

EXCELLENT CHOICE

Once upon a time, there was a king. He had a grownup daughter. One day he told her that he wished to see her married to a good man. She said to him, "Father, I will if you wish me to, but do allow me to choose my husband from among the unmarried men in your kingdom in my own way."

"You may, my daughter," said the king.

The princess then took a shawl and clasping it against her breast, she made this solemn wish: "This shawl, when thrown onto the roof of a man's abode, may it slide down to the ground if he is unworthy, but may it remain there on the roof if he is."

Then in the dead of night, accompanied by her bodyguard, the princess went from house to house, throwing the shawl onto the roof of one dwelling after another. From the roof of every house the shawl slide down to the ground, but the princess went on and on from one house to another. It was nearly dawn when she reached a poor man's hut at the edge of the last village in her father's kingdom. She threw the shawl onto the roof of this miserable hut, and there it remained on the roof.

Now, the princess was quite certain that the man asleep within the hut was her destined husband. So she dismissed her bodyguard, and went into the hut. She spoke gently to the man sleeping inside, "Wake up, dear." The man opened his eyes and was greatly surprised to see the beautiful princess.

"Who are you? And what do you want?" he asked. "I am but a poor man, living on a very meagre income I get from gathering and selling shorea leaves. What would you have of me?"

The princess told him all about her solemn wish and her magic shawl. The man could not believe his ears. The princess continued, "Stop worrying about your poverty, I will take care of it." And taking the diamond ring off her finger, she said to him, "Here, take this ring and go and sell it for whatever it might fetch."

The man looked at the beautiful princess and the ring. He thought he was dreaming, yet the princess, her voice and her ring were all real. So he took the ring and went round the village to sell it. However, there was no one rich enough to buy such a precious ring. He looked at the ring and suddenly remembered that he had seen a heap of sparkling stones just like this one in one part of the shorea wood where he gathered leaves. Thinking that it was just as worthless as the 'pebbles' he had seen in the wood, he tossed it over a bridge and returned home.

Back at his hut, the princess asked him how much he had got for the ring, and he told her what he had done with it and why. She then asked him to take her to that part of the shorea wood where he said was a heap of such 'pebbles.' Off they went and true enough, there was such a heap of precious stones! She selected the best of the lot and the two of them returned home with as many precious stones as they could carry. They lived on this secret store, selling a little of it from time to time, and they were happy and content as husband and wife.

One day, the king let it be known to his people that he was going on a sambar hunt and he invited anyone who had a horse as fleet as his to join him. The princess at once bought the

fleetest horse in the land and said to her husband, “Here, take this horse and join the king in his sambar hunt. But remember never to overtake the king even though your horse is far swifter than his. Just keep close to him, fast or slow.”

She also provided him with dry ration of hard-baked soya bean paste in the form of a hunting cap. “Wear this cap as you ride,” she said, “and take a bite of it whenever you feel hungry.”

The once poor shorea leaves pedlar was now a proud member of the king’s hunt, riding his own splendid horse. The king’s horse was swift; so was the pedlar’s. Their horses were so strong and fast that others in the hunt were soon left far behind them. On and on they rode, deeper and deeper into the wood, but found no sambar. The king began to feel hungry, but the pedlar did not, because he had been taking a bite after another of his soy bean cap as he rode beside the king. At last the king could stand the hunger no longer. He exchanged his cap of gold with the soy-bean cap of his companion.

The king felt so full and satisfied after eating it that he decided to stretch out under a shady tree. He asked his companion, the pedlar, to massage him. The pedlar did as bidden, and the king, while enjoying the massage, began to tell the pedlar a story. He was a good story-teller and even the guardian spirits of the wood came to listen to the king’s story. However, the king was so tired from the ride that he soon fell asleep right in the middle of his story. The spirits were so annoyed that they began to lay a curse upon him. “May you meet with one accident after another on your way back,” they imprecated. “May a branch in the forest break and fall on your head. Should you escape this, may a bridge on your way home collapse under you. Should you again escape this and reach your palace, may the stairs tumble down as you step on them. Should you still live after all these mishaps, may the doors of your chamber close in upon you and squeeze the life out of you. Should your luck still protect you, may you be bitten by a viper in your bed!”

The king’s companion, the shorea leaves pedlar, who in fact was the king’s son-in-law, heard all these curses of the spirits and felt a deep concern for the king. He woke the king and told him that they should ride away at once. They mounted their horses and barely had they moved away when a branch of the shady tree broke and fell right on the spot where the king was sleeping earlier. It was a close shave indeed!

The two men rode away, fast as the wind. But the curses of the spirits followed the king. The bridge did collapse, but only after the king had crossed it. The palace stairs did tumble down, but only after the king had reached the landing at the top. Then, the chamber doors did close in upon him, but he had already got through them. The king began to realize that his hunting companion had been saving his life from one accident after another. He also began to suspect that ill luck was following him. So, paying heed to what his hunting companion had warned him of, he ordered his men to search his bed thoroughly. And true to the curse of the spirits, there was a viper in his bed. The king’s men, of course, killed it, and the king’s life was saved again.

Tired and worn out but quite relieved, the king began to recall the day’s experience. As he did so, he felt a deep sense of gratitude to his hunting companion. So the king sent for the man and said to him, “Young man, I owe you my life, and in gratitude I give you the hand of my daughter in marriage.”

The once poor shorea leaves pedlar then told the king who he really was. The king was astonished. The princess was brought in. He looked at his daughter, the princess, and his son-in-law, the hunting companion who had saved his life. With just a trace of a smile on his face, he murmured, "My daughter, you have indeed made an excellent choice."

THE FOUR YOUNG MEN

In a village there lived four young men, and they could make up strange and impossible tales. One day they espied a traveler resting in the rest-house outside the village and he was wearing fine clothes. The young men conspired to cheat him of his fine clothes. So they went to the traveler and engaged him in conversation. After some time one of the young men suggested, "Let us make a bet. Let each of us tell his most wonderful adventure and any one doubting the truth of the story shall become the slave of the narrator." When the traveler agreed to the suggestion, the young men smiled to themselves thinking the traveler to be an old fool. They did not suspect that the traveler could tell impossible stories and even if he could, they merely had to say that they believed his story. On the other hand, they expected that as their stories would be so strange and impossible, the traveler would forget himself and express his doubt as to the truth of the stories. Of course they did not really mean to make him their slave, but they meant to claim the clothes of the traveler, as a master owned not only the person of a slave but also his property. The young men went back to the village, and brought back the headman to act as a judge over their bet.

The first young man now narrated his wonderful adventure. "When I was in my mother's womb my mother asked my father to pluck some plums from the tree in front of our house, but my father replied that the tree was too high for him to climb. My mother asked my brothers, but they gave the same answer. I could not bear to see my poor mother disappointed over her desire to eat a few plums, so I slopped out and climbed the tree. I plucked some plums and wrapped them in my jacket. Then I left the plums wrapped in the jacket in the kitchen, and re-entered my mother's womb. Nobody guessed how the plums came to be there, but my mother was able to eat some plums. As there were many plums left over after my mother had eaten, she gave seven plums each to all the inmates of the house and to all the neighbours. Still there were many plums left over, so my mother piled them in front of the door and, do you know, the door could not be seen from the street, so high was the pile of plums!" The first young man looked at the traveler hoping that he would express some doubt as to the truth of the story, but the traveler merely nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three men also nodded their heads.

Now it was the second young man's turn, and he said: "When I was a week old I took a stroll in the forest, and saw a big tamarind tree with ripe tamarinds. I climbed up the tree swiftly as I felt so hungry. When I had eaten my fill, I felt so heavy and sleepy that I could not climb down. So I went back to the village and, bringing a ladder, I propped it against the tree. Then I came down by the ladder. It was really fortunate that I found a ladder in the village, otherwise I would still be up that tamarind tree." The second young man looked expectantly at the traveler, who however, nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three young men also nodded their heads.

The third young man now narrated his wonderful adventure. "When I was of the ripe age of one year I chased what I thought to be a rabbit into a bush, but when I crawled into the bush I found that it was really a tiger. The animal opened his mouth wide, meaning to swallow me. I protested that it was grossly unfair of him, for I was looking for a rabbit and not for a tiger.

But the tiger took no notice of my protest, and came nearer with his mouth open. So I caught hold of his upper jaw with my left arm, and gave a jerk. To my surprise, the huge animal broke into two and died.” The third young man looked expectantly at the traveler who, however merely nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three young men also nodded their heads.

The fourth young man then narrated his adventure. “Last year I went fishing in a boat but I could not catch a single fish. I asked other fishermen, and they said that they had not caught a single fish either. So, deciding to investigate what was happening at the bottom of the river, I jumped out of my boat and dived. After about three days I touched the bottom, and I discovered that a fish as huge as a mountain was eating up all the other fishes. I killed the fish with one blow of my fist. By that time I was feeling so hungry that I decided to eat it then and there. So I lit a fire and, after roasting the fish, ate it at one sitting. Then I floated back to the surface and regained my boat, none the worse for my little excursion to the bottom of the river.” The fourth young man looked expectantly at the traveler, who merely nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three young men nodded their heads also.

The traveler now told his adventure. “Some years ago I had a cotton farm. One cotton tree was unusually big, and was bright red in colour. For a long time it had no leaf or branch, but four branches later appeared. The branches had no leaves but they had a fruit each. I plucked one of the four fruits and, when I cut them open, a young man jumped out from each fruit. As they came from my cotton tree they were legally my slaves, and I made them work on my farm. But, being lazy fellows, they ran away after a few weeks. Since that time I have been travelling all over the country in search of them and only now have I found them. Young fellows, you know very well that you are my long-lost slaves. Come back to my farm with me now.”

The four young men hung down their heads in mortification, for they were in a hopeless position; if they should say that they believed the story, it would amount to an admission that they were the traveller’s long-lost slaves. But on the other hand, if they should say that they did not believe the story, they would become his slaves according to the bet. The headman asked the young men three times to indicate whether they believed the traveller’s story or not but, as they remained motionless and speechless with downcast eyes, he declared that the traveler had won the bet. The traveler, however, was magnanimous. “The clothes that you are wearing belong to me.” He said, “for you are my slaves.” Take them off and give them to me. After that I will give you your freedom.” So the young men had to surrender their clothes to him, and the traveler went away, shouldering the bundle of clothes that he had won by his wonderful story telling.

HOW FRIENDSHIP BEGAN AMONG BIRDS

At first friendship was unknown among birds, for there was intense rivalry among them all. If a bird saw another bird, he at once said, "I am a better bird than you," and the other replied, "Certainly not, for I am better than you," then they would start to fight.

One day the Pheasant met the Crow and, being in no mood to quarrel, he said, "Crow, you are a better bird than me."

The Crow was not only surprised but very pleased at these words of the Pheasant, and out of politeness, he replied, "No, no, Pheasant, you are a better bird than me." The two birds sat down and had a chat.

Then the Pheasant said to the Crow, "Crow, I like you. Let us stay together."

"All right, Pheasant," replied the Crow. So the two lived together in a big tree. With the passing of time, their regard of each other grew, but in their case familiarity did not breed contempt, and they continued to show courtesy and respect to each other.

Other birds watched the association of the Pheasant and the Crow with interest, and they were surprised that the two birds should stay together for such a long time without fighting or quarrelling. At last some of the birds decided to test their friendship. So they went to the Pheasant while the Crow was away, and said, "Pheasant, why do you live with that good-for-nothing Crow?"

"You must not say that," replied the Pheasant, "the Crow is a better bird than me, and he honours me by living with me in this tree."

The next day they went to the Crow while the Pheasant was away and said, "Crow, why do you live with that good-for-nothing Pheasant?"

"You must not say that," replied the Crow, "the Pheasant is a better bird than me, and he honours me by living with me in this tree."

The birds were deeply impressed with the attitude of the Pheasant and the Crow towards each other, and they said to themselves, "Why couldn't we be like the Pheasant and the Crow, instead of fighting and quarrelling?" And from that day onwards, friendship and respect for one another developed among birds.

HOW THE GALON-BIRD BECAME A SALT-MAKER

As a Dragon was having a stroll in the forest, a Galon-Bird saw him from the sky, and swooped down to catch him. The Dragon looked round swiftly for a hiding place, but found none. However, a king was nearby on a hunt and, assuming human form, the Dragon lost himself in the king's retinue. The Galon was puzzled at the sudden disappearance of the Dragon, but soon guessed what the latter had done. So he assumed human form also and, joining the king's retinue, he scanned the face of every retainer carefully. The Dragon quaked in fear, for he knew that the Bird would recognize him. The king and his company met a group of merchants, who respectfully stood aside for the king and his men to pass. The Dragon slipped into the group of merchants and went along with them.

The Galon-Bird had scanned the face of every retainer, but he did not find the Dragon. After consideration, he realized what the Dragon had done, and followed the group of merchants. But by that time the merchants were approaching the sandy shore of the sea, and when the Dragon saw his enemy coming towards them, he decided to make a dash to the sea. So assuming Dragon form, he ran across the sand towards the sea. The Bird saw him and, assuming Galon form, he chased his prey. However, he was just too late, and the Dragon dived into the water and returned to his home beneath the sea.

The Galon wept in disappointment, for he had set his heart on eating that particular Dragon. He felt he could not leave the place where the Dragon entered the water, for he expected that the latter would one day come out of the sea again, and he decided to wait. However, he realized that it was out of the question to wait in his own form, for the Dragon would see him from underneath the water and, moreover, human beings would come and harm him. There was a village of salt-makers, who made salt from the sea-water nearby and, assuming human form, the Galon joined them. He worked and watched at the edge of the sea every day, but the Dragon did not reappear. The Galon grew old and died as a morose salt-maker, for he never caught the Dragon after all.

IF YOU HELP OTHERS, YOU ALSO HELP YOURSELF

Long, long ago, there was a man who was so ill that he could not eat or drink. His ill health made him very unhappy. He tried all sorts of medicines and consulted all sorts of medicine men. Yet day by day he grew weaker and weaker. Then, one day he received good news. In a country to the east there was an amazing astrologer who could tell a poor man how to get rich and a sick man how to get well. He made up his mind to find this astrologer no matter what happened. Even when he started on his journey, he already felt better and could walk well. He felt that this was a good sign and meant that this astrologer was the right one for him.

The sick man walked on till the evening. Seeing a banyan tree he decided it was too late to go any further that day so he would sleep one night under the banyan tree. Then he cleared a place for himself beneath this tree and settled down for the night. But no sooner had he made himself comfortable than the guardian spirit of the banyan tree appeared before him.

"Where are you going?" the spirit asked the man, "and what are you sleeping under my tree for?"

"I am going to a country in the east to consult a famous astrologer there."

"In that case," said the spirit, "please ask him a question for me too. Please ask him why it is that even though I want to leave this banyan tree I can't go away at all. Please ask him that."

Promising that he would, the sick man slept that night under the banyan tree, then went on his way the next day. After walking for a while, he came to a big mound. A large snake came out of this mound and lay across his path.

"Where are you going," the snake asked the traveller, "and why have you taken this path?"

"Oh, King of Snakes, I am going to a country in the east to consult a very famous astrologer."

"Then please consult him for me too," said the big snake. "I want to know why I can't ever get away from this mound however hard I try to leave."

"Very well, I will ask him for you," promised the sick man, and I will come back here and let you know what answer he gives on my way home again."

Satisfied with this promise, the big snake glided back into his hole and the sick man resumed his journey. He continued slowly on his way until he found himself on the bank of a river. 'Now, how am I to cross this wide river when there is no ferry!' he wondered to himself. He sat down on the river bank while he considered what to do. As he sat there thinking, a big crocodile swam up to him.

"Traveller, where are you going and why did you come this way?" he said.

"Oh, King of Crocodiles, I am on my way to an amazing astrologer who lives on the other side of the river."

"If you are going to the astrologer, I will carry you across the river. But you must give me your solemn promise that you will consult the astrologer for me. Ask him why it is that I can't go under water even though I am a crocodile."

The sick man promised.

"Now get on my back and I will carry you over to the other bank."

"The sick man climbed onto the crocodile's back and rode over to the bank across. By the time he got there, night had fallen, so he slept on the sandy bank of the stream.

After this, his journey continued uneventfully till he reached a certain country where no stranger was permitted to set foot on pain of death. As he walked on notwithstanding, he was arrested and brought before the king.

"Why have you entered my kingdom?" inquired the king, "Do you not know that any stranger visiting this country is liable to be put to death? Have you not heard of this decree?"

"Your Majesty," replied the sick man, "I did not know of any such decree. In any case, I had no intention of visiting your country. I am on my way to a country in the east where there is a famous astrologer. If I have done wrong in entering your country, I do assure you it was only by mistake. I've lost my way."

On hearing the sick man's story, the king's daughter said; "If you are going to consult an astrologer, please ask him what he predicts for the king's daughter too."

"Certainly, Princess, I will consult him for you and I will tell you what he predicts on my return."

When the king heard what the princess and the sick man said to each other, he saw that it put him in an awkward position. For, the daughter who had just spoken had been ill since birth and had never been heard to speak before, so that the whole palace had supposed her to be dumb. Her words to the sick man asking him to consult the astrologer for her, were the first she had ever uttered in her whole life. Now if in accordance with his own decree he had the sick man put to death, it would prevent the sick man from consulting the astrologer for her, 'What was he to do?' he wondered to himself. Finally, for the sake of the love he felt for his daughter, he spared the sick stranger's life and permitted him to go to the astrologer. But he commanded the sick man to return afterwards and report what the astrologer had predicted for his daughter, the princess.

Then the sick man left the palace and travelled on till he found the astrologer.

"I am a sick man," he told the astrologer, "Please tell me what the future holds in store for me."

"You would have died if you hadn't reached me. Now because of this journey, you won't die. You will become a rich man when you go back home."

On hearing this prediction, the sick man at once began to get better, until finally he was completely cured. Having paid homage to the astrologer, he said:

"Now I would like to consult you on behalf of friends I met on the way. The daughter of the king of a certain country I passed through, has been ill since birth. She is now sixteen and cannot speak."

"This matter is not difficult. Let the king permit his daughter to marry the first person she speaks to and she will recover immediately."

"While I was on my way here," continued the sick man, "I had to cross a river and I met a crocodile who asked me to consult you for him. He said although he's a crocodile, he cannot dive under water."

"There is a magic stone embedded in this crocodile's head which has magic power. He will only be able to dive under water when this magic stone is removed."

"Now I have something else to ask you. On my way here a snake came out of a mound and begged me to consult you on his behalf. He is tired of living in that mound and wants to go somewhere else but he can't leave. He wanted me to ask you why he is kept there."

"This too, is a simple matter," explained the astrologer. "This snake is there to guard the big ruby in the mound. If the ruby is removed, he will be able to go anywhere he pleases."

The sick man still had to consult the astrologer on behalf of the guardian spirit of the banyan tree.

"The guardian spirit of the banyan tree appeared before me and requested me to ask you why he cannot leave this banyan tree even though he longs to go away."

The astrologer replied: "He is in the same kind of situation as the snake. You see, there is a pot of gold under that banyan tree which must be watched over by the guardian spirit of the tree. That's why he cannot leave and go elsewhere until the pot of gold is removed. Once the pot is taken away, the guardian spirit will be free to go where he chooses."

The sick man paid careful heed to every word, the astrologer said, then he set off again. Travelling slowly homewards, he came once again to the country of the princess who had begged him to consult the astrologer on her behalf. He went to the palace and repeated to her what the astrologer had foretold for her: "If she is to live and be healthy, the princess must marry the first person she speaks to." Hearing these words, the king, her father, pronounced his daughter and the traveller who had formerly been sick, man and wife. From this time on, the princess enjoyed perfect health. Her husband, the traveller who had once himself been sick, took her away with him so that he might take her to meet his parents and other relatives when he brought her to his home.

They continued on their way till they reached the place where the princess's husband had met the crocodile. He explained to the crocodile what the astrologer had said. "The reason why you cannot dive under water, Crocodile, is that there is a magic stone in your head."

Being unhappy because he could not dive under water even though he was a crocodile, he said, "In that case, please take out the magic stone."

The princess's husband gently pierced the skin on the animal's head with a small knife and removed the magic stone. After this, the crocodile found that he could dive under water. He was so delighted that he gave the magic stone to the princess's consort and took both him and the princess on his back to the other side of the river.

The couple journeyed on slowly till they came to the big mound where the snake was. The princess's consort called out to the snake: "Oh, King of Snakes, the astrologer said that the reason why you cannot leave this mound is that you have to guard the ruby buried inside it."

On hearing these words, the big snake said: "Please break up this mound of soil and take away the ruby. It has brought me nothing but trouble."

So the couple did as they were bidden, found the buried ruby and took it away with them. The snake thanked them and they went on their way. After a while, they got to the banyan tree under which the princess's consort had spent the night. He looked up at the banyan tree and said: "Oh, Guardian of the banyan tree, I consulted the astrologer as you asked me to and now I have returned. The reason you cannot leave this tree is because you have to guard the pot of gold buried underneath it. If the pot of gold is removed, you can leave this banyan tree and go anywhere you please."

Then they heard a voice which seemed to come from the banyan tree saying: "Yes, the pot of gold is hidden under the root which sticks out on the eastern side of my tree. Please dig it up and take it away. Then I can go wherever I wish."

Thus he allowed them to dig up the pot of gold and take it away with them.

Then the princess and her consort went to his home. Next morning, they showed his parents the pot of gold.

From that day forth, as the astrologer had predicted, the man who had once been sick became well, and what was more, the richest man in his village. He owed his property, not to the astrologer, but to his own unselfish interest in the welfare of others when he was ill. Surely the story of his adventures shows the truth of the saying: "If you help others you also help yourself."

INGWANJAWA, THE STRONG MAN

Long, long ago, there was a couple in a little village. They had been married for many years, but they were childless. And how they longed for a child!

One day, at last, a baby was born to them. It was a little boy – plump, strong and healthy. And he was a strange little-baby boy, for no sooner had he been delivered than he uttered, “I’m hungry. I’m hungry.” His parents were amazed, and so were the villagers. Food was brought to him, and how he ate whatever was given him! And how he grew bigger and bigger and stronger and stronger from day to day! By the age of one month, he could easily consume the entire pot of rice enough for the whole family.

Yet, the parents fed him on, and fed him well they did, for he was their only son and they loved him so. In time the boy came of age and each meal he ate was large enough to feed ten men. That itself was not so much a problem for his parents as his not doing a single stroke of work. So one day his old father said to him, “My son, both your mother and I are getting old and infirm. Whatever *taung-ya* work we can manage these days is not even half as much as we could do before. And with you eating so much each day, we will soon run out of food and starve. Why don’t you lend us a hand?”

“Very well, Father,” replied the young man pleasantly. “Just give me a good chopper and I shall help you out in all the *taung-ya* work of cutting down trees to clear a patch of land for you to till and grow rice, corn and vegetables.”

The old man was delighted and soon got for his son a fine, new chopper from the village blacksmith. The son, who was a giant of a man, looked at the chopper and said, “But, Father, this is but a tiny toy for me. Get me a much bigger one.”

The father rushed back to the village blacksmith and had a larger one made. But his still found it too small for his size and strength. So for the third time the old man went to the village blacksmith and had a truly huge chopper made. Now this chopper had a blade the size and shape of a banana leaf and a massive handle to go with it! It was so heavy that the old man could not carry it home himself. The blacksmith had to help him.

The son looked at it and hefted it. He liked its size and weight, and said, “Now, Father, just point out to me the spot you wish me to clear for your *taung-ya*, and I’ll get down at once to clearing it.”

The old man took his son to the hillside he had chosen and pointed out to the young man the area he wanted cleared. “All right, Father, don’t worry. Just go home and rest. I’ll see to it.”

But as soon as the father was gone, the young man stretched himself out on a huge flat rock nearby and soon fell asleep. At sundown the father came to fetch his son; but to his astonishment and dismay he found that his son had done nothing at all. What was more, his son was nowhere to be seen either. Worried, the old man searched frantically for his son, and there he found the young man fast asleep on the flat rock with the huge chopper for a pillow! “Get up, Son,” he said kindly. “Time to go home.”

The young man rubbed his eyes, looked around and, remembering the task his father had given him, muttered, "Oh, Father, I'm sorry I haven't done anything. I'll do it now."

The old man gave his son a benevolent smile. "No, It's getting dark," he said. "Soon the sun will disappear behind that hill. Why not begin the work tomorrow?"

"No, Father," replied the young man. "I think I'll do a little bit of clearing while it is still light. You go on home, Father, and I'll follow you in a moment."

The old man left. The son stood up. With the giant chopper in one hand, and pointing with the other, he said aloud to himself: "This plot is for growing paddy. That for vegetables. And that for other crops." So saying he swung the great chopper and chopped, chopped, and chopped away. Big trees, small trees, all fell over the hillside as if struck by a violent cyclone. And in no time there were plots more than enough for his parents to till and cultivate.

News of his amazing feat soon spread, and by early morning the next day, the whole village was talking about it. And from that day onward they called him "*Ingwanjawa*", "The Strong Man".

However, amazement and admiration soon turned into fear and suspicion. Many villagers began to feel that Ingwanjawa was a threat to their lives because he was getting stronger and mightier from day to day. They were also somewhat jealous of the old man and his wife for having a son so strong and helpful. So some of them began to poison the old man's mind.

"You know, old man," they said to him, "this son of yours will soon be a problem and a danger to you. Just look at the way he's growing bigger and stronger from day to day. Sooner or later he'll be an awesome giant, whom you will not be able to control or manage. Might as well do away with him now than later."

Such words were cruel words indeed, and the old man would not hear of any such things said of his wonderful son. However, he kept all these to himself. He said not a word to either his wife or his son. The young man continued helping his parents in their *taung-ya* work, which flourished from day to day. And the more they prospered, the more the villagers became jealous of them. One day, they plotted again against Ingwanjawa and his father.

They invited the old man and his son to join them on a hunting expedition. The two went along. The villagers led them to a hillside. Above this place, on the brow of the hill, were many boulders. Some villagers took position behind these boulders and, making a great noise as if they were beating game, they began to dislodge the boulders. In a loud rumble the boulders came thundering down. But Ingwanjawa, far from being harmed, just caught the biggest boulder in his arms, lifted it onto one of his massive shoulders, and carried it back to the village. There, he threw it off his shoulder. The boulder went rolling through the village, crushing all that lay in its path. When at last it stopped, half the village had been destroyed.

The villagers were stunned. For a few moments they were speechless. The destruction, however, was proof of Ingwanjawa's menace and danger to the community. And soon all of them began to complain aloud to the old man. "Haven't we been telling you that this son of yours will only bring us harm? Now see what he has done to our property! You had better do away with him. Now! At once!"

The old man was heart-broken, He loved his son. Yet he must do something to be rid of him. With a heavy heart he took his son into the forest one day. When they came to a big tree, he said that he was going to fell it. Then, asking his son to wait his turn on the side where the tree would fall, the old man began to axe the tree down. Meanwhile, Ingwanjawa fell asleep, and the old man went on axing the tree. The tree began to sway to the side where Ingwanjawa was sleeping, and came crashing down.

However, Ingwanjawa woke up in time to catch the bole of the huge tree in his mighty arms. Then shouldering the whole tree, he carried it home. When he reached home, he just threw off the tree with careless ease. As a result, his own homestead was destroyed completely.

The old man did not know what to do. He himself was now beginning to sense the danger and menace of having his son around. At the suggestion of the villagers, whose fear of Ingwanjawa had only grown from day to day, the old man first asked his son to get him some fresh tiger meat to cure him of his peculiar ailment. Ingwanjawa went away in search of a tiger and soon came back with a freshly killed one on his shoulder.

Seeing that his son had not been killed by the tiger, the old man told him to get fresh elephant meat. This, too, Ingwanjawa brought back in no time. It seemed that Ingwanjawa was just indestructible. Finally, the old man asked Ingwanjawa to fetch him a Khonran, the biggest and most ferocious of birds. But Khonrans were fabulous birds. They were hard to find.

Nevertheless, Ingwanjawa, as faithful and obedient as ever to his father, went away in search of the Khonran. Over ranges of mountains and belts of forests he travelled, but he found not a single Khonran. Yet he was as resolute as he was mighty and strong. At last he spotted a Khonran nest atop a high tree. Up the tree he climbed at once and waited near the nest.

After a long wait, two Khonrans, a male and a female, came. They had come back to their nest. Ingwanjawa reached out and killed the female Khonran with one mighty blow of his fist; the male, however, escaped. Then before Ingwanjawa could do anything, the male Khonran swooped down on him, piercing his heart with its strong, hard beak.

With one hand clutching his wound and the other hanging on to a nearby branch, Ingwanjawa called out to his father. "Father," he cried. "My end is near. Tell me who I should bequeath the strength of my body and the breath of my life. Please, Father, tell me quick!"

The old man heard him and replied, "O, Ingwanjawa, my son, bequeath your strength to the Water and your breath to the Wind."

So goes this Kachin folk tale, and so do some Kachins to this day believe that the Water and the Wind owe their tremendous power and might to Ingwanjawa, the Strong Man.

KHUN SAN LAW AND NAN OO PYIN

An old couple had a very beautiful daughter, and they wanted her to marry and settle down. All the young men of the village fell in love with her and tried to win her hand, but in vain. One day, her mother said to her, "Daughter, you are growing old and we are also growing old. Do choose a suitable young man and marry him." But the young maiden merely smiled and did not heed her words. Some time later, the father died and the mother said, "We need a man in the house. Will you not marry a nice young man?" "Mother," the maiden replied, "I dare not marry anybody in case he should prove to be a cruel husband. However, if you want a man in the house, I will pray to the guardian god of yonder tree for a gift of a son, although I am a virgin pure." The mother laughed at her, but soon the daughter was with child. In due course, she gave birth to a beautiful young boy whom she named Khun San Law.

When Khun San Law was but six years old, both the mother and the grandmother died, and Khun San Law was adopted as her son by a rich widow. As Khun San Law grew up into a handsome young man, the young ladies of the village fell in love with him and dreamed of marrying him. But Khun San Law remained uninterested in any of them. Then a scheming, ugly girl went to the old widow and saying, "I love you as my own mother," insisted upon waiting on her. After some months, as the ugly girl was so persistent, the old widow became very fond of her and said, "You shall be my daughter-in-law." Then she sent for her adopted son and asked, "Khun San Law, have you fallen in love with any girl?" "No, mother," replied Khun San Law. "In that case," said the old widow, "let me choose a wife for you. Here is a very affectionate and worthy young girl." Khun San Law looked at the ugly girl and was not pleased with her, and so gave the excuse that she was still too young to marry. Wanting to escape from the clutches of the scheming girl, he asked his mother's permission to accompany a caravan of merchants who were soon leaving the village. The old widow reluctantly agreed, and Khun San Law went away with the merchants.

At one market town, Khun San Law strolled along a street and suddenly saw a beautiful girl smiling at him while watering some flower pots on the verandah of her house. Khun San Law fell passionately in love with her, and losing his shyness, he boldly proposed to her, "Oh, handsome stranger", the girl replied, "My name is Nan Oo Pyin, and I love you also. But I do not know you at all, and you will have to come in and speak to my parents." Khun San Law went into the house and introducing himself, he asked for their permission and consent for him to marry their daughter. The parents, greatly impressed with the young man's demeanour, at once gave their approval. The next day Khun San Law and Nan Oo Pyin were duly married.

Khun San Law was very happy with his young wife, but after a few weeks he felt that it was his duty to go home to his mother and inform her of his marriage. Promising his wife to return in a few weeks, he started on his journey home. On arrival there, he broke the news to the old widow. Although shaking with anger, she pretended to be pleased. "Well done, my son," she said, "but before you go back to your wife, please go to my plantation in the north and supervise the workers there for a few days." The old widow then sent secret instructions to her workers at the plantation to delay Khun San Law's return by pretending to quarrel and fight with each other. She hoped that the long absence of Khun San Law would make his wife forget

him. Nan Oo Pyin waited and waited for her husband's return and she became even more impatient when she found herself with child. Feeling that she could not wait any longer, she asked some of her young women friends to accompany her, and together they travelled to Khun San Law's village. On arrival at the old widow's house, she received a seemingly warm welcome, but all the time the old woman was plotting to get rid of her. "Daughter," she said with a smile, "My son will soon return, and in the meantime you can help me in my housework." Then she proceeded to overwork the poor girl by making her do all kinds of tiring chores about the house. As days passed and Nan Oo Pyin remained as gentle and patient as ever, the old widow, losing her temper, abused the poor girl and beat her many times. Humiliated and shamed in front of her friends, Nan Oo Pyin called them to her, and together they started on the journey back to their own village. On the way, she gave birth to her child, who, however, soon died. Taking the dead child in her arms, she cried, "I will not throw you into the river, in case you should become a fish, nor will I bury you in the ground in case you should become a frog. Instead I will leave you on the fork of yonder tree, so that your father will see you when he comes after me." Then she and her companions continued their journey. The little child at once became a bird, and crying, "Father, father," he flew in search of Khun San Law. Nan Oo Pyin arrived safely back to her house, but she was sick and dying.

Khun San Law now arrived back at the old widow's house, and angry neighbours told him all about the cruel treatment his mother had meted out to his wife. Jumping on the back of a horse, he rode at full speed and reached his beloved wife's house in a few hours. But she was already dead. Taking her in his arms, he cried out, "I shall follow you soon, and we shall become twin stars in the sky and we shall be together until this world ends." Then he died. Nan Oo Pyin's parents laid the bodies of the two lovers side by side, and sent word to the old widow to come to the funeral. When the old widow arrived and saw the two lovers lying side by side, instead of feeling remorseful and instead of being stricken with sorrow, she was jealous and angry. Picking up a bamboo carrying-pole with three joints, which was lying on the floor, she swiftly placed it between the two dead bodies. Unfortunately, in their sorrow and grief, others present did not notice her action.

That same night, Khun San Law and Nan Oo Pyin appeared as twin stars in the sky, but alas, between them there were three other stars, being the three joints of the bamboo carrying-pole.

THE MAN WHO LOOKED FOR THE LORD OF DEATH

Long, long ago, in a certain country there was a man living in such depths of poverty that he wanted to leave this world. Longing to die, he began to search for the Lord of Death. He would ask any one he met if they knew where the Lord of Death was. The people he asked, taking him to be a madman, would walk away without giving any reply. When they walked away like this, or worse still avoided him completely, he thought it meant that they did not look on him as a fellow human being and despised him because of his poverty. The result was that he no longer wanted to live with his fellowmen. Overwhelmed with misery, he left the village. Then he went from place to place, always avoiding the haunts of men, till finally he came to the seashore. Thinking the Lord of Death might be there, he sought him along the shore.

One day, he met an old man walking towards him supporting himself with a staff.

“Where are you going, young man? The old man asked as he came up to him.

“I’m so miserably poor,” the unhappy young man replied, “that I no longer want to live in this world and I am looking for the Lord of Death.”

On hearing this the old man laughed heartily and said, “Young man, you really are out of your mind!”

The old man’s words discouraged the young man who was turning away when the old man reached out and caught hold of his hand.

“Wait!” said he, “You aren’t going away, are you? I am the Lord of Death you wanted to meet.”

“In that case, why are you looking at me like that, Lord of Death? Please take my life now. I have been waiting to die for such a long time.”

“Young man,” said the Lord of Death laughing, “though you may want to die now, you cannot die yet for your hour has not yet come. When the time comes, you will surely die even if it is against your will. You will not escape however hard you try to hide yourself.”

“Do please tell me when the day of my death will be.”

“On the seventh day after leaving this place, you will become a rich man. You will die ten years to the day after you have become rich. Here’s a bow and ten arrows. Use them as you like.”

With these words the Lord of Death disappeared.

The young man took the bow and arrows and went away. On the way he started to feel very hungry as he had had no food for two days. Looking round, he saw a bird and shot it with his bow and arrow. When he found that the bird he had shot was no ordinary one, but a golden bird he was delighted. With the golden bird in his arms, he continued his wanderings. After a short time he came to a town. There, he exchanged his golden bird for a good plot of land. Then, shooting an arrow from his bow, he commanded a house full of gold and silver to appear immediately. The house he wished for appeared at once and he became a rich man.

Time flew but he did not notice it, as he was enjoying himself living in his fine house complete with servants and every kind of luxury. Amidst all this, the words of the old man were forgotten.

But one day, when nine years and nine months had passed in this way, he dreamt in his sleep about his own past from the day before he became a rich man. He woke up really frightened. Only now did he remember what the Lord of Death had told him. “You cannot die yet even though you may want to die. After leaving this place you will become a rich man and on the day you have been a rich man for ten years, you will die.”

When he thought over the time he had spent enjoying the pleasures of wealth, he realized there were only three months left till the ten years were up. He began to fear that he would die at the end of those three months.

Next morning, he called his servants and told them to make a watertight box. They were to put in it enough food which would not go bad but last for three months and to take the box to the seashore.

On reaching the seashore, he gave his servants the same instructions again and again: “When I get inside, close and seal the box to make it watertight and let it down into the deep sea until it reaches the bottom. Then tie a really long, strong rope to the box. In three months counting from today, you must drag it back up onto the shore.” So saying, he got into the box.

His servants closed it and tied a long rope to it as he had instructed. This done, they dropped the box into the sea where it was really deep. The free end of the rope they tied to a tree at the edge of the seashore.

When the lord of Death looked at the list of people from this world who were to die, he found that the rich young man’s turn had come. “Oho, said he, “the rich young man’s turn has come. Now we will meet again.” With that he went to the world of men to look for the rich young man.

The Lord of Death looked for the rich young man in house after house in one big town after another, but failed to find him. Then he searched house after house in one small town after another. Again, he did not find him. The Lord of Death began to lose heart, but when he looked again at the list of people who were to die, he found that the rich young man was definitely on the list. So he searched everywhere again, but without success. Now the Lord of Death hardly knew what to do, but still he went on looking. He went over the hills and through the forest till he was weary.

The day on which the young man was to die came nearer and nearer till there were only two days left for him to live. Still the Lord of Death would not give up. He did his best to find the young man but could not. Finally, it looked as if the Lord of Death would have to stop searching. He walked along with weary feet until he reached a certain beach by the sea. He walked along the beach thinking he would rest for a while and bathe his tired limbs. Then suddenly he tripped on a rope and fell down. The Lord of Death was very angry. He began to pull up the rope, but it took him a long time as the rope was so long. In the end, however, a big box appeared at the end of the rope. The Lord of Death stared at the strange box in surprise. When he opened it, he found the rich young man inside.

“Young man,” he exclaimed angrily, “do you think you can escape by hiding like this? I am worn out looking for you. Come out of that box this minute!”

Frightened out of his wits, the rich young man got out of the box. He admitted that he had tried to escape and apologized to the Lord of Death.

“Lord of Death,” he begged him, “please spare my life. In return I will give you half my wealth.”

“Didn’t tell you before,” replied the Lord of Death, “that no one can die before his appointed day, no matter how much he may want to die? On the other hand when his day comes, there can be no delay. It is all the consequence of your Karma, of what you did in the past.”

Turning a deaf ear to the pleas of the rich young man, the Lord of Death, who grants no extra time to any man on earth, did not spare the rich young man who long before had once wanted to die at once, but who did not want to die when his time had come.

MASTER PO AND THE TIGER

A young boy, by the name of Master Po, used to leave his village every day and wander in the forest. He became friends with all the animals, especially the Tiger. Master P and the Tiger used to take long walks in the forest together. Master Po had a genuine affection for his friend, but the Tiger had an ulterior motive; he looked forward to the day when he could ask young Master Po to take him to the village, so that he could run away with a fat calf or tow belonging to the villagers. One day, the Tiger said to Master Po, "Friend Po, will you take me to your village?"

"I cannot do that, good Tiger," replied Master Po, "for the villagers all dislike you. You must remember that you have often pounced upon their cattle while at pasture outside the village."

"If you won't take me, I will go there by myself," said the Tiger petulantly.

That same evening, the Tiger loitered about the village gate. Master Po saw him, and said to him, "Friend Tiger, do not loiter about here, for the villagers are full of cunning, and they will trap you." But the Tiger merely laughed at this warning. Master Po stood at the gate, trying to persuade his friend to go back to the forest, but without success. It now became dark, and as his parents were calling him, Master Po went back to his house with a final warning to the Tiger. The Tiger waited until the villagers were all asleep. He then went into the village, and came out dragging a fat calf. Early the next day, Master Po went into the forest and found the Tiger. "Tiger," said Master Po, "we have been friends for a long time, so please heed my words. Tonight they are laying a trap for you, so do not come again to our village." But the Tiger laughed at the warning as before.

That night the Tiger entered the village, and was duly caught in the trap laid by the villagers. In the morning, the villagers found him. "We will let him rage and roar in the trap until he exhausts himself," agreed the villagers, "and we will let him die slowly of starvation and thirst." So they left the Tiger in the trap.

For six days the Tiger raged and roared, and Master Po felt sorry for his friend, but as he was afraid of a beating from his parents, he did not dare to set the Tiger free. On the seventh day, however, Master Po felt that it was worth a beating to save his friend, so he went and opened the trap. "Run away now, good Tiger," said Master Po, "for the sake of our friendship, I will face the anger of my parents and other villagers."

"Thank you," replied the Tiger, "but I must eat you, for I am exhausted and cannot hunt for prey." Master Po pleaded that as the animal owed him a debt of gratitude of freeing him, the Tiger should not eat him. The Tiger, in reply, contended that there was no such thing as a debt of gratitude. In the end, Master Po succeeded in persuading the Tiger that they should find a judge and let him decide their dispute.

Master Po and the Tiger went into the forest in search of a judge, and they met the Skull of a dead ox. They begged the Skull to decide their dispute. After listening to the arguments put forward by the disputants, the Skull gave his decision: "There is no such thing as a debt of gratitude. For example, my master made me plough his land for many years, but when I became old in his service, he killed me and ate me. So the Tiger should eat Master Po."

“I will eat you now,” roared the Tiger. But Master Po claimed the right of appeal to another judge. So Master Po and the Tiger went on until they met the Banyan Tree, whom they asked to decide their case. The Banyan Tree, after listening to the arguments put forward by the disputants, gave his decision: “There is no such thing as a debt of gratitude. For example, human beings rest in my shade from the heat and glare of the sun, yet they break my branches and take away my flowers. So the Tiger should eat Master Po.”

“I will eat you now,” roared the Tiger. But Master Po claimed the right of appeal to another judge. “Remember this is your last chance,” warned the Tiger, “for one is entitled to go before three courts only for the same dispute.” So the two went on until they met the Rabbit.”

“Wise Rabbit,” said they, “please decide our dispute.” After listening to the arguments of the disputants, the Rabbit said that he would have to visit the scene of the dispute, before he could give his decision.

So the Rabbit went with Master Po and the Tiger to the trap at the village. “Now,” said the Rabbit, “where were you, Tiger, when Master Po came to free you?”

“I was in the trap,” replied the Tiger.

“Show me exactly how you stood in the trap,” asked the Rabbit, and the Tiger went and stood in the trap. “Now, Master Po,” said the Rabbit, “close the trap first and then show me how you came and freed the Tiger.” When Master Po had locked the trap, the Rabbit shouted, “Stop! Do not free the Tiger.” The Rabbit then explained to the astonished Tiger and Master Po. “I have now restored the *status quo* of the disputants. The Tiger is back at his place, and Master Po is back at his place also. The dispute is now over.” The Rabbit then went back to the forest, and Master Po ran back to his home. The Tiger died of hunger and thirst a few days later.

THE OLD MAN IN THE MOON

Once there was an old man in a village, and he earned his living by pounding rice on hire. He had no friend nor companion, except for an old rabbit. The whole day, and part of the night when there was a moon, the old man pounded the paddy, and the old rabbit crouched nearby, eating the chaff that his master threw away.

One moonlit night the old man, while pounding the paddy, said to himself, "It is sheer waste of time sifting the grain from the chaff after pounding. If only I had an old woman with me, she could do the sifting besides keeping me and my rabbit company." The Moon-goddess heard his words, and felt sorry for him. The next day, assuming the form of an old woman, she came to the old man and kept him company. The whole day she sifted with a sieve the grain from the chaff, while the old man pounded the paddy. At nightfall, she went back to the sky.

Every day the Moon-goddess assumed the form of an old woman, and kept the old man and the rabbit company. At nightfall she always went away, for it was a moonlit night she had to go and look after her Moon, and for if it was a moonless night the old man did not need her help as he did not work in the dark. Weeks went by in this manner, until the old man asked, "Who are you? Why do you go away when night falls?" and the old woman replied that she was the Moon-goddess. "Take me and my rabbit to your Moon," pleaded the old man, "and let us live with you forever, for we are so lonely without you." So the Moon-goddess took the old man and the rabbit to her Moon, and let them stay with her forever.

When the moon is full, little children, nowadays gaze at it carefully, for, provided they are not "cry-babies", they will see in the moon the old man still pounding rice, and the old rabbit still eating the chaff that the old man throws away.

ORCHID

The orchid is a kind of flower liked by many people. Nevertheless, not many people know how this flower originally came to exist. The following is the story about the orchid's origin used to be told by the Chin Pon people.

Long ago, there lived in a Chin village two couples, Pi Lun and Pu Son Su, and also Pi Laing and Pu Ngiu Mu. Far from being strangers to each other, Pi Lun and Pi Laing were sisters born from the same womb. They all lived together in the same house both because of their being related and also because there were so few people in those days.

One day, Pu Son Su and Pu Ngiu Mu asked their wives to weave them a longyi each. Their wives said that in order to do this they would need porcupine quills and their husbands should go and look for a porcupine. The two men called their hunting gods which they would need on the trip and set out for the forest. The two of them travelled far and wide in their efforts to find a porcupine, but without success. They simply got tired out and wasted their time all for nothing. So they placed a chicken egg on a slab of stone and offered it to the Nat. As they were offering it, they prayed that they would get a porcupine. When they had done this, they continued their search until they found the animal. Now that they had found it, they returned home and with great joy presented it to their wives.

“Now please weave our longyis,” they said.

A week after the longyis had been woven, Pi Lun and Pi Laing saw a very beautiful young girl coming towards them. On her head the sisters were amazed to see a lovely sweet-smelling flower of a kind they had never seen in their lives before.

So Pi Lun said to the young girl, “We would like to know our little sister's name. Please tell us. And what is the lovely sweet-smelling flower you have in your hair?”

“My name is Pi San Hmun, and the flower I am wearing in my hair is the “tree-fork flower,” the young girl answered sweetly. She explained that the so-called “tree-fork flower” got its name from the fact that it was to be found growing in the forks of trees.

The two sisters, Pi Lun and Pi Laing, told their husbands the name of the young girl and the name of the flower. Then the two husbands curious to know how the “tree-fork flower” came into being, went out into the forest to find out. And indeed, when the two men reached the forest and tried to find out what they wanted to know, they learnt about the origin of the flower.

Now, they remembered that earlier they had gone into the forest to look for a porcupine so that they might each get a new longyi. When they had not been able to get the porcupine quills, they had placed a chicken egg on a slab of stone and had offered it to the Nat. They discovered that this egg which they had offered to the Nat, had been carried off by a crow. But the egg had got broken and had dripped here and there in the forks of trees. In the places where the egg had dripped down, it was said, plants with little flowers had sprung up. This was what they learnt about the origin of the flower.

Since that time, the Chin Pon People have called the orchid (called “tree-fork flower” in Myanmar) by the name *ar ek par*.

In the Chin hills, there are orchids of many shades, white, blue, red and yellow.

THE RAINBOW

The Queen of Syriam(Tanyin) died while expecting the birth of a child. But, when her funeral pyre was being lit the child was born. It was a girl and the king, her father, named her Princess Mwaynun. However, she could not be taken back to the city for it was believed that, as she was born in a cemetery, she would bring ill luck to it. So the king built her a palace near the cemetery. Later a town grew round the palace, which came to be known as Dalla.

Across the river-mouth there was the kingdom of Mingaladon, and the king's son Prince Nandar, fell in love with the princess of Dalla. The king of Mingaladon and his people disapproved of the romance, as they also considered that, as she was born in a cemetery, she would bring ill luck to the kingdom. The king gave orders that no boatman should row his son across to Dalla, and prohibited the prince from ever going across the river again.

The city of Mingaladon was very near to the stream in which Rain Cloud the Crocodile lived and, as the prince sadly gazed across the river, Rain Cloud happened to swim by. The crocodile went to the prince, and offered his services. The prince was grateful, but he remained sad. "Master," said Rain Cloud, "can I do nothing for you?"

"You cannot help me, Rain Cloud," replied the prince, "for who can help me to go to my beloved across the river without my father knowing?"

Rain Cloud proposed to carry him in his mouth when darkness had fallen. "Nobody can see you then," explained Rain Cloud, "and the king will never know that you have disobeyed his orders. Moreover, I will swim so swiftly that you will be in my mouth only for a few moments, and you cannot die for lack of air." The prince accepted Rain Cloud's suggestion, and every night the prince went across the river in the crocodile's mouth to his beloved princess, returning the next morning at dawn.

A female crocodile, by the name of Brownish, fell in love with Rain Cloud, but as he scorned her love she became his bitter enemy. She felt very jealous to see Rain Cloud going across the river, looking so proud with the precious burden in his mouth. Brownish, being a crocodile who had attained the age of one hundred years, transformed herself into a human being, and became a serving-maid to the princess. She was so wily and cunning that she soon became the favourite lady-in-waiting and confidante of the princess. One day she said to the princess, "My Lady, when your prince comes at night, do you sleep on his right or on his left?"

"On his left," replied the princess innocently, "using his left arm as my pillow."

"That shows that he doesn't love you enough," said the crocodile Brownish slyly. "If he really loves you, he will allow you to sleep on his right side, with his right arm as your pillow."

"Of course he will let me do anything I like," replied the princess indignantly.

"Try him tonight," suggested Brownish. "Ask to be allowed to sleep on the right, with your head on his right arm." The cunning crocodile suggested this because she realized that if a woman should sleep with her head on the right arm of a hero or a prince, ill-luck would befall him. Of course Brownish had no enmity towards the prince, but she knew that Rain Cloud

would get into trouble with the king of Mingaladon, should some accident happen to the prince while travelling across the river in his mouth.

That night when the prince came to the princess as usual, she asked to be allowed to sleep on his right side with her head on his right arm. "Beloved," replied the prince, "do you not know that ill-luck would befall me if you should sleep with your head on my right arm?"

But the princess thought that he was merely giving her an excuse as he did not love her enough to comply with her request. "You do not love me enough," said the princess. In the end the prince allowed the princess to sleep with her head on his right arm, so as to assure her that he loved her dearly.

Dawn came and the prince went down to the shore where the faithful Rain Cloud was waiting. The prince entered the crocodile's mouth, and Rain Cloud started on the return journey. But something came over the crocodile's mind, and he entirely forgot that the prince was in his mouth. He swam up and down the river for many hours and the prince fainted through the continued lack of air. In the city of Mingaladon the king and his courtiers were searching for the missing prince, and they came down in a body to the shore, hoping that the prince had gone only to his beloved, and that no untoward accident had befallen him. Rain Cloud saw the king on the river bank, and only then did he remember that his master the prince was in his mouth. Swimming swiftly to the shore, he opened his mouth and placed the prince at his father's feet. But the prince was dead. Rain Cloud was heart-broken and explained to the king how the prince came to be in his mouth. "I am ready to die and follow my prince," said Rain Cloud, "so punish me swiftly, my Lord."

"You have been a faithful servant to my son," said the sorrow-stricken king. "I pardon you. But for the sake of your dead master, swim back to the princess and acquaint her with the sad news." Rain Cloud swam swiftly across the river again, and told the princess that her beloved was dead. The princess became stricken with sorrow and remorse, for she felt that she was the cause of the prince's death by bringing ill-luck upon him. She soon died of a broken heart.

That day at sunset, at Mingaladon, the funeral pyre of the prince was lit, and over at Dalla the funeral pyre of the princess was lit also. The people, on both sides of the river, watched with sorrow the smoke from the funeral pyres rising into the sky. As they watched, they saw that the smoke from each pyre met over the river, and lo! a rainbow was formed.

THE RIGHTFUL OWNER

A long time ago, a man left his own village and went to another village in the hope of making money there, but toiled as he might he could not save anything. So he returned home penniless. On his way back to his own village, he was resting under a banyan tree when he saw a pot of silver among the roots of the tree. He was delighted, for in spite of three years' hard work which had brought him nothing, it seemed as if now at last his luck had turned with the discovery of this pot of silver.

He took the pot out from among the roots of the banyan tree. Just as he was doing this, he heard a voice from high up in the tree saying. "Don't take that pot of silver. It is not meant for you, it's meant for Ngato."

But the old man did not pay any attention to the voice from up the banyan tree. He took out the pot of silver and started for home with the pot on his shoulder. When darkness fell, he had covered about half the journey home.

He went to a certain house in a nearby village and asked if he might stay the night.

"I am a traveler who has come from very far away," he explained. "Please allow me to put up at your house for the night."

The good-natured house owner let the old man stay. Now the old man felt uneasy about his precious pot of silver, so he pretended to his host that it was only a pot of oil.

"I will keep my pot of oil here," said the old man. "If cats and mice should come, please frighten them away."

Being exhausted after his long journey, the old man fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow and nothing woke him. After midnight, the house owner's wife woke her husband up and told him that she was about to give birth. Then, except for the guest, the whole house woke up and made arrangements for the confinement. In due course she gave birth to a son. As the newborn child did not have any fingers, its grandmother said. "It's a Ngato. Just call him 'Ngato' so that he will be healthy." Thus she gave the baby its name.

As oil was needed in the delivery room, the baby's grandmother told her son: "The pot in the basket under the house is full of oil, but it is difficult to get at it at night. Take a little of the old man's oil for us to use now and we can fill his pot up again in the morning."

When the house owner opened the old man's pot to get oil, he found that it was full of silver. He took all the old man's silver, then put oil from the pot under the house into the old man's pot.

In the morning, when the old man was preparing to continue his journey, he took a casual look inside his pot. He was astonished not to find any sign of the silver. The pot was full of oil. How was he to tell his host when he had said from the beginning that the pot was full of oil? Gloomily, he took his pot of oil and left the house.

When he got home, he put the pot of oil aside in one corner with a heavy heart and sat looking miserable. His wife came back from the farm late that night. She did not ask how he had been

doing but as soon as she came indoors she said in a rush, "I have something important to tell you. When the banyan tree on the farm fell down, a pot of silver came out of it. As I could not carry the pot by myself, I left it. Please come straight away and bring it in for me."

When the old man caught the words "pot of silver," he said gloomily, "Enough, my wife, don't say any more about the pot of silver. If it is my rightful property, it will come to my house."

Now there was a thief hiding under the house waiting for an opportunity to rob them. When he heard what the old couple were saying, it seemed like a stroke of good luck for him, so he went to the old woman's farm to get the pot of silver. He found a big pot near the fallen banyan tree, just as the old woman had said. He opened the pot carefully and looked inside. He found some very poisonous snakes inside, but no silver. "The old couple know that I was hiding under their house," he thought to himself. "They are plotting my death. They said it was full of silver not snakes as a cunning way of luring me to the pot. Well, I will take my revenge on them," he thought. The thief then covered the pot full of snakes and closed it securely before bringing it back to the old man's house. Then he left it at the old people's door and went away.

His idea was that when morning came, either the old man or the old woman would open the door to come out. When they saw the pot, they would open it to look inside and then one of the snakes in it would certainly bite and kill them.

When morning came, the old woman opened the door and came out to do her work. Then to her surprise she found the pot which she had seen inside the hole in the banyan tree the previous day now standing by the door. She went into the house, woke up the old man and told him joyfully that the pot she had seen the previous day had come to their house.

"well," he said "if it is my rightful property it must come to my house." He got up, opened the pot and had a look inside. There was no sign of the snakes the thief had seen. The pot was full of silver.

TOO MUCH KNOWLEDGE MAKETH FOOLS

Once upon a time, there were four youths studying under the famous professor Disaparmauk of Taxila. They all came of rich families from different lands. Each followed his natural bent and specialized in different branches of study. One studied music and dancing; another studied medicine; another studied astrology; and the fourth, philosophy.

After studying for three years they were considered proficient in their respective subjects, and the time came to say good-bye to their professor and return to their respective parents. As a parting gift the professor gave them a cooking pot, as well as some grain, in order that they would have something to cook and eat should their dry rations run out before they reached home.

Then, as his final gift to his students, the professor gave them a piece of advice. "Remember," he said to them, "the four of you may be proficient, each in your own subject, but if you don't have the sense to act suitably to the time and circumstance of a situation, you may have to go hungry."

Not quite comprehending what the great teacher meant, they looked at one another, but said nothing, and after paying their respects to their professor, set forth on their journey home.

After travelling for a number of days their dry rations ran out and the pot and the grain given to them by their professor came in very useful indeed. "How thoughtful our great teacher is!" they felt and got down to the business of cooking themselves a meal. There was rice enough for all four of them all right, but they would have to do something about the curry. So they drew lots for the different tasks to be carried out in order to get a decent meal.

Thus, the man of music and dancing was to cook the rice. The medico was to buy meat and fish; the astrologer was to gather vegetables; and the philosopher was to get some ghee (which is clarified butter) to cook the curry in. And thus each set out to do his task.

The medico went to the nearest village and there in the bazaar he found various kinds of meat and fish. He looked around for some time and found that nothing suited him. His medical knowledge now seemed to warn him which meat or fish was indigestible, which not nutritious, which unseasonable, which would cause what disease, which would upset the stomach and which the bile, till finally he left without buying any meat or fish!

The philosopher, however, got the required ghee, which he packed in a green leaf, and retraced his steps. On the way he soon became lost in philosophical speculations. Ghee," he said to himself, "comes from cow's milk. Cows eat grass, and yes, leaves, too. Ah then, in a way, ghee comes from cow's milk, and cow's milk comes from leaves, and so the ghee and the leaf are related!" On and on he philosophized, quite happily unaware of the ghee in the leaf in his hand melting gradually and dripping.

By the time he met the medico, who was coming back empty-handed from the village market, there was nothing left of the ghee he had bought! He, too, was now empty-handed. The two of them looked at each other, not knowing whether to smile or weep and each recounted to the other what had happened to him, as they walked back to where the man of music and dancing

was supposed to be cooking the rice. But there to their horror, they found their friend looking as disconsolate as ever, moping beside a broken pot with the rice strewn all over the fire-place.

"Soon after the three of you left," wailed the cook, "I built a fire, rinsed the rice, put it in the pot, added the required amount of water, and placed the pot on the fire. After some time, the pot began to simmer, and then it started to boil. I watched and could not help but hear the bubbling noise of the boiling rice. To my ears it sounded so much like the rhythmic beats of music coming from a drum that I started dancing to it. And, ... and,..."

"And what happened?" asked his two friends. "And," continued the cook, "one backward kick of my right heel caught the pot. And there, as you can see, is the end of our rice!"

The other two, who had come back empty-handed, now found it quite easy to admit to the cook that they, too, had failed to accomplish what they had set out to do. Suddenly, they remembered their astrologer friend, who was to get some vegetables. Off they went to look for him in the forest, and there atop a tall bael tree was their friend, sitting tight.

Before they could say anything, the astrologer called out to them. "Hey, I've got all the tender bael leaves that should go well with our meal. See!" he said, holding up the leaves he had plucked.

"Then why are you still there astride that branch? What are you staying on there for?"

"Ah," replied the astrologer, "the climbing up was easy because at that moment I was under the influence of an ascending constellation. But now, the climbing down is quite a different matter. You see, the stars are not just right as yet and I am waiting for the moment when I'll be under the influence of a descending constellation."

"Oh, to hell with your stars and constellations!" the three on the ground yelled, almost in unison. "Just come you down!"

The poor astrologer was frightened out of his wits. He started to climb down — slowly, shakily. But he was trembling so much that he half-slipped and half-fell, and lay in a stunned heap on the ground. His three friends lifted him up and all he had were bruises and cuts. No tender bael leaves!

Now with no meal in sight, each began to realize how and why he had failed in carrying out his lot. Then, slowly, the wisdom of the parting advice given to them by their great teacher dawned upon them.

"Remember, the four of you may be proficient, each in your own subject, but if you don't have the sense to act suitably to the time and circumstance of a situation, you may have to go hungry."

WHY THE BUFFALO HAS NO UPPER TEETH

The buffalo and the Ox were cousins and they were very fond of each other. The Buffalo had two rows of fine teeth, but the Ox had only one row, which was his lower jaw. But the Buffalo was a kindly old thing, and when he had eaten his meal he would lend his upper teeth to the Ox.

The Horse was a wonderful dancer, and he was also a wonderful clown. He could sing very well too. He toured the sountryside dancing and singing and clowning. Everywhere the animals flocked to see the horse putting up a fine show.

One evening the Horse was giving a performance near the place where the Ox and the Buffalo were living. The Buffalo did not care for such frivolities, and for him to stay submerged in water up to the neck was better than any dancing or clowning. But the Ox was only a young animal, and he wanted to see the show. But as other animals went to such shows in all their finery, the Ox wanted to go with both rows of teeth, so that when he laughed at the jokes of the clown, all the world see that he had two rows of lovely teeth. So after he had finished eating his evening meal, he did not return the teeth to his cousin, but slipped away to the place where the Horse was performing.

The Ox strutted up to the front and took his seat. On the stage the Horse danced, and the animals clapped their hands. The Horse now performed acrobatic tricks, and recited humorous verses, until the animals were prostrate with uncontrollable laughter. The Ox laughed with his mouth wide open, and the Horse saw the two rows of ivory teeth. The Horse also had no upper teeth, and felt very jealous that the stupid-looking Ox should have them. So he thought of a trick.

The Horse finished his act and he sat down amidst applause. "Oh, Horse," said the animals, "you are wonderful."

"My friends and patrons," replied the Horse, "I could entertain you more if someone would lend me his upper teeth, for then I could talk better and sing better." Up jumped the foolish Ox and taking out his upper teeth, handed them to the Horse. The Horse expressed his thanks to the Ox, and after resting for some minutes continued his performance. He sang a merry song, and the animals roared with laughter. Then he turned a back somersault, and the animals clapped their hoofs in joy. He turned another back somersault, and he was off the stage. The animals clapped the more. Then the Horse give another back somersault, and now he was quite a distance from the stage. As the animals cheered his acrobatic trick, he suddenly turned his back to the audience, and ran with all his might. The Ox, crying, "Stop thief, return me my upper teeth," chased the Horse, but as the Horse was such a fine runner, very soon he was over the hills and far away.

That is why at the present day the Buffalo has no upper teeth. Even now, the Buffalo wails, "It's mine, it's mine." The Ox to support his cousin's claim, cries, "That's true, that's true." And the Horse laughs in reply "Hee, hee, hee," for he still possesses the upper teeth gained from the Ox at that performance of long ago.