

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. Travellers 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 has 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.

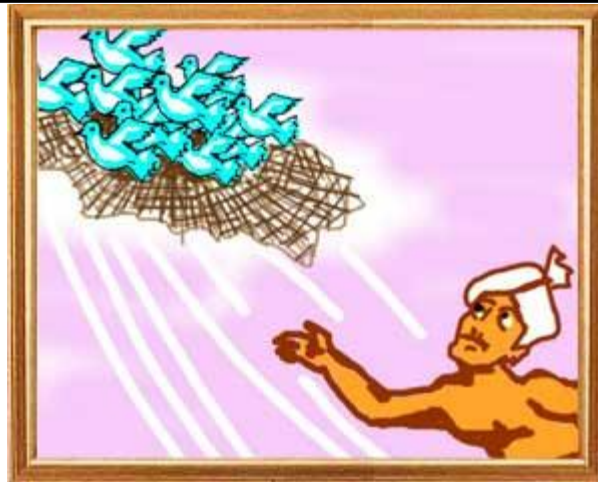
Chitrgriva and his retinue, however, kept their cool in the face of danger. He appealed to his friends not to panic. Elders have said that they tide over danger, who are not scared by crisis.

"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 Chitrgriva. 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 ruing 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, Chitrgriva 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 Chitrgriva, king of the doves. Come out soon.” Hiranyaka came out and was happy to see Chitrgriva with his retinue and asked what was the matter. 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 Chitrgriva.

Hiranyaka said,

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

After delivering this sermon, the rat set out to free Chitrgriva first. But the king of doves pleaded with him to first liberate his friends. The rat was angry and reminded Chitrgriva that it was fair that the king became free first and then the servants. “No, it is not like that,” countered Chitrgriva. “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 Chitrgriva and retinue and went back into his fort.

Seeing the whole drama of Hiranyaka liberating Chitrgriva 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.”

The Crow-Rat Discourse



After he saw how Hiranyaka had helped Chitrgriva, Lagupatanaka came down from his tree perch and called out the rat in a voice resembling that of Chitrgriva. 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 Chitrgriva 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.

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 honored 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 recognise 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."

Recognising 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 recognise 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.

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."

"Realising 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."

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 favoured 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 un husked 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 un husked 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 realised 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.

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 neighbour 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 realised 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 realised 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 saviour. 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.

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 fibres 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 Somalika 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.

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 realised 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.



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