

The Great Panchatantra Tales

(For more than two and a half millennia, the Panchatantra tales have regaled children and adults alike with a moral at the end of every story. Some believe that they are as old as the RigVeda. There is also another story about these fables. According to it, these are stories Shiva told his consort Parvati. The present series is based on the Sanskrit original.)

A king, worried that his three sons are without the wisdom to live in a world of wile and guile, asks a learned man called Vishnu Sharman to teach them the ways of the world.

Since his wards are dimwits, Vishnu Sharman decides to pass on wisdom to them in the form of stories. In these stories, he makes animals speak like human beings. Panchatantra is a collection of attractively told stories about the five ways that help the human being succeed in life. Pancha means five and tantra means ways or strategies or principles. Addressed to the king's children, the stories are primarily about statecraft and are popular throughout the world. The five strategies are:

1. Discord among friends
2. Gaining friends
3. Of crows and owls
4. Loss of gains
5. Imprudence

The stories have been translated into nearly every language in the world that has a script. The story form appeals to children while the wisdom in them attracts adults. The Panchatantra collection represents the earliest folk tale form in the world of literature. There are several versions of Panchatantra tales in circulation in the world but the one that is popular in India is the Sanskrit original of Vishnu Sharman.

Very soon, Hamarashehar.Com will bring to netizens the oldest collection of tales in the world as told by an 80-year-old teacher to his royal wards. The translation seeks to be as close to the Sanskrit original as possible in spirit.

The stories will appear in five sections, each representing a strategy for getting over problems in life. They are of interest not just for the ruling class but also for every person. They are all about survival in a complicated world and the several ways to get over problems. The stories based as they are on human nature have an eternal relevance.

The series begins with a parent story that unfolds story after story; each strung to the other by a narrator.

Now, it is your turn to enjoy these stories as immortal and fragrant as the soil of India.

The Loss of Friends

Once upon a time, Amarasakti ruled the city-state of Mahilaropyam in the south of India. He had three witless sons who became a matter of endless worry for him. Realizing that his sons had no interest in learning, the king summoned his ministers and said:

“You know I am not happy with my sons. According to men of learning an unborn son and a stillborn son are better than a son who is a dimwit. What good is a barren cow? A son who is stupid will bring dishonour to his father. How can I make them fit to be my successors? I turn to you for advice.”

One of the ministers suggested the name of Vishnu Sharman, a great scholar enjoying the respect of hundreds of his disciples. “He is the most competent person to tutor your children. Entrust them to his care and very soon you will see the change.”

The king summoned Vishnu Sharman and pleaded with him “Oh, venerable scholar, take pity on me and please train my sons into great scholars and I will make you the lord of hundred villages.”

Vishnu Sharman said “Oh, king, listen to my pledge. Hundred villages do not tempt me to vend learning. Count six months from today. If I do not make your children great scholars, you can ask me to change my name.”

The king immediately called his sons and handed them to the care of the learned man. Sharman took them to his monastery where he started teaching them the five strategies (Panchatantra). Keeping his word, he finished the task the king entrusted him in six months. Since then, Panchatantra became popular all over the world as children's guide in solving problems of life.

Now begins the Loss of Friends (first of the five strategies) series. These are stories that figure in a dialogue between two jackals named Karataka and Damanaka.

Long, long ago, a merchant named Vardhaman lived in a town in the south of India. As he was resting on his bed one day it struck him that money was the axis of the world and that the more he had of it the more he would be powerful. Even enemies seek the friendship of a rich man, he told himself. The old become young if they have riches and the young become old if they do not have wealth. Business is one of the six ways that help man amass wealth. This was his logic.

Mobilizing all his wares, Vardhaman set out on an auspicious day for Madhura in search of markets for his goods. He began his travel in a gaily-decorated cart drawn by two bullocks. On the way, tired of the long haul, one of the bullocks named Sanjeevaka collapsed in the middle of a jungle near river Jamuna. But the merchant continued his journey asking some of his servants to take care of the animal. But the servants

abandoned the bullock soon after their master had left. Joining him later, they told him that the bullock was dead.

In fact, Sanjeevaka was not dead. Feeding on the abundant fresh and tender grass in the forest, he regained strength and began to merrily explore the jungle, dancing and singing in joy. In the same forest lived Pingalaka, the lion. Sanjeevaka, content with his new life in the jungle would waltz and sing uproariously with joy. One day, Pingalaka and other animals were drinking water in the Jamuna when the lion heard the frightening bellow of the bullock. In panic, the lion withdrew into the forest and sat deeply lost in thought and surrounded by other animals.

Sensing the predicament of their king, two jackals, Karataka and Damanaka, sons of two dismissed ministers, were clueless as to what had happened to their king.

“What could have happened to the lord of the forest,” asked Damanaka.

“Why should we poke our nose into affairs that are not our concern? Haven't you heard the story of the monkey which pulled out the wedge from the log,” asked Damanaka.

“Sounds interesting. Why don't you tell me what happened to the monkey,” pleaded Damanaka.

“Now, listen,” said Damanaka and began narrating the story of the monkey.

1.The Monkey And The Wedge

A merchant once started building a temple in the middle of his garden. Many masons and carpenters were working for the merchant. They took time off every day to go to the town for their lunch. One day, when the workers left for lunch a batch of monkeys landed at the temple site and began playing with whatever caught their fancy. One of the monkeys saw a partly sawed log of wood and a wedge fixed in it so that it does not close up.

Curious to know what it is, the monkey began furiously tugging at the wedge. At last the wedge came off, not before trapping the legs of the monkey into the rift of the log. Very soon, not able to get his legs out of the closed wood, the monkey died.

“Therefore,” Karataka told Damanaka, “it is not wise to poke our nose into affairs that are not our concern. We have a food store. Why should we bother ourselves about this lion?”

Damanaka retorted, "Food is not the centre of our life. The elders have said that wise men seek the help of the king to help friends and harm foes. There are hundred ways of collecting food. What matters is a life full of learning, courage and wealth. If living somehow is the goal, even the crow lives long eating leftovers."

"True, but we are not ministers any more. The elders have always said that the stupid person who offers uncalled for advice to the king invites not only insult but also deceit," said Karataka.

"No," Damanaka said, "anyone who serves the king with devotion is bound to earn his favour in the long run. The one who does not remains where he is. Those who understand why the king is angry or generous will one-day rise in office. It is necessary to be in the good books of the king."

"Okay, what do you want to do now?" asked Karataka.

"You know the king is scared now. We will ask him what frightens him and using the six ways of diplomacy get close to him."

"How do you know the king is scared?"

"Changes in posture, signs, pace, actions, conversation, looks and expression indicate the working of the mind. I will approach the fear-struck king today and with my intelligence, I will dispel his fear and once again become his minister," said Damanaka.

"How can you do it when you do not know principles of service?" asked Karataka.

Damanaka told him all he knew and learnt about what makes a good and loyal servant in the service of the king.

"In that case, I wish you all good luck," said Karataka.

Taking leave of Karataka, Damanaka then called on the king. Recognizing that he was the son of his old minister, King Pingalaka told his sentry to bring him into his presence. Damanaka came down on his knees to pay respects to the king.

"We haven't seen you for a long time," the king said.

"I don't know of what use I can be to you, my lord. Yet, according to the learned, there are occasions when every person however high or low will be of use to the king. For generations we have served the king with devotion. Yet I am out of your majesty's favour."

"All right, competent or incompetent you are the son of our old minister. Go ahead and tell me whatever you have in your mind," the king ordered Damanaka.

“May I ask you humbly, my lord, what made you come back from the lake without drinking water,” asked Damanaka reluctantly.

“O' Damanaka, haven't you heard the great and frightening sounds in the distance? I want to leave this forest. The strange animal that could make such sounds ought to be as powerful as the sounds he makes.”

“Your majesty, if it is only sound that is your problem; I wish to submit that sounds are misleading. I can tell you the story of the jackal, how it overcame the fear of sound.”

Let us hear it, said the king.

2.The Jackal And The Drum

A hungry jackal set out in search of food and ended up at an abandoned battlefield whence he heard loud and strange sounds. Scared, he thought, “I must disappear from here before the man who is making these sounds gets me.” After a while he told himself, “I must not run away like that. Let me find out what really the sounds are and who is making them because whether it is fear or happiness one must know its cause. Such a person will never regret his actions. So, let me first look for the source of these noises.”

Warily, the jackal marched in the direction of the sounds and found a drum there. It was this drum, which was sending the sounds whenever the branches of the tree above brushed against it. Relieved, the jackal began playing the drum and thought that there could be food inside it. The jackal entered the drum by piercing its side. He was disappointed to find no food in it. Yet he consoled himself saying that he rid himself of the fear of sound.

“Therefore”, Damanaka told king Pingalaka, “your majesty should not be afraid of sounds. I seek your permission to go and see what the sounds are.”

“Okay,” said the king. Taking leave of the king, Damanaka proceeded in the direction of the sound.

The king now began worrying himself about Damanaka's intentions. “He may have a grudge against me for dismissing him once. Such persons seek revenge. I should not have taken him into confidence. Let me keep an eye on him. Wise men have always maintained that it is difficult to kill even a weak man who does not easily trust others but easy to kill a strong man who readily trusts others,” the king thought.

As the king kept an eye on him, Damanaka moved slowly towards Sanjeevaka, the bullock, and found that he was after all an animal and thought, “This is a good omen. This will help me to get back into the good books of the king. Kings never follow the advice of their ministers unless they are in peril or grief. Just as a healthy man never thinks of a doctor, a strong and secure king also never remembers the need for a minister.”

Assured that what he saw was only a bullock, Damanaka returned to the king and told him what he saw.

“Is it true?” the king asked.

“The king is God. The man who lies to a king perishes. He alone has the power to grant favors.”

“I believe you. Great men do not harm weaker people. They take on only their equals. That is what is unique about brave people.”

“What your majesty says is true. Sanjeevaka is great. If your lordship permits me, I will persuade him to be one of your servants.”

“All right, I am taking you back as a minister,” said the king, pleased.

Damanaka at once hurried back to Sanjeevaka and told him to stop bellowing and come and meet his king. But the bullock wanted who this Pingalaka was. “What? You do not know our lord? Wait, you will know shortly the cost of this ignorance. There he is, surrounded by his retinue under the banyan tree.” Sanjeevaka thought his days were numbered and pleaded with Damanaka, “Sir, you seem to be a man of great wisdom and wit. You alone can save me. I can come only if you can assure me that no harm will come to me.” Damanaka told the bullock to wait for the right time to meet the king.

Returning to the king, Damanaka told him “My lord, he is not an ordinary being. He is the vehicle of Lord Shiva. He told me that Lord Shiva had permitted him to feed on the tender grass in the neighborhood of Jamuna. But I told him that the forest belonged to our lion king who is the vehicle of goddess Chandika. You are our guest. You can see our king and seek a separate space for you to graze. He agreed to this plan provided he has an assurance from your majesty.”

“Yes, certainly. But I will need assurance from him in return. Bring him here,” the king told Damanaka. Going back to the bullock Damanaka advised him, “You have the assurance of the king. But this new position should not go to your head. We have to work together. That is how we can prosper. Otherwise, he who does not respect everyone, however high or low, will forfeit the favour of kings like Dantila.”

“What about Dantila?” asked Sanjeevaka.

3.The Fall And Rise Of A Merchant

In the city of Vardhaman, there lived a wealthy merchant named ***Dantila***. He held a great reception for his wedding attended by the king, the queen, their ministers and all the rich and influential persons in the city. Present at the reception was Gorambha, a lowly sweeper in the royal household. When Dantila saw him occupying a seat reserved for the nobles of the king, he ordered his servants to throw him out of his house.

Thus insulted, Gorambha thought to himself, "I am a poor man and so cannot give a fitting reply to such a wealthy person as Dantila. I must somehow see that the king stops his favours to him." Then he hit upon a plan to take revenge on Dantila.

One early morning when the king was still in sleep, Gorambha pretending to sweep the king's bedroom began loudly murmuring, "Oh, how arrogant is Dantila! He has the cheek to lock the queen in his embrace." Hearing this, the king demanded to know whether what Gorambha was murmuring is true. Did Dantila embrace the queen?

"Oh, your majesty, I don't remember nor do I know what I was saying because I was drowsy having spent the entire night in gambling," the sweeper told the king.

Not satisfied with his reply the king thought that it was possible that the sweeper had seen Dantila, who had equal access to the royal household as Gorambha, embracing the queen. He remembered wise men saying that men were likely to talk in their sleep about what they did, saw and desired in the day. Women were chaste because men were not within reach or they were afraid of prying servants. Convinced that Dantila had indeed embraced the queen, the king barred Dantila from entering the royal household.

The merchant began grieving his fate though he had not done any harm to the king or his relatives even in his dreams. One day as Dantila was trying to enter the king's palace he was barred by the king's men. Seeing this Gorambha told them, "You fools, you are barring the great Dantila who has won the king's favours. He is powerful. If you stop him, you will meet with the same fate as I did at the hands of Dantila one day."

The merchant thought that it would do him good to make Gorambha happy and win his confidence. One evening he invited the sweeper for tea and presented him with expensive clothes and told him, "Friend, I had never meant to insult you. You had occupied a seat I had set apart for the learned. Kindly pardon me."

Pleased, the sweeper promised to win the king's favour for Dantila again. The next day, Gorambha repeated the same drama of pretending to talk irrelevantly, raving that the king was eating cucumber in the rest room. "What nonsense are you talking? Did you ever see me doing such things?" the king demanded to know. "No, your majesty. I do not know nor do I remember what I was saying because I was drowsy having spent the entire night in gambling," the sweeper said.

The king then realized that if what the sweeper had said about him was not true what he had said about Dantila also could not be true. A person like Dantila could not have done what Gorambha had told him. The king also found that without Dantila the affairs of the state had suffered and civic administration had come to a standstill. The king immediately summoned the merchant to his palace and restored to him all the authority he had enjoyed before he fell out of king's favour.

Damanaka resumed, "That is why we must know that pride goes before fall." Sanjeevaka agreed. Taking him to the lion king, Damanaka introduced Sanjeevaka to Pingalaka. After exchanging pleasantries, the king asked him to relate his past and the purpose of staying in that jungle. On the bullock relating his story, the king said, "Friend, don't be afraid. I assure you that I will protect you from wild animals here because even stronger animals feel insecure here."

Since then, the king asked Karataka and Damanaka to look after the affairs of the state and began happily spending his time in the company of Sanjeevaka. But the jackals were worried that after Sanjeevaka had become a good friend of the king, the king gave up his royal sports and pastime and became a saint.

The jackal twins thought, “the king has stopped taking us into confidence after Sanjeevaka became his best friend. He is also indifferent to his kingly duties. What shall we do now?”

Karataka said, “The king may not heed our advice. But it is our duty to advise him on it if it is good for him. Elders have always held that even if the king is not willing to heed good advice, it is the duty of his ministers to offer him advice. “You are right,” said Damanaka. “The mistake is mine. What happened to the sage and the jackal should not happen to us.”

Karataka then pleaded with him to tell the story of the sage and the jackal. Damanaka began telling him.

4.The Foolish Sage And The Jackal

In a monastery far away from human habitation lived a saint called Deva Sarma. He amassed a lot of wealth by selling clothes gifted to him by well-wishers and disciples. It became a burden for him to guard that wealth. Since he did not trust anyone, he put all his money into a bag and carried it with him wherever he went. Ashadhabhooti, an experienced cheat, noticed Deva Sarma carrying his bag always with him and assuming that it certainly contained something valuable, began planning to snatch it from him.

One day, the cheat met the saint and promptly fell on his feet and said, “Oh, know-all, I have realized that this life is an illusion; youth is fleeting and all familial ties are like a dream. Please show me the correct path that delivers me from all worldly ties.”

Pleased with his humility, Deva Sarma said, “Child, you are the blessed one who has thought of renouncing worldly pleasures. Listen, however low his caste is, the person that chants “Om Namahsivayah' and smears holy ash on his forehead, becomes Siva himself and knows no rebirth. I shall accept you as my protégé but you must not enter the hermitage in the night because company is forbidden for saints. After initiation, you have to live in the hut at the entrance of the monastery.”

Ashadhabhooti promised the saint that he would consider every sign from him as a command and carry it out. Satisfied, the saint accepted the cheat as his disciple. Ashadhabhooti too began making Deva Sarma happy by attending to every need of his. But seeing that the saint never separated the money-bag from his person, Ashadhabhooti thought, “the old man is very crafty and keeps the bag always with him. How can I snatch it from him? Shall I kill him?”

As the cheat was at a loss to achieve his goal, the son of a disciple came calling on the sage. The visitor invited Deva Sarma to come to his village and perform the sacred thread ceremony of his son. The saint accepted the invitation and set out for the village taking Ashadhabhooti with him.

On the way, the guru and his disciple had to cross a river. After bathing in the river and wanting to rest for a while, Deva Sarma took the money bag and pushed it into a quilt he was carrying and told the disciple, “I

have to respond to nature's call. I am leaving this holy quilt of Siva here. Keep an eye on it." The moment the guru went out of his sight, Ashadhabhooti collected the bag and fled the place.

With great trust in his disciple, Deva Sarma decided to spend time by joining a crowd watching two well-fed goats fighting ferociously. As blood was running down their heads, a jackal came there to feast on the blood the two goats were shedding. Deva Sarma saw the jackal entering the scene and thought that the jackal would surely die caught between the two warring goats. His surmise came true and the jackal died, gored by the two goats.

Brooding over the demise of the jackal, Deva Sarma returned to where he had left the money-bag with Ashadhabhooti and panicked when he found Ashadhabhooti missing. The holy quilt was there but not the money-bag in it. He began wailing, "Oh, trickster, what have you done? I have lost everything in this world." After a vain search for the trickster, the foolish saint returned home dejected.

Damanaka asked Karataka, "What do you learn from this episode?"

"You alone can tell me."

"The sage and the jackal have none to blame except themselves."

"In a similar situation, what should we do?"

Damanaka said, "Yes, I know what to do now. With my cunning I will create a rift between king Pingalaka and Sanjeevaka. Haven't you heard that though you cannot subdue the enemy with a volley of arrows, you can destroy him by your wit?"

"Wait," said Karataka. "Suppose the lion king and the roving bullock comes to know of your plans to separate them, get ready to meet your end."

"My friend, you are too pessimistic. When time and tide are against you, don't give up. Wise men keep on trying till they succeed in getting what they want. Haven't you heard the elders saying?"

"The Goddess of Wealth favours the man who persists.
Pray God by all means, but put in your own effort.
Even if you don't succeed, you will be free of blame."

Karataka was not convinced that Damanaka could create rift between the fierce lion king and the wise bullock.

Damanaka told him, "Here is how through cunning two crows, husband and wife, managed to save their children from a cobra. Every time, the wife hatched the eggs, a cobra would come and feast on the offspring. The couple asked a jackal who was their friend to show them the way. The jackal told the crow not to despair

for there is nothing that a trick cannot achieve. That is how a crab killed a greedy crane that was preying on the fish in the lake. The female crow asked the jackal how the crab had killed the crane.”

Damanaka then asked Karataka to listen to the story of the crane and the crab.

5.The Crafty Crane And The Craftier Crab

Once upon a time an old crane lived on the rim of a large lake in the middle of a jungle. Because of age, it was not able to prey on fish and other insects. Unable to suffer hunger, the crane stood on the edge of the lake and began crying pitifully. Moved at the sight, a crab passing by asked the crane:

“Friend, what is the matter? Why are you not hunting for food today?”

“Son, you have correctly guessed. I am feeling guilty because I have swallowed too many fish. I have decided to fast unto death and am not harming even the fish that are within my reach,” said the crane.

“But why are you so philosophical today,” asked the crab.

“What shall I tell you? I have heard that there will be no rains for the coming twelve years. Astrologers have forecast an evil conjunction of the planets. As a result, there won't be rains on this earth for another twelve years. All these years we have all played and lived together. I am now worried about the fate waiting for these poor fish and other creatures in the lake. They will die and I will be alone and without them.”

“Is there no way we can save ourselves?”

“At present, fish and other water creatures in other lakes are migrating to bigger lakes with the help of their relatives. Here, nobody seems to worry about the dark future. At this rate, there won't be any kind of fish left.”

The crab carried this information to all the fish and other water creatures in the lake. Alarmed, all of them came to the crane and pleaded with him to show them the way to overcome this danger.

“Why not. There is a big lake not far from here that has plenty of water throughout the year and lotuses always in bloom. That lake does not go dry even if there are no rains for twenty-four years. I can ferry all of you one by one to that lake.”

The poor fish and other water creatures at once put all the trust in the crane and agreed to be ferried. Every day, the crane would take one of them at a time to a lonely place, smash them against a stone and eat them. He would return to the lake and repeat the trick every day.

One day the crab asked the crane, “Uncle, you are taking everyone to the faraway lake and not me. Why don't you take me there today and save my life?”

Tired with eating fish every day, the crane too was happy to carry the crab to the lake that did not exist. The crab was happy and mounted on the back of the crane. As the crane was flying close to the spot where he ate all the fish, the crab saw a heap of fish bones and asked the crane, “Uncle, we have come a long distance and I see no lake anywhere. Tell me, where is the lake?”

“You are a fool to trust me. There is no lake. Nor is there water. Say your prayers now; I am going to kill you.” The crafty crab at once caught the neck of the crane in his claws and tore through it to death. Slowly, carrying the crane's neck, the crab reached the lake where all his friends, worried that the crane did not come back, asked him what made him come back.

The crab said, “you fools, that crane was taking all of us to a lonely place where it would smash the victims against a rock and have them for lunch. I found out his mischief and saved myself by slicing his neck. From today, all of us can live happily without fear.”

Then the crows asked the jackal how they could get rid of the cobra that was feasting on their offspring. The jackal told them to go to a big city and snatch any item of jewellery from a palace and drop it in the hollow of the tree that is the cobra's home. In search of the jewellery, the king's men would reach the tree and kill the cobra.

The crow couple flew off to a lake where the women in the king's harem were revealing in water. Before entering water, the women left their jewellery and clothes on the waterside. The female crow skillfully dived and snatched a gold necklace and began slowly flying towards the cobra's hideout. The king's men who saw the crow fly off with the necklace followed the female crow and saw it dropping the necklace into the hollow of the tree. They ran to the tree and pulling it out killed the cobra.

“That's why,” Damanaka told Karataka, “elders say that he who is wise is stronger than the strong. That is how a small hare killed the almighty lion.”

“How is that?” asked Karataka.

“That is another story,” said Damanaka.

6.The Cunning Hare and The Witless Lion

Bhasuraka was a lion lording over the jungle, killing deer, boars, rabbits, bison, etc. Yet he was not happy with his kill. The victims too were unhappy and met the lion one day in a delegation. “Oh, lord,” they said, “why do you kill so many animals every day when you need only one for your food? Let us come to an understanding. From today, you need not move from your place. We will send an animal every day to you. That will spare you the trouble of hunting and us our lives.”

“Our forebears have said that the duty of the king is to rule and not to destroy. Just as a seed sprouts, grows into a tree and yields fruit, a people protected by the king come to his rescue in times of need.”

“What you say is true,” the lion said and added a condition. “If you fail to send one animal every day, I shall kill all of you.”

“Agreed,” said the animals and began roaming the forest without fear and sending one of their own folk to the lion for his lunch. One day it was the turn of a hare. He started leisurely on his last journey and saw a big well on the way and saw his own reflection when he peeped into the well from curiosity.

Suddenly an idea struck the hare. “I will somehow tempt the lion to the well and persuade him to jump into it,” the hare thought to himself. It was late in the evening when the hare reached the lion's den. The lion was hungry and so angry and decided to kill all the animals when the hare came and knelt before him.

“First, you are too small for my lunch. Second, you have come late. I shall kill you and all the others too,” the lion warned the hare.

“My lord, it is not my fault or the fault of other animals.”

“Let me know who it is who delayed you and I will kill him at once.”

“Our folks have decided that it is my turn today. Since I do not make a full meal, they have sent three more hares with me for your meal. As we were all coming to you, a big lion came out of his den and demanded to know where we were all going.”

“We are all going to Bhasuraka as his meal according to our arrangement, we said. The big lion said that this jungle belonged to him and that all animals obeyed its orders. He also told us that you are a cheat and asked us to bring you to him for a trial of strength. Whoever is the victor will become the king. He commanded me to summon you to his fort. That's why I am late. It is now for you to decide,” the hare told the lion.

“In that case,” Bhasuraka told the hare, “show me that lion. I will kill him and have him for lunch. According to the elders territory, friendship and gold are the rewards of war. Wise men do not go to war unless there are gains.”

“Yes, my lord,” said the hare, “what you say is true. But the big lion lives in a fort. He knows that the king without a fort is like a cobra without fangs and an elephant without heat.”

“Stop that nonsense and bring him here. Don't you know that you have to crush the enemy and disease at the first opportunity? Otherwise, they will grow in strength and crush you.”

“But the big lion seems to be very strong. Haven't you heard elders saying that one should not go to war without assessing one's own strength and the strength of the enemy? He who meets the enemy in haste will

perish like the locusts in a fire.”

Growing impatient, the lion roared, “why all this tall talk. Show him to me.” Asking the lion to accompany him, the hare took him to the well. He told the lion that the big lion was there in that fort and showed him the well. The lion then peeped into the well and mistaking his reflection in the water for the big lion jumped into the well to kill him. Thus the foolish lion perished and all the animals in the jungle lived happily ever after.

Damanaka resumed, “This is how with my skills I will create a rift between Pingalaka and Sanjeevaka.”

“All right, best of luck to you,” said Karataka.

One day when Pingalaka was alone, Damanaka visited him and bowed to him.

“We haven't seen you for a long time,” said Pingalaka. “Of what use am I to you? Yet, when your rule is breaking up, I thought I should inform you. Even without asking, offer good advice to him whom you want to protect from indignity, said our elders.”

“Whatever you want to say, say it without hesitation.”

Gathering courage, Damanaka said, “My lord, Sanjeevaka wants to harm you. Taking me into confidence, he once told me that he would kill you, become the king and make me a minister.”

“But Sanjeevaka is a trusted friend of mine. Why should he think of harming me?”

“There is no loyal or disloyal servant. There is no servant who does not covet power. My lord, what made you to take Sanjeevaka into confidence? Don't think he is a strong animal able to kill your enemies. This will not happen because he is a vegetarian and my lord feasts on meat. It is better to get rid of him.”

“You remember I gave him the word on your advice. How can I kill him who has won assurance from me.”

“My lord, according to wise men, you should not make friends with people you do not know. You know how an innocent flea died for the fault of a bug.”

Pingalaka demanded to know the story. Damanaka began to relate.

7.The Bug and The Poor Flea

Once upon a time a bug named Mandavisarpini made for itself a small home in the folds of the milk-white sheets of linen spread on the king's ornamental bed. One day, the bug saw a flea drifting into the king's bedroom and told the flea that he had come to a wrong place and asked him to leave before somebody

noticed him.

The flea, whose name was Agnimukha, said, “Oh venerable sir, it is not proper for you to ask a guest to leave even if he is a wicked person. You must welcome him, ask him about his health, say words that comfort him and request him to take rest. That is how good hosts treat their guests. Besides, I have tasted the blood of a variety of men and animals. Never did I taste royal blood. The king's blood is a compound of rich foods and is bound to taste rich. Please permit me to relish this delicacy.”

The flea continued, “Everything we do in this world we do to slake our hunger. I have come to you in search of food. It is not proper for you to siphon off the king's blood all alone. You should share it with me also.”

The bug told him, “oh, flea, I suck the blood of the king when he is fast asleep. You are impatient. You have to wait till I finish my job. After me, you can have your fill.” The flea agreed.

Meanwhile, the king entered his bedroom to sleep. But the impatient flea began feasting on the king's blood even before he went to sleep. Stung by his bite, the king rose from his bed and asked his servants to look for what was in the bed that caused him discomfort. The king's men pulled the linen off the bed and examined it closely. Before they could him, the flea sneaked into a recess of the bed. The servants found the poor bug and killed him at once.

Damanaka told Pingalaka, “This is why you should kill Sanjeevaka before he could kill you. He who abandons a trusted confidant and trusts an outsider will die like sage Kakudruma.”

“How did he die?” Pinagalaka asked him.

8.The Story of The Blue Jackal

Chandaraka was a jackal living in a forest. One day, driven by hunger, he came to a nearby town in search of food. Seeing him, a group of mongrels began chasing and attacking him whenever possible. The jackal fled in panic and entering the house of a washer man hid in a vat full of blue used for bleaching clothes. When he came out, he became a blue animal. Thinking that he was not the jackal they chased, the mongrels dispersed.

The jackal came back to the forest with his body dyed in blue. When the lions, tigers, panthers, wolves and other animals in the forest saw him, they took fright and ran in all directions. They thought to themselves, “We do not know his power and strength. It is better we keep a distance from him. Haven't the elders warned not to trust him whose conduct, caste and courage are not known.”

Seeing them scared, the dyed jackal said, “Why do you run away like that. There is no need to fear. I am a special creation of God. He told me that the animals in the jungle here had no ruler and that he was nominating me as your king. He named me as Kakudruma and told me to rule all of you. Therefore all of you can live safely under the umbrella of my protection.”

All the animals in the jungle accepted him as the king. He in turn appointed the lion as his minister, the tiger as his chamberlain and the wolf as the gatekeeper. After distributing office to the animals, the new king Kakudruma banished all the jackals in the forest. The lions, tigers and the wolves killed other animals and brought them as food for the king. Taking his share, Kakudruma would distribute the rest of the kill among his subjects.

One day when the blue jackal was holding court, he heard a gang of jackals howling. Thrilled by the sound of his own ilk, Kakudruma began loudly responding in his natural voice. The lions and other animals immediately recognized that their king was after all a jackal and not a Godsend. They at once pounced on the blue jackal and killed him.

“The moral is,” Damanaka said, “he who abandons his own folk will perish.”

“But how do I believe that Sanjeevaka has evil intentions,” asked Pingalaka.

“He told me today that he would kill you tomorrow. If you notice him carefully tomorrow, you will find him red-eyed and occupying a seat he does not deserve. He would stare at you angrily. If what I say comes true, it is for you what to do with Pingalaka,” said Damanaka.

After this meeting with the lion king, Damanaka went to meet Pingalaka. The bullock received him with courtesy and said, “We are meeting after a long time. What can I do for you? They are the blessed who are visited by friends.”

“You are right, sir. But where is rest for servants. They have lost their freedom for the sake of money. They know no sleep, no interest in food nor can they speak without fear. Yet they live. Somebody has rightly compared service to a dog's life,” said Damanaka.

“Come to the point, my friend” The bullock was now impatient.

Damanaka said, “Sir, a minister is not supposed to give bad advice. He cannot also disclose state secrets. If he does, he will go to hell after his death. But in the cause of your friendship, I have revealed a secret. It is on my suggestion that you have taken up service in the royal household. Pingalaka has evil designs against you. When we were alone, he told me he would kill you and bring happiness to everyone in the palace.

“I told the king that this was stabbing a friend in the back,” Damanaka continued. “The king was angry and said that you were a vegetarian and he lived on a diet of meat and so there was natural discord between you and him. He said that this was enough reason for him to kill you. This is a secret I have kept to myself for a long time. It is now for you to do what is necessary.”

Sanjeevaka fainted on hearing these words. Recovering after some time, he said, “It is truly said that a person who serves the king is like a bullock without horns. It is difficult to know the mind of a king who has different ideas. It is not easy to serve a king. Even sages could not read the minds of kings. I think some servants who were jealous of my friendship with the king must have poisoned his mind.”

“Don't worry,” Damanaka said. “Forget what tales the servants carried to the king. You can still win his favour by your sweet words.”

“That is not true. It is impossible to live with wicked people, however small they are. They can always think of a hundred ways to get you in the same manner the jackal and crow trapped the camel.”

“Sounds interesting. Let me know what happened to the camel,” asked Damanaka.

Sanjeevaka began to tell him the story.

9.The Camel, The Jackal And The Crow

In a far off forest, there lived a lion named Madotkata served by a leopard, a jackal and a crow. One day they sighted Kradanaka, a camel who lost his way. Thinking the camel they saw was an unusual animal, the lion asked his assistants to find out if he was a wild animal or domestic animal.

The crow said that the camel was a domestic animal fit to be killed and eaten. Refusing to eat Kradanaka, the lion said:

“I shall not kill someone who came seeking hospitality. According to our elders, you cannot kill even an enemy who came trusting you. He who kills so commits the sin of killing hundred Brahmins. Assure him of safety and bring him to me.”

The three assistants brought the camel to the presence of the lion. On the lion asking the camel to relate his story, Kradanaka told him how he was part of a trade caravan and how he had lost his way. The lion told the camel, “Kradanaka, why do you go back to your village and become once again a beast of burden? Remain with us without any hesitation and feast on this tender grass.” Thereafter, the camel stayed on to live happily with the lion and his three assistants.

One day, the lion was locked in a battle with an elephant. The tusker gored Madotkata and badly injured him. He became too weak to hunt. Without food he was in no position to do anything. Then, the lion asked the assistants to go out and look for some animal for his meal. “Bring the animal here. I will kill him somehow and provide food for you all,” said the lion.

The leopard, the jackal, and the camel looked everywhere for an animal but could not find anyone. The jackal told the crow aside:

“Friend, what is the use of wasting time like this? We have Kradanaka, our lord's loyal friend. Let us kill him and survive.” “That is fine. Yet we cannot kill him because our lord has assured him protection,” said the crow.”

“Leave it to me. I shall convince Madotkata to kill the camel. Wait here. I will meet the lord and get his permission,” said the jackal and left to meet the lion.

The jackal told his lord, “Oh, lord, we went to every nook and corner of the forest. We could not find a single animal. We are tired, weak and hungry. Since my lord is also in the same condition, I humbly suggest that we make a meal of this camel.”

Highly annoyed, the lion said, “You sinner, if you repeat these words, I shall first kill you. I have given him my word. How can I kill him? Haven't our elders said that no gift of land or cow or food is greater than the gift of an assurance?”

“You are right my lord. It is a sin to kill him who has your word. But if the camel voluntarily offers himself as food it is no sin to accept the offer. If he does not volunteer, you can kill anyone of us. You are hungry and close to your end. If we are not of use to you at this time what value have our lives? If anything undesirable happens to our lord, we will immolate ourselves.”

“This seems to be more reasonable,” said the lion.

The jackal told the other two assistants, “Friends, our lord is in a pitiable condition. There is now no one to protect us from others. Instead of aimlessly searching the forest for food, let us offer our bodies to him. That will deliver us from the burden of debt. The servant who is witness to the helpless death of his master will go to hell.”

After the jackal's plea, all of them called on the lion with tears in their eyes. “What's the matter? Did you find an animal?” asked the lion.

“No, my lord. We searched every place, every inch of the forest. We are not lucky. We found nothing. But I request the lord to have me for his meal. That will mean two birds with one shot. The lord will survive and I will go to heaven. He who lays down his life to save his lord will have no rebirth,” said the crow.

It was now the turn of the jackal to show his loyalty. He said, “My friend, crow. Your body is too small to slake the hunger of my lord. It amounts to starving him and that is a sin. Get out of my way. I have to submit a plea to my lord.”

Addressing the lion, the jackal said, “Lord, I request you to have me for your meal and ensure me a place in heaven. The lord has rights of life and death over his servants. Therefore, it is no sin in exercising his rights.”

The leopard intervened and said, “You jackal, you are no great personality. Let me plead with the lord.” Addressing Madotkata, the leopard said, “Oh lord, let me give away my life to save your life. Please permit me to earn a permanent berth in heaven. My sacrifice will win fame for me on earth.”

All this set Kradanaka thinking, “All these servants of the lord have said what they wanted to say. Still, the lion did not kill anyone of them. Let me also offer to be the lord's food today. I am sure my friends will

support me.' He then turned to the leopard and said, "What you have said is right and proper. But you are a carnivorous animal and belong to the same species as the master does. How can he kill you? Let me offer myself."

The camel then came forward and requested the lion to have him for that day's meal. At once, the jackal and the leopard pounced on him tore him to pieces and all of them had a sumptuous feast.

As the story ended Sanjeevaka told Damanaka, "Wicked people surround the king. Good men should not serve such masters. I will need your advice to get out of this problem."

"The best course is to leave the country," said Damanaka.

"It is not wise to leave when the king is still angry. He can reach me anywhere I go. The only alternative I have is to go to war with the king."

Damanaka was afraid that if Sanjeevaka chose to fight Pingalaka the lion might die and that would be a disaster. Let me persuade the bullock to leave the forest, he thought.

"Going to war is all right. But how can there be a war between a servant and a king? If you underestimate the strength of your enemy you will meet the same fate as the Sea met at the hands of the bird pair."

Curious, Sanjeeva asked, "What happened to the birds?"

10.The Bird Pair and The Sea

Once upon a time, a pair of pheasants lived close to the Sea. They spent their time happily singing and dancing on the branches of the trees by the Sea. One day the female pheasant told her husband that she was expecting their baby and he must look for a safe place to lay the eggs. The husband said, "My dear, this Seaside is enchanting and it is better you lay eggs here only."

The wife said, "When it is full moon, the Sea tide can wash away even wild elephants. Let us go elsewhere."

Amused, the husband said, "What you say is true. But the Sea has no power to harm us. Haven't you heard that there is no fool who could stop the flight of a bird or a fool who would enter fire recklessly. Will anyone be brash enough to challenge Yama (the Lord of Death) to take his life if he can? You can lay your eggs here only."

Listening to this dialogue, the Sea thought, "How vain is this bird which is as small as a worm! Let me drown these eggs and see what he can do."

After laying eggs, the female bird went in search of food. In her absence, the Sea sent a wave that sucked the eggs into the waters. The female returned to the nest and, not finding the eggs there, told the husband, "You are a fool. I told you that the waves would wash away the eggs. Those who do not heed the good words of a friend will perish like the turtle that fell off the stick."

"What's that turtle and what is that stick?" asked the husband.

Once upon a time a turtle called Kambugriva lived in a pond. He had two swans, Sankat and Vikat, as good friends. Every day they would meet on the rim of the pond and discuss legends of yore. They would disperse with sunset. That year there were no rains and the water in the pond began slowly disappearing.

Worried, the swans told the turtle, "Friend, What will happen to you? We are concerned."

"I appreciate your interest in me. There is trouble ahead. Please find a way out of this crisis. But it is important that we should not give in to despair. According to Manu, all good men should come to the rescue of friends and relatives in times of need. Look for a stick or a rope. I will hang on to it as both of you hold the two sides of the stick or rope and ferry me to safety."

"We shall do as you say," the swans said. "But you have to shut your mouth. Otherwise, you will crash to the ground."

On Kambugriva agreeing to the plan, the swans brought a stick and asked the turtle to hold it with his teeth. When everything was ready, the swans flew off with the turtle hanging from it. On the way people saw this sight and exclaimed, "see, how clever the birds are." In trying to respond to the people, the turtle opened his mouth and fell to the ground and the people at once killed him.

"The lesson is that those who do not heed the advice of their well-wishers meet their end like the turtle. Any day, the survivors are those who foresee a danger in time and those who deal with it when it comes. Those who leave things to fate and believe in luck will destroy themselves like Yadbhavishya," said the female pheasant.

"What happened to Yadbhavishya?" asked the male bird.

11.Tale of The Three Fish

Three fish lived in a pond. Their names were Anagatavidhata, Pratyutpannamati and Yadbhavishya. Some fishermen passing by the pond wondered, "Hey, we have never seen this pond. It seems to be full of fish. It is now evening. Let us come at dawn tomorrow and bag as many fish as we can."

Hearing the fisherman, Anagatavidhata (the one who foresees a danger in time) called a meeting of all the

fish and told them, "Haven't you heard what the fishermen were saying? We must move out of this pond tonight itself. As the wise men have said weak men should flee when a strong man invades or seek refuge in a fort. There is no alternative."

"The fisherman will come tomorrow. I think we should not be here for even a moment more," said Anagatavidhata.

"That's true. I endorse your suggestion," said Pratyutpannamati. "Let's go elsewhere. Those who are afraid of foreign lands and those who are bound to their soil will die in their own country. He who can prosper anywhere does not die in his own land clinging to sentiment."

Loudly laughing, Yadbhavishya said, "Your plans are not good. Why should we leave this pond, ancient home of our forefathers, because the fishermen have evil intentions. If it is destined, we cannot escape death even if we go elsewhere. Everything is in the hands of God. You cannot dispose what he proposes. Without his blessings people will die even if they have protection. With his blessings nobody can kill them even if they do not have protection."

Unable to convince him, the other two fish left the pond. Coming the next day, the fishermen took a big catch of fish in the pond. Yadbhavishya was one among them.

The female pheasant resumed, "That is why I told you that those who foresee the problem and those who deal with the problem when it arises are always victors and those who trust their luck are the losers."

Her husband asked, "In that case do you think I am as stupid as that Yadbhavishya? Wait and see what I can do. I will siphon off all the water in the Sea and leave him dry."

"Don't try to settle scores with the Sea. It will do no good to you. A weak man's anger will hurt him in the end."

"Don't discourage me. Those who have confidence can confront stronger men. Doesn't the lion that is small in size slash the crown of the mighty elephant? Doesn't a small wick repel darkness? He who has courage is the stronger person. See how I will siphon off all the water in the Sea and make him dry," said the male."

"But hundreds of rivers flow into the sea. Your beak is just as big as a drop of the sea. How can you consume all the water in the Sea? Stop this tall talk," advised the female.

"Not to despair is to win the Goddess of Wealth. I have an iron beak. I will toil day and night to siphon off all the water."

The wife said, "Okay, if you want to engage the Sea, call all of your friends and try to do the job together. When they are united, it is difficult to defeat even a band of weak men. Even blades of slender grass can bind an elephant if they are woven into a rope. Haven't you heard the story of how a sparrow, a woodpecker, a fly and a frog killed an elephant?"

“Let me know how they did it,” asked the male pheasant.

The wife began telling the story.

12.The Elephant and The Sparrow

Two sparrows, husband and wife, built a nest on a banyan tree where the female sparrow laid eggs. One afternoon a wild elephant came to the tree seeking shelter from the sun. Unable to bear the heat, the tusker suddenly went berserk and snapped a big branch of the tree, crushing the sparrow's eggs in the nest. The sparrow pair somehow escaped the fury of the elephant but the wife began crying for her eggs.

A woodpecker, a close friend of the sparrow, heard her crying and moved by her grief asked her, “Why are you crying, my friend? Wise men do not grieve what is lost or what is dead or what is past. That is the difference between a learned person and an unlettered man.”

The female sparrow said, “The wicked elephant has destroyed my offspring. If you are a true friend of mine suggest a way to kill him. In my view, he who harms a person in trouble or he who ridicules a person in sorrow deserves to be punished and he who punishes such a person has no rebirth.”

“What you say is right,” said the woodpecker. “He is a friend who comes to your aid when you are in need. Everyone tries to be friendly when you are prospering. You will see how resourceful I am. I have a friend who is a fly. With his help we can kill the elephant.”

Taking the female sparrow with him, the woodpecker called on the fly and told him, “This is my dearest friend. A wild elephant has squashed her eggs. You must somehow find a way to kill that elephant. We need your help.”

The fly said, “I have a friend who is a frog. Let us go to him and seek his help also.” The female sparrow, the woodpecker and the fly went to the frog and narrated the entire story of the sparrow's grief.

The frog said, “What is an elephant before a united crowd like us? Do as I tell you. O' fly, go to the elephant when the sun is high in the sky and hum a sweet tune into his ears. When he closes his eyes in ecstasy, the woodpecker will scoop his eyes out. He becomes blind and thirsty and will look for water. I will go to a quicksand and begin croaking there. Thinking that there is water, the elephant will come there and sink into the quicksand and die.”

All the four played out their roles according to the frog's plan and caused the death of the elephant.”

At the end of the story, the female pheasant told her husband, “That is how together the four friends killed the elephant.”

Impressed by his wife's wisdom, the husband said, "Okay, we will call our friends and with their help crush the Sea.' As their friends, the cranes, the peacocks, the cuckoos and other birds, gathered, the male pheasant told them the story of how the Sea had killed their offspring and how necessary it was to drain him out. At the end, he said, "We cannot do this job. Let us go to Garuda, Lord Vishnu's vehicle, and tell him all that has happened. He will be angry over what the Sea has done to his species. He will surely take revenge on the Sea."

Wailing and weeping, all the birds went to meet Garuda and told him, "O lord, we need your help. The Sea has destroyed the eggs of the pheasant pair. This is a blow to all the bird community. If you do not intervene, he will destroy our entire tribe. Wise men have always said that one wicked person will be an inspiration to all others with evil intentions."

Moved by their story of grief, Garuda thought to himself, "These birds have a legitimate grievance. I will go and punish the Sea.' Meanwhile, an envoy from Lord Vishnu came and told Garuda that the Lord had sent him as He wanted to travel to Amaravathi on a divine mission. The envoy asked Garuda to accompany him at once.

Garuda told the envoy, "No, I cannot come. I am not a useful servant. Let him take someone else. Please convey my regards to the Lord."

Surprised at Garuda's words, the envoy said, "O Garuda, you have never uttered such words about the Lord. Did the Lord slight you in any manner? Let me know."

"See, this Sea, the Lord's habitat, has swallowed the eggs of the pheasant pair. If the Lord does not punish the Sea for this, I shall not serve Him. This is my decision and you may convey this to the Lord," said Garuda.

Informed of Garuda's pique, Vishnu told himself, "Garuda has reason to be annoyed with me. I shall go myself and receive him with respect. If the king is satisfied he can give only money. But when the master honours his servant, the servant is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of the master. Therefore, it is wise that I should visit and appease him."

When Vishnu arrived to meet him, Garuda felt guilty that he had said harsh words about the Lord and said, "O Lord, the Sea who enjoys your protection has stolen the eggs of my servants and thus insulted me. Because of respect for you, I delayed taking action against him."

"True, learned men say that a master is responsible for the misdeeds of his servants. Such misdeeds hurt the master more than the servant. Come with me. I shall recover those eggs from the Sea and make the pheasant pair happy again. Later we will go to Amaravathi," said Lord Vishnu.

The Lord then took out his thunderbolt and aiming it at the Sea warned him, "You wicked man, return the eggs to the bird pair. Otherwise, I will turn the sea into a desert."

Frightened, the Sea returned the eggs to the pheasants. The male bird handed them to his wife.

“From this story,” Damanaka told Sanjeevaka, “it is evident that he who challenges an enemy without knowing his strength perishes in the end.”

“True, but how do I know that Pingalaka has evil designs against me? We have been very friendly. That makes it difficult for me think of killing him,” said Sanjeevaka.

Damanaka said, “He stares at you in anger if he has evil thoughts in his mind. Otherwise, you may safely think he is the same old affectionate friend. But if you decide to leave the place do it after sunset. Our elders have said that one must sacrifice an individual for the good of the community, give up caste for the good of the village and surrender a village for the good of the country. It is desirable to save money so that one can spend it in a crisis, spend money to save his wife and give up both his wealth and wife to save himself.”

After he gave this advice to Sanjeevaka, Damanaka went to see Karataka. Hailing him, Karataka said, “What happened to your mission?”

“I have just finished sowing the seeds of discord among the two friends. The rest is in the hands of God,” said Damanaka.

“Let me know how you did it.”

“I have carried tales from one to the other and succeeded in dividing the friends. You will not see them again together.”

“Oh, you have not done anything good. You have separated two good friends. You have made them hate each other. A wicked person knows only to harm but not mend.”

“You do not know political science. However strong you are, unless you kill the enemy or the disease at the very outset, your enemy or the disease will kill you in the end. Sanjeevaka stole the ministership from us and so he is our enemy. I won the king's assurance for him and brought him to the court of the king. Today, he has ousted us from our office. That is why I have plans to kill him. If he wants to save himself, he should leave this place. Wise men, like Chaturaka, do not hesitate to torment others to achieve their goal. Fools like the lion cannot enjoy even what they have won.”

On Karataka's request, Damanaka began telling that story.

13.The Lion and The Jackal

Vajradanstra was a lion living in a forest. He had two friends, a jackal named Chaturaka and a wolf named Kravyamukha. Because of their friendship with the lion, the jackal and the wolf had a free run of the forest. One day the lion found a female camel separated from its caravan and in labour pains. The lion killed the camel and found a live baby camel inside her womb. The lion and his friends fed on the dead camel but spared the baby. The lion adopted the baby and brought him home.

The lion told the baby camel, "You are now my child. Nobody can harm you. You can freely roam about the forest and have a nice time. You have ears which look like a pair of conches. So I will call you Sankhukarna."

As days passed, Sankhukarna became a young and energetic animal. He was always to be seen in the company of Vajradanstra. One day the lion had to confront a wild elephant and in the fight the elephant badly injured the lion. Now the lion was too weak to go out and hunt. He called his friends, the jackal and the wolf, and the camel and told them, "Look for an animal. I will kill it and all of us can have a good meal."

The three scoured the entire forest but could not find an animal. In despair, the jackal thought, "If we can kill this camel we will have a sure meal for several days. But he is a favorite of our king. He will not agree to kill the camel. Yet with my cunning I will see that the lion kills him. The learned have said there is nothing impossible or forbidden for an intelligent being."

The jackal told the camel, "O Sankhukarna, our lord has been without food for a long time and he may die of hunger. His death will mean a disaster for all of us. I have a plan to get over this problem. Listen."

"Go ahead. Let me know what you have in mind. I shall certainly do whatever I can for the lord because if we do good to our master we will reap a reward hundred times more valuable than what we gave to the master," said the camel.

Chaturaka, the jackal said, "O young camel, offer your body to the lord at the double the profit. Your body also will grow in size and the lord also will continue to live."

The camel replied, "I am ready. Let the lord know that he can have my body provided the Lord of Duty is a witness to my sacrifice."

The jackal, the wolf and the camel then called on the lion to inform him of the camel's decision. The jackal told the lion, "We searched the entire forest without sighting even a small animal. It is already sunset now. The camel is prepared to offer his body if you are ready to increase the size of his body and invite the Lord of Duty to be a witness."

On the lion agreeing to the proposal, the jackal and the wolf at once pounced on the camel and tore him to pieces.

Vajradanstra, the lion, told the jackal, "I am going to the river to take a bath and worship the deities. Till I come back, keep an eye on this food." The minute the lion left the scene, the jackal thought of a plan to have the camel all to himself. He told Kravyamukha, the wolf, "You seem to be very hungry. Go ahead and feast on the camel meat. When the lion comes I shall convince him about your innocence."

As the wolf started to taste the meat, the jackal alerted him and told him that the lord was coming and to allay any suspicion he should stop eating and leave the place. When the lion came, he saw that the heart of the camel was missing. Angrily, the lion roared and said, "Who is the culprit, I will kill him."

The wolf then looked at the jackal suggesting that the jackal should convince the lion of his innocence. But the cunning jackal said, "You did not heed my warning and ate the meat. Why do you now expect me to help you?" Realizing the danger, the wolf fled the scene to save his life.

Meanwhile, a caravan of camels passing by stopped where the lion and the jackal were planning the next move. The lead camel had a big bell tied to his neck. Frightened by the sound of the bell, the lion asked the jackal to find out what the sound was all about. He had not heard such sounds in his life. Pretending to find out, the jackal went out of the lion's sight and shouted from there, "O lord, run for your life."

"What's the matter," the lion asked him. "Why are you frightening me? Let me know clearly what's happening."

The jackal said, "My lord, the Lord of Death is angry that you have killed the camel before its death was due. He is upset and vowed that he would get from you one thousand times more than the value of the camel we have killed. It is the Lord of Death who hung a bell in the lead camel's neck. He also brought with him all the ancestors of the camel."

The jackal thus tricked the lion into hurriedly fleeing the place, leaving the camel's body all to himself to feast upon.

Damanaka continued, "That is why I told you that a wise man protects his interest even if it is to torment others and never shares his secrets with others as Chaturaka, the jackal did in the above story."

Sanjeevaka began pondering, "Why did I do like this. A vegetarian serving a meat eater! What shall I do and where shall I go? Perhaps, Pingalaka may spare me because he had given me assurance. Trouble may sometimes come to people who walk the path of ethical conduct. Every living being does good and sometimes bad deeds. He will reap the consequences in the next birth. So, we cannot escape what fate has in store for us."

With these thoughts on his mind Sanjeevaka went to see Pingalaka, the lion, and sat down without greeting him. The lion also was surprised at the bullock's arrogance and, believing what Damanaka had told him about Sanjeevaka, pounced on him tearing him with his claws. Sanjeevaka too began goring the lion with his horns.

Seeing that the jackal and the lion were determined to fight to the end, Karataka admonished Damanaka, "You fool! You have created a rift between the two friends. If the lord dies, how can you be a minister? How do you aspire to be a minister when you do not know the principles of diplomacy? War mongers like you can never reach their goals. You should not use force where there is still room for peace. One of the two is bound to die. Save the situation if you can. No, it is my folly to tell you what is good and what is bad. Elders have said that one should not preach to one who is not a disciple. You have the example of the bird Suchimukha."

"I am eager to know what it is," said Damanaka.

14. Suchimukha and The Monkey

A gang of monkeys made their home in a mountain slope. When winter came, it brought not only severe cold but also heavy rains. Unable to stand the cold, the monkeys collected red berries wildly growing in the mountain slope. They gathered around the berries and began blowing air at them thinking they were embers.

Watching their vain effort in amusement, Suchimukha, a bird, told them, “You fool, they are not embers but red berries. Why do you waste your energy on them? This will not save you from cold. Go and look for a shelter in a cave or a place free from wind. The clouds are thick and there will be no immediate relief from rain.”

An old member of the monkey gang angrily told the bird, “Why do you poke your nose in our affairs? Go away. Haven't the elders said that he who cherishes his welfare should not talk to a gambler or an inefficient workman. So is the person a fool who talks to an idiot or a pleasure seeker.”

Disregarding the old monkey's anger and not giving room to any other monkey to talk, Suchimukha went on repeating his advice to them to seek shelter elsewhere. Tired with the bird's unwanted advice, one of the monkeys sprang at the bird and bashed him against a rock till he was dead.

Karataka said at the end of the story, “If you counsel a fool it will only provoke him and not pacify. If you feed milk to a snake it will increase its store of poison. That's why you should not offer advice to everyone. Look, how two good sparrows lost their home, all due to a foolish monkey.”

At Damanaka's request, Karataka began telling the story of the evil monkey.

15. How a Sparrow Came to Grief

A pair of sparrows made their home on a branch of a big tree and lived happily there. Soon it was winter and it began to rain heavily. Frequent gusts of wind made the cold unbearable. At this time, a monkey completely drenched in the rain and shivering from cold, came scurrying to the tree for cover.

Seeing the condition of the monkey, the female sparrow said, “Gentleman, with your feet and hands you seem to be a human being. Why didn't you build a house for yourself?” Angered by this uncalled for advice, the monkey said, “you stupid, why do not you shut up and mind your business?” The monkey told himself, “My, what impudence! This bit of a creature has the cheek to offer me advice. Makes fun of me. Unnecessary prattle. I must teach her a lesson. Why shouldn't I kill her?”

Turning to the female, the monkey said, “How does it help you to worry about my plight? Haven't you heard this saying of the elders that you should offer advice to those who seek it and cherish it? Advice to him who

is indifferent is like a cry in the wilderness. Don't try to do that.”

When the female persisted, the monkey climbed up the tree and broke up the nest of the sparrow pair.

“That's why,” said Karataka to Damanaka, “you should be careful in offering advice. You are a fool who does not understand the essence of my advice. That is not your mistake. Fools ignore advice and wise men follow it and benefit by it. It is clear that you haven't heard the story of Dharmabuddhi and his son Papabuddhi, the story of how the father was killed by smoke due to the son's thoughtlessness.”

“Why don't you tell me that story,” asked Damanaka.

In a city in the north, lived two friends named Dharmabuddhi and Papabuddhi. One day, Papa thought, “I am a man without worldly wisdom and added to that I am also poor. Let me persuade Dharma to take me to far off lands and earn lots of money through his business skills. Later I will deprive him of all his wealth and live happily ever after.”

With these plans on his mind, Papa told Dharma, “My friend, you are growing old and cannot manage your business. Unless you go out into the wide world how can you tell your children about the wonders of the world? Elders have said that he is born in vain who does not see the countries in the world, learn several languages and know the dress styles of other people. You cannot earn wealth and knowledge without wide travel.”

Dharma liked this advice and taking the blessings of his teachers set out on overseas travel, taking Papa with him. Both of them earned a lot of money abroad due to the business talent of Dharma. It was time for them to return home because it is natural for people who go abroad in search of wealth and learning to think of home when they have achieved both.

As they were entering their native place, Papa told Dharma, “It is not safe to take home all this wealth because relatives and friends in need will seek help if they know about our riches. We shall bury most of our money in some secret place in this forest. Whenever we need money, we can come here and take whatever we need. You know that money tempts even saints.”

Dharma agreed to Papa's plan and went home after both of them dug a pit and covered it after burying most of their earnings in it. One midnight Papa went to the secret place in the forest and stole all the money and brought it home. Next morning, he went to Dharma and suggested that they should go to the forest because he was in need of money.

When both of them arrived at the secret spot in the forest and dug there, they found the pit empty. At once Papa began shouting loudly, “Dharma, you stole the money and nobody else. The pit was carefully covered. You must give me half of what we have buried here.’ Though Dharma denied it, Papa insisted that they should take the dispute to a court of law.

When the case came before the court, the judge asked them to take oath in the name of God. But Papa quoted experts as saying that relevant documents should be produced first as proof, then witnesses would be

summoned to give evidence and oath in the name of God is taken when neither documents nor witnesses are available.

"I can produce the gods of the forest as witnesses. They will determine who is guilty and who is innocent," said Papa. Impressed by this plan, the judges asked both the parties to be present next morning at the forest for a hearing. Happy at the judges' order, Papa went home and told his father, "Father, I have stolen all Dharma's money. There is a case in the court that I can win only with your help. Otherwise, my life will be in danger."

"What have I to do to get that money, son," asked his father.

"There is a big tree there. You have to go now and hide in the hollow of that tree. Tomorrow morning when the judges and others assemble there, I will ask you to tell the truth. Then it is your turn to declare that Dharma is the thief," said the son.

The father left at once for the forest to hide in the hollow of the tree. The morning of the next day, the son took a bath and went to the tree taking Dharma and the judges with him. Papa went near the tree and shouted, "O sun, moon, air, fire, earth, water, the God of Death, day and night, you are all witnesses to the history of humanity. O Goddess of the Forest, declare who among us is guilty."

The father shouted back from inside the hollow of the tree, "Listen all of you, it is Dharma who stole the money." The judges and the king's men heard the verdict and sat down to decide what punishment they should give Dharma. Meanwhile, Dharma filled the hollow with rags and hay, poured oil on them and threw a matchstick into it. The fire forced the half-burnt father to come out of the tree.

"All this is the work of Papa's evil mind," said the father and soon collapsed and died. The king's men at once bound Papa hand and foot and hung him to a tree. They said, "Our elders have always said that wise men should not only be resourceful but also know the consequences of being resourceful. You have the story of how a mongoose killed all the offspring of the crane before his own eyes."

When Dharma asked them to tell the story, the king's men began relating the story.

16.The Foolish Crane and The Mongoose

A big banyan tree was home to a number of cranes in a forest. In the hollow of that tree lived a cobra, which used to feed on the young cranes which did not yet learn to fly. When the mother crane saw the cobra killing her offspring, she began crying. Seeing the sorrowing crane, a crab asked her what made her cry.

The crane told the crab, "Every day, the cobra living in this tree is killing my children. I am not able to contain my grief. Please show me some way to get rid of this cobra."

The crab then thought, “These cranes are our born enemies. I shall give her advice that is misleading and suicidal. That will see the end of all these cranes. Elders have always said that if you want to wipe out your enemy your words should be soft like butter and your heart like a stone.

Then the crab told the crane, “Uncle, strew pieces of meat from the mongoose's burrow to the hollow of the cobra. The mongoose will follow the trail of meat to the cobra burrow and will kill it.”

The crane did as the crab advised her. The mongoose came following the meat trail and killed not only the cobra but also all the cranes on the tree. “That is why,” the king's men said, “if you have a strategy, you must also know what the strategy would lead to. Papabuddhi considered only the crooked plan but not what would follow. He reaped the consequences.”

Karataka told Damanaka, “That's why like Papabuddhi you haven't foreseen what will happen if you went ahead with your plans. You have an evil mind. I knew it from your plans to endanger the life of our lord. Your place is not with us. If a rat had a 1000-pound scale for its lunch, is it any wonder that a kite carried away a child?”

“What about it,” asked Damanaka. Karataka told him the following story.

Jeernadhana was the son of a rich merchant. But he had lost all his wealth. He thought he should go abroad, for, he told himself that he who had once prospered should not live in the same place as a poor man. People who respected him once would now look down upon him and shun him. Deciding to go abroad to seek his fortune, he mortgaged with a local merchant the 1000-pound balance his ancestors had left behind.

He went abroad with the money the merchant gave him and after several years came home and asked the merchant to return him the balance.

The merchant said, “O my, where is the balance? The rats have gnawed at it for food.”

Jeernadhana replied without emotion, “I cannot blame you for what the rats have done. The world is like that. Nothing really is permanent. Any way, I am going to the river to take the purificatory bath. Please send with me your son Dhanadeva to look after my needs.”

Afraid that Jeernadeva would accuse him of theft, the merchant called his son and told him, “Son, your uncle is going to the river for a bath. You accompany him taking with you all the things he needs to take his bath. Men offer help not only out of kindness but also out of fear, greed etc. If one offers help for reasons other than this, you have to be wary of such a person.”

The merchant's son followed Jeernadeva to the river. After taking bath, he led the boy into a nearby cave and, pushing the boy inside, closed it with a huge boulder. When Jeernadeva returned from the river, the merchant asked him, “O honoured guest, didn't you bring back my son? Where is he? Please tell me.”

Jeernadeva told him, “A kite has carried away your boy. There was nothing I could do.”

“You cheat, is this possible? How can a kite carry away a boy? Bring my boy back. Otherwise, I will go to the king and complain.”

“Yes, just as a kite cannot carry away a boy, rats also cannot eat away heavy iron balance. If you want your boy, give me back my balance,” said Jeernadeva.

Both of them took the dispute to the king's court. The merchant complained to the judges that Jeernadeva had kidnapped his child. The judges ordered him to return the boy to the merchant. Jeernadeva told the judges the entire story. Thereupon, the judges ordered Jeernadeva to return the boy and the merchant to give back the balance to Jeernadeva.

Karataka then told Damanaka, “You have done this foul deed because you were jealous of the king's friendship with Sanjeevaka. It is not without reason that our elders have said:

“Fools hate the learned
The poor blame the rich
The miser riles the giver
The wicked abhor the virtuous”

“You have tried to help us. But you have hurt us. It is like the well-meaning monkey killing the king,” said Karataka.

“What did the monkey do?” asked Damanaka.

17.The King and The Foolish Monkey

Once upon a time, there was a king who kept a monkey as a pet. The monkey served the king in whatever way he could. He had a free run of the royal household because he was the king's pet. One hot day the monkey sat fanning by the side of the king who was sleeping. He noticed a fly on the chest of the king and tried to swish it away. The fly would go away for the moment and come back again to sit on the king's chest.

The monkey could take it no longer and decided to teach the fly a lesson. He looked for a dagger to kill it and when he found it brought it down with all force on the fly. The fly flew away but the king died as result of the dagger blow delivered by the monkey.

Karataka said, “Therefore, the lesson is that a king who cares for his life should not have a fool as his servant.’ He went on to relate a second story to show how shrewd people save the lives of others.

Once upon a time a Brahmin lived in a big city and as a result of his misdeeds in his previous birth he became a thief. He saw four other Brahmins from another city selling a variety of goods in his city. He

thought he should somehow deprive the four Brahmins of their money and through sweet words become their good friend. He was useful to them in whatever way he could. True, it comes naturally for women of vice to act coy and for charlatans to pretend to be learned.

The four visitors sold all their goods and with the money from the sales bought pearls and precious jewels. The Brahmin thief was keeping an eye on what they were doing even as he pretended to serve them faithfully. One day, in the presence of the Brahmin, the traders cut open their thighs and storing the jewels and pearls inside the thighs sewed them back.

The Brahmin was disappointed that they did not give him even a small part of their wealth. He immediately decided to follow them and kill them in the middle of their journey back home and take all that wealth from them.

He told the traders with tears in his eyes, “Friends, you seem to be ready to leave me behind. My heart is broken because it is difficult for me to snap the bonds of friendship with you. If you will be so kind as to take me with you, I will be very grateful to you.”

Moved by his request, the traders started their homeward journey accompanied by the Brahmin thief. They passed through several villages, towns and cities before they reached a village inhabited by thugs. Suddenly, they heard a group of crows loudly shouting, “You thugs, very rich people are coming. Come, kill them and become rich.”

The thugs at once attacked the Brahmin traders with sticks and began examining their bags. But they found nothing. They were surprised because this was the first time that the words of the crows turned out to be false. They told the traders, “O traders, the crows always tell the truth. You have the money with you somewhere. Take it out or we will cut every limb of yours and bring it out.”

The Brahmin thief pondered, “These thugs will certainly pierce the body of the traders to grab the jewels. My turn also will come. It is better I offer myself to these thugs and save the lives of the Brahmins. There is no point in fearing death because it will come today or after hundred years. One cannot escape it.”

With these thoughts on his mind, the Brahmin thief asked the thugs to first kill him and see if there was anything valuable on his body. The thugs accepted the offer and found nothing on him after they pierced his body. They let go the other four Brahmins thinking that they also did not have anything precious on their bodies.

As Karataka and Damanaka were discussing the ways of the world, Sanjeevaka engaged Pingalaka in a short battle in which Pingalaka clawed him to death. But the lion was immediately struck by remorse and, recalling the good days he had spent with the bullock, began repenting:

“O I have committed a great sin by killing my friend. There cannot be a greater sin than killing a trusted friend. They who forget a favour or breach a trust or let down a friend will all go to hell as long as the sun and the moon shine in the sky. A king will perish whether what he loses is his kingdom or a faithful servant. A servant and a kingdom are not the same because you can always win back the kingdom but not a trusted servant. In the court, I have always praised Pingalaka. How can I explain his death to the courtiers?”

Damanaka approached the grief-stricken king and told him, “O lord, ruing the death of a grass eater is cowardice. It is not good for a king like you. The learned have always said that it is not a sin to kill a person for treason even if that person is a father, brother, son, wife or a friend. Similarly, one must abandon a tender-hearted king, a Brahmin who eats all kinds of food, an immodest woman, a wicked assistant, a disobedient servant and an ungrateful person.”

Damanaka continued, “You are mourning the death of someone who does not deserve sympathy. Though you are talking like a learned man, you forget that learned men do not think of the past or the dead.”

These words of Damanaka worked like a tonic providing relief to Pingalaka’s troubled mind. Pleased with this advice, the lion king reappointed Damanaka as his minister and continued to rule the forest.

Second Strategy: Gaining Friends

This is the second strategy of Panchatantra known as Gaining Friends beginning with this stanza:

*Even without the wherewithal
Learned men and intellectuals
Achieve what they want like
The crow, the rat, the deer and the turtle.*

Now the story. There was a city called Mahilaropyam in the south not far off from where was a large banyan tree. Many species of birds came there to eat the tree’s fruit. In the hollow of the great tree lived poisonous reptiles like snakes and scorpions. Travelers found the tree a great shelter in their journeys.

A crow called Laghupatanaka made this tree his home. As he was flying one day towards the city for collecting food, he sighted a hunter carrying a net and approaching the tree like a messenger of death. The crow at once sensed danger and, sure that the hunter came to trap the birds on the tree, told all the birds,

“Friends, this wicked hunter have seeds in his bag that he will scatter to lure you. don’t trust him and avoid the seeds like poison.” The hunter came, sowed the seeds and spread the net. He left the spot and sat elsewhere not to arouse the suspicion of the birds. Warned by Laghupatanaka, the birds stayed away from the seeds as though they were poisonous berries.

Meanwhile, Chitrgriva, king of doves, saw the seeds from a distance and landed there with his retinue of one thousand doves. They came to eat the seeds ignoring the warnings of Laghupatanaka and soon the hunter spread his net and trapped all of them. That is why elders have said that fools can never foresee peril. People often lose sense when danger lurks in the corner.

Chitrigriva and his retinue, however, kept their cool in the face of danger. He appealed to his friends not to panic. Elders have said that they tide over dangers, who are not scared by crisis. “Let us fly together and land elsewhere where the hunter cannot reach us. We can then plan a strategy to get out of this net. If we don’t fly now, we are all doomed,” said Chitrigriva. Thereupon, all of them flew together.

The hunter followed the flight of the doves and looking upwards chanted, “They are flying together. But the moment there is a break in their unity they will crash to the ground.” Laghupatanaka, the crow, also followed the flying doves to see what they would do. When he lost sight of the birds, the hunter gave up and went home rueing that he had lost his net also.

When he was sure that the hunter had failed to chase them, the king of the doves told his friends, “The hunter has disappeared. Let us all now fly towards Mahilaropyam where I have a friend Hiranyaka, who is a rat. He is our only hope. It is only a friend who will come to the aid of those in trouble.” The birds, heeding the advice of the king, flew to the fort of Hiranyaka in Mahilaropyam.

Standing outside the fort, Chitrigriva shouted,

“O friend, come quickly. We are in great trouble.”

Without coming out, Hiranyaka shouted back, “Who are you sir and what do you want from me? What is the kind of trouble that is bothering you? Let me know.”

“I am your friend Chitrigriva, king of the doves. Come out soon.”

Hiranyaka came out and was happy to see Chitrigriva with his retinue and asked what the matter was. The king of the doves said,

“Whatever man does for whatever reasons,
in whatever manner and wherever in his last birth.
He reaps the consequences for the same reasons,
in the same manner and in the same place.”

“All of us are trapped in this net because of our weakness for food. Come at once and free us from this trap,” urged Chitrigriva.

Hiranyaka said, “It is rightly said that a bird can recognize food from fifty miles but cannot see the danger lurking next to him.”

After delivering this sermon, the rat set out to free Chitrigriva first. But the king of doves pleaded with him to first liberate his friends. The rat was angry and reminded Chitrigriva that it was fair that the king became free first and then the servants. “No, it is not like that,” countered Chitrigriva. “They are all dedicated to my service and have left their families behind to come with me. I have to repay that debt,” he said.

Pleased with his friend's love for his servants, Hiranyaka said, "Friend, I know the duties of a king. I was only testing you. I will free everyone now. This will win more doves for your retinue." With the help of his servants, the rat then bit off the entire net and all the doves came out. Hiranyaka saw off Chitravirya and retinue and went back into his fort.

Seeing the whole drama of Hiranyaka liberating Chitravirya and his friends, Laghupatanaka, the crow, thought, "I don't trust anyone. On top of it, I have a fickle mind. I will seek his friendship. Our ancestors have always said that even if a wise man has everything he needs, he should still seek friends. Even if all the rivers flow into the Sea, the Sea still waits for the Moon to come out."

1.The Crow-Rat Discourse

After he saw how Hiranyaka had helped Chitravirya, Lagupatanaka came down from his tree perch and called out the rat in a voice resembling that of Chitravirya. The rat thought, "What happened? Did I forget to free any bird? The dove king must be calling me for the same purpose."

Not sure who was calling him, the rat shouted from inside his fort, "Who are you?"

"I am Laghupatanaka, the crow."

The rat further retreated into his fort and said, "Go away at once, I don't know who you are."

"I have come on an important business. Why don't you meet me?"

"What do I gain by meeting you?"

"Sir, I have seen you liberating Chitravirya and his retinue. I thought friendship with you would be useful in such a crisis. I am seeking your hand."

"Very odd! You are the diner and I am the dinner. How can there be amity between the two? Where there is enmity, there cannot be friendship. Didn't you hear the elders say:

Friendship or marriage is always
between equals in caste and wealth.
There cannot be any sort of bond
between the weak and the strong.

"He who seeks friendship with someone who is not an equal will earn ridicule. So, please go."

The crow replied, “Hiranyaka, I am waiting here at your doorstep. If you reject my hand, I will starve here to death.”

“But friendship with you is not possible. However hot the water, it still kills the fire.”

“We haven’t even seen each other. How can there be enmity between both of us?”

Hiranyaka then explained, “Enmity is of two kinds. The first is natural and the second is artificial. The second kind disappears when what caused it disappears. But natural enmity ends only with the death of one of the two enemies.”

“Can you make it clearer, asked Laghupatanaka.

“Yes, artificial enmity is always based on some reason. Natural enmity is like the one between a snake and a mongoose, water and fire, Devatas and Rakshasas, dogs and cats, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, between women of virtue and vice.”

The crow then pleaded, “Sir, what you say is unreasonable. There is always a reason behind friendship and enmity. That is why a wise man should always seek friendship and not enmity.”

“True, it is foolish to think that you will not come to harm because you are a man of character. People who are blinded by ignorance and anger do not consider your character,” said the rat.

“Friendship with bad men is like a pot of clay easy to break but difficult to rejoin. With good men it is like pot of gold, difficult to break but easy to mend. I pledge that you will have no reason to fear danger from me,” said the crow.

Hiranyaka said, “I have no faith in pledges. don’t trust an enemy with whom you have made peace. Even if the hole is small, water seeping through it can sink a ship.

don’t trust a person untrustworthy
Faith has its own limits
The evil that trust brings
Leaves you totally destroyed
Him who is highly skeptical
The mighty cannot put an end to
Him who trusts others easily
Even the weakest can kill.

After this long sermon, Laghupatanaka didn’t know how to reply. Hiranyaka, he thought, was a very knowledgeable being and that was a strong reason for him to seek his friendship. Turning to the rat, he said, “Seven words are enough to bring two good people together. We have already talked a lot, which makes us good friends. That’s why please believe what I say. If it is not possible, I will stay out and you can talk to me

from within your stronghold.”

Impressed by his sincerity, Hiranyaka said, “Okay, you should not step inside my fort.” When Laghupatanaka agreed to that condition, the two became friends and enjoyed their daily meetings and long talks. They helped each other, the crow bringing pieces of meat and relics of offerings to God at temples for the rat and the rat in turn bringing for Hiranyaka grains of paddy and food items. Thus they became great and inseparable friends.

2.Meeting a New Friend

Hiranyaka, the mouse, and Laghupatanaka, the crow, became great friends. One day, the crow came calling on the mouse with eyes full of tears. Worried, the mouse asked,

“What’s the matter? Why are you so sad?”

“I am thoroughly fed up with this country. I want to go elsewhere,” replied the crow.

“But what is the reason for this sudden change of mind,” asked the mouse.

“There is a famine here. People are dying like locusts. No one is offering cooked rice for the peace of the dead. So, I don’t have food. Hunters are busy trapping birds in their nets. I have escaped narrowly. I don’t know when my turn will come. I want to leave this country before it comes,” said the crow.

“What are your travel plans then,” asked the mouse.

“There is a big lake in the middle of a vast forest in the south. I have a friend there, a turtle whose name is Mandharaka. He is a great host who will feed me with fish, pieces of meat etc. I will spend my time happily with him daily discussing small and big things in the world. I don’t want to die miserably in a hunter’s net.”

Laghupatanaka continued, “Elders have always said that they are happy who are fortunate not to witness the destruction of crops and the decline of the people. Nothing is impossible for a competent person. There is no land that does not respond to effort. For a scholar every country is his own country and there is no enemy for a sweet-tongued person. Learning and power are not the same. Remember that the king is respected only in his country but a scholar is honoured everywhere.”

Hiranyaka said, “If that is so, I will also follow you. I am also very sad.”

“Why are you sad?” asked the crow.

“It is a long story. I shall tell you when I reach your friend’s place,” said the mouse.

“But how can you come with me,” asked the crow. “I am a bird and can fly. You cannot do that,” said the crow.

“That is no problem. I will sit on your back and we can fly off,” suggested the mouse.

“That’s an idea. I will be doubly happy there because I have the company of the turtle and also yours. Come, get on to my back. We will fly together,” said the crow.

On a fine day, the crow with the mouse on his back flew to the great lake in the middle of the forest. His friend Mandharaka, the turtle, saw him with the mouse on his back and thought, “This crow is not an ordinary crow. It is better I hide from him.” The turtle immediately ducked under water. But the crow saw the turtle going down and understood that his friend did not recognize him. The crow then left the mouse at the bottom of a tree and flying to the top of it loudly addressed the turtle, “O Mandharaka, I am your friend Laghupatanaka. Come out and welcome me who has come to see an old friend after a long time.”

Recognizing his friend’s voice, Mandharaka came out of the water and with tears of joy in his eyes, said, “O Laghupatanaka, I am so happy you have come. Come and hug me. We are meeting after a long time and that’s why I could not immediately recognize you. You know the saying that you should not make friends with him whose power and pedigree are not known to you.”

The crow then came down from the tree and the two of them embraced each other in joy. They began telling each other about what happened in the long interval of their separation. The mouse, Hiranyaka, too came out of the hole he was hiding in, greeted the turtle and sat by the crow’s side. The turtle asked the crow, “O Laghupatanaka, who is this little friend of yours? Why did you bring him here on your back though he is your food.”

“He is my friend Hiranyaka. I can’t live without him. Just as you can’t count the stars in the sky and the sands on the seashore, I can’t recount his great qualities. He is fed up with this world. That is why he has followed me on my visit to you,” said the crow.

“But there should be some reason for his despair,” said the turtle. The crow replied, “I have asked him to tell me the reasons. He said he would tell us after meeting you.” Turning to the mouse, the crow asked him, “Now it is your turn to tell us why you are so fed up with the world.

Hiranyaka began telling his story.

3.The Hermit and The Mouse

“In the southern city of Mahilaropya,” said Hiranyaka, “lived a hermit named Tamrachud in a Shiva temple on the outskirts of the city. Every day, he would go out into the city, collect alms and cook his food. After the meal, he would store whatever is left in his begging bowl and hang it to a peg and go to sleep. He would give

the leftovers to poor people in return for services rendered to the temple. They would every day wash it, clean it and decorate it with patterns of chalk.”

“One day, some of my relatives complained to me, “O lord, the hermit is storing the food in his bowl and hanging it high to a peg. We are not able to nibble at it. You alone can reach any place. Why should we go anywhere else when you are there? Let’s go to the hermit’s place and with your help feed ourselves.”

“Accompanied by my relatives, I went to the hermit’s place and springing at the bowl brought the stored food down. All of us then had a good meal. We repeated this act every day till the hermit found what we were doing. He brought a split bamboo and began striking the food bowl with it. That noise used to frighten us and we would spend the whole night waiting for a respite from this noise. But the hermit never stopped striking the bamboo.”

“Meanwhile, a visitor named Brihat came calling on the hermit. Tamrachud received him with great respect and did whatever he could to make the honoured guest happy. At night, the guest would relate to the hermit tales about his travels. But Tamrachud, busy scaring the mice with his bamboo, would not pay much attention to what his guest was narrating. In the middle of the story, the guest would ask him questions to which he would give indifferent replies.

“Angry with Tamrachud’s absent mindedness, the visitor told him, “Tamrachud, you are not a great friend of mine because you are not attentive to what I am telling you. I will leave your place tonight and seek shelter elsewhere. The elders have always said that you must not accept the hospitality of such a host who does not welcome you gladly, does not offer you a proper seat and does not make inquiries about your well-being.”

“Status has gone to your head. You do not any more care for my friendship. You do not know that this conduct will take you to hell. I am really sorry for what has happened to you. You have become vain and proud. I am leaving this temple at once,” Brihat said.

“Frightened at his visitor’s words, Tamrachud pleaded with him, “O worshipful guest, please don’t be harsh on me. I don’t have any friends other than you. Here is the reason why I was not attentive to your discourse on religion. There is this mouse, which every day steals my food however high I keep it. As a result, I am not able to feed the poor people who do the job of keeping the temple clean. The temple is now in a bad shape. To scare this culprit, I have to keep tapping the food bowl with the bamboo stick I keep with me. This is why I was not able to pay attention to the great and learned tales you have been relating.”

“Realizing what really was the problem, the visitor asked the hermit, “Do you know where the mouse lives?”

“Sir, I have no idea,” said Tamrachud.

“The visitor said, “This mouse must have stored a lot of food somewhere. It is this plenty that gives him the energy to jump so high and eat all your food. When a man earns a lot of wealth, that pile of money increases his strength and confidence.”

“Brihat continued, “There is an explanation for everything in this world. There is a reason for Shandili trying

to exchange husked sesame seeds in return for degraded sesame seeds.”

“Tamrachud asked Brihat to tell him who this Shandili was and the story of sesame seeds.”

4.Shandili and Sesame Seeds

“Brihat began telling the story. "I sought the hospitality of a Brahmin one day for sacred ceremonies connected with the monsoon season. He was kind enough to offer me space in his house and in return I used to render services he found useful in his rituals. As this arrangement continued, one fine morning I heard the Brahmin and his wife Shandili discussing what they should do for the day. The husband told his wife, “Today is the time when the Sun begins his northward journey and a time when the rich and pious people offer gifts to Brahmins. I am going to the next village to receive the offerings. You will do well to invite a Brahmin as guest today and offer him food in the name of the Sun.”

“The wife flew into a rage and told him, “How can I offer anything to anyone in your poverty-stricken house? Aren’t you ashamed to make such a suggestion? I have wasted my entire life as your wife. I haven’t tasted a good meal so far even on a single day. Nor do I have any jewellery.”

“Though taken aback, the Brahmin quickly recovered and said, “Such words are not becoming of you. The learned say that if you share even half of your meal with a mendicant, you will get whatever you wish in life. What good the rich reap by liberally giving away, the poor get by parting with even a cent they have. The giver deserves to be served even if he is poor. But a rich miser is shunned. It is like the well and the sea. People drink the water from the well and not the sea. We must always give to him who deserves. Greed can only destroy a person.”

“How is it?” asked the wife.

“The husband then told Shandili the story of the hunter and the greedy jackal.

A hunter went to the forest in search of a kill. Spotting a well-fed boar he took his bow and aimed a sharp arrow at the boar. Though severely wounded, the boar made a wild charge at the hunter goring him to death. The boar too died later from the wounds inflicted by the hunter.”

“Meanwhile, a hungry jackal, not knowing that he was doomed to die, came on the scene where the bodies of the hunter and the boar lay. He was thrilled by the sight of so much food and thought, “God has favored me today. That’s why he has sent so much food for me. It is not without reason that the learned have said that he who has done a good deed in a previous birth is rewarded in this birth even if he does not make any effort. This great feast is certainly the result of some good I have done in a previous birth. But a man must enjoy his wealth in small doses. Therefore, I will begin my meal with this gut of the bow.”

The jackal went close to the body of the hunter and began nibbling at the gut of the bow. The gut suddenly snapped with great force killing the jackal in the end. “That’s why,” the Brahmin told his wife, “Haven’t you heard that a man’s longevity, destiny, wealth, learning and death are predetermined by God even as the child

is in the womb of the mother.”

“If that is the case,” Shandili said, “I have some unhusked sesame seeds in the house. I will make a cake from it and serve it to a Brahmin.” Happy at his wife’s words, the Brahmin left for the next village. The wife soaked the seeds in warm water, removed their husk and left them on a cloth to dry in the sun. As the Brahmin’s wife was busy with other chores, a dog came and peed on the seeds left on the cloth to dry.”

“When the wife saw what the dog had done, she felt miserable that all her effort had gone in vain. She thought that nobody could undo God’s will. She thought, “These seeds cannot now be given away to anyone. I will see if I can exchange them for unhusked seeds. Anybody will agree to this swap.”

“Brihat continued his story, “The Brahmin’s wife came to the same house which I was visiting to accept offerings. She offered to exchange the husked seeds to anyone ready to accept them. Then the woman in the house came out and was ready to accept the husked seeds from the Brahmin’s wife. But her son intervened and told her, “Mother, these seeds are not good. Why should anyone give away good husked seeds for the raw seeds? There must be some reason for it.” The housewife at once gave up the idea of taking husked seeds from the Brahmin’s wife.”

“After Brihat completed the story, he asked Tamrachud, “Do you know the route he (Hiranyaka) takes to come here?”

“I have no idea,” said Tamrachud.

“Have you any tool to dig?” asked the visitor.

“Yes, I have a dibble with me.”

“In that case, let us follow the mouse trail before it is erased,” said the visitor.

Hiranyaka resumed his account and said, “Listening to the conversation between Tamrachud and Brihat, I thought that my end had come. Just as he had found my food store, he is capable of tracking my fort. Learned men can measure the strength of the rival by just looking at him. I decided immediately to take a new route and was on my way with the other mice when a fat cat sighted us. He immediately pounced on us and killed a number of my retinue.”

“Excepting me, those of the bloodied mice who escaped being killed by the cat took the same old route to the fort. The visitor saw the trail of blood the fleeing mice left behind and following it reached my fort. There, Brihat and Tamrachud dug and found the food store. The visitor told Tamrachud, “Here is the secret of the mouse’s energy. Now, you can sleep in peace.” Then they took the store to the temple, the home of Tamrachud.”

“I went back to where I had stored food. It was now like a desert. Without food, the spot was a ghastly scene. I did not know where to go and what to do to get back my peace of mind. Somehow, I spent the day in

sorrow and when it was dawn went to the temple followed by what remained of my retinue. Alerted by the noise we made, Tamrachud again began striking the food bowl with the bamboo. Brihat, the visitor, asked him why he was doing so. Tamrachud told him about our return.”

“The visitor laughed and told Tamrachud, “Friend, don’t be afraid now. The mouse has lost his energy. It cannot do any mischief now.” When I heard this, I was angry and tried again to jump at the food bowl and crashed to the ground before I could reach the bowl.”

“I was dejected by this failure. But my sadness increased when I heard my retinue telling each other that I was no more capable of earning food for them and they should immediately give up serving me. I then realized the importance of riches and decided to somehow steal it back from Tamrachud. When I made another attempt, the visitor saw me and banged the bamboo on my head. I somehow managed to escape.”

“Elders have always said that man gets what he is destined to. Even God cannot alter destiny. So, I stopped brooding over what has happened because what is ours can never become others”.

“Explain that to us,” asked Laghpatanaka and Mandharaka.

5. Story of The Merchant’s Son

“Sagargupta was a merchant living in one of the country’s big cities. He had a son, who, one day purchased a book whose only content was a single verse. The verse read:

“Man gets what is in his destiny
Even God cannot prevent it
To me it makes no difference
What’s mine can never become others.”

“What is the price of this book,” the father asked.

“Hundred rupees,” said the son.

The father flew into a rage and said, “You are a fool. You have paid hundred rupees for a book that has only one verse. You can never come up in life. Leave my house at once. It has no place for you.”

“Thrown out of the house, the boy went to another city and began fresh life there. One day, a neighbor asked him, “What is your native place and what is your name?”

The boy replied, “Man gets what he is destined to.” He gave the same answer to whoever asked for his name.

From that day onwards, people began calling him Praptavya, meaning the same line he was reciting to indicate his name.

“The summer came and the city was celebrating it with a big fair. One of the visitors to the fair was the city’s princess Chandravati and her maids. Chandravati was young and beautiful. As she was making the rounds of the fair, she saw an extremely handsome warrior and immediately fell in love with him. She told one of her maids, “It is your job to see that both of us meet.”

The maid ran to the warrior and told him, “I have a message for you from our princess. She says she will die if you do not meet her today.”

“But tell me where and how I can see her. How can I enter the harem?” asked the warrior.

The maid told him, “Come to the palace and you will see a rope hanging from the high wall. Climb and jump over the wall with the help of the rope.”

“All right, I will try to do it tonight,” said the warrior.

When the night came, the warrior lost his nerve and thought, “O this is an improper thing to do. The elders have said, “He who has liaison with the daughter of a teacher, wife of a friend or of a master or of a servant commits the sin of killing a Brahmin. Also, don’t do what brings you a bad name or what denies you a place in heaven.” In the end, the warrior decided not to meet the princess and stayed back at home.

“Coming out for a walk in the night, Prapta noticed the rope outside the royal palace and curious to know what it is, went up the rope that took him inside the princess’ bedroom. The princess mistook him for the warrior and served him dinner and with great ecstasy told Prapta, “I have fallen in love with you at the very first sight. I am yours. You are in my heart and nobody except you can be my husband. Why don’t you say something.”

“He replied, “Man gets what he is destined to.” The princess immediately realized that this man was not the warrior she saw in the day and asked him to leave the palace at once. She made sure that he climbed back the way he came. Prapta left the place and slept that night in a rundown temple.

“The sheriff of the city came to the same temple where he had arranged to meet a woman of vice. He saw Prapta sleeping there and to keep his meeting a secret, he asked Prapta who he was. Prapta recited the verse about destiny. The sheriff then said, “Sir, this is a bad place to sleep. You can go to my house and sleep there tonight in my place.” The merchant’s son agreed to the proposal.

“At the sheriff’s house, his young and beautiful daughter Vinayawati had asked her lover to come and meet her secretly there in the night. When Prapta came there following the sheriff’s advice, Vinayawati mistook him in the darkness for her secret lover. She arranged a feast for him and married him according to Gandharva tradition. Noticing that Prapta did not utter a word, the sheriff’s daughter asked him to say something. Prapta recited his usual verse. Vinayawati realized her mistake and asked him to leave at once.

“As Prapta once again took to the street, he saw a marriage procession entering the city led by the bridegroom named Varakirti. He joined the procession. The bride was the daughter of a very wealthy merchant of the city. This procession reached the wedding hall sometime before the scheduled time for the wedding.

“The bride’s father set up a costly and gaily decorated dais for the wedding. The bridal party came to the scene of wedding a bit in advance. In the meantime, an elephant went berserk and killing the mahout headed for the marriage venue. The bridegroom and his party joined the frightened people who were fleeing the scene of marriage.

“Prapta happened to see the frightened bride alone and abandoned on the dais shivering in fear. He jumped on to the dais and told the merchant’s daughter that she need not fear for her life and that he would save her at any cost. With great courage and presence of mind he approached the elephant with a stick and began to threaten him. The elephant luckily left the scene. Prapta took the bride’s hand into his as a token of assurance.

“When peace returned, Varakirti and his friends and relatives also returned to the dais and seeing the bride’s hand in the hand of a stranger, addressed the merchant, “Sir, you have pledged the hand of your daughter to me. But I see that you have given her away to someone else. This is improper.” The merchant replied, “My son, I don’t know anything. I also ran away from the dais. Let me ask my daughter.”

The daughter told her father, “This brave man saved me from the mad elephant. He is my savior. I won’t marry anyone but him.” It was now dawn and hearing the commotion the royal princess also came to the wedding venue to see what happened. The sheriff’s daughter also came there learning what had happened. The king also came there and asked Prapta to tell him everything without fear. Prapta as usual recited the verse.

This verse rang a bell in the princess head. She remembered what happened in the night and thought “Even God cannot undo what is destined.” The sheriff’s daughter also recalled the events of the night and thought “There is nothing to regret nor cause for surprise.” Listening to what Prapta said, the merchant’s daughter also thought “nobody can take away what destiny gives me.”

“The king now knew everything and the mystery of the verse. He then gave away his daughter in marriage to Prapta and also a thousand villages as gift. He also crowned Prapta as the prince. The sheriff also married his daughter to Prapta. The merchant’s son lived happily ever after with his wives and parents.

Hiranyaka, the mouse, thus ended his story of troubles and said:

“Even God cannot undo
What is destined
There is nothing to regret
Nor cause for surprise
Nobody can take away
What destiny gives me.”

"I am disillusioned. That is why my friend Laghupatanaka brought me to you," said the mouse.

Addressing the mouse, Mandharaka, the turtle said, "O Hiranyaka, the crow is your true friend. Though he was hungry and you were his meal, he did not kill you. On the other hand, he brought you here on his back. You must make a friend of him who is uncorrupted by wealth and who stands by you in time of trouble."

The turtle continued, "Therefore, stay here without fear or hesitation. Forget the loss of wealth and shelter. Remember, the shade of a passing cloud, friendship of the wicked, a cooked meal, youth and wealth do not stay for long. Learned men are never attached to wealth. It does not come with you even for a few feet in your last journey. There is a lot of pain in earning money and protecting it. Money, therefore, brings grief."

"What is not ours will not stay with us. Haven't you heard the story of Somilaka who earned a lot of wealth but could not keep it?"

"How is that?" asked Hiranyaka.

Mandharaka began telling Hiranyaka the story of the unlucky weaver.

6.The Unlucky Weaver

Somilaka was a weaver living on the edge of the city. He was an expert at making fine garments worthy of kings and princes. He enjoyed the patronage of the nobility. Despite all this, he was poorer than those weavers who were making coarse cloth for the common people. Worried at his condition, he told his wife, "Look dear, how rich these weavers of coarse cloth have become. There is something wrong with this place. I am not a success here. I will go elsewhere."

"No dear. It is not true that you can be successful elsewhere. Our luck is linked to what we have done in a previous birth. If you have done a good deed in your previous birth, you will reap the harvest in this birth without your effort. If you don't have it in your destiny, you will not get it even with effort. Just as sun and shade are inseparable, cause and effect are also linked to each other."

Somilaka did not agree with her. He said, "Without effort, you can achieve nothing. Without cause there is no effect. Even if you get a good meal as a result of a good deed in the past, you have to use your hand to eat it. Wealth comes to a person who toils. There is no point in chanting the name of God. You must do your bit first. If you are not successful despite your effort, you are not to blame. Therefore, I have decided to go abroad."

Ignoring his wife's pleas, Somilaka left his place and reached Vardhamanapuram. Working day and night, he earned three hundred gold sovereigns within three years. He thought he should go home now and started the homeward trek. At dusk he found himself in the middle of a forest. Wild animals began their hunt for prey. The weaver climbed a tall tree and went to sleep on a big branch. He saw a dream:

The God of Action and the God of Destiny were talking to each other. Destiny asked Action, “The weaver is not destined to live in luxury. Why did you give him three hundred sovereigns?” Action replied, “I have to give to those who try and toil. Whether the weaver can keep it or not is in your hands.”

The dream jolted the weaver. He looked into his bag and found the sovereigns missing. Heart-broken, Somilaka began crying, “Oh I have lost what I have earned in three years with great effort. I have become a poor man again. I cannot go home in this condition and show my face to my wife.” He saw no point in brooding over what has happened and decided to go to Vardhamanapuram and try again.

This time, he could collect five hundred sovereigns in one year. He stored all this money in a small bag and began his homeward journey. When it was sundown, he had already entered a forest. This time, he did not sleep, afraid that he would lose his money. He continued to walk through the forest. This time also he saw those two persons he saw earlier in his dream coming in his direction.

They repeated the same conversation about God rewarding a hardworking person and destiny denying it. He immediately looked into his bag and found there was no gold in it. This time Somilaka lost his courage and thought he should commit suicide. He made a strong rope with the fibers he found in the forest. He tied one end of the rope to a high branch of the tree and made a noose of the other end. Everything was ready for his suicide when he heard a voice in the skies:

“O Somilaka, don’t be rash. I am destiny who took away your wealth. I cannot give you more than what is necessary for your bare needs. Not a single cent more. But I am pleased with your adventurous spirit. Ask for a boon. I shall give it.”

“Please give me lots of wealth,” said the weaver.

“What do you do with so much money,” asked the voice.

The weaver replied, “People serve him who is rich even if he is a miser.”

“In that case, go back to Vardhamanapuram where two wealthy merchants, Guptadhana and Upabhuktadhana are doing business. After studying them well, decide who you want to become, Guptadhana, the man who earns a lot of money but does not spend a cent of it or Upabhuktadhana, the man who earns but also enjoys the wealth he has amassed.”

Somilaka followed their advice and went back to Vardhamanapuram reaching the place in the evening after a tiring journey. With great difficulty he traced Guptadhana’s house and entered it despite resistance from the merchant’s family. When the time for dinner came, the merchant grudgingly gave food to Somilaka, suggesting that he was an unwanted guest. The weaver found a corner in the house where he could sleep.

Somilaka again had the same dream in which Action and Destiny were debating Guptadhana giving food to him.

Destiny told Action, “You have made Guptadhana give food to Somilaka.”

Action said, “You cannot blame me. I had to ensure that Somilaka was fed. It is for you to decide who deserved what.”

Next day, Destiny saw to it that Guptadhana had an attack of cholera and had to miss his meal. In this manner what was given away was saved.

Later, Somilaka visited Upabhuktadhana’s house where the host welcomed him with great love and respect. The weaver had a good meal and slept. He had a dream as usual, the same two figures appearing in the dream.

Destiny told Action, “O Action, the host has spent a lot of money to entertain Somilaka. He even borrowed to make the guest happy. It is not in his destiny to have surplus. How will he repay what he has borrowed?”

Action replied, “My job is to see Somilaka got what he deserved. If Upabhuktadhana crossed the limits in entertaining his guest, that is not my fault. It is for you to decide what should be done.”

Next day, a messenger from the royal household came to Upabhuktadhana and gave him a big sum of money on behalf of the king.

Somilaka thought, “It is better to be like Upabhuktadhana. He enjoys life with whatever he has. What’s the use of being rich but miserly? I will better be Upabhuktadhana.” Pleased, the Gods showered on him the wealth that he needed to enjoy life.

7.The Rescue of a Deer

Mandharaka ended the story of Somilaka telling Hiranyaka and Laghupatanaka that a rich person who does not spend money is as poor as any poor person can be. Not being able to enjoy is common to both the poor and the miserly rich. Nothing on this earth is greater than charity and there is no greater enemy than miserliness.

The crow then advised Hiranyaka, “Listen to what the turtle is saying. Elders have said that it is easier to get friends who talk sweetly but difficult to find friends who venture to tell you the truth however bitter it is. The latter alone deserve to be called friends.

The crow and the mouse put a brake to their conversation when they saw a frightened deer darting towards the lake. The crow flew to the top of a tree. The mouse scampered into his hole and the turtle sank into the water. From the treetop, the crow could see the deer now clearly and told his other friends, “Friends, he is

only a deer who is thirsty. These footfalls are not those of a man.”

The turtle replied, “The deer is panting. It seems someone is chasing him. He has not come to quench his thirst. Surely, some hunter might be after him. Please go to the top of the tree and look if you can find any hunter.”

Assured that these are friends only, the deer named Chitranga, now said, “Friend, you have guessed correctly. I have escaped the arrow of the hunter and reached here with difficulty. I am in search of a shelter the hunter cannot reach. Please show me a place safe from the hunter.”

Mandharaka, the turtle, said, “the scriptures have mentioned two ways of escaping danger. One is to use your muscle power and another is to run as fast as you can. Now, run into the forest before the hunter could come.”

“That is not necessary,” said Laghupatanaka, the crow.

“I have seen the hunters taking a good catch of food and going the way they came. O Mandharaka, you can now come out of the water.”

With Chitranga, the deer, they became now four friends, happily spending time in each other’s company. The learned have said that when you have plenty of cordial conversation, to be happy you do not need a woman. The man who has no store of good words is not capable of uttering them.

One day, Chitranga had not come when the other three had gathered at the lakeside for their daily discourse. They thought, “Poor Chitranga has not come so far. Is it possible that a lion or a hunter has killed him? Or, is it possible that he has fallen into a pit?” Well-wishers naturally suspect the worst when their near and dear ones are not seen for a while.

Mandharaka told the crow, “Friend, you know neither Hiranyaka nor I can move fast. You alone can fly and see more things than we can. Please go immediately and find out what is happening to our friend.”

The crow did not fly too long before he saw Chitranga trapped in a hunter’s net near a small pond. Moved by his plight, the crow said, “Friend, what happened to you?” Trying to check tears in his eyes, the deer said, “Death is chasing me. It is good that you came to see me.”

The crow said, “Friend, don’t lose courage when we are here. I will rush back and bring Hiranyaka here.” Laghupatanaka flew fast to where the mouse and the turtle were anxiously waiting for him to come and tell them what happened to the deer. On hearing his account, Hiranyaka immediately decided that he should go and bite off the strings of the hunter’s net.

He got on to the back of the crow and together they flew to the spot where the deer lay helplessly in the hunter’s net. When the deer saw his friends rushing to his aid, he realized how necessary it was to collect good friends and how nobody could overcome troubles without the help of good friends.

Hiranyaka asked the deer, “How did you, such a learned being, get into this hole?” The deer replied, “Friend, this is not a time for a debate. The hunter may come any time. First, get me out of this net.” The mouse laughed and said, “Why are you scared of the hunter when I am here? But tell me how did you let yourself trapped in this way?”

The deer replied, “Friend, when luck is not with you, you will lose discretion. As the elders say when death is lurking for you and when wickedness overtakes you, your thoughts too take a crooked path. Nobody can save you from what God has in store for you.”

As they were discussing their plan to escape, Laghupatanaka and Hiranyaka saw that the turtle also was coming. The crow said, “Look, this slow-footed guy is coming. Neither can we save the deer or ourselves. See this fellow’s foolishness. If the hunter comes, I can fly away and you can beat a fast retreat. But how can this turtle escape?”

The hunter came when they were debating this point. The mouse did a fast job of biting off the strings of the net and the deer rushed into the thick forest. The mouse too disappeared into the nearest hole. But the poor turtle was slowly plodding its way to safety. But the hunter saw him and bound him to his bow and slung it across his shoulder and began going home.

Hiranyaka saw this from a distance and began reflecting, “Troubles do not come in singles. I have already lost everything I have. I have lost my relatives and my retinue. Now, this loss of a great friend! We come close to each other only to part. Everything in this world is temporary. Yet, I am grateful to God, for, he has created this sweet relationship we call friendship.”

Meanwhile, the deer and the crow came, disturbing the mouse’s reverie. Recovering, Hiranyaka said, “Let’s not brood over the past. Let us first look for a way to rescue the turtle.” The crow said, “Listen, and do as I tell you. Chitranga will go to a small lake on the hunter’s way taking him home. He should pretend he is dead and I will sit on his head and pretend pecking his eyes. Seeing the motionless deer, the hunter will then rest the turtle on the ground and reach for the deer. Hiranyaka should at once reach the turtle and bite off the strings binding him to the bow.”

“All right, we will do as you say,” said the mouse and the deer. Meanwhile, the hunter, seeing the motionless deer, thought it was dead. Leaving the turtle on the ground, he came to the deer. The deer at once ran away and the crow flew away. At the other end, the mouse bit off the strings binding the turtle to the bow. The turtle entered water and the mouse ran to his hole.

Disappointed, the hunter returned to where he had rested the turtle. When he found that the turtle had escaped, he cried bitterly and went home. After making sure that they were far away from the hunter’s reach, the four friends gathered and celebrated their reunion.

Concluding his discourse, Hiranyaka said, “It is a lesson to mankind on the value of friendship. One should not try to cheat friends. The elders have said that he who is faithful to his friends shall never taste defeat”. Thus we come to the end of the second part of Panchatantra called Gaining Friends.

Third Strategy: Of Crows And Owls

This third part of the Panchatantra begins with a verse:

*Trust not even a close friend
Who earlier was your enemy.*

This is the story of how the crows burnt the home of a trusting pack of owls.

Once upon a time all the crows in a town called Mahilaropya made a huge banyan tree their home. The tree had hundreds of branches. Their king, known as Meghavarna, set up strong fortifications to ensure security for his brood. Similarly, the owls of the town made a nearby cave their colony. They also had a king, called Arimardana, who ruled with the help of a strong and cunning army.

The owl king kept a close eye on the banyan tree and on account of previous enmity killed every night any crow he sighted outside the tree. Slowly, the owl king managed to kill all crows that could be seen outside the tree. That is why wise men had always said that whoever neglects disease or the enemy perishes in their hands.

Alarmed at the loss of his flock, Meghavarna assembled his ministers and asked them to prepare a plan to fight the owls. He placed before them six strategies and asked them to name the best of the six. The first minister suggested compromise as a tactic because one had first to survive to gather strength and later destroy the enemy. The elders have said,

“Bend to the enemy when he is strong
Attack him when he is vulnerable.
Don’t wage a war if it doesn’t bring
Power, or wealth or friendship.”

The second minister ruled out compromise and offered trickery as a formula. He cited the example of how Bheema in the Mahabharata had killed Keechaka in the disguise of a woman. He also quoted elders saying,

“Never accept peace with
An enemy who is not just
For, he will break his word
And stab you in the back.”

The minister referred to the learned as saying that it is easy to defeat an enemy who is a tyrant, a miser, an idler, a liar, a coward and a fool. Words of peace will only inflame an enemy blinded by anger.

The third minister said, “O lord, our enemy is not only strong but also wicked. Neither compromise nor trickery will work with him. Exile is the best way. We shall wait and strike when the enemy becomes weak.”

“Neither peace nor bravado
Can subdue a strong enemy
Where these two do not work
Flight is the best alternative.”

The fourth minister opposed all these tactics and suggested the king of crows should stay in his own fort, mobilize support from friends and then attack the enemy. He quoted the learned as saying,

“A king who flees is like
A cobra without fangs.
A crocodile in water
Can haul an elephant.”

Therefore, the minister said, “An ally is what wind is to fire. The king must stay where he is and gather allies for support.”

The fifth minister offered a strategy similar to that of the fourth and said, “Stay in your fort and seek the help of an ally stronger than the enemy. It also pays to form an axis of less strong allies.”

After listening to all the ministers, Meghavarna turned to the wisest and senior most among his counsels, Sthirajeevi, and asked him for his advice. The wise man told Meghavarna,

“Oh, king of crows, this is the time to use duplicity to finish the enemy. You can thus keep your throne.”

“But learned sir, we have no idea of where Arimardana lives and of what his failings are.”

“That is not difficult. Send your spies and gather information on the key men advising the king of owls. The next step is to divide them by setting one against the other.”

“Tell me why did the crows and owls fall out in the first place,” asked Meghavarna.

Sthirajeevi said, “That is another story. Long, long ago all the birds in the jungle—swans, parrots, cranes, nightingales, owls, peacocks, pigeons, pheasants, sparrows, crows etc.—assembled and expressed anguish that their king Garuda had become indifferent to their welfare and failed to save them from poachers. Believing that people without a protector were like passengers in a ship without a captain, they decided to elect a new king. They chose an owl as their king.

As the owl was being crowned, a crow flew into the assembly and asked them why and what they were celebrating. When the birds told him the details, the crow told them, the owl is a wicked and ugly bird and it is unwise to choose another leader when Garuda is still alive. To crush enemies it is enough if you mentioned Garuda's name or for that matter the name of anyone who is great. That was how the hares managed to live happily by taking the name of the moon."

The birds asked the visiting crow, "Tell us how this has happened."

"I will tell you," said the crow and began telling them the story of the hares and the elephants.

1.Elephants and Hares

Once upon a time a great elephant called Chaturdanta ruled over a vast stretch of forest as the king of his subjects. They were not happy because for several years there had been no rains and all the lakes, tanks, ponds and water holes in the forest became arid. The subjects went in a delegation to the king and appealed to him, "O mighty king, there is no water to drink in the forest. Many of the younger ones are on the verge of extinction. Please look for a lake full of water and save us."

The king told them, "I know of a hidden lake that is always full of water. Let us go there and save ourselves."

The elephants then set off for the hidden lake and after plodding through the jungle for five nights reached the great lake. They colonized the land around the lake and once again started their revelry in water. But as the elephants daily marched their way to the lake, they trampled upon hundreds of hares that made the land around the lake their home. Hundreds of them died and thousands more were maimed.

One day the hares assembled to chalk out a plan to save themselves from the menace of the wayward elephants. An older one among them said, "these elephants will come every day and every day many of us will die. We must find a solution to this problem."

A wiser one among them said, "The great Manu had said that it was better to abandon a person to save the whole community, abandon the community to save the village and abandon the village to save the country. Even if the land were fertile, a wise king would abandon it if it were in the interests of his subjects."

But the other hares protested and said, "How can we do that? We have been living here for several generations. Let us find an alternative. Let us see if we can scare the elephants by some means."

Some of them said, "We know of a trick that works with the elephants. However, we need a very intelligent person."

Pressed to reveal the plan, they said, "Our ruler Vijayadatta lives in the lunar sphere. Let us send a messenger to the elephant king. The plan is to tell the elephant king that the Moon does not like the elephants visiting the lake for water because they are killing and maiming hundreds of hares. The Moon has declared the lake out of bounds for the elephants."

Some others agreed and said, “Yes, there is a hare whose name is Lambakarna. He is an expert negotiator. He can do the job with success.”

After a lot of discussions, the hares decided to send Lambakarna to the elephant king. Addressing the king, Lambakarna said, “O heartless king, I live in the lunar sphere. The Moon has sent me as envoy to you. This lake belongs to the Moon. He has forbidden all of you from drinking water from the lake. So, go back.”

“But where is you lord, the Moon,” asked the elephant king.

Lambakarna said, “He is very much in this lake. He has come to console the survivors of your rampage.”

“Then, let me see him,” the elephant king challenged the envoy.

“Come alone with me, I will show you.”

“Let us go then,” said the elephant.

Lambakarna took the elephant king one night to the lake and showed the reflection of the Moon in the lake and said,

“Here he is, our King, the Moon. He is lost in meditation. Move quietly and salute him. Otherwise, you will disturb his meditation and bring upon you his wrath.”

Taking him for the real Moon, the elephant king saluted him and left quietly. The hares breathed a sigh of relief and lived happily ever after.

The crow told the birds gathered to elect a leader, “that is why it is important to choose a wise and experienced person as your leader. If you do not, listen to this story of how a hare and a partridge destroyed themselves because they chose a wicked mediator.”

“Very interesting,” said the birds and asked the visiting crow to tell them the account of the mediator.

The visiting crow began narrating the story:

2.The Cunning Mediator

A sparrow was living in the hollow of a big tree that I had made my home. His name was Kapinjala. We became good friends and used to spend our time discussing characters in our literature and the unusual things we saw in our travels. One day, my friend left the tree with other sparrows in search of food and did not

return even after nightfall. I began to worry. “What happened to him? Did any hunter take him away? He never leaves my company even for a while.”

Days passed without any trace of my friend Kapinjala. One fine morning, a hare named Sighragha, came and silently occupied the hollow that my friend made his home. It did not worry me because there was no word about Kapinjala and I had lost all hopes of his return. But one day, he returned looking healthier than he was when he had left and found that the hare had taken his place.

Kapinjala told the hare, “O hare, what you have done is improper. You have displaced me. Leave the place immediately.”

Sighragha hit back saying, “What are you talking? This is my place. Haven’t you heard the elders saying that nobody has rights over a public well, a temple, a pond and a tree? Whoever enjoys land for more than ten years also becomes its owner. That needs no evidence or documents of proof. This place is not yours any more.”

The sparrow told him, “Oh, you are quoting legal scriptures! Let us go to an expert in law and ethics. We will abide by his ruling.”

The hare agreed to this proposal and both of them went in search of an expert. Curious to see what would happen, I also followed them. Meanwhile, word about their quarrel had reached a wicked and wild cat. Knowing the route that the hare and the sparrow would take, the cat set up a camp on the way. He spread a mat of grass on the ground and went into a posture of meditation. Facing the sun and raising his hands in worship, the cat began reciting scriptures,

“This world has no essence. Life is passing. All liaisons with lovers are like a dream. Your ties with the family are illusory. There is no alternative to following the right path. The learned have said,”

“This wretched body will soon perish
Material wealth is not permanent
Death is knocking at your door
Free thyself from earthly chains
He who abandons the right path
Is the same as the living dead.”

“I will end this long discourse and tell you in a nutshell what the right path is. Doing good to others is virtue. Tormenting others is vice. This is the essence of our philosophy. I am in the service of God and have given up all desires. I will not do you any harm. After hearing your account, I will decide who among you is the rightful owner of the place in the tree. But I am now very old and cannot hear you properly. So, please come close to me and narrate your story.”

When the poor and innocent sparrow and hare came within the reach of the cat, he pounced on them and

grabbed the sparrow in his teeth and slashed the body of the hare with his jaws and killed them.

The visiting crow then told the birds, “That is why I tell you if you rest your faith in this wicked and blind owl, you will meet the same end as the hare and the sparrow.” The birds then dispersed, deciding to discuss the matter again carefully before electing the owl as the king.

Meanwhile, the owl was sitting restlessly on the throne waiting for his coronation.

He asked his wife Krikalika, “What is all this delay in crowning me.”

The wife told him, “My lord, it is this crow which has sabotaged the coronation. All the birds have dispersed. Only this crow is lingering here. Come, let us go. I will take you home.”

Furious, the owl shouted at the crow, “You wicked crow, what harm have I done to you? You have wrecked the coronation. This is enough reason that from today there shall be enmity between owls and crows. One can heal wounds inflicted on the body but not the heart.”

Dejected, the owl went home with his wife.

The crow began reflecting, “Oh, what a foolish thing have I done? Unnecessarily, I have made enemies. I should not have advised the birds not to elect the owl as the king. Elders have aptly said,

“Words out of tune with times
Words that bring grief in the end
Words that bring pain to others
Are, any day, as good as poison.”

Regretting what he had said and done, the visiting crow also went home. This is how enmity began between the owls and the crows.

After listening to the story, Meghavarna asked Sthirajeevi, “What should we do in such a situation? Sthirajeevi, the wise crow, told him, “There is a strategy better than the six I had already told you. With its help, I will myself go and conquer the owl king. The learned have said that men with great common sense and a little bit of cunning can subdue stronger enemies like the tricksters who cheated the gullible Brahmin of his lamb.”

On Meghavarna’s request, Sthirajeevi began telling him the Brahmin’s story.

3.The Brahmin and The Crooks

Mitra Sarma was a Brahmin living in a small village. He used to daily worship Fire. It was the month of Magha (February). The sky was full of clouds and it had already started raining. Sarma left for a neighboring village at that time to seek the gift of a sacrificial lamb from some rich man. He called on a well-to-do man in the village and requested him to make him a gift of a healthy lamb for sacrifice to Gods. The wealthy man gave him one of the well-fed lambs he had.

Carrying the lamb on his shoulders, the Brahmin began his homeward journey. Three crooks, very hungry and emaciated, crossed his path and seeing the healthy lamb on the Brahmin's shoulders thought, "Ah, God has sent us good food. Let us trick the Brahmin into parting with it and free us from hunger and cold." At once, they began to act.

One of them changed into a disguise, and overtaking the Brahmin by another route, stopped him and said, "O what a fool you are? Such a great worshipper of Fire, why are you carrying this dog on your shoulders? This will bring you ridicule. Don't you know that it is a sin to touch a dog, or a rooster, or a donkey?"

The Brahmin lost his temper and said, "You stupid fellow, are you blind? Why do you call a lamb a dog?"

The first crook replied, "Don't be angry, if you think he is not a dog, please carry on. I have no objection."

The Brahmin hardly walked a little distance when the second crook greeted him and said,

"O respected sir, it is highly regrettable that you are carrying a dead calf on your shoulders, however dear it is to you. The man who touches dead animals or birds has to undergo purification rites."

The Brahmin challenged him, "Are you too blind? This is a live sacrificial lamb and you say he is a dead calf."

The second crook said, "All right, sir. Please excuse me. I am an ignorant fool. Do as it pleases you."

Now it was the turn of the third crook to cross the Brahmin's path.

Turning to the Brahmin, the crook said, "Sir, it is highly improper. You are carrying a donkey on your shoulders. This is not done. The elders have said he who touches a donkey, knowingly or otherwise, has to take a bath fully dressed. So, please leave him before anybody notices it."

Thinking that he was really carrying a donkey, the poor Brahmin threw the lamb to the ground and went home. Sthirajeevi, continuing his advice to Meghavarna, said,

"There is hardly any person

Who is not misled by
The servility of a new servant or
The sweet words of a guest or
The mock tears of a wily woman.”

“Also, remember not to quarrel with weak men when they are united because they cannot be defeated. See, for example, how a deadly snake becomes prey of a united army of ants. That is why I want to tell you a few words of caution. Follow them.”

“We shall do as you command us,” said Meghavarna.

Sthirajeevi then began revealing his plan, “Apart from the four strategies I had told you, there is a fifth one. In the presence of everyone, abuse me and punish me branding me as the friend of your enemy. That will convince the spies of our enemy that you don’t trust me any more. Bring some blood and spray it on my body. Then exile to the Rishyamooka hills.”

“I shall remain here bruised and when the enemy comes, I will try to earn his mercy and trust by blaming you. You stay in the hills till I find their fort and give you a signal when all the owls are sleeping in the day. Then you can come and with the help of your army kill all the owls. This plan is the result of great thought. We have no alternative.”

On Meghavarna approving the plan, Sthirajeevi started a mock fight with the king of crows. The king’s men and others, mistaking it for a real duel, were ready to kill Sthirajeevi when Meghavarna told them, “Don’t interfere. Go away. I will have the pleasure of punishing this unfaithful fellow.” Meghavarna then pretended to attack Sthirajeevi with his beak and doused him in blood he brought with him and left for the hills.

Then Krikalika, wife of the pretender who was spying on the crow camp, carried this news of the assault on minister Sthirajeevi and the king’s departure for the hills, to the owl king Arimardana. Soon after sunset, the owl king, accompanied by his ministers and followers, set out to kill all the crows. They reached the tree, home of the crows, and surrounded it.

Not finding a single crow there and happy for that reason, Arimardana told his men to look for the crows so that they could chase them and kill them. Meanwhile, Sthirajeevi, who suffered mock injuries, began weakly moaning to attract the attention of the owls.

When the owls saw this and rushed to kill him, he pleaded, “Sir, my name is Sthirajeevi and I am minister of Meghavarna, the king of crows. Before you kill me, I have something to convey to your king.”

Arimardana came to see the minister at once and asked him the reason for his plight. Sthirajeevi told him, “Our king wanted to avenge the massacre of his subjects by your men. When I knew he was bent upon waging a war with you, I advised him not to be rash and not go to war with you. I asked him to sign peace with you. My king thought that I was on your side and in great anger inflicted these injuries on me. As soon as I recover, I will show you where he and his men are hiding. You can destroy them.”

The king of owls called a meeting of his elders and his five ministers for consultations. He asked his first minister, Raktaksha, “Friend, our enemy’s minister is in our custody. What shall we do with him?”

The minister said, “What is there to discuss? Kill him instantly without hesitation. It is always better to destroy the enemy before he acquires strength. Such opportunities come once in a while. If you lose it now, you will never get it back. Don’t be carried away by Meghavarna’s minister’s show of affection. Because once lost, love never returns.”

To drive home the point, Raktaksha related to the king of owls the story of a cobra and a Brahmin.

4.The Brahmin and The Cobra

Haridatta was a Brahmin living in a hamlet. He was a farmer but the piece of land he cultivated gave him very little to survive. One day, unable to stand the heat of the summer sun, he went to a big tree in his land to rest for a while. Before he could spread himself on the ground he saw in the nearby anthill a huge cobra swaying with his hood open.

He thought, “This cobra must really be the Goddess of this land. I have never worshipped her, which is why I am not able to get anything from the land. From today, I will worship her.”

At once he went back to his village and returned with a glass full of milk.

He poured it in a bowl and turning to the anthill said, “O ruler of the land, I did not know you were living in this anthill. That is why I have not paid my tribute to you. Please excuse me and accept this humble offering.”

He then placed the bowl of milk at the anthill and left the place.

Next day when the Brahmin came to his land before the Sun was up, he saw a gold coin in the bowl he had left at the anthill. Henceforth, he came alone every dawn, collected the coin, offered the milk in the bowl and left. One day the Brahmin, leaving for another village on business, asked his son to go to the anthill and offer milk. When the son went the next day, he found a gold coin in the bowl.

He collected the coin and thought, “This anthill must be full of gold. If I kill the cobra, I can collect all the gold in one go instead of coming here every day.”

He then struck the cobra with a big stick. But the cobra deftly dodged the blow but stung the son to death with his poisonous fangs. Returning to his village the next day, Haridatta heard the story of his son’s death and at once realized that greed was behind it.

The Brahmin went to the anthill the day after his son's cremation and offered milk to the cobra. Without coming out of his hole, the cobra told Haridatta,

"You have come here for gold forgetting that you had lost a son and that you were in mourning. The reason is greed, pure greed. From today, there is no meaning in our relationship. Blinded by his youth, your son has struck me and I bit him back. How can I forget that blow? How can you suffer the grief of your son's death? Finally, I am giving you this diamond, don't come back again."

Ending the story of the Brahmin and the cobra, Raktaksha told Arimardana, "The lesson is that love once betrayed cannot be regained. If you kill this minister (Sthirajeevi) you will have no problems left."

After listening to Raktaksha patiently, the king of owls turned to his second minister Kruraksha and asked him for his opinion.

The second minister said, "O my lord, I don't agree with the advice Raktaksha gave you. It is very unkind. We should never kill a person seeking asylum. There is a fine story about how, knowing that a hunter who sought shelter had in fact come to kill him, a dove offered himself as food to the hunter."

On the king asking him to relate that story, Kruraksha told him the following tale.

Once upon a time there lived a merciless hunter in the heart of a forest, terrorizing birds and animals. Because of his cruel nature he had no friends or relatives. The elders have said,

"It is unwise to be close to
Men who are wicked and cruel.
Avoid such heinous persons as
You avoid poisonous snakes."

The hunter went out into the forest every morning with a stick and net. One day, he threw his net and trapped a female dove in it. Soon, thick and black clouds appeared in the sky and it began raining cats and dogs. Scared and shivering, the hunter looked for shelter and found it under a huge banyan tree. The rain and wind stopped suddenly. The skies became clear with stars shining. The hunter said loudly,

"If there is anyone on the tree, I seek shelter and food from him. I am hungry and may faint any moment. Please save me."

At the same time, a dove that had his nest on the same tree was worried that his wife who had gone out had not come back. He prayed to Gods that his wife should not come to any harm in this wind and rain. He began telling himself,

"Blessed and happy is the man
With a caring and loving wife.
A home is not a home without a wife;

A wifeless home is like a jungle.”

The wife trapped in the hunter’s net heard her husband’s sorrowful words and, happy that her husband loved her so much, thought,

“Don’t call her a woman
Whose husband is unhappy;
Where happy husbands live
Heavens shower blessings.”

Later, addressing her husband, the female dove said, “Listen to me, my dear. Even at the cost of your life, you must come to the rescue of someone seeking shelter. This hunter is suffering from cold and hunger and has sought shelter under our tree. You must serve him with devotion. Don’t hate him because he has trapped your beloved wife. In reality, the strings of destiny have bound me. Give up all thoughts of revenge and serve the hunter with care.”

In accordance with his wife’s desire, the dove suppressed grief and told the hunter, “Sir, you are welcome to our modest home. Please let me know what I can do for you. Treat this as own home and feel free to command me.”

The hunter told the dove that he was suffering from cold and needed relief. The dove flew out, brought fire from somewhere and lit a small fire with dry twigs and asked the hunter to warm himself.

The dove told the hunter, “Because of my past deeds, I am born poor and unfortunate and do not have enough to feed myself. What is the point in a host living if he cannot entertain a guest? It is better he renounce this world.”

Yet he thought that it was better to die than say no to a host. Determined to die, the dove told the hunter to wait for a while and that soon he will have food. Then circling over the fire, the dove jumped into the fire he lit for the benefit of the hunter.

Moved by this sacrifice, the hunter told himself, “I am responsible for this tragedy. I will no doubt go to hell. This dove is a great soul, he has shown me the right path. Hereafter, I will give up all wants and desires and slowly destroy this body. Nothing, neither cold nor sun nor wind, matters to me. I will fast and see my slow end.”

The hunter then threw his net and stick and released the female dove from the net.

The wife then saw how her husband had jumped into the fire to provide food for the hunter. She thought that life without her husband was worse than death and at once jumped into the same fire that consumed her husband. After her death, she saw her husband in the heaven wearing royal regalia.

On seeing her, the husband said, “O my darling, you have done well to follow me into the fire. Women like

you live happily with their husbands for 35 million years.”

The dove couple lived happily ever after. The hunter, shunning worldly pleasures, went to a forest for realizing God. As penance had cleansed him of all desires, the hunter burnt himself in a forest fire and attained nirvana.

After Kruraksha ended telling the king the hunter’s story, Arimardana asked a third minister, Deeptaksha for his advice on dealing with Sthirajeevi.

The minister told the king, “My lord, Sthirajeevi does not deserve to be killed. He will be of use to us in revealing the secrets of the enemy. There is this story of how even a thief could help an old man.”

On the king commanding him, Deeptaksha began telling him the story of the old man, his young wife and the thief.

5.The Old Man, His Young Wife and The Thief

There lived an old widowed merchant in a city in the south. Though old, he did not give-up his desire for another wife. Therefore, he gave lots of money to a poor merchant and married his young daughter. She never loved her old husband. One day, when the husband and wife were sleeping on different sides of the bed, a thief entered their house. Shocked by the sight of the thief, the wife embraced her husband in fear.

The husband was both thrilled and surprised by the embrace and began thinking about what made her do so. He searched every nook and corner of the house and at last found the thief lurking in a corner. He then realized that his wife had embraced him because the thief had frightened her. The husband told the thief, “My dear young man, today I had the fortune of being hugged by my wife. Thanks to you. Take away whatever you want.”

The thief replied, “My dear sir, I do not find anything in your house that I could take with me. But I will come back soon and see if there is anything to carry away. Or, you could call whenever you need love from your wife.”

“That is why,” Deeptaksha said, “when even a thief could do some good for someone, why not this Sthirajeevi who has sought asylum? He will give us useful information about the handicaps of the enemy. Therefore, in my view he should not be killed.”

Then Arimardana turned to another minister, Vakranasa, and asked him, “Tell me what should we do with this crow?” Vakranasa told him that “the refugee’s life should be spared because it may benefit us when two rivals fight each other like the quarrel between a thief and a monster had saved the life of a Brahmin and his two calves.”

“How was that?” asked the owl king.