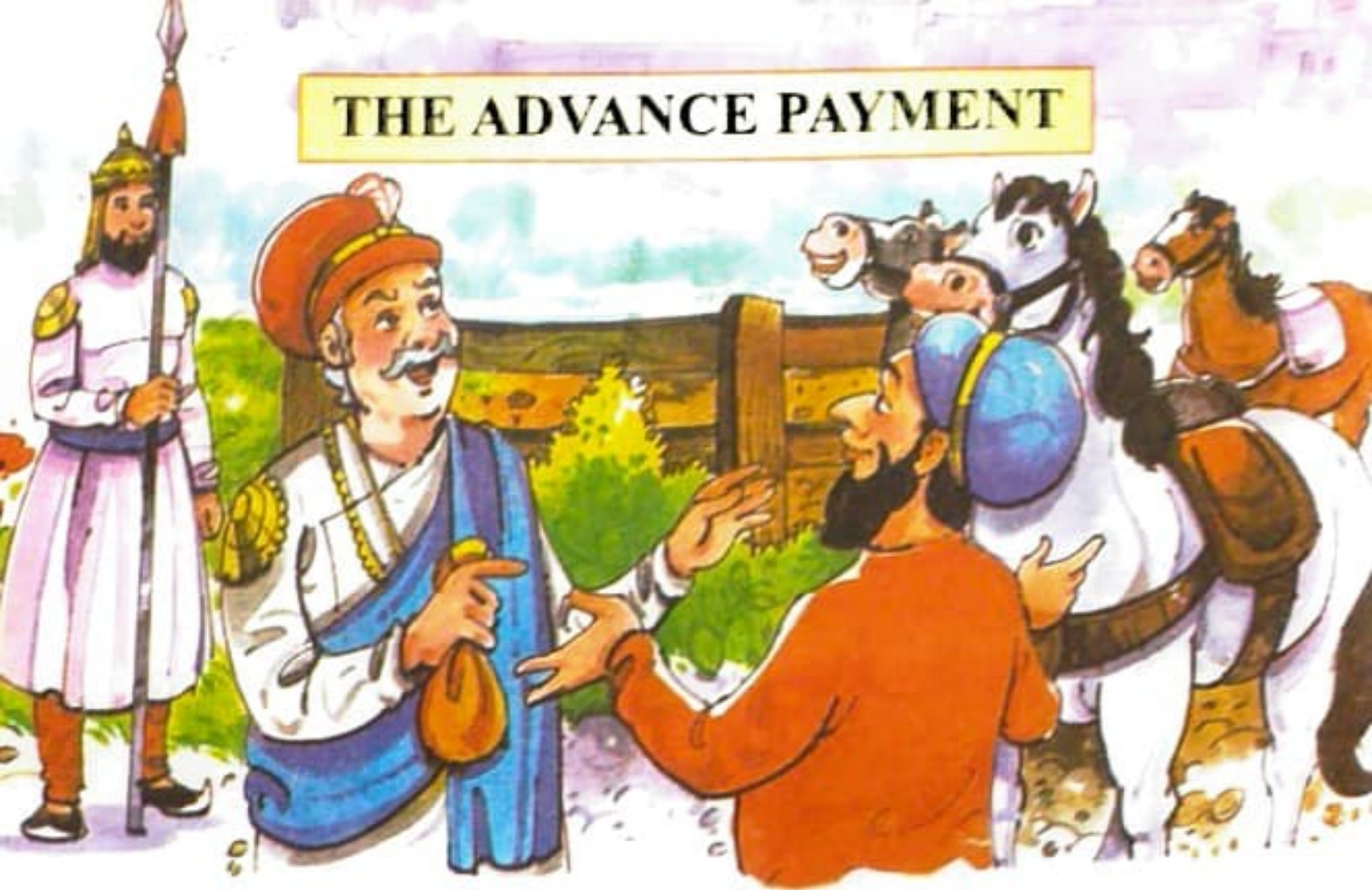
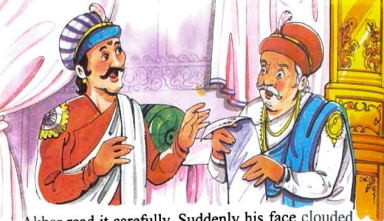


## THE ADVANCE PAYMENT



Once a horse trader came to the court of Emperor Akbar. He wanted to show the emperor some Arabian horses. Akbar was a great lover of good horses. After inspecting the horses, he liked them so much that he bought all of them and even paid advance money to the trader to get him more of such horses. The trader took the money and left the court. Months rolled by but he did not come back. He simply disappeared from the kingdom. Birbal felt very upset by this thoughtlessness on the emperor's part. Akbar completely forgot about the horse trader.

Some days later, the emperor asked Birbal to compile a list of all the fools in the kingdom. Birbal thus got an opportunity against the emperor's unmindful attitude. When Birbal presented the list,



Akbar read it carefully. Suddenly his face clouded with anger. He asked Birbal to be called immediately.

“Birbal,” roared the emperor as soon as he saw him entering the chamber, “what is my name doing in this list?” The emperor sounded very angry.

“Well, Your Majesty, is it not true that you have been cheated by the horse trader?” asked Birbal.

“If the horse trader cheated me, does it mean that I am a fool?” asked Akbar.

“Was it not foolish to trust a stranger? You should have made inquiries about him,” answered Birbal.

“When the trader returns...,” the emperor began to say. “I will remove your name from this list,” Birbal said completing the sentence. Akbar kept quiet as he had realised his mistake.