

The Flying Elephant

A Bhili folktale

A sugarcane farmer once lived in a small village. He worked very hard in his fields and hoped to have a big harvest. One morning, he saw that a big chunk of his crop was missing. The next day, another huge chunk of his crop was gone. "I'll stay awake tonight and see who's eating my sugarcane," the farmer thought to himself.

That night, he waited by the window, watching his fields. As the moon rose, he saw a tiny speck grow larger in the sky. It was an elephant flying right into his field! The farmer watched in amazement as it flew down and started eating his sugarcane. He tiptoed outside and waited for the elephant to finish eating.

When the elephant began flying away, the farmer grabbed its tail in order to catch the elephant. Soon he was flying above his fields into Indra's kingdom of Paradise. Paradise was filled with beautiful birds and flowers. The ground was covered with silver grass and precious stones.

The farmer soon found the royal palace and met Indra. "Your elephant has been flying down and eating all my sugarcane. My harvest is ruined," said the farmer. "I am very sorry. Please take whatever you want from my kingdom. I'll make sure he doesn't go down again and damage your crops," said Indra and blessed the man with a safe journey back home.

The farmer took two handfuls of gems and returned home. He built himself a new house and became a very rich man. Soon the whole village was curious about his sudden wealth.



One day, some villagers went to visit the farmer's wife."Where did you get all this money? Did you find buried treasure in your fields?" they asked. The farmer's wife told them what had happened.

That evening the villagers decided to lure the elephant down themselves."When we get to Paradise, we'll take more than just two handfuls of gems!" they said. They planted a field of sugarcane and sure enough, the elephant flew down one night. One villager grabbed its tail and soon there was a chain of villagers flying behind the elephant.

As they flew up, they began talking about what they would bring back. Finally, it was the turn of the villager holding the elephant's tail."I'm going to carry back this many gems!" he declared in excitement. He stretched his arms wide and let go of the elephant's tail. The villagers all fell in a heap on the ground.

They watched sadly as the elephant disappeared into the sky."Don't worry. The elephant will come back tomorrow," said the villagers. But Indra, hearing of the villagers' trick, arranged for a sugarcane field to be planted in Paradise. The elephant never felt the need to fly down again. The villagers waited for many nights, watching the sky. But the elephant never came back down again.

THE END

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