

The Princess Farmer

A Bhili folktale

Kansari was the daughter of a powerful king. Although she was a princess, she had always wanted to be a farmer when she was a child. This made her father angry, and when she grew up, her father ordered her to leave the palace. "I want you to experience how difficult life is outside this palace. Only then will you come to your senses," he said angrily. So Kansari packed the seeds that she had collected throughout her childhood, and went to live in the woods. She built a little hut and began planting seeds in the nearby field. It was hard work, but Kansari had help from her three new friends: a cat, a parrot and a spider.

The cat hunted rats in the field. The spider took care of the hut. The parrot flew around the kingdom and brought back the latest news. They all became good friends and lived together happily. It wasn't long before everyone in the kingdom was talking about Kansari's lush farm.

This made the king furious and he went to Indra, the king of the gods. The king requested Indra to help him, as he wanted to teach his daughter a lesson. "Leave it to me. I'll send down a drought. All the crops will dry up and die," said Indra. The parrot heard this and quickly recounted it to Kansari.

Kansari and her friends then moved their crops to a damp riverbed. When the drought took place, all the crops in the kingdom dried up, but Kansari's crops survived.



Indra saw this and scratched his head. "I'll send down a flood. That should stop Kansari," he said. But again, the parrot overheard Indra. This time, Kansari, along with her friends, planted their crops on the slope of a hill. When the flood came, it drowned all the crops in the kingdom. Kansari's crops were the only ones that survived, because the excess water simply flowed downhill.

"I'll send hundreds of rats!" Indra decided. But the parrot told the cat of Indra's plan. "Wonderful! I'll call my cat friends for a feast!" purred the cat. Soon the cats had eaten every single rat in the field. By now, Indra was at his wit's end. "I'll send birds! She can't save her crops from birds!" he said. But the spider called her spider friends and they wove sticky webs above the crops. When the birds attacked the crops they were stuck in the sticky web. The crops were saved once again.

By now the king had bigger problems. The drought and flood had destroyed all the crops in the kingdom. People were starving. The king went to Indra for help. "You don't need my help. Your daughter Kansari is already feeding your people!" said Indra. He took the king to the woods. There he saw Kansari and her friends giving away sacks of grain to everyone.

The king felt ashamed of himself and proud of his daughter. "There are nobler things than just living in a palace. Don't you agree?" asked Indra. The king begged his daughter for forgiveness and requested her to come back to the palace. She forgave her father but did not return to the palace; she stayed in her hut beside her fields, living happily with her friends. Kansari later became known as the Princess Farmer.

THE END

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