



TALES  
OF  
ASIA



DEDICATED TO THE CICA 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

# TALES OF ASIA



NUR-SULTAN

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Tales of Asia  
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The Collection of Fairy Tales of the peoples of Asia is intended to mark the 30th anniversary of CICA. On the pages of this Collection, young and adult readers will be able to plunge into the world of fabulous lore of Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Palestine, Qatar, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam; gain new knowledge and expand the spiritual and moral horizons about the culture of magnificent Asia



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## FOREWORD

Dear reader,

Let me present to your attention a Collection of Fairy Tales from Member States of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

The year 2022 is marked by an important milestone for CICA – celebration of the 30th anniversary of our forum.

It has become a good tradition to celebrate anniversaries with commemorative activities. This publication aims to strengthen cultural and humanitarian ties among the peoples of the CICA Member States, introduce children to the vast geography and rich traditions of diverse Asia, as well as develop tolerance among the younger generation.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Palestine, Qatar, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam for cooperation and promotion of universal spiritual and moral ideals.

On the pages of this Collection, one will discover a variety of national features, traditions, cultures and values of the peoples of Asia. A theme that resonates through the lines of the fairy tales is the desire of the peoples of the great continent to promote mutual understanding, spiritual enrichment, reciprocity, interaction with the outside world.

From generation to generation, by word of mouth, the elders pass on to the younger generation a wealth of folk wisdom, original cultural flavours, subtle humour and cautionary tales. All this is collected in our publication and designed for children of different ages, as well as for adults.

For example, the Thai “Story of Makatho” brings us back to the time of the Sukhothai Kingdom, and a Vietnamese fairy tale called “The Story of One Hundred Eggs” informs of the origin of the Vietnamese people and why they refer to themselves as the grandchildren of



the dragon and fairy. A fairy tale from Bahrain called “Enki and Ninhursag” tells us about a happy and safe life in the sacred land of Dilmun.

The Indian fairy tale “The Grateful Elephant” reminds about the importance of selfless service to people; “Truthfulness and Peace with the Opponents” from Iran – about virtue and decency; the Turkish story “The Reward for Kindness” – about the triumph of justice.

The Collection also includes a fairy tale about a smart girl by Jordanian author Khadija Mohmoud Mazari, and an Azerbaijani fairy tale about a savvy little man named Djirtdan. In a fairy tale from Bangladesh, we learn about an unbelievable miracle of the kingdom of Dharma – a peacock woven from yarn, while a Palestinian fairy tale narrates about a dream of a little boy to become a poet.

The Kazakh fairy tale “The Bear and the Mosquito” tells us about the value of joint efforts and interaction in resolving problems, and so does the Russian folk tale “The Turnip”. The Chinese fairy tale “Summer” once again reminds readers of the eternal importance of mutual help and support, when the strong selflessly helps the weak.

One can learn about traditional family values, harmony and love in the Kyrgyz fairy tale about the magic stork and the Korean fairy tale about the good brothers. A similar theme of true and loyal friendship is touched upon by the Qatari fairy tale. A folk tale of Cambodia tells us about overcoming difficulties and trials for the sake of friendship between Ah Kvak (“blind”) and Ah Kven (“paralyzed”).

The theme of strong, skilled, brave and savvy warriors is revealed in the fairy tales from Mongolia and Uzbekistan.

These and many other wonderful fairy tales of the peoples inhabiting Asia, different in their motives or styles of storytelling, but united by a common theme of peace, friendship and good neighbourliness, echo the goals and principles of CICA.

People say, “Fairy tales are like old friends — you need to visit them from time to time.” And in this sense, CICA will continue to promote cultural diversity on the Asian continent.

Ambassador Kairat Sarybay,  
Executive Director  
CICA Secretariat



## DJIRTDAN

Some live their lives, some never live, but one old woman surely did. She had a son the size of a finch who from top to toe measured barely an inch. A hat down to his nose and a shirt to his toes, he'd a look in his eye that was sly, sly, sly. He might have been slight, but, boy, was he bright. He lived in a land called Azerbaidjan, and the people called him Djirtdan, which means "Shorty" in that land.

One day the neighbours' girls and boys were going to the forest to gather firewood. Djirtdan ran home and said,

"Mother, let me go with the other girls and boys into the forest!"

The old woman called the children and gave them a bun. They all got one. She said, "Be good and look after my son."

The children went to the forest and began to gather firewood. Only not Djirtdan, who did just as he pleased, running about in and out of the trees.

The children said,

"Hey, Djirtdan, why don't you gather firewood?" But Djirtdan said,

"Because my mother gave you a bun, so you could gather the firewood rather than her son!"

So then the children gathered firewood specially for Djirtdan. They were tying their firewood into bundles and piling the bundles on each other's backs, but still Djirtdan did nothing, shirking the work.

The children said,

“Hey, Djirtdan, why don’t you take your firewood and carry it home?” But Djirtdan said,

“My mother gave you all a bun so you would carry firewood back home for her son.”

So what could they do? The children took Djirtdan’s bundle of firewood and walked through the forest, taking turns to carry it. They looked around and what did they see? Djirtdan far behind, sobbing under a tree.

So they asked him,

“Hey, Djirtdan, what’s making you cry?” But Djirtdan was being sly, sly, sly.

“I’m tired ... My mother gave you a bun, not forgetting anyone, and asked you all to look after her son. Carry me on your backs and take me home!”

So what could they do? They had to carry Djirtdan on their backs.

The children walked in the forest, carrying Djirtdan’s bundle, carrying Djirtdan. They walked and walked and went astray, and then night fell and they’d completely lost their way. At last they came out of the forest, but didn’t know where to turn. To the left of them some dogs were whining, to the right of them a light was shining. They asked Djirtdan,

“Which way should we go? The way we hear the dogs are whining, or the other way to where the light is shining?”

“If we go to where they whine, the dogs will bite; perhaps we’ll find the way if we go towards the light.” Djirtdan replied.

They went to the light and came to a cave. But in that cave lived the giant Dev, with horns on his head as sharp as blades and teeth that looked the size of spades, a thunderous voice that left you numb ... but luckily he was also very dumb. He invited the children in to sup, and thought now he could gobble them up. He gave his guests stale tack to eat and put them on the floor to sleep. He waited till he thought they slept and up towards them quietly crept.

“Who’s fast asleep and who’s awake?”

Djirtdan heard, raised his head and spake,

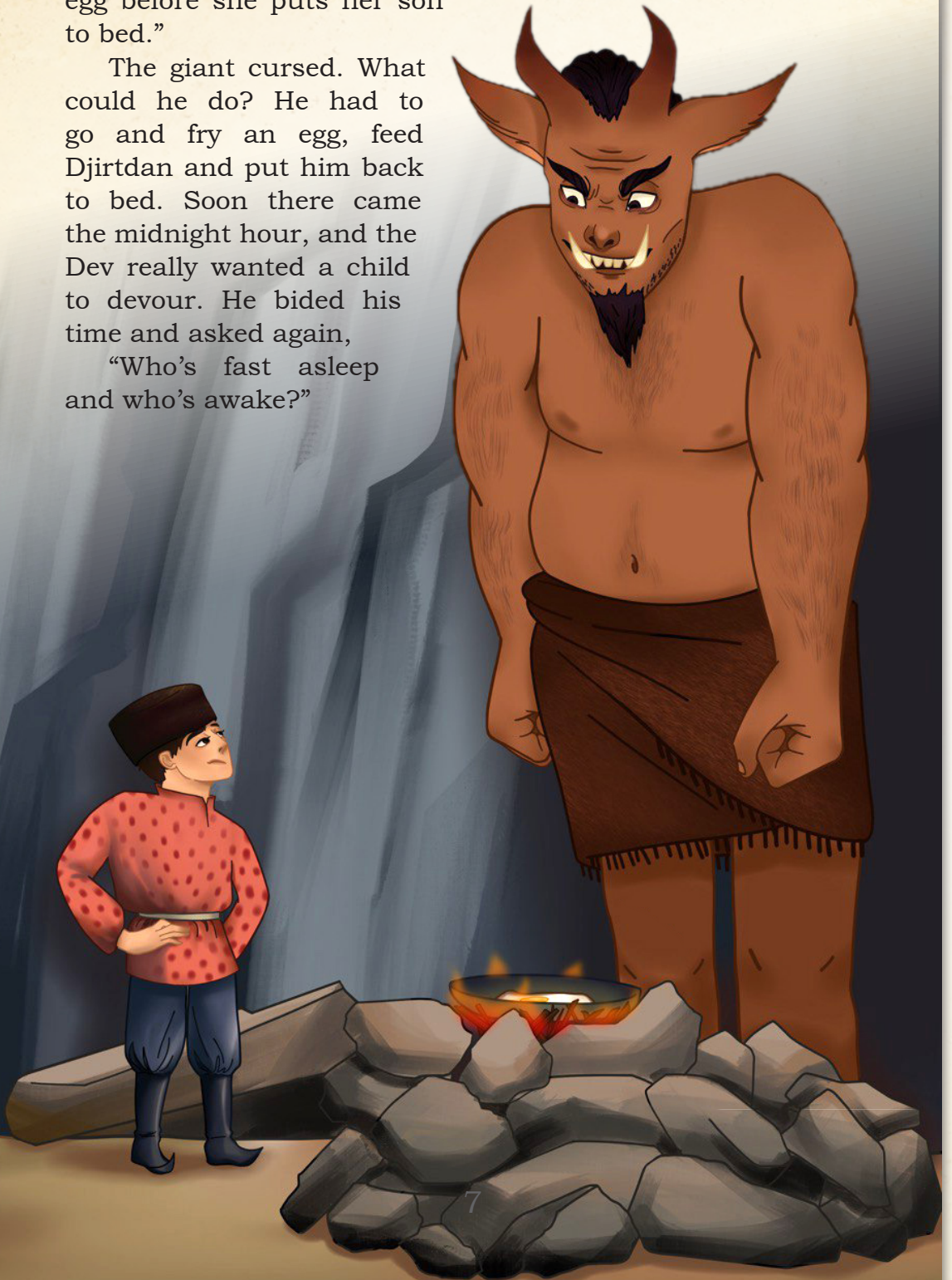
“The children sleep – Djirtdan’s awake!”

“And why can’t little Djirtdan sleep?” the giant asked.

“He cannot sleep unless he eats. His mother always fries an egg before she puts her son to bed.”

The giant cursed. What could he do? He had to go and fry an egg, feed Djirtdan and put him back to bed. Soon there came the midnight hour, and the Dev really wanted a child to devour. He bided his time and asked again,

“Who’s fast asleep and who’s awake?”





Again Djirtdan heard, raised his head and spake,  
“The children sleep – Djirtdan’s awake!”

“Why doesn’t little Djirtdan sleep? What’s keeping him so wide awake?” asked the Dev.

“He cannot sleep,” he said, “because without a drink of water Djirtdan never goes to bed. His mother brings him water from the river in a sieve to drink before he lays down his sleepy head.” The Dev seized a sieve and ran to the river for water.

Djirtdan jumped up and woke the children.

“The Dev wants to gobble us up! Let’s escape!”

Up jumped the children and ran like the wind, soon finding a ford, stepping over the stones, crossing the river in their bid to escape.

Back on the other side of the river, the Dev was carrying water in a sieve. He filled half the sieve and climbed the bank, only to find the sieve was empty. He filled the sieve to overflowing, ran as fast as his legs could carry him, but halfway back the sieve was empty! He ran from the river, he ran back to the river, in such a sweat, so out of breath, completely spent. He raised his head and there, on the other side of the river, he saw the children standing tall, laughing, and little Djirtdan loudest of all.

“Oh, nice, kind Djirtdan, tell me how you crossed the river?” begged the Dev.

And Djirtdan told him what to do,

“Find a millstone, a really big one, and put it round your neck. Then come into the river where the water is deepest, and that way you will cross the river.”

The Dev ran, the Dev found a millstone, a really big one, and put it round his neck, and went into the river where the water was deepest. He took three great steps, choked and spluttered and drowned. And that is how little Djirtdan tricked the giant Dev and saved his friends. And this is the story of Djirtdan, and that is how it ends.





Saidul Islam, Naogaon

## THE YARN PEACOCK

There was a king named Jamshed in the kingdom of Dharma. One day he became the father of a son. Excited, he called in the Wazeer and told, "Wazeer, the birth of my son made my palace full of light. Today I am extremely happy. You beat the drums across the kingdom, I want to see the unseen to celebrate his birth. I will give one lakh gold coins to the person who can show me an unseen thing."

The Wazeer asked, "What do you mean by unseen thing?"

Jamshed replied, "The thing that none has seen is the unseen one. I will give one lakh gold coins to the person who can show me such an unseen thing. You go and beat drums and declare my will."

The Wazeer followed the order. He announced everywhere that the King Jamshed wished to see the unseen and he will give one lakh gold coins to the person who can show him such an unseen thing.

Listening to the announcement, an elderly woman from the south village thought, "I'll go to the royal court with my torn kantha. Being a rich person the king might have not seen such a torn kantha. Showing it to him I will bring the gift of one lakh gold coins."

A widow from north village thought, "I will carry my curved gourd to the court because I am sure that a king does not include such cheap vegetable in his food. He must have rich foods including fish and meat. He never has seen such a curved gourd. Seeing the gourd he will be happy and will give me one lakh gold coins."

An elderly peasant while tilling his land heard the announcement and thought, "The king remains inside the palace. He has never seen the plow-yoke. I will take my plow-yoke to the court and show him for getting the one lakh gold coins."

The Wazeer then beat drums at a market place. Listening to the announcement, a blacksmith told the Wazeer, "Wazeer sahib, I will make beautiful shoal fish with iron. Putting the iron shoal fish in the water if you clap your hands, the fish will start swimming. None has seen such a shoal fish. I will be the only person who will receive the one lakh gold coins."

The Wazeer told the blacksmith to go to the court in time.

When the Wazeer was about to leave the market place, a young girl told, "Wazeer sahib, I am a weaver's daughter. I can make yarn peacock. I want to show the king my peacock."

The Wazeer asked, "How can a yarn peacock be worthy to show?" The weaver's daughter explained, "Wazeer sahib, it looks simple but it's not an ordinary thing. My yarn peacock is without soul but it can fly if I order and comes back when I order to come back. Nobody has seen such a peacock. The king will surely be happy and give me one lakh gold coins."

The Wazeer asked all of them to go to the royal court the next morning.

The next morning, the elderly woman and the widow first reached the palace of the King Jamshed. Just after them, came the peasant with his plow-yoke.

The king asked the elderly woman, "Why have you come with your torn kantha?"

The elderly woman replied, "I know that a king sleeps on expensive bed covered with luxurious bed covers. You might not have seen a torn kantha."

The king then asked the widow why she had brought her curved gourd. The widow replied, "My lord, I came with the hope of getting one lakh gold coins. I thought that being a king you have not seen the cheaper vegetable curved gourd."

King Jamshed ordered the Wazeer, "Give each of them ten thousand gold coins and tell them to go away."

The king then asked the peasant, "O my peasant, why have you brought your plow-yoke? I am not going to grow crop inside the royal court!"

The peasant answered, "Huzur, I thought you had not seen a real plow-yoke!"

The king told, "Being a king, I know how you cultivate land to grow crop for feeding all of the people of my kingdom. Please go back to your field."

The peasant went back. The king asked the Wazeer, "Is there no one in my kingdom who can show me some unseen thing? How can I fulfill my wish?"

The Wazeer said, "Huzur, a blacksmith and a weaver's daughter are to come. Please keep patience."

The blacksmith reached the court immediately. He brought shoal fish made of iron in a pot. He said, "Huzur, I am a blacksmith. I live on beating iron. I have made something quite unseen by anyone. Look into the pot to find the shoal fish and its fry. They all are made of iron. If you leave them in the water and clap your hand, they will swim."

The king said, "Then let me see the unseen thing".

The blacksmith left the shoal and the fry in the pond in front of the palace of King Jamshed. He requested the king to clap his hands. The king clapped his hands. Instantly, the iron shoal started swimming. The swarm of the fry followed the adult shoal.

In the meantime, the weaver girl arrived at the royal court with her yarn peacock. She said to the king, "Huzur, sorry for being late. We, the weavers, have no way to make hurry. If we are slightly unmindful, the yarn may get twisted. So we need to be very cool and calm at the work. However, I have brought my yarn peacock to show you. This peacock has no life, but it does as I say. It can fly in the sky with a two and half a day old baby on its back."

The king said, "Really! Okay weaver girl, let me see the unseen thing."

Taking the yarn peacock out, the weaver girl said, "Huzur, if you really want to see the unseen, please bring a two and half a day old baby".

The king ordered the Wazeer to bring a two and half a day old baby. But the Wazeer failed to execute the order. Then the king said, “Wazeer, I must see the unseen thing. Manage a right baby at any cost.”

The Wazeer said, “I am afraid to say, your son is barely two and a half day old.”

King Jamshed thought a while and then asked the weaver girl, “I hope my son will not be harmed, right?”

The weaver girl told, “Huzur, my yarn peacock will fly in the sky with your son on its back. But before it goes behind the sky you have to ask me for telling the peacock to come down. It will come down safely.”

The king went to the queen to fetch the baby. The queen felt afraid and was not willing to endanger the new-born prince. Still she could not go against the king’s will. She wrote address of the baby prince on a small piece of paper – Matiur Rahman, son of king Jamshed, in the kingdom of Dharma – and the address will work if ever needed. The address was sewn into the baby’s pocket.

After that, the weaver girl said to the king, “Huzur, please put your son on the back of the peacock.”

King Jamshed did so.

The weaver girl said aloud, “O may yarn peacock, fly in the sky”. The yarn peacock flew upward. The two and half a day old baby on the back of the peacock flapped in the blue sky. A few minutes later, the weaver girl thought that the unseen thing of the blacksmith might become the shareholder of the one lakh gold coins! So, she called the peacock and said aloud, “My yarn peacock, please come down and eat the fish and the fry in the pond and then go up again”. In a moment, the yarn peacock came down, ate all the fishes in the pondwater and flew away again. The king felt fascinated to see the strange thing. After







eating fish, gaining more energy, the yarn peacock flew high above the blue sky. It reached almost to the clouds.

The weaver girl said, “Huzur, it is high time you allowed me to tell my yarn peacock to come back with your son”. But the king was too fascinated to allow the weaver girl to tell the peacock to get down. Meanwhile, the yarn peacock went inside the clouds.

The king said to the weaver girl, “O my weaver girl, tell your peacock to come back”.

The weaver girl replied, “Huzur, as I said before, after getting inside the clouds, my yarn peacock would no longer listen to me! It has gone behind the clouds and now I have no power to turn it back”.

Being angry, the king captured the weaver girl and ordered his soldiers to keep a stone on her chest. In the jail the weaver girl went on crying.

Meanwhile, the yarn peacock with the two and half a day old baby boy reached the realm of fairies called Paristan.

There was an elderly woman gardener in Paristan. She was used to give flower to the king of Paristan in exchange for twenty taka. But one day she found that all of the flower plants in the garden had died. There was no flower. The woman gardener got frustrated thinking of her stoppage of earning.

All of a sudden, the yarn peacock got tired and hung on one of the dead rose plants in the garden of the elderly woman gardener. Immediately, the plant became fresh and flowered. Excited, the elderly woman gardener rushed to collect flowers. While picking flowers, she heard a baby crying in the twigs of the rose plant. It was a twelve-day-old cute baby. The elderly woman gardener started to raise the baby as her own child. She named him Matiur.

Time passed by. The baby, son of King Jamshed, became sixteen years old. One day the boy made a threadless flower garland and put it inside the elderly woman gardener’s flower bouquet. While receiving the bouquet from the elderly woman gardener, the king of Paristan got surprised to see the threadless garland. He asked the gardener, “Why did not you say that you know how to make threadless flower garland?” The woman



gardener could not answer because she was unfamiliar with this threadless garland. She said to the king of Paristan, “My lord, I will answer you tomorrow.” That day, the king gave her one hundred and twenty taka.

Coming back home, the elderly woman gardener of Paristan asked Matiur, “Did you make the garland without yarn, my boy?” Matiur answered in the affirmative.

The next day, the elderly woman gardener gave two threadless garlands to the king of Paristan and told him that her son has the expertise of making threadless flower garland. The king of Paristan wished to see her son.

The woman gardener the next day took Matiur to the royal palace of Paristan. Matiur took three threadless flower garlands – two garlands in his two hands and one garland around his neck.

He gave one garland to the king of Paristan, one to the queen. The king gave him one lakh taka and the queen gave him her diamond garland. After that, Matiur took off the third threadless garland from his neck and gave it to the princess of Paristan. Pleased, the princess fell in love with Matiur. The king of Paristan married the princess to Matiur.

That night, the yarn peacock met Matiur and told, “I need to tell you that the elderly woman gardener is not your real mother. It is time for you to leave Paristan to your parents. I can fly taking you and your wife on my back. But when you will have a child I will not be able to take the three persons back.”

Listening to the yarn peacock, Matiur asked the elderly woman gardener if the statement of the yarn peacock was true. The elderly woman gardener confessed that the statement of the yarn peacock was quite true.

The yarn peacock flew again with Matiur and the princess on its back towards the kingdom of Dharma.

After return, the yarn peacock told the weaver girl about what happened in the kingdom of Paristan behind the clouds. Getting back his son, King Jamshed freed the weaver girl and gave her one lakh gold coins. The whole kingdom of Dharma celebrated the return of the prince and received the princess of Paristan with big festivities.



## MONRI MANGTSMUI

The world was created a long time ago. In a forest a pair of doves nested. They made the nest of straws. One day, two eggs were laid. They hatched the eggs. Two baby doves were born. They had been growing in the air and light of the world. One day, the parent doves went to collect grains for their babies. In the meantime, fire burnt the forest. Before flying in the sky, the baby doves died. To mourn the death of the children, the parent doves also sacrificed themselves in the fire. In their rebirth, they became Sathanu and Monri.

Domaroy was the king of the heaven. From his kingdom, one day, a few Ching came down to the earth. Seeing the forests, flowers and falls across the hill tract of Bangladesh, they were captivated. Another day, being attacked by a wild cow, they went back to the heaven of Domaroy. Returning to the heaven, the Ching began to sing and dance praising the worldly forests, flowers and falls. The seven fairy princesses, who looked similar, in Domaroy, heard the song of the Ching. Knowing about the worldly beauty, the princesses became impatient for taking bath in the lake in-between the hills. They sought their father's consent for descending down the earth.

Domaroy said, "No. Don't go to the world, my dear daughters. I have dreamt a horrific dream."

The princesses asked, "What dream, father?"

Domaroy said, "I dreamt that seven lotus had bloomed in our alluring lagoon. The lotuses looked as beautiful as you are. Suddenly, a ferocious demon appeared, picked a piece of lotus

and went away. I knew what the meaning of this dream was. You please do not wish to visit the world.”

Listening to Domaroy, the fairy princesses said, “Unless you agree to our wish of going to the world, we won’t touch any food of the heaven”. Saying so, they turned their faces about. Seeing the toughness and determination of the princesses, the members of the royal house softly opined, “Your majesty, you may permit them to go. You know, there are means of making the effect of a dream affirmative.”

Domaroy told his daughters, “Al right my daughters. But you have to perform Supreme Chibar Offering. In one night, you will collect cotton, make seven ocher Chibars and donate to the Buddhist Temple. Thus Lord Buddha will bless you. Then you may go to the world.”

Accordingly, the princesses in a night collected cotton, made yarn, colored the yarn and made seven sacred uniforms called Chibar. Then they donated the Chibars to the Buddhist Temple. After that, they travelled down the world.

The fairy princesses got fascinated by the splendor of the falls and reflection of the sunlight on the lake water in the hilltract of Bangladesh. They swam there with contentment. In the evening, they flew back to the heaven. From then onward, the seven fairy princesses would regularly visit the hilly lakes and enjoy water sports. But, one day a hunter came across the sight of the fairies in the water. For imprisoning the fairies, he sought assistance of Nagaraja living in the cave to the south of Kidang Hill. Nagaraja gave strong poison to the hunter who cast net of poison over one of the fairy princesses. It was the youngest princess name Monri Mangtsmui. The hunter wished to marry Monri. But Monri addressed the hunter as brother. The hunter then introduced Monri with the Marma prince Sathanu. Sathanu married Monri and the hunter became their slave. After marriage, heavenly fairy Monri sang –

I came from the far sky  
Where cotton blooms over hills  
I fell in love with the world  
I got charmed to see the hilly lake of Bangladesh.

After that, Monri prayed to Lord Buddha, “May I never return to heaven.”

The conjugal life of Monri and Sathanu went on happily. Monri started preaching the religion of Lord Buddha in the palace of the Marma king. This made the priestly Brahmins afraid of the damage of the traditional religion and loosing of their clergy profession. They thought they would starve to die in future.


In course of events, a war began between the Marma kingdom and the neighboring kingdom. Sathanu had to go to the warfield. In the meantime Monri gave birth to a boy child.

In such time, one day the Marma king had a dream. He told Monri, “O my fairy daughter-in-law, I dreamt last night that a white elephant came out of my tummy, circled the palace seven times and again entered into my tummy. Do you know what the meaning of this dream is?”

Monri told, “It was a very happy dream, father. The white elephant means the kingdom and the kingship. You will see that your son will have won the war and come back as a hero.”

Knowing the meaning of his dream, the king invited all of the Brahmin priests to come to the palace. The traditional priests by this time were involved in deep conspiracy against the rise of the Buddha religion. When the king had shared his dream with the priests, they said, “Your majesty, it was a very bad dream. There is warning message of the death of your son Sathanu. But you can overcome this crisis by sacrificing Monri in our traditional temple.” Advised by the Brahmin priests, the king planned to sacrifice Monri at the traditional temple. A priestess of the traditional temple informed Monri of the conspiracy of killing her. She advised Monri to fly up the heaven for saving life. But Monri said, “I cannot leave for heaven leaving my child behind. On the other hand, as my child is a worldly creature, it is not possible to take him to the heaven.” The priestess said, “Leave your child. He will remain safe. If you delay, they will slaughter you.”

Before leaving the world, Monri had left a ring to a monk living in the deep forest.



Sathanu came back after winning the war. Without seeing Monri, he became wild and left home. After travelling long ways, he came across the Monk in the deep forest. The monk gave the ring of Monri to Sathanu and told him how he could go to the heaven.

Following the instruction of the monk, Sathanu through a laborious journey reached the heaven. The king of heaven Domaroy tested Sathanu's strength and intellect and found him a perfect man who can marry a fairy of the heaven. According to the convention of the heaven, Sathanu and Monri were again married and sent to the world.

When Sathanu and Monri got back to the world, they found one hundred years had passed by. The child of Monri and Sathanu in the meantime had become an old man. However, Monri and Sathanu felt awfully happy to get their child back.





## THE STORY OF ILI-IPPAŠRA AND HIS DAUGHTER

King Ilī-ippašra ruled over the land of Dilmun (what is modern – day Bahrain) in the first half of the 14 TH century BC. He had a beautiful daughter whom he loved very much and wanted to see her excel in everything she did. To that end, he sent her to a boarding school in the sacred Sumerian city of Nippur (in modern – day Iraq), sending with her an escort and everything she may need during her stay. Every month he would send delegates to check on his his cherished daughter, as well as gifts to her and her caretakers.

King Ilī-ippašra would anxiously await the delegates' return to get updates on the princess who was away in the land of Sumerians studying diligently to return as an educated royal and oversee the social and cultural activities of the people of Dilmun.

One day, King Ilī-ippašra got word of an illness that befell his beloved daughter, but he was unable to leave the kingdom and visit her. He sent her all the medicines and gifts he could find, and even sent his personal doctor. Upon receiving clear tokens of love, the princess recovered from her illness and was able to continue her studies and return at last to her father, a healthy educated woman of whom he was supremely proud.

A royal reception was held in her honor befitting the kings of the which there is sickness, death or sorrow, according to the famous Epic of Gilgamesh.



## THE STORY OF ENKI AND NINHURSAG

When the water god Enki searched for a place to live happily and safely with his love, the goddess Ninhursag, no place was beautiful to settle and call home than the land of Dilmun, a place which legends described as being sacred, pure, and radiant. Fresh water flowed with abundance and life flourished. Plants sprang from the ground and supported all kinds of animals. It is in Dilmun that Enki discovered the secret of immortality.

Upon hearing it, the great Sumerian mythical hero Gilgamesh made his way to Dilmun seeking the flower of immortality which, as legend had it, lays at the bottom of its sea in the form of a white pearl whose beauty was formed by the salty waters of the sea and the fresh water that flows above the sea and gushes up from under it.

Enki and Ninhursag were particularly enchanted with Barbar area and built a temple for them in that location that exists to this day. The temple dates back thousands of years and marks their arrival to Dilmun during the Stone Age, which preceded the Bronze Age.

Around the temple, they built a settlement in which humans and animals lived and many industries flourished, including weaving and pottery. Residential communities in form unwallled villages with stone houses were established and an advanced society developed under the watchful eyes of Enki and Ninhursag.

A sophisticated system of seals and weights was established and trade relations with the Hindu and Mesopotamian cultures blossomed.

The people of Dilmun lived a blissful, peaceful life by the water and the various plants and animals, which were a chief source of their livelihood.





## ANIMALS CHOOSE THEIR KING

Once upon a time, on this planet Earth, there was no one to rule. Later, people convened a meeting to appoint a king named Preah Sammat Reach (assumed to be king to reign and rule the people).

When animals (wildlife, birds and fish) knew about the news, they were shocked.

They later announced to the world that they haven't had a king just yet and asking for help.

Not long after that, all the people came together to choose a king for those animals.

A lion, who was a mighty, strong, wise, and quiet, was appointed to be the king of wildlife.

The wildlife was very pleased with their new appointed king without question. Anon, the largest fish, was appointed to be the king of all fishes, and he was accepted with a great satisfaction.

As for the birds, there were two candidates, a crow and a hawk, running for the position. Each of the two candidates had large number of supporters. Both groups often made a propaganda to humiliate each other.

The crow said, "Who would make the owl a king? With his large eyes, he would destroy all the birds if he would became a king over all the birds." "If you do not believe me, just look into his eyes, you can see that he is a real beast."

The owl also propagated to the crow, "Oh! The crow black to bones! He is a black animal, not only his feather, wings and flesh, but he also has a black mind. If anyone appointed him as a king, he would prosecute and suppress you all. This black





creature would never hunt for foods in a proper way. He steals others food. Just observe how he hunts for food to support his everyday life, you will understand his behavior.”

The crow and the owl candidates propagated against each other like this until they split into large factions and became very quarrelsome. At the end, those animals that did not take either side decided to appoint a Swan as a king of birds.

Because of this, crows and owls hate each other until these days. The tradition of dividing the two animals into night traders and day traders has been done to avoid any further argument.



## Khmer folk tale series

## AH KVAK AH KVEN

## (The blind man and the paralyzed man)

Once upon a time, there were two people, Ah Kvak was blind and Ah Kven was paralyzed. They were owned by different masters, but they were very close friends. If they wanted to go anywhere, they could only go together. Their masters used them without mercy.

The two friends were very unhappy with their lives, then Ah Kven said to his friend, "We are very tired and we cannot stand working for the masters any more. What we should do is run away from here." Ah Kvak responded, "Then how can we do?" Ah Kven replied, "I saw their boat at the harbor. We have to run away with it." They both agreed with the plan, and at night they asked each other to go down to the harbor. They got on the owner's boat, one seated on the prow and the other sat opposite him, facing each other, and tried to row the boat away. Ah Kvak could not see and Ah Kven had never rowed.

In the dark night, they could not see anything but imagined that the boat was moving fast; unfortunately, the boat was still spinning at the very same place and going nowhere.

After a while, the two friends heard vulture crowed then Ah Kvak said, "We reached the canyon." They both kept on rowing until they heard the rooster crowed, then they said to each other, "We're getting close to another village, so we should row faster otherwise our owners would catch up with us." Ah Kvak and Ah Kven tried to row as fast as they could.

While they were struggling, Ah Kvak heard the sound of the birds cried, and he suddenly said, "It sounds like our house."

When the morning dawned, the master came down to fetch water and saw the two men sitting on the boat facing each other. He knew they made an attempt to run away, but he was not worried about that. Instead of punishing them, the master allowed the two friends to return home.

Once again, Ah Kvak and Ah Kven made another escape plan. Ah Kven proposed to Ah Kvan that, "Running away this time, we let them catch up with us. Don't go by boat but on foot." Ah Kvak replied, "How can we escape on foot if I am blind and you are paralyzed like that?" Ah Kven responded, "Don't worry about that just simply carry me on your shoulders and I will show you the way." After discussing the plan, at night while everyone was falling asleep, Ah Kvak carried Ah Kven on his shoulders and they began their journey.

When the morning came, the master didn't see the two friends at home. He immediately understood that the two were on an escape plan again. However, he wasn't concerned about that and believed the two could not go anywhere far. He decided not to seek them.

After several days of walking, Ah Kvak and Ah Kven arrived late at a forbidden village where no one but a brutal tiger lived. Ah Kvak said, "How can we survive in this village? How can we grow crops if don't have any farming tools or buffalo? And who will hire us to work for them? We can only be a thief to survive." With no reply, Ah Kven advised Ah Kvak to approach some villagers. Along the way, people tried to warn the two men about how brutal the tiger was. In return, the two men replied confidently to the villagers that they were not afraid of the tiger, and they could not wait to see one.

Shortly after that, Ah Kvan saw a cow shed and screamed out loud, "You go and steal a cow while I am waiting out here." Ah Kvak putted Ah Kven down and walked to ward the cow shed. He encountered with the tiger there. The tiger was scared and stayed still, thinking Ah Kvak is some kind of animal. Ah Kvak touching the tiger entirely, thinking it was an ox. Then he touched the tiger's head seeing no horns. He was very happy and yelled out loudly to Ah Kven, "This ox has horns, and it is

very fat. The blind man grabbed the tiger and brought it to his friend. The tiger was afraid of the blind man, thinking that the man would do whatever he could, so he followed the blind man silently. After seeing the animal, Ah Kvan told his friend that, "Ah Kvak it is a tiger not an ox." Ah Kvak responded, "If you are scared hand me the tether rope, I will put it in the ox's nose." Ah Kvak pierced the tether rope into the tiger's nose with no hesitation. With so much pain, the tiger screamed out loud and ran away. Ah Kven feared for his life, but Ah Kvak refused to let go. He put his blind friend on his shoulders and ran after the scared tiger.

After a while, they arrived at a hut where they found a rake and a turtle. Ah Kvan saw it and talked to Ah Kvak, "We arrived at a hut. Over there I saw a wire and a large basket."

Ah Kvak replied, "Take it all, don't leave anything behind." Ah Kven said, "Don't take it because it is heavy." Ah Kvak responded, "The weight is on me, so take it." Then the two men took everything from the hut and walked into the wood. Over there, they met a guy hunting for honeycomb. Seeing that man, Ah Kven informed his blind friend that, "There is a person is hunting for honeycomb." Immediately, Ah Kvak called out to the man, "Hey man, please share your honeycomb with us." Then the man replied, "I take only the honey and leave you the comb." The man defecated into a bamboo pipe and handed it to Ah Kvak.

After a long tiring walk, the two make a stop to have some meals. Ah Kvak put his friend down and pulled out the bamboo pipe thinking it was honeycomb. Once they pulled out the pipe, it started to stink I Ah Kvak said, "This place is stinks, so we better move elsewhere."

Then they continued walking. Once again, the two man felt hungry and made another stop to eat. They pulled out the bamboo pipe and unplugged it, then again they smelled something bad. They kept doing that repeatedly. At last, Ah Kvan took out the pipe and removed the pipe plug. He put his hand into the pipe whole, then he smelled the poop. Ah Kven

told Ah Kvan everything. They got mad and wanted to take the hunter's life for deceiving them.

After finishing their meal, the two best friends hurried to find the bee hunter, but they got lost in the wood. Not finding the bee hunter, Ah Kvak and An Kven arrived at a ruled kingdom, instead. On the arrival day, the kingdom was in chaotic situation. The king was threatened to give his youngest daughter, Princess Pov, as a meal for a cruel giant, otherwise he would lose everyone, including himself. Princess Pov felt very sorry for her father and her people, so she agreed to sacrifice herself for the giant. She was waiting for her turn in a building. Accidentally, the two friends arrived at the place without knowing anything. They made a stop to take a rest. Hearing the two talking to each other, the princess asked them, "Where are you coming from? Why are you here? This is where the king leaves people for the giant to eat. Here in this kingdom, there is a giant flying here to have human as his meal. It is my turn to be his meal, so you both have to leave immediately otherwise he would eat you, too." Having been born blind, Ah Kvak, was not afraid of anything; thus, after hearing the princess's word, he responded, "Why do we need to be afraid of him?" I will cut him into pieces, so you just stay still. Bring me good food and a sharp sword then I will cut him to death." Hearing what Ah Kvak said, the princess was very happy and made a promise to give him all the wealth if he could kill the giant. Ah Kvak was very pleased with the promise. However, Ah Kven was scared to death. After finishing his meal, Ah Kvak closed all the building's doors and windows waiting for the giant's arrival at dark. Like it was said, the giant arrived with a strong sound as if a strong thunder striking the earth.

Ah Kven was so frightened that he almost drowned in his urine. Princess Pov fainted in the drum. Ah Kvak heard the giant coming. Without fear, he was waiting at the door. When the giant arrived seeing the door were closed, he shouted like lightning, "Who closed my door?" The blind man was not afraid and shouted back, "I closed the door, I'm not scared of you." The giant replied, "Where are you from? How large is your liver? I

want to see it with my own eyes. The blind man threw the large basket at the giant. He saw the basket and thought to himself, "This liver is so big, it is bigger than mine," and the giant said, "If your liver was this big, how big would your lice be?" The blind man threw the turtle at the giant.

The giant thought it was a louse and said to himself, "How big is your lice ? It is big." The giant asked, "How long is your leg hair?". The blind man threw the buffalo wire to the giant. The frightened giant ran back. Ah Kvak told the princess that, "The giant is gone, will there be another one?" the Princess woke up in a panic and told the blind man, "There will be a female giant coming this night." After hearing that, Ah Kvak suggested his friend to choose a sharp sword that would match his strength. Ah Kvan went to pick up the sword for the blind man.

When the night came, here came again the giant. The blind man heard the sound of the giant opening the door, so he stood there holding a sword and waiting at the door. Once the giant entered the hall, he successfully cut the giant's head. Ah Kvak and Ah Kven knew that giant was dead, so they decided to take the gifted gold and silver.

In the morning, Ah Kven saw a tree and told the blind man to go in and share the gift. In front of the blind man, Ah Kven asked, "Do you take what is in front of you or what is in front of me?". The wise blind man thought that Ah Kven placed something bad in front of him, so he told Ah Kvan that, "I will take the thing in front of you." Ah Kven knew that the blind man was taking good things, so he told the blind man, "Divide again, this is not the same as before." "Which side are you taking, Ah Kvak?"

The blind man thought, "This time, Ah Kven would place a good thing in front him."

So, he said, "I take the one in front of me." Ah Kven saw that the blind man had a good gift, so he replied, "It's not right, let's divide it again." Ah Kvak disagreed with the request and they argued with each other. Suddenly, a fruit fell and hit the blind man's head, who thought that Ah Kven hit him, so he said, "Why did you hit me?" Ah Kvak jumped up and kicked

Ah Kvan until he straightened his arms and legs. Ah Kvan jumped up and hit the blind man in his eyes until he could see. Both of them were very happy and shared the gifts equally. After that the two friends continued their journey.

Talking about Princess Pov, in the morning people came to see her at the building.

She was alive. The giant did not eat her, but they saw his dead body laid at the door. The king was very happy with the good news and asked his daughter about what had happened during that night. The Princess told the king everything. He then decided to find the one who killed the giant and saved his daughter's life. He promised to marry the princess to that person and make him a king. Ah Kvak and Ah Kven were very happy to hear the news and revealed themselves to the king. They showed the king all the evidence proving that they killed the giant. The king asked his daughter to identify the two men. She recognized the two friends clearly although they were not blind and paralyzed anymore. Ah Kvak was married to Princess Pov and was on the throne. He made his lifetime friend a crowned prince. And they all lived together happily ever after.





Cao Wenxuan  
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## SUMMER

A hot summer sun was burning in the sky. A little bird dived under a leaf for cover. Katydid crawled onto the underside of the reeds. A frog was crouching on a lotus leaf on the water. His back was covered in lotus leaves, just like an umbrella. Several ducks hid their heads in their wings and floated silently on the water, asleep in the shade of a big bridge. In the shadow cast by bales of hay, a few chickens lay on the ground, dozing. The farmer watching over his melons lay beneath an awning, fanning himself. A flock of sparrows rested together in the shadow cast by a telegraph pole. A little fishing boat with cormorants was moored up under the shade of the willows on the bank.

On the savannah, a pack of animals were looking frantically for somewhere out of the sun. As they ran, behind them they kicked up a cloud of dust.

“Over there!” – cried the sharp-eyed jackal.

All the animals raced with all their might towards a tree – only for a tussle to begin!

“I got to the tree first!”

“No, I did!”

“I got here first!”

“It was me!”

“It was me!”

The vole, who was the smallest of them all, was pushed to one side and was on the verge of tears. “It was me! I got to the tree first!”



In fact, the tree was almost dead: on a few branches there were still a few drooping leaves. All the other branches were completely bare. The tree was like an umbrella without a cover!

The argument soon became a fight. The vole was so frightened he ran out of the way and squeaked,

“Stop fighting! Stop it!”

Of course, it was the elephant who won. Everyone rushed at the elephant and began to shout, “Hey, we got to the tree first!”

The elephant got angry. He roared at them: “Go away! Go away!”

He sucked up the dust with his trunk, then sprayed them with it: “It’s already so hot! You’re all making such a racket. You’re so annoying!”

The other animals could only retreat.

They looked over at the elephant, arguing among themselves.

Soon, though, they started to laugh – so hard that their stomachs ached: the elephant under the tree was barely any better off than they were!

The elephant looked up at the bare tree and began to laugh too.

All the animals were laughing together, but before long, they stopped. They saw an eternal sight: a father and his son were walking across the plain. The father, who was tall and broad, bathed his small son in his huge shadow.

The pair walked peacefully along.

All the animals watched in silence.

They walked towards the horizon.

All the animals could see was the father’s silhouette.

After another while,

Father and son disappeared into the distance...

In the endless wilderness the animals decided they could go no further.

A while went by before the lynx said to the vole:

“Here, let me give you some shade.”

So the vole went over into the lynx’s shadow.

When the stray dog saw this, he went to stand by the lynx.

The leopard went to stand by the dog.



The brown bear joined the leopard.

The rhino joined the brown bear.

The elephant flapped his great big ears, and stood next to the rhino.

A beetle hurried over and finally stopped dead still by the vole.

The sun burned on.

In the sky, over floated a cloud, passing over the animals' heads.

After a while, the cloud floated back again, stopping above them.





Shi Nan  
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## YU GONG MOVED AWAY THE MOUNTAINS

During the Warring States period, there was a thinker named Lieh Tzu who wrote many fables, one of the most famous of which was “Yu Gong Yi Shan” (literally meant a foolish old man moved away the mountains). It said that there was once an old man called Yu Gong, who was already 90 years old and in good health. He had a large family of children and grandchildren, with men doing farm work and women doing housework, and lived a life of plenty.

However, there was some stuff on Yu Gong's mind. His family had lived in the mountains for many generations, and in front of their house were the two majestic mountains of Taihang and Wangwu, so they had to go over the mountains to get in and out, which was quite inconvenient.

Yu Gong thought to himself, “I am old, but my descendants have to live on in the mountains. It is necessary to try to remove the mountains.” So, he called the whole family together to discuss it, and everyone expressed their approval. Yu Gong's wife had some doubts, “Where will the removed rocks go?” Yu Gong replied, “We can carry them to the edge of the Bohai Sea.”

The next day, the laborers of the family went out together and started their mountain-digging work. They pried up the big stones one after another, and pulled them to the outside of the mountains with the combined efforts of oxen and humans. The women and children took on the work of bringing water and food.

The neighboring widow's little boy, who was only six or seven years old and was just changing his teeth, also came running to help every day.



Illustrated by Yang Yongqing

The mountain road was rugged and the journey was long, thus it took a cycle of seasons for Yu Gong and his crew being back and forth only once, transporting the stones far outside of the mountains.

There was a so-called clever old man literally named Zhi Sou who was living by the river bend. He watched the scene and thought it crazy, so he decided to dissuade Yu Gong's family from doing such a foolish thing.

He said to Yu Gong, "You are too old and confused. With your old bones, it is difficult to even pull up a grass on the mountain, how can you remove the rocks of the two huge mountains?"

Yu Gong pointed to the hard-working scene and replied steadily, "You are so stubborn that you are even not as sensible as the widow and the child. How do you know that even if I die, I have my sons, and my sons will have grandsons, ...there will be no end of it. Since the mountains won't grow higher, there will be the day when they are levelled."

Zhi Sou was speechless. He shook his head and left with a sigh.

Yu Gong's family kept digging the mountains. When tired, they sit on the side of the road for a break. Witnessing the smooth road stretch forward little by little, they felt very satisfied and happy.

When the mountain god on his tour heard that Yu Gong was moving mountains, he was upset that the two mountains of Taihang and Wangwu would really be flattened some day, so he reported to the Lord of Heaven hastily.

Moved by Yu Gong's commitment, the Lord commanded two giants of the Kua'e clan to help. The two Hercules transported the two mountains, one of which was carried on the back and the other in arms, to faraway places.

From then on, there were no mountain barriers in the place where Yu Gong lived, and the road was smooth and accessible in all directions. Everyone was feeling more comfortable than before when they were living in the mountains.



## THE GRATEFUL ELEPHANT

Once upon a time, when Brahmadata was king of Benares, there was a village of carpenters not far from the city, in which five hundred carpenters lived. They would go up the river in a vessel, and enter the forest, where they would shape beams and planks for housebuilding, and put together the framework of one-storey or two-storey houses, numbering all the pieces from the mainpost onwards; these then they brought down to the river bank, and put them all aboard; then rowing down stream again, they would build houses to order as it was required of them; after which, when they received their wage, they went back again for more materials for the building, and in this way they made their livelihood.

Once it befel that in a place where they were at work in shaping timbers, a certain Elephant trod upon a splinter of acacia wood, which pierced his foot, and caused it to swell up and fester, and he was in great pain. In his agony, he caught the sound of these carpenters cutting wood. "There are some carpenters will cure me," thought he; and limping on three feet, he presented himself before them, and lay down close by. The carpenters, noticing his swollen foot, went up and looked; there was the splinter sticking in it. With a sharp tool they made incision about the splinter, and tying a string to it, pulled it right out. Then they lanced the gathering, and washed it with warm water, and doctored it properly; and in a very short time the wound was healed.

Grateful for this cure, the Elephant thought, "My life has been saved by the help of these carpenters; now I must make

myself useful to them.” So ever after that, he used to pull up trees for them, or when they were chopping he would roll up the logs; or bring them their adzes and any tools they might want, holding everything in his trunk like grim death. And the carpenters, when it was time to feed him, used to bring him each a portion of food, so that he had five hundred portions in all.

Now this Elephant had a young one, white all over, a magnificent high-bred creature. The Elephant reflected that he was now old, and he had better bring his young one to serve the carpenters, and himself be left free to go. So without a word to the carpenters he went off into the wood, and brought his son to them, saying, “This young Elephant is a son of mine. You saved my life, and I give him to you as a fee for your leechcraft; from henceforward he shall work for you.” So he explained to the young Elephant that it was his duty to do the work which he had been used to do himself, and then went away into the forest, leaving him with the carpenters. So after that time the young Elephant did all their work, faithfully and obediently; and they fed him, as they had fed the other, with five hundred portions for a meal.

His work once done, the Elephant would go play about in the river, and then return again. The carpenters’ children used to pull him by the trunk, and play all sorts of pranks with him in water and out. Now noble creatures, be they elephants, horses, or men, never dung or stale in the water. So this Elephant did nothing of the kind when he was in the water, but waited until he came out upon the bank.

One day, rain had fallen up river; and by the flood a half-dry cake of his dung was carried into the river. This floated down to the Benares landing place, where it stuck fast in a bush. Just then the king’s elephant keepers had brought down five hundred elephants to give them a bath. But the creatures scented this soil of a noble animal, and not one would enter the water; up went their tails, and off they all ran. The keepers told this to the elephant trainers; who replied, “There must be something in the water, then.” So orders were given to cleanse the water; and there in the bushes this lump was seen. “That’s what the

matter is!” cried the men. So they brought a jar, and filled it with water; next powdering the stuff into it, they sprinkled the water over the elephants, whose bodies then became sweet. At once they went down into the river and bathed.

When the trainers made their report to the king, they advised him to secure the Elephant for his own use and profit.

The king accordingly embarked upon a raft, and rowed up stream until he arrived at the place where the carpenters had settled. The young Elephant, hearing the sound of drums as he was playing in the water, came out and presented himself before the carpenters, who one and all came forth to do honour to the king's coming, and said to him, “Sire, if woodwork is wanted, what need to come here? Why not send and have it brought to you?”

“No, no, good friends,” the king answered, “tis not for wood that I come, but for this elephant here.”

“He is yours, Sire!”- But the Elephant refused to budge.

“What do you want me to do, gossip Elephant?” asked the king.

“Order the carpenters to be paid for what they have spent on me, Sire.”

“Willingly, friend.” And the king ordered a hundred thousand pieces of money to be laid by his tail, and trunk, and by each of his four feet. But this was not enough for the Elephant; go he would not. So to each of the carpenters was given a pair of cloths, and to each of their wives robes to dress in, nor did he omit to give enough whereby his playmates the children should be brought up; then with a last look upon the carpenters, and the women, and the children, he departed in company with the king.

To his capital city the king brought him; and city and stable were decked out with all magnificence. He led the Elephant round the city in solemn procession, and thence into his stable, which was fitted up with splendour and pomp. There he solemnly sprinkled the Elephant, and appointed him for his own riding; like a comrade he treated him, and gave him the half of his kingdom, taking as much care of him as he did of himself. After





the coming of this Elephant, the king won supremacy over all India.

In course of time the Bodhisatta was conceived by the Queen Consort; and when her time was near come to be delivered, the king died. Now if the Elephant learnt news of the king's death, he was sure to break his heart; so he was waited upon as before, and not a word said. But the next neighbour, the king of Kosala, heard of the king's death. "Surely the land is at my mercy," thought he; and marched with a mighty host to the city, and beleaguered it. Straight the gates were closed, and a message was sent to the king of Kosala, "Our Queen is near the time of her delivery; and the astrologers have declared that in seven days she shall bear a son. If she bears a son, we will not yield the kingdom, but on the seventh day we will give you battle. For so long we pray you wait!" and to this the king agreed.

In seven days the Queen bore a son. On his name-day they called him Prince Winheart, because, said they, he was born to win the hearts of the people.

On the very same day that he was born, the townsfolk began to do battle with the king of Kosala. But as they had no leader, little by little the army gave way, great though it was. The courtiers told this news to the Queen, adding, "Since our army loses ground in this way, we fear defeat. But the state Elephant, our king's bosom friend, has never been told that the king is dead, and a son born to him, and that the king of Kosala is here to give us battle. Shall we tell him?"

"Yes, do so," said the Queen. So she dressed up her son, and laid him in a fine linen cloth; after which she with all the court came down from the palace and entered the Elephant's stable. There she laid the babe at the Elephant's feet, [22] saying, "Master, your comrade is dead, but we feared to tell it you lest you might break your heart. This is your comrade's son; the king of Kosala has run a leaguer about the city, and is making war upon your son; the army is losing ground; either kill your son yourself, or else win the kingdom back for him!"

At once the Elephant stroked the child with his trunk, and lifted him upon his own head; then making moan and lamentation he took him down and laid him in his mother's arms, and with the words, "I will master the king of Kosala!" he went forth hastily.

Then the courtiers put his armour and caparison upon him, and unlocked the city gate, and escorted him thither. The Elephant emerging trumpeted, and frightened all the host so that they ran away, and broke up the camp; then seizing the king of Kosala by his topknot, he carried him to the young prince, at whose feet he let him fall. Some rose to kill him, but then the Elephant stayed; and he let the captive king go with this advice, "Be careful for the future, and be not presumptuous by reason that our Prince is young."

After that, the power over all India fell into the Bodhisatta's own hand, and not a foe was able to rise up against him. The Bodhisatta was consecrated at the age of seven years, as King Winheart; just was his reign, and when he came to life's end he went to swell the hosts of heaven.






## From Panchatantra and Hitopadesha stories

# TOO MUCH GREED LEADS TO THE WHEEL

Alpalobhin, Mithalobhin, Athilobhin and Athyanthalobhin were four very poor Brahmin youths who were fast friends of one another. They were feeling the pangs of poverty bitterly. One day, when they were all assembled together, Athyanthalobhin said, "Friends, most shameful is it to be poor! Better far to live in a forest overrun with thorns and haunted by tigers, elephants and other wild beasts, and to wear garments made of the barks of tree, and to sleep on the grass, than to live in poverty in the midst of one's relatives."

Poor men are scorned by the very masters whom they serve faithfully, and even their otherwise virtuous relatives cut them unhesitatingly. Their virtues do not shine, their sons leave them at the earliest opportunity, and even their noble and virtuous wives do not serve them assiduously, their whole time being engaged in household work and supplemental occupations intended to eke out a few coppers. Friends resort not to them as they get at their houses no delicious things to eat or drink. In this world, even if a man is naturally brave, handsome, cheerful, and eloquent and has an inborn aptitude for the use of weapons and the study of the sciences, he does not obtain fame or respect without the possession of at least some wealth. It is wonderful what difference wealth makes to such a man. With wealth, he is able to develop the above qualities and become famous and respect all over the world; without it, the faculties are not developed and die by attrition. So, let us go far and wide

in search of wealth. All the others agreed. Soon all of them left their native city and relatives and friends and started on the quest for wealth. Well has it been said, "When man desperately poor and is filled with anxiety for the day's meal, he will forsake truth, abandon relations and friends, and go to a foreign country leaving his own mother and motherland." The four reached after a few days the country of Avanti. Bathing in the Sipri river, they worshipped in the famous temple of Mahakala\* on its banks. When going out of the temple, they met a famous ascetic and magician called Bhairavananda. They saluted him and followed him into his monastery close by. He asked them, who are you "Who are you? where have you come from? Where are you going now? What is your errand?". They replied, "We are wandering in quest of wealth and are resolved either to get wealth or die in the attempt. They say that by magic a man may easily find hidden treasures and suddenly become wealthy. Our attempt is, if possible, to get hold of such magicians. Many seemingly unattainable things and coveted objects are obtained by adventurous persons who dare everything and are equal to any emergency. One man falls down from the sky into the gutters, another clammers out of hell and becomes the master of the wide ocean. It is not Fate which is responsible for these rises and falls but only manly exertion or its absence. All desired objects are got only by hard exertion and not by mere fate. What is called luck is nothing but human exertion with the super-imposition of accident. Adventurers have no fear of men in power. Nor do they care a straw for their own lives. The generous recklessness of these is indeed sublime. Without hard and tiresome labour no happiness can be obtained in this world. Even the lord Narayana could embrace Lakshmi only after tiresome churning of the ocean with his hands. The moment a man ceases to work, his wealth begins to decrease. If a King has no valour, he cannot conquer his enemy's kingdom or even preserve his. The sun conquers lots of clouds and shines bright because no obstacles are regarded as insuperable by him. So too, a man will conquer all difficulties and shine if he determines not to be outdone by anybody. Now, kindly tell us some way of



obtaining wealth quickly. It does not matter whether the wealth is in some underground chamber guarded by deadly cobras, or is to be got by propitiating demonesses, or by going to the burning grounds and selling the meat of human corpses to demons anxious to eat them, or by securing the magic wicks which get extinguished and fall wherever there is treasure to be had. We will dare anything, and we can see that you are certainly possessed of superhuman powers. So you alone can help us, and you must help us. It has been said that the great alone can accomplish great objects. Who but the sea can bear the terrible submarine fire?”. Bhairavananda was pleased with their words and made for them four very powerful magic wicks. He said to them, “Go to the Himalayan regions. After reaching there, wherever a wick burns itself out and falls to the ground there if you dig you will find a hidden treasure without the least doubt. Do not transgress the laws of God, and return home when you have had enough to stave off your poverty.”

The four thanked the ascetic and proceeded to the Himalayan regions. When they had crossed the foothills, the wick of Alpalobhin was burnt out and fell to the ground. He dug there and discovered a hoard of copper coins. He was delighted and said, Let us take as many as we can carry and return home.

The others said, “Oh, fool, what can be accomplished with this worthless copper? It will not mitigate our poverty very much. So, get up and let us push on.” Alpalobhin said, “You may all go. I shall not come any further and am quite content with this copper.” He took three thousands of these copper coins and returned home. The rest pushed on, the next day Mithalobhin’s wick burned out and fell to the ground. He dug there and discovered a hoard of silver coins.

He was overjoyed and shouted out, “Here, let us take as many of these as we can carry and return home. There is no need to go any further.” The other two said, “First we got copper coins, and now silver ones; surely, the place where the next wick falls will contain a hoard of gold coins. We will never stave off our poverty permanently with these silver coins. So, let us push on still further” Mithalobhin said, “I am quite content with this silver

and shall not come any further.” He then took five thousand silver coins and returned home, joyously groaning under the weight. The other two pushed on. A day later, Athilobhin’s wick burned out and fell to the ground. He dug there and discovered a hoard of gold coins. Delighted beyond measure, he cried out to his companion, “Let us take as many of these as we can carry and return home. There is no need to go any further, for there is nothing greater than gold.” Athyanthalobhin replied, “You fool, your ignorance is amazing. First copper, then silver, then gold. Surely, the next hoard will be of diamonds, rubies and other precious stones. A single one of them is enough to ward off poverty for a lifetime. With a heavy load of them we shall be able to buy up kingdoms and shall be richer than all others in the world. Your heavy load of gold will not be worth a single one of those diamonds and rubies we shall discover presently. Why commit the folly of taking this worthless gold and returning? So, get up and let us push on.” Athilobhin said, “Friend, I am quite content with this gold. We started our expedition in order to stave off our poverty permanently and not to buy up kingdoms or to become richer than all others in the world. You call this gold, which we never so much as handled before, worthless. To me it is valuable enough, it will make me a rich man for life, and keep poverty from my doors for ever. I do not desire anything more. Too much greed is no good.” “Pooh!” said his friend, “The greater the greed, the greater the earnings, I shall prove that to you. So, leave this trash and come along,” “No, I do not want to come any further and am quite content with this gold. However, I shall wait for you here, and both of us can return together”, said Athilobhin.

So Athyanthalobhin alone pushed on. The hills became more rugged and gloomy. For three days he walked without the wick showing the least sign of burning itself out or falling. Then he entered a secluded valley which had no sign of water anywhere. It was the middle of the hot season, and the rays of the sun literally burnt into him. His thirst became intolerable, and he saw no signs of water anywhere. Not a living thing, neither bird nor beast nor man, was seen by him. But he walked on

undismayed, impelled by his greed for diamonds. The regular path gave way to a confused maze of footpaths swarming with brambles and thorns. Still, impelled by his greed, he wandered on and on without a thought of returning to Athilobhin and helping himself to the gold. The more the difficulties, he assured himself, the greater, rarer, and more precious would the diamonds and other stones be. After much wandering, he saw a man in a trough in the valley shut in by hills on all sides. The man had a quickly-revolving wheel on his head and it was churning his blood and covering his whole face and body and the adjoining space with blood. Going to him, Athyanthalobhin asked, "Who are you, sir? Why are you standing here turning this wheel on your head? Is it some sacrifice to some demon that you are offering in order to get hidden hoards of precious stones? Is there any water anywhere here?" As soon as he had uttered these words, the wheel sprang from the head of that man and planted itself on the head of Athyanthalobhin, the latter asked in astonished bewilderment, "Friend, what is this? Oh, what a diabolical pain it inflicts!" The other replied, "That wrotched wheel sprang on my head also as it did on yours just now, and I was suffering all this time this diabolical pain." Athyanthalobhin asked, "Then, tell me when it will come down. It is causing me untold pain by its incessant revolutions and the resultant churning and scattering of the blood of my head." The man replied, "When some man like you comes with a magic wick prepared by a famous magician and talks with you, the wheel will leave you and settle on his head." Athyanthalobhin asked, "How long have you stood here with this wheel on your head?" The other asked, "Who is the King now?"

"Vina Vatsaraja" said Athyanthalobhin. Then the other said, "I cannot say exactly how long I had this wheel on my head. But it was when Rama was king that I, unable to bear the pangs of poverty, came here with a magic wick like yours. I too was far more avaricious than I should have been and pushed on in front of my comrades not satisfied with what could have kept me in the greatest luxury all my life. I saw a man here with this wheel on his head revolving furiously and churning and sprinkling his




blood in all directions. I asked him why he was standing here in this horrid fashion and whether there was any water in the vicinity. At once, the wheel left his head and settled on mine. So I remained with this terrible pain for ages untold, for few living things ever come to this place. Now, by God's grace, you have come here with your magic wick and, by talking to me, relieved me of this." Athyanthalobhin asked "Friend, how can one get food and drink if he were to stand like this perpetually? Will he not die in a few days and be rid of this misery?" "Not so" said the other. To prevent the plunder of his most precious treasures, the god of wealth has devised this horror in order to strike terror into the hearts of all magicians and their greedy disciples. Few therefore dare to come this way. If anybody comes here with wick in hand to discover treasures, he will see the man with the wheel and cannot help talking to him. He would never have seen such a horrible sight before, and would be impelled by curiosity to find out why he is doing this. Sheer joy at meeting a fellow human being after so long will also induce him to speak to him. If these two motives are not enough, there is always the selfish one of ascertaining whether there is any water in the vicinity to allay the parching thirst. The moment he talks to him, he takes on the wheel and bears it on his head till another comes with wick in hand and talks to him. While the wheel is on his head churning the blood, he feels not hunger nor thirst, nor does he grow old or die. But he will suffer all the while this excruciating pain. Now, give me leave to go. Let me go home." "What home have you after these hundreds of thousands of years? The race of your wife and children must have perished ages ago. Whither will you go?" asked Athyanthalobhin. "Ah, I never thought of that", said the other. "Still, the world is wide, and life is sweet. What matter if ages change and one's people are all dead? One can always begin anew. So, good-bye" and he went. Athilobhin waited for Athyanthalobhin near his hoard of gold for a long time. Not seeing any signs of his return, he took five thousand gold coins and set out in search of him and at last found him in the desolate valley with the fast-moving wheel on his head churning blood and himself uttering pitiable moans



of the most bloodcurdling type. Tears streamed down his face at seeing the fate of his friend, and he asked, "Friend, what is this?" Athyanthalobhin replied, "This is Fate's decree." "How did this happen?" asked Athilobhin. Then his friend related the whole story. After hearing everything, Athilobhin said, "Friend, all this came from your excessive greed and from your not listening to my advice. Gold was not enough for you, and you hankered after rubies and diamonds. Now you have got this wheel churning your blood and spraying in the air drops brighter than the brightest ruby while from your eyes come tears more dazzling than the diamonds you desired. My friend, it is not enough in this world to be learned and to know that diamonds are more valuable and desirable than gold. There must be also the saving commonsense which can visualise the difficulties and foresee the consequences. Else, even a learned man of noble family will come to grief. Commonsense is better than learning. Persons devoid of commonsense perish as did the learned men who resuscitated the lion." "What is that story?" asked Athyanthalobhin. Then Athilobhin related the story of "The Lion Made Alive Again," "Well, one story will not prove a truth any more than a single lotus will make a lotus lake," said his friend after hearing it. "There are many more such stories," said Athilobhin and related the story of "The Learned Fools." "Well," said Athyanthalobhin after hearing that story, "There seems to be some point in what you say. But, if you ask my opinion, neither learning nor commonsense determines whether a man prospers or comes to grief. The utterly helpless and the unprotected are often protected by God and survive, while the powerful and the well-protected are often struck down by Providence without a warning, even one abandoned in a forest and left to die survives if God is pleased with him while one taken the greatest care of dies even in his home if such is God's will. Thus, in the story of Thousand-wit, Hundred-wit and Single-Wit, the far less able Single-Wit survived while the other two mightier intellects perished. What do you say to that? Does it not prove my point, that God and Fate alone determine man's lot here below and that neither greed nor lack of commonsense

has anything to do with it?" "Not so", said Athilobhin after hearing the story, "Single-Wit was saved because he had the saving grace of commonsense which the other two had not. Besides, the story of" The "Monkey's Revenge" will show the evils of greed, and he related that story. After he had heard it, Athyanthalobhin said, "I agree with you. All men are in the grip of this demon of greed and either come to grief thereby or become ridiculous. The pity is that they never realise this till too late." "Friend, I warned you in time" said Athilobhin, "and yet you were obstinate like the Ass which sang, and he related the story of" "Ass As Singer." "True, too true," said Athyanthalobhin. "I realize it myself now." He who has no sense himself should at least have sense enough to act on the advice of a friend. Else, he comes to grief. Alas, too often he lacks this sense also like me and solely occupies himself with the speculative, the impossible, and that which has not yet fructuated, abandoning that which is at hand. This too much calculation and greed can be seen in the story of "The Castles In The Air", "What is that story?" Asked Athilobhin. Athyanthalobhin narrated it for him. "Ah, that Brahmin too counted on the unhatched and the uncertain and lost what little he had," said Athilobhin after hearing the story. "Yes," replied his friend. "But whereas he lost only rice flour and a mud pot and was strewn only with harmless rice flour I have lost heaps of gold and am strewn with drops of blood. The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that Fate regulates man's fortunes here below more than his virtues or vices.

Fate being favourable, a blind man, a hunchback, and a three-breasted princess all got cured of their defects by acts intended to bring about their deaths," said Athyanthalobhin. Athilobhin wanted to hear that story and Athyanthalobhin related the story of "The Three-Breasted Princess". After hearing that, Athilobhin said, "It is true that Fate sometimes brings about happiness even where it is not deserved. But man should not choose the path of greed lest he should invite an unkindly Fate to descend on his devoted head and to bring him to grief like you. I am heartily sorry for you, but I must be returning



to my home now. So, please give me leave to return.” “Friend,” said Athyanthalobhin, “Friends and wealth are said to stand one in good stead in adversity. Then how is it that you say that you will leave me in this miserable plight?” It is said, “That cruel man who deserts his friend on seeing him in misery is an ungrateful wretch and undoubtedly goes to hell for this sin” “That is true only in cases where the friend’s misery is capable of alleviation by him” said Athilobhin. “Here, your misery cannot be ended by mortal man. Neither I nor any other man has got the power to liberate you. So, my staying by your side will be of no use whatever and will only give me intense pain by seeing your agony. Besides, the more I see your face showing signs of agony caused by the turning of the wheel, the more I am inclined to flee from here quickly lest some calamity should befall me also.” “Kindly therefore give me leave to go.” “All right, go home and live in peace. Tell my people also about my hard fate,” said Athyanthalobhin. Athilobhin returned home safely with his gold.

“Too Much Greed Leads to The Wheel” whispered he to himself as he cleared the mountain regions and reached the habitations of man.



A tale taken from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi

## ZAL AND THE SIMORGH: FRIENDSHIP

A boy, Zal, is born to King Sam but the baby has hair as white as snow. Sam thinks his son is either an old man or a demon and orders the baby to be taken to the foothills of the Alborz Mountains and left there. The Alborz are mountains made of jewels.

Zal is found by the magical Simorgh, the phoenix like bird with red and gold feathers who has her nest on the summit of the mountain. She carries the baby to her nest and brings him up as her own.

Some years later King Sam is reminded in a haunting dream how badly he has behaved towards his son. Sam feels remorse and sets out to the Alborz Mountains to see if his son might still be alive.

Sam once dreams that his son is still alive and he starts looking for him. He finds his son a grown handsome young man, well brought up by the bird. Zal doesn't want to leave the Simorgh, but she gives him one of her feathers and tells him if he is ever in trouble he must burn the feather and she will come to his aid. Zal finally goes home, but the phoenix always supports him.

After a while, Rudabeh gets pregnant, in great pain and unable to give birth. Zal remembers the Simorgh's feather. He burns it and the Simorgh appears. The bird orders and arranges the first caesarean birth, giving Rudabeh healing herbs and stroking her with her feathers. Rudabeh gives birth to a corpulent son, "a lion cub", Rostam.



## TRUTHFULNESS AND PEACE WITH THE OPPONENTS

King Zuzan had a Khajah (Minister/Wazir) of noble sentiments and of good aspect who served his companions when they were present and spoke well of them when they were absent. He happened to do something whereby he incurred the displeasure of the king who inflicted a fine on him and also otherwise punished him. The courtiers of the king, mindful of the benefits they had formerly received from him and being by them pledged to gratitude, treated him kindly whilst in their custody and allowed no one to insult him.

If thou desirest peace from the foe, whenever he  
Finds fault behind thy back praise him to his face  
A vicious fellow's mouth must utter words  
If thou desirest not bitter words, sweeten his mouth

He was absolved of some accusations brought by the King against him but retained in prison for some. Another King ruling an adjacent region secretly dispatched a messenger to him to tell him that his people do not appreciate his excellent qualities and therefore, have dishonored him. He added that if his precious mind were to serve the King of the neighboring region, then the utmost efforts would be made to please him because the King and the nobles of this realm would consider it an honor to see him and are looking forward to receiving an affirmative response from him to the King's letter. The Khajah, who had received this message, being aware of the potential danger, wrote a brief and suitable answer on the back of the King's message and

sent it back. One of the King Zuzan's informants in the Court, who noticed what had taken place, reported to him that the imprisoned Khajah was in correspondence with the King of the neighboring country. The King became angry and ordered this issue to be investigated. The courier was overtaken and the letter was confiscated.

The Khajah's response to the message was as follows, "The good opinion of high personages is more than their servant's merit deserves, who is unable to comply with the honor of reception which they have offered him, because having been nourished by the bounty of this dynasty, he cannot become unthankful towards his benefactor in consequence of a slight change of sentiments of the latter", since it is said,

"He who bestows every moment favors upon thee

Is to be pardoned by thee if once in his life he injures thee"  
The King approved of his gratitude, bestowed upon him a robe of honor, gave him presents, and asked his pardon, saying, "I committed a mistake." He replied, "My lord, it was the will of God the Almighty that a misfortune should befall this servant but it was the best possible that it should come from thy hands which had formerly bestowed favors upon him and placed him under obligations."

If people injure thee grieve not

Because neither rest nor grief comes from the people

Be aware that the contrasts of friend and foe are from God

Because the hearts of both are in his keeping.

Although the arrow" is shot from the bow

Wise men look at the archer.



## THE SMART GIRL

The father of a young man named Mashhour was one of the great merchants of the city named "Rama", he owned several estates and orchards, and he had thousands of dinars. The father of Mashhour was afraid of bad companions for his son, so he warned him about them, and the young man accepted the advice. However, his father told him before his death, if you want to drink wine, do not drink it until the end of the night. If you want to gamble, do not play it except with the biggest and oldest men in this game. And if you want to get married, marry only a smart girl, even if her dowry is so dear.

After a while the merchant passed away, and his son Mashhour wanted to test his father's commandments, so he went to the city's winery at the end of the night. He saw the miserable scenes of the drunkards, so he hated drinking wine and those who drank it.

A week later, he wanted to test his father's second will, so he asked about the person who introduced gambling into the town, so they told him. He went and sat with him, and after conversing together, that person told him,

"Look at me, you see my old clothes, and I smoke the worst kinds of cigarettes and I have no money at all; this is after I was one of the richest people in town, and I am the one who introduced the game of gambling to this city. I was then skillful gambler until I met who is more skilled than me, so I lost everything I own, until I became a dependent on others."

Mashhour left him and he hated gambling and gamblers; but the question of the smart girl remained there in his mind.

He asked his companions to look for a smart girl to propose to her, and after two weeks of searching, one of them told him that there is a girl whose name is Afaf, a daughter to a merchant and his name is Salem. After one week or so Mashhour went to the house of the merchant Salem and asked for the hand of his daughter Afaf.

Salem replied, "But my daughter's dowry is so high."

Mashhour inquired, "How much is her dowry?"

The merchant informed him, "Her dowry is ten thousand golden dinars."

Mashhour agreed, recalling his father's will, and gave him eight thousands dinars. As for the remaining two thousands dinars, he promised the merchant to pay them off after a year. Merchant Salem accepted and took the eight thousands dinars, knowing that the girl's usual dowry was three thousand dinars in the city of "Rama".

A week later, the wedding took place; Mashhour and Afaf were happy and loved each other so much. Yet, the obsession of paying the two thousand dinars was still there on the mind of Mashhour, who sold some of his property and went in business to the city of "Siror". There were, in the city, some swindlers who conspired against him, consequently he lost all his trade, and he became a laughingstock for all those merchants around him. When his wife Afaf heard the story of her husband, she borrowed some money from her friends, added to her money, disguised herself as a man, bought goods, and traveled with one of the caravans in the name of merchant Hassan. She stayed in the same Khan (inn) in which her husband lodged, and took care of him, sold her goods and made a good profit. The imposters, who had taken over her husband's money and business, heard about the merchant, Hassan. So they sent one of their men to Hassan, who told him about a bet, after they got to know each other,

"We bring three cats and each of them carries a candle. If the candles burn out and the cats are still carrying them, we win the bet, but if the candles fall down, you are the winner, and the bet amount is two thousand dinars." Hassan agreed,

even though Mashhour and the rest of the merchants advised him not to accept the bet, but he insisted that the sheikh (the elderly man) of that town, its judge, and its police chief should attend the bet; thus both agreed on a certain day.

Merchant Hassan gave one of the boys there five golden dinars to bring him some mice on the day of the bet, and that he would release them with a sign from Hassan. The boy agreed and was very happy by the large amount given to him.

On the appointed day, the swindlers came with cats and candles. The sheikh of the city, its judge, its police chief and a large crowd of people attended. The candles were lit and the cats carried them. All nerves were tense and the candles started burning and reached the middle of it, and the cats grabbed it tightly. With a signal from merchant Hassan, the boy without anyone noticing, released the mice, when the cats saw the mice, threw the candles and ran towards the mice, and here the inn hall erupted with applause. Merchant Hassan won the good bet and the swindlers loosed and withdrew in disappointment.

Merchant Hassan profited from his trade twice capital, and he prepared at the time of the return of the caravan to the city of "Rama", and when he told Mashhour to return with him, Mashhour cried and apologized. But merchant Hassan had a good heart and insisted that he return and will find what pleases him. Indeed, Mashhour agreed to return to "Rama", and when the caravan arrived, merchant Hassan gave Mashhour a sum of money, telling him,

"Go to the Public bath and buy new clothes and take with you some precious gifts for your wife." Mashhour carried out what merchant Hassan had told him, and before sunset, he returned to his house. He noticed that the merchant's goods were in the spacious courtyard of his house, and his wife received him warmly and with splendor, but he was surprised by the goods and he asked her about them.

She informed him, "Don't worry, my dear and kind husband, I am the good merchant Hassan." Mashhour was struck immensely by the surprise, and when he regained his sense, he almost flew out of joy.

After several days, she went to the city judge and talked to him about the question of her dowry asking him to allow her be a judge for one day, the judge then agreed to her request. So, the dowry case was raised against her father, who attended the session. Everyone was stunned when she removed her veil, and it was Afaf, the smart girl who saved her husband and returned her dowry.



## THE CHESS

A family was living in one of the villages, consisting of a father, a mother, and three young brothers. Two years of hardship had passed in the village, and living conditions became so difficult for them. The eldest son, whose name was Saeed, decided to travel. He told his parents what was going on in his mind regarding travel, perhaps finding a job would improve the conditions of the whole family. His parents tried to dissuade him from this idea, but he was determined to do so.

After an intervention of their two other sons, the parents agreed to his travel.

His father asked him, "How much time will you need?"

Saeed replied, "I want three months. If I don't come back, wait for me another three months."

His mother prepared some food and drink for him to take for few days, and the next morning he said goodbye to them. He went eastward, and after several days he saw very bright lights that appeared to him from a far, so he headed towards it. He realized that it was a city he saw for the first time in his life, he thus slept in front of the city gate opened in the next morning. When the guards saw him, they approached him and asked him about his destination, so he explained to them,

"I am just a passerby looking for a job."

The chief guard greeted him, offered him food, and said to him,

"Come on to the Princess."

Saeed inquired, "Who is the Princess?"

The chief guard answered him, "She is the ruler of the city, and she is the daughter of our late king."

Saeed added, "What do I have to do with that?"

The chief guard informed him, "Her father stipulated that whoever marries her should beat her in the game of chess and then become the ruler of the city."

The guard took him to the palace of the Princess. Saeed was astonished by what he saw of the luxurious buildings and furniture. Finally, he entered the throne hall, and he saw a beautiful lady sitting there. The chief of the guard greeted her in a royal manner. She responded respectfully, and he addressed her,

"We found this young man at the gate of the city."

The princess welcomed the young man and allowed him to sit down, ordered him some apple juice, and asked him,

"What brought you to this country?"

Saeed answered, "I am looking for a job. Our country has become barren after two years of poor rains."

The princess also asked him, "Do you know the game of chess?"

Saeed replied, "Yes, I know it."

The princess continued, "We will play chess. If you beat me, you will become the prince and you will marry me, but if I beat you, I will put you in prison for two years."

Saeed thought, then said to himself, "If I beat her, I will become prince and save my family from poverty and its consequences. And if she beats me, may Allah help me to spend the two years in prison." Then, he raised his head and said to her,

"I agree to your condition, Princess."

The Princess pointed to one of the guards, and he brought the chessboard, and they started playing. It appeared to the Princess that he was a professional player, but he was impressed by her beauty and adornment, so his thought was distracted, the thing that made her beat him, she smiled at him and said, "Now, go to prison."

He went with the guard, head bowed, lamenting his bad luck.

Four months passed by his family and Saeed did not return home, which led his brother Hamed to tell his family that he wanted to travel and join his brother. His mother and father tried to dissuade him, but he was determined to catch up with his brother. His mother prepared his food and drink, and he walked the same route as his brother Saeed. So he reached the same city and the chief guard took him to the palace of the Princess; then, she offered him the game of chess, and he tried hard to beat the princess, but the Princess defeated him with great difficulty. She smiled at him a victorious smile and told the guards to take him to prison according to the condition she stipulated at beginning on him.

After four months of Hamed's absence, their young brother Ali decided to join his two brothers; but before he traveled, he went to a tailor and asked him to sew a suit that differs from all people's suits. Then he walked wearing it in the street, drawing the attention of all people, some of them laughed and others admired it, and so on until he reached the house of his family, who were astonished by this dress. They tried to discourage him from wearing it, but he insisted on going with it. So, he traveled the next day in the same way as his two brothers Saeed and Hamid, and at the end he arrived in that city. It was almost noon time, and the guards received him with a mixture of laugh and admiration, and the chief of the guards took him to the Princess, who stood smiling, and after she allowed him to sit he said to her,

"I am starving."

So the Princess ordered him food to eat and drink, and he ate and drank, and praised Allah. She addressed him,

"Do you know game of chess?"

He told her, "Yes."

She offered him to play chess, and she stipulated her same condition of playing. Ali agreed to what she stated, and they started playing. He remembered what his chess coach told him:

"You have to concentrate on playing, and do not be distracted by any preoccupation." So he played; as for the princess, she looked at his clothes, sometimes smiling and





sometimes laughing. Ali put all his focus on playing, and thus playing continued for a long time. Eventually, he overcame her, and that was in the presence of the city's elderly who were disappointed by the result, but it was the truth; they consulted among themselves, and finally their notable elder addressed the Princess,

“What was agreed upon must be implemented, but we have a condition on this young man, who will become our Prince.”

The Princess said, “What is this condition?”

The notable man said, “That we give him a test to verify his mental abilities.”

The princess said, “It's fair.”

The elders of the city began asking him various kinds of questions, and he answered them calmly and tactfully, and there was no one left in the council who did not test him, and he succeeded in answering all the questions. The Princess declared,

“Let everyone know that I accept the marriage of this young man, and I thus give him the title of Prince.”

The joys swept across the city for a whole week, and Ali knew the story of his two brothers who were still in prison, so he took them out, as he took out the rest of the young men who before lost the bet with the Princess, and he also brought his parents from their far village to the city.





## THE BEAR AND THE MOSQUITO

The huge bear grabbed a rabbit as small as his fist, for no reason he caught his ear and tormented him. He just twisted the one ear, and almost tore it. Then the rabbit was very sad.

“My ear will heal, my eyes will dry, but my enmity shall not go.

Why have I seen this insult?! If I meet this wicked bear again, I shall be destroyed. Will my scars survive being pulled by him? The bear is the most powerful of the animals in this forest, who would strike at him?

The wolf and the fox are by his side, they are his inseparable friends. I have no friend to protect me” he cried. Then from the midst of thick rushes,

“Take protection from me!” one thin little voice reached him. At this the rabbit squinted his eyes, it was a mosquito.

“What kind of protection can you be? He is a bear, and you, a gnat.

What do you intend to do to the bear? No matter how much strength there is in you, you are only a poor little thing,” said the rabbit.

“I am strong enough to keep him from sleep,” said the mosquito.

The bear couldn't find anywhere in the hot forest to lay himself down. When he had grown almost completely exhausted, he laid down on some broken branches, but he could find no rest. When he closed his eyes, it would be like this, from right above his ear, “Bzzzz! Bzzzz!” could be heard.

The bear knew it was the voice of the mosquito. He prepared, waiting for the mosquito to come and land on his nose. The mosquito came and flew around, and landed on the bear's snout. The bear hit himself on the nose with his left paw as hard as he could.

"How would the mosquito know how landing on a bear's snout will end!"

The bear turned to his right, squinted his eye, yawned, and then from his car he heard Again a voice saying, "Bzzzz! Bzzzz!"

Mosquito, it seemed, had slipped from under the paw of the bear!

"Where will midge land on me next?", thought the Sleepy bear and he laid and listened.

He flew buzzing around the bear, and then for a little while laying absolutely still.

"He's flown away, I think, curse him!" roared the bear. But when the bear did this, the mosquito only slipped into his ear and bit him. The bear jumped up. He whirled around, slapped his ear with his left paw so hard he saw stars. "May this make the mosquito completely forget about biting the bear!"

The bear settled down, rubbing his ear from time to time. Then he was able to sleep. But just as soon as he closed his eyes, he once again heard the buzzing sound near his head.

"What is that so horrible?! What kind of gnat is so strong!" the bear spat at the ground, and took off from this place where mosquito would give him no peace. He went through the whole forest, and came right into the middle of the brush, and as he wanted to sleep so much, he yawned wide, but even this had not left the mosquito behind. "Bzzzz! Bzzzz!" The bear ran off, he kept running and running, and fell under one bush. He laid there resting, it was quiet. Where was this mosquito!

The middle of the forest was completely quiet Ryes couldn't pierce the darkness. All the birds and beasts around were peacefully sleeping, just as they used to. The bear alone was pestered and could not sleep.

"Oh, what a catastrophe! Have you ever seen such torment as this wicked mosquito gives me! Am I a common bear, or

not? If can just escape from this, I shall say thanks a thousand times! Then I should fall blissfully asleep!” said the bear.

The bear settled down under a walnut tree. His eyes were closed, he started to sleep, and he even had a dream. In his dream, he had found a bees’ nest in the middle of the forest, full of honey. He was putting his paw in the hive, when suddenly, he again heard “Bzzzz! Bzzzz!” The mosquito had again caught up with the bear. Caught up and woke up!

The bear sat up and started moaning. And in the darkness, mosquito flew around him, sometimes buzzing loudly, sometimes quietly.

The fly pestered and pestered, then he was completely quiet.



The bear listened, then he hid himself under the walnut tree shut his eyes, started to doze, and was feeling nice and warm when started buzzing once again.

The bear crawled out from under the tree, and started to cry, "Am I never to be left alone? Curse it. Keep on, then, my tormentor.

I will kill you even if I do not close my eyes before dawn."

The mosquito gave the bear no sleep until the break of dawn. He made him tired and angry. While the sun had not risen, his eyes found no rest. The bear hit himself again and again, his whole body was black and blue. But, he couldn't defeat the mosquito.

The sun rose. The birds and the beasts of the forest woke up, completely rested. They broke joyously into song. The bear alone greeted a new day with sorrow. He met a rabbit in the forest. The bear's head was dull with sleepiness, his fur was disheveled, he could barely lift his feet as he stumbled aimlessly along. He couldn't open his eyes, and still the mosquito's buzzing didn't leave his ears.

"The rabbit saw the crippled bear, and he was delighted.

"Oh, mosquito, well done, mosquito," the rabbit laughed until tears came from his eyes.

And no sooner did the rabbit think of the mosquito then his old friend had come.

"Have you seen the bear?"

"I saw! I saw!" the Rabbit swelled with laughter, "How did you defeat him?"

"Ah, we, mosquitos, are not alone, of course," said the mosquito, "We do not go alone as you do, and therefore we are not afraid like you."

The rabbit settled down alone beneath a bush, and the mosquito flew off buzzing behind the bear.



## THE TWO BABY GOATS

The white baby goat and the black baby goat ran here and there. They looked all around them. Thick brush on one side, and thick grass on the other side. They couldn't see any sheep or goats anywhere near.

"You, white goat, you are a fool who knows nothing! You drag me here and there, and you make us lose the sheep paddock! Go and find the sheep!" said the black goat, getting angry at the white lamb. The black goat had been born one day earlier, and he considered himself to be the white goat's older brother. His body trembled, he was very round, and there were two horns on his head. He was very stubborn, and he wanted to be leader. He didn't ever feel sorry for the little white goat and think, "He is my little brother." At every little thing, he would jeer and say "White goat, you are a fool." When he was angry, he would take his horns and knock the white goat to the ground. And he was a slanderer. Look, he says, "Baaa, baaa, look at all the grass here!" but really it was him who led them there. Then once they were lost, he blamed the white goat.

"White goat, you fool, come here before I kill you!" the little black goat kept on shouting and threatening.

The white baby goat thought about this, and he thought about that, and finally he remembered where they had come from.

"The sheep are long gone, how shall we find them? Who knows, perhaps they have gone up into the mountains and are already at the zhailau? But if we go to the zhailau, it won't be easy to find the road. Even so I must look for it. But I have

these words to tell you. Don't quarrel with anyone, but just do as I say. If you don't do so, we will be lost and will die," said the white baby goat. When the black baby goat heard him say "we will die" he became panicked and frightened. Although he had been very bad before, he promised the white baby goat he would obey his words now.

The white baby goat started on the road, walking in front and beating a path through the thick brush. If there was a gully in front of him, he jumped over it, if there was a stone in front of him, he climbed over it. In this way, the two of them came to the very edge of the mountains. They didn't see anything dangerous near them. It was absolutely quiet all around them.

All of a sudden, a fox appeared in front of them.

"Ooo-ooo-oooh, what a beautiful baby goat you are, just as white as snow.

And your older brother is beautiful, too. You must be very tired. Come to our house, have some food. I also have two children, just like you, you can play together," said the fox. But in mind she thought, "The white baby goat is very small. I should catch him unawared, and rip him into shreds at once. But if his brother sees this, he will get very scared, and of course he will run off."


The white baby goat had been thinking on answer all day, and said in a firm voice, "Foxye, over there, at the top of that hill, next to a black stone a wolf is waiting for us. He invited the two of us to be his guests. If he sees us go and follow you, he will of course be angry. And his rage is so terrible! Maybe you too will come along with us?"

"Alright, then, keep going, I will follow behind you," said the fox, thinking of a trick she could play.

Next, they met a wolf as big as a bull calf. He opened his mouth like a trap, and at once pounced on the two baby goats. When the fox saw the wolf, she ran away.

"I was getting hungry, and how tasty this will be! I am going to catch you now!" said the wolf.

"Wolfie, over there, a lion is waiting for us next to the black stone. Yesterday he came here to become the Patsha of all the



beasts that wander and birds that fly on the mountain. He eats two calves for breakfast, two baby goats for lunch, and two lambs for dinner. If he sees your crime, he will become furiously angry. It will be a terrible misfortune for you,” said the white baby goat.

“Ba, baaa, wolf, look at the lion, call him,” cried out the black baby goat, who couldn’t keep quiet.

The wolf was very flustered, and looked around fearfully.

“I must get far from this calamity. Go, while you’re till alive,” and he hurried off.

The two baby goats ran up to the top of the mountain. When they saw the field there, the mountains side was covered with a great herd of sheep, with horses in front of them and behind them, and a shepherd with his dog beside them. When the two baby goats saw this, they were so happy that they kept bleating and bleating “ba, ba, baaa.” Shopan Ata came, and he picked the little white goat who had travelled so far up off the ground.

“I looked uphill and downhill for you, and I couldn’t find you. Look how you have come all by yourselves. All right, my little white goat, good for you. And you, who jeered at the little white goal and called him a fool, are yourself a fool,” he said, and hugged little white goat.







## THE GOOD BROTHERS

A long time ago in a mountain village lived two brothers and their widowed mother. They got along very well and together tended their farm. They stuck together no matter what happened. They seemed so kind that everyone in the village called them the “good brothers.”

As time passed, the elder brother got married and had a son and a daughter. The younger brother also met a kind woman and got married. But after a while their mother passed away and the brothers had to live separately.

“Elder brother, please take more of the inheritance because your family is larger.”

“No, younger brother. You have to buy new things for your house so you will need more.”

Each brother was insisting that he would take less of their mother’s possessions, but eventually the two brothers agreed to split the inheritance evenly.

Then came the next spring. The two brothers went out to the field early and worked hard.

“We have to have a good harvest so that my younger brother can live comfortably.”

“We have to have a good harvest so I can take care of my elder brother!”

The two brothers were always busy worrying about the other instead of themselves. They went into the field every day to work hard. The elder brother and younger brother planted the rice together in the spring, and pulled weeds together during the summer. Thanks to their hard work and cooperation, the rice grew quickly. Autumn finally arrived and the brothers enjoyed a bountiful harvest.



The two brothers' faces were as bright as an autumn sky. The two brothers again quarreled over who would take less rice.

"You are raising two children, elder brother. You should take more rice."

"No. You need more, younger brother, since you just got married."

The two brothers eventually agreed to split the rice evenly.

After returning home that evening, the elder brother thought to himself, "With my younger brother now starting a new family there are many things he will need..."

Late that night, the elder brother took a bundle of rice from his pile and carried it to the younger brother's pile. Meanwhile, the younger brother worried that his elder brother had many mouths to feed, and in the middle of the night he secretly took a bundle of rice from his pile and placed it on his elder brother's pile. The moon watched over the brothers with a smile.

The next morning, the elder brother looked confusingly at his pile. Something was strange. He had definitely taken one bundle of rice from his pile and moved it to his younger brother's pile, but it seemed as though his pile was still the same size.

"That's weird," he thought. "I definitely took one bundle away so how can the pile be the same size? Tonight I'll take another bundle to my brother's pile."

The younger brother also looked confusingly at his pile.

So that night, the elder brother took a bundle of rice from his pile and put it on the younger brother's pile, and the younger brother also did the same. But the next morning the brothers were again confused that their piles were the same size as before. What is going on at night?

On the third night the brothers finally figured out what was happening. The two brothers ran into one another at the pile of rice in the middle of the night.

"Who's there?" "Oh my, elder brother!"

"Thank you elder brother!" "Thank you younger brother!"

The two brothers realized what was going on. They embraced one another as they shed tears of joy. From that day on, the two brothers split everything evenly and lived happily side by side.



## THE STORY OF TWO BROTHERS: HEUNGBU AND NOLBU

A long time ago, two brothers lived in Korea, Heungbu and Nolbu. Nolbu was naughty all the time and enjoyed making trouble for his little brother Heungbu.

On the very same day their father passed away, Nolbu kicked Heunbu's family out from their house. Heungbu took his wife and many children to live in a thatched house in an area far from the village.

Because they had no money, Heungbu and his family soon had nothing to eat. Heungbu had no choice but to ask his older brother, Nolbu, for help. But Nolbu refused every time. Yet, Heungbu did not become bitter or angry at his greedy brother.

The cold winter passed and spring arrived. A couple of swallows built their nest on the roof of Heungbu's house and laid eggs. Heungbu liked watching the swallows' family grow.

One day, Heungbu found a baby swallow had fallen onto the ground. He immediately cared for it and treated its broken leg. Again, another winter passed and spring arrived. The mother swallow brought a gourd seed and gave it to Heungbu in return for his kindness.

Heungbu planted the seed and the gourd grew quickly becoming very large. In the fall, Heungbu and his family prepared to open one of the gourds. It cracked open with the sound of a "pop".

In the first gourd, there were many treasures. The second gourd was full of people to build houses and to make clothes,



and the third gourd had a magic rice chest that was always full of white rice no matter how much was poured out of it.

Eventually, the Heungbu family became rich and Nolbu, hearing this, was so jealous that he could hardly sleep at night. Nolbu decided that he would destroy the swallow's nest. As a result, a baby swallow fell on the ground and broke its leg. Nolbu wrapped the baby swallow's leg in silk cloth, hoping he would be repaid for taking care of the bird.

In the spring of the following year, the swallow brought a gourd seed to Nolbu. Nolbu took great care of the gourd so that it would grow large. And finally, the day came to crack open the gourd arrived. Nolbu and his wife were expecting an overflow of treasures when the gourd was opened. Suddenly, the gourd opened with the sound of a "pop", but instead of treasure, there were only scary ogres called Dokkebis in the gourd. The Dokkebis attacked Nolbu and his wife destroying their house before leaving.

Heungbu was shocked when he heard the news. Worried he ran to his brother's house and said, "Big brother, you can come to my house and live with us."

As a result, Nolbu was full of regret and sorrow for all of his wrong-doings and he was forever grateful for Heungbu's good heart.





## THE STORK

“Grandpa, I saw a white stork on the river. It had long legs, it was very big and beautiful. It walked on the water so easily. Grandpa, can the stork walk on cold water?” Jasmina said.

“This majestic white bird is familiar to everyone from childhood. The stork is called “ilegilek” in the Kyrgyz language. You should remember it.”

“Grandpa, can I ask you something?”

“Yes, my sunshine.”

“Why do adults always say that storks bring kids? Do they steal them anywhere? Or perhaps is there a factory where children are produced? I saw a cartoon recently, where a letter comes to someone who needs a child. Then the stork brings them a little baby. Maybe I also write a letter, so we will get a baby, huh?”

Grandfather smiled at the words of his granddaughter.

“No, my dear. The storks do not steal children and there is no factory where kids are produced.”

“Then tell me about storks.”

The grandfather was sitting in thought and remembered those tales that he had once told his children.

“Jasmina, call your brother and sisters, I will tell you about the magic stork.”

Jasmina ran outside and called Nurel, Adelina, and Aruuzat.

“Listen carefully to the tale about the magic stork, my kids. Once upon a time there lived a snow- white magic stork. It was the most beautiful stork among the birds. It built a nest on a high fir near the dwelling of a man. People were happy about it.



They say if a stork swirls up the nest near one's house, it is a good omen. When a stork brings a baby to one's house, it's the omen which doubles the benefit.

Stork ate moles, rats, mice, frogs, fishes, water beetles, and worms. They could also eat chickens, ducks, and hares.

"What noise do storks make?" Nurel asked.

"They are usually silent because they lack the vocal organ. But nestlings make a loud nasal sound, a bit like a braying donkey. Storks make a chattering sound by snapping their bills together during courtship.

Well, where were we? This magical stork flew around all the houses every night. They watched the houses where there was a good atmosphere, where parents lived in harmony and love, and where children were very hardworking. A blue illuminating ray of light always emanated from such houses. Then the stork took this ray and flew away with it. The stork took care of it until it turned into a baby. After that, the stork brought the kid into that house, where it had taken the ray.

The stork remembered how it had brought the baby for the first time. The stork carefully picked up the baby, took it in his beak, and flew. The stork knocked on the window glass with its beak. A man and a woman ran up and hurried to open the window. And the woman cradled the baby happily.

"Oh, what a small, cute, sweetie," the woman said. "What happiness!"

They were happy to show the child to all their relatives and then celebrated a big holiday in honor of the child. Seeing all this, the young stork made sure that it was a useful job. Since then the stork gladly brought babies to good people."

"Grandpa, my sister and I saw a stork today. Will the stork bring us a baby too, if we obey and do not offend each other?"

"Of course, my honey. If you obey your elders and take care of your little sisters, the stork will bring a little baby to our family."

"Okay grandpa, I will obey my dad, mom, sister. I wish the stork brought us a boy. I would play with him. Dad promised me to buy a bike, I would give it to him."

“My sunshine, may all of your dreams come true. And as it turns out, so were we. The stork flew every day and brought the kids to those houses who really wanted children. It was important to bring it to the address safely.”

“Grandpa, where do storks take children?” Nurel asked again.

“Do not rush, grandson. I am telling you. So, the stork did not forget the baby and flew at night to see how it grows. If the parents loved children very much, the stork would also rejoice with them. And if the parents did not love the baby, the stork would take it back.”

“So, grandpa, if we obey and help our parents, the stork will bring us a little boy on its beak. And then if we love him so much, the stork will not take it back, right?”

“Yes, my dears. If you obey your elders, your dreams come true.”

“Let’s help mom and dad,” Jasmina suggested.

Excited children were cleaning the room. Seeing all this, Sydyk ata was happy.





## THE SWALLOW

“Grandpa, you know, the swallows make their nests on the roof of our barn,” said Adelina with joy. “Would you like to see?”

“Well, let’s go and see,” said the grandfather.

He went with his granddaughter to the barn to see the nest of swallows.

“There’s here, here,” said the granddaughter pointing at the swallows. “Look, their nest is built of clay- like ours. Why do they build their nest not from branches like other birds, but clay?”

“So they want the house to be made of clay. After all, the clay will make the house windproof; it will be warm and cozy for the chicks. Look at them, granddaughter, how they work tirelessly from morning to evening. The sand, silt, and clay mud that they carry to build the nest.”

“Grandpa, how can they carry clay with such a small beak and build a house?” asked Baiel.

“They are very hardworking birds. Therefore, people love the swallow for hard work and meekness. The swallow is a herald of goodness, happiness, freedom, hope, and home comfort. The attitude to it among the people is especially warm and kind. Because they are a symbol of spring, the return of the sun. It is a good omen when swallow nest on the estate. After all, all people know that swallows nested only in those houses where there is peace and coexistence. So, granddaughter, we will have happiness and prosperity.”

“I will be a good boy too, right, grandpa? And they will build nests in my house,” said Baiel.



“Me too, I will be a good girl. You will see. And the swallows will make their nests in my house... like this one,” showing her little fingers said Adelina.

“Well, of course, my dear grandchildren, your dreams will come true”, said grandfather stroking everyone on the head.

“According to folk belief: people learned how to weave and darn from a spider, and how to build houses from a swallow. Ruin the nest is a sin. So never destroy nests.”

“Okay, grandpa”, the grandchildren answered in one voice.

“The swallow’s popularity is second only to the white stork. Dove, swallows are the favorite birds of God. Many nations believe that the swallow’s nest protects the house from lightning and fire. They are sacred birds. Swallow has the most widespread species. They spend most of their lives floating in the air. Moreover, swallows not only eat on the wing but also drink”.

“On the wing?” surprised Moltur. “How can they drink on the wing?”

“Very easy. Swallows always drink on the wing, flying low to sip the water. Swallows have adapted to drink and even sleep on the wing. They walk awkwardly and reluctantly on the ground. Swallows are migratory birds. They make a long flight from the habitat to wintering and back twice a year.

And now everyone sits down calmly and I will tell you a story about a swallow: There were two brothers a long time ago. The elder brother was a very kind and calm person. He was poor, but his wealth was children. They could barely fit in their little wretched dwelling. His little shack was cramped and hungry, but despite this, his family was very friendly and hardworking. They worked day and night tirelessly and the fact that they mined in the evening was divided equally. Elder brother’s name was Joomart. The younger brother was a very rich, but evil man. He never did anyone good. And his name was Bitirbek. After the winter the long-awaited spring came again. It was time to sow wheat, but Joomart had nothing. And he decided to go to the rich younger brother with a request to give some seeds for



sowing. Bitirbek as soon as saw his elder brother guessed that he had come to him to beg, and Bitirbek started abusing him.

“Shame on you to ask a younger brother. I have nothing. I will not give even one grain.”

The elder brother did not say anything to his brother and sadly returned home. His wife saw that her husband came with nothing and began to console him.

“Do not worry. God helps us, and we will also live well.”


The days passed and once the elder brother was sad and suddenly saw how the swallow began to build a nest under the roof of their house. Swallows worked tirelessly from morning till evening. They carried sand, silt, clay mud to build the nest.

“Why are you building nests under my poor roof? It will not protect your nest from the wind and you will not find even crumbs in my garden.”

But the swallow made out the nest and gave birth to chicks. Chicks were growing and the swallow tirelessly got food for them. One day a snake crawled to swallows nest to eat chicks. Swallow flew at the snake and chirped loudly began to peck at the head. The snake wriggled trying to swallow the bird, but the swallow rushed to the side, and the feathers of its tail were left in the teeth of the snake. Since then, they have such a form. The elder brother heard this noise and ran to find out what was the matter. Seeing the swallow, driving away from the snake from its chicks, he attacked the snake. He hit the snake hard with a stick. The snake fell into the bush and crawled away. So Joomart saved the swallow chicks. And in gratitude, the mother swallow fluttered and disappeared into the blue sky.

Swallows suddenly flew in in the evening and each one dropped something at his feet. The elder brother was surprised when he saw on the ground seeds of wheat, pumpkin, beans. Excited, he gathered all the seeds and planted them in the field. His family worked hard from spring till the end of summer, and the harvest was very good by autumn. They left half of the seeds of the wheat for the next year. All winter they had warm bread on the table. And now the family did not need anything. The elder brother helped all the poor and they, in return helped





him. Seeing all this, the younger brother even stopped sleeping because of greed and anger. His sly wife once came to visit the elder brother and asked him everything.

“How have you become rich so quickly? What is the secret of your luck?”

The wife of the elder brother told her about the swallows, expecting no trouble. After that, the wife of the younger brother decided to do bad things. They decided to kill the swallows and destroy the nest. But people say: “Actions can boomerang”. So it happened. All their curses came back to them. Once there was a fire in the field, and all of their yields in the field were burning. Since they had not done good to anyone, neither close people nor neighbors helped them. The greedy rich man and his wicked wife could not save their wheat alone. No one helped put out the fire. The whole crop burnt. Thus, they were left with nothing. You see, my grandchildren, people only need to do good and help others. And then the goodwill returns to you. For example, the family of Joomart achieves a lot of success in life because they have done good to people and worked tirelessly. Therefore, I would like you to be also hardworking and kind”.





## THE WHITE MARE AND HER FOAL

A famous white mare had a white foal.

She lived in a herd with other mares and a dun stallion.

One summer there was a drought, meaning there was no fodder at all.

“We need to leave,” the white mare told the dun stallion, and the herd left its traditional pastures. The horses roamed three years in search of fodder until, finally, they came to a pasture where the grass was lush, the water clean, and there were salt marshes. Here they stayed. One day the horses were frolicking on the river bank and crushed seven goose eggs.

“This is a disaster,” the white mare said. “We need to leave. We came to a pasture which is not ours and have crushed these eggs. Now the geese will take revenge on us. At dawn their army will assemble and destroy us. Let us go back to our native haunts!”

But the other horses did not heed her advice and stayed. The next morning an army of birds flew in and attacked and pecked the horses. Only the white mare and her foal survived. When the birds attacked, she tried to protect her foal and shielded him with her own body.

“Well, son, let us go back now to our traditional pastures,” the mare said to her foal.

In a month they galloped a route that usually takes a year, and in a day they they galloped a route that takes a month.

“Hey, Mum! Why is your skin so rough?” the foal asked one day.



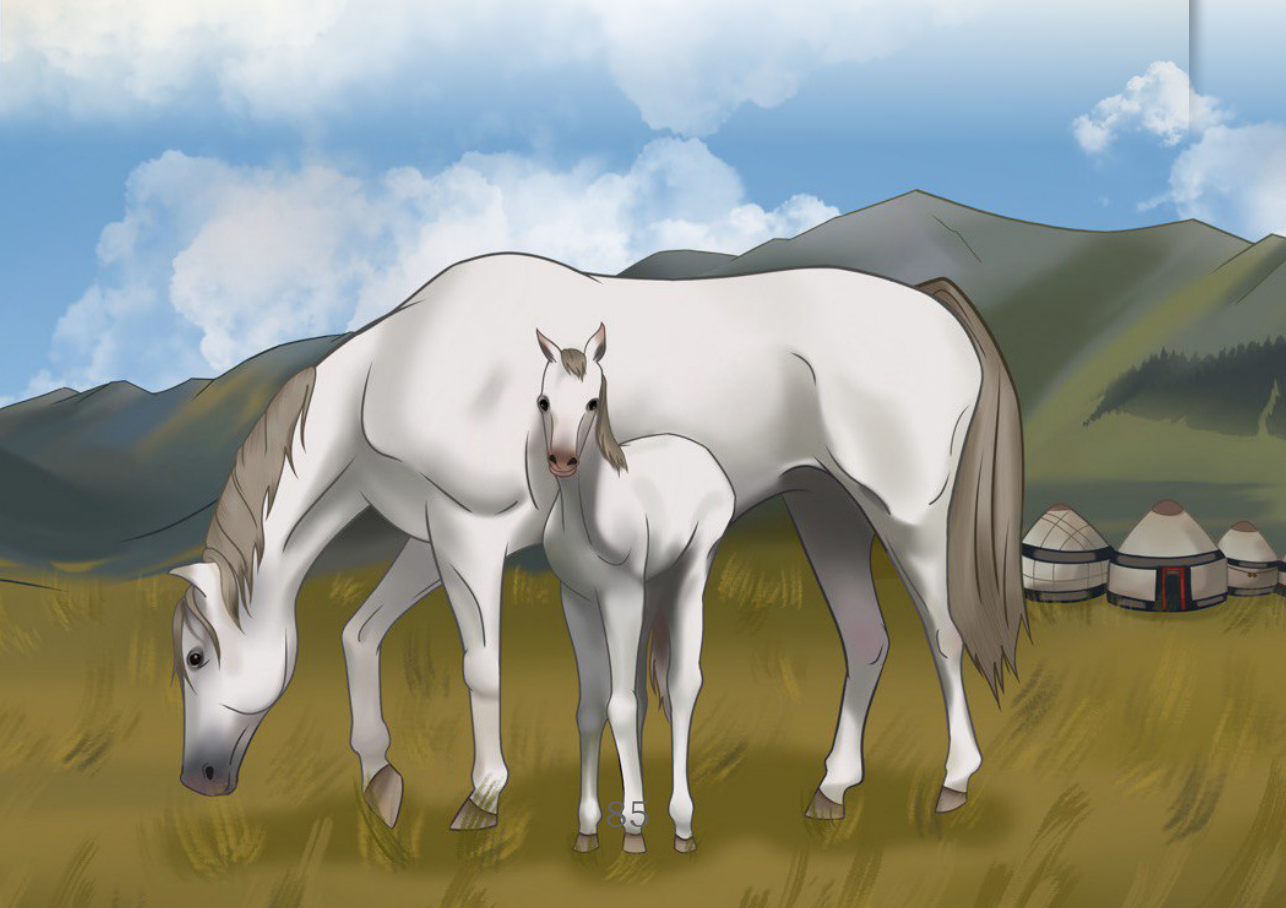
“Son, it’s only red clay has stuck to me when we were passing through the mountain pass.”

“Hey, Mum! Why are your legs trembling so?”

“I’m tired. I have travelled many roads and swum many rivers.”

At last the mother brought her son back to his native pastures, and died soon after. Before she died, she passed on some wisdom to her foal.

“Son, do not sleep in the north: there are blizzards there, and wolves creep up on you. Sleep in the south where it will be more peaceful. Stay away from the yurts of humans, where children and dogs are likely to attack you. Do not lie in a place where a yurt has been pitched before or you may be pricked by a needle. In the herd, always stay on the outside. Only when it goes to a watering hole stay at the front. Do not lag behind the herd or the herdsman will beat you. Do not move in the middle of the herd, or other horses will kick you to death. And three years from now, my son, come and pay respect to my remains!”



But the foal did not follow his dying mother's advice: he laid down in the north and almost froze to death in a snowstorm. Another time he was almost devoured by wolves. He cried and cried, he galloped and galloped, and recalled, "Oh, what wise advice my mother gave me!" and from then on slept only in the south where it was more peaceful.

Forgetting his mother's words, the white foal many times passed close to yurts. He was bitten by dogs and children beat him with sticks.

The foal wept bitter tears and thought, "Oh, how right those words were that my mother spoke to me." Henceforth he stayed well away from yurts.

His mother had told him to run to the watering hole in front of the herd and then he would drink clean water, but the foal lagged behind. The herdsman beat him, and he had to drink muddy water. The foal began to stay on the outside of the herd. Now the herdsman did not beat him, the other horses did not kick him, he had fresh grass to eat, and immediately life became better. "What wise advice my mother gave me," the foal thought again.

Exactly three years later, the foal came to pay respect to his mother's remains. In that place abundant, lush grass was growing. The foal ate it, shook his mane, and left.

As he walked on his way, the foal met a youth called Erkhee Mergenkhu.

"Might you be my steed?" the young man asked.

"Yes," the foal answered. "Now I will raze the mountain with my hooves and scatter the earth over all the steppe. If you cannot hold on, you will not be my master!"

The foal razed the mountain with his hooves, and scattered the earth over all the steppe, yet Erkhee Mergenkhu stayed in the saddle.

And thus did the rider find his steed, and the horse its master.



## GUNAN BATOR

In a certain khanate a poor shepherd lived with his wife. A son was born to them, and they called him Gunan. A day after he was born, the baby was already too big to be wrapped in a sheepskin. Two days after he was born, he was too big to be wrapped even in two sheepskins. Five days after he was born, five sheepskins were not enough. That is the kind of young warrior he was growing to be! His father gave Gunan a chestnut foal, made him a saddle, a bow and arrows, and gave him the bridle. Gunan began to go out hunting. He was a good horseman. When he came back from the hunt he would bring fox pelts for hats, and shot hares would be dangling by his saddle. One day the khan was passing through those parts. He heard what the people were saying about Gunan:

“What a warrior he is growing to be! He should be the khan! Our present khan is like a horse given too much to drink. He eats too much and cannot work.”

The khan was enraged and decided to destroy Gunan Bator. He ordered that the shepherd’s son be brought to him. When he was brought, the khan said,

“I have heard there is no one braver than you in my khanate. I have heard too that there is no horse in the world faster than your chestnut colt. Ride south to where the ten-headed Mangus lives and bring it to my yurt.”

“Fine,” said Gunan. “Prepare a pit for the man-eater!” The warrior saddled his chestnut colt, took with him a pole two hundred metres long with a noose on the end of it, and rode south. In a single month he covered the distance others might





ride in a year. His colt galloped in a single day a distance that would take others a month. The warrior bounded across the steppe with the wind whistling in his ears. Suddenly his colt stopped in the middle of the road reared up and began to retreat.

Gunan asked,

“Why have you stopped? Why are you not speeding over the steppe?”

The colt replied,

“Do you see far in the distance, where the sky merges with the earth, a black blob?”

“I do,” Gunan said. “It is a great mountain.”

“That is not a mountain, that is no mountain at all, that is the ten-headed Mangus mounted on its horse.”

“Gallop straight at it!” Gunan yelled, seizing the bow from his shoulder.

“No,” said the chestnut colt. “For as long as the Mangus is mounted on its horse, no one can conquer it. It needs to dismount. Here is what you should do. Take your pole two hundred metres long and hide in a tree.”

Gunan did as the colt bade him. He climbed up into a tree, holding the pole in his hands, and waited to see how events would unfold.

The Mangus saw a colt cantering over the steppe and whipped up his horse. It galloped the three-day ride in a minute.

The chestnut colt cantered over to the tree and then did not move from where it stood.

The Mangus got off its horse, took a halter from its belt, and began putting it on the chestnut colt. Gunan promptly caught the man-eater with his pole, leaped down from the tree on to his colt, and sped off faster than fire spreading in a dry steppe.

Gunan Bator rode off, dragging the hapless Mangus behind him.

Soon such an uproar was heard in the khan’s yurt that the horses reared up, the cows mooed, the sheep bleated, and the distant mountains crumbled.

The khan was terrified, and his aged adviser asked,



“Do you know, oh mighty one, why there is such turmoil in your khanate?”

“It is an earthquake!” the khan replied. “Do you see, the mountains are trembling?”

“No,” said the old adviser. “It is the Mangus approaching your yurt!”

Before the adviser had finished his sentence, the Mangus was lying in front of the khan’s yurt. The ogre swayed its ten heads from side to side, hissing, but could not break free because Gunan Bator was holding it in the noose with an iron hand.

They imprisoned the Mangus in a pit seventy metres deep. The khan then said to Gunan,

“No other khan has such a warrior. Stay in my yurt: you shall be my illustrious noion. I will reward you with a drove of horses, a herd of cows, a flock of sheep, camels, and the hand of my daughter in marriage.”

Gunan replied,

“Fine indeed is the yurt of the khan, but better still is the yurt of my ancestors. Fine is wealth, but freedom is better.”

So saying, he rode his chestnut colt to the yurt of his parents.

For five days Gunan lived in his parents’ yurt, and on the sixth the khan’s soldiers came galloping to fetch him.

“The khan summons you. Make haste to come with us!”

Gunan mounted his chestnut colt and rode to see the khan.

The khan said,

“There is no warrior braver than you in my khanate. There is no horse in the world faster than your chestnut colt. Bring me the daughter of the mighty Iribsyn Khan to be my wife and I will make you my heir. But if you fail, I shall throw you to be eaten by the dogs!”

Gunan turned his colt and went to bid his father farewell before setting out on his long journey. The old shepherd said,

“You will never reach the realm of Iribsyn Khan. On the way you will encounter the Dead River. The Dead River can be crossed by neither man nor horse. Should even a drop of water from that river fall on a person, he dies immediately. Beyond



the Dead River lies the Red Sea. Should even a drop of water from the Red Sea fall on a person, he is burnt alive.”

Gunan was unafraid. He mounted his chestnut colt and rode off. In a single month he covered the distance others might ride in a year. His colt galloped in a single day a distance that would take others a month. Soon Gunan saw the Dead River. He picked a reed and dipped it in the water. The reed turned yellow and withered immediately.

“Your father was right,” the colt said. We cannot swim across this river.”

Gunan was sad.

The chestnut colt comforted him,

“Do not be sad. I will summon my elder brother. He will help us!”

“Who is your brother?” Gunan asked.

“I haven’t told others, but you I will tell: my brother is the wind of the steppe.”

The chestnut colt turned its head to the east and neighed. In the twinkling of an eye the wind came rushing to the Dead River, lifted the chestnut colt and his rider into the air, and carried them to the far side.

Gunan rode on. In a single month he covered the distance others might ride in a year. His colt galloped in a single day a distance that would take others a month.

Soon he reached the shores of the Red Sea. Gunan picked a reed and threw it into the sea; the reed burst into flames and was consumed in an instant.

“Your father was right,” said the colt. “No one could swim across this sea.”

Gunan was sad.

Again the chestnut colt turned its head to the east, neighing louder than before. An hour passed with no sign of his elder brother. A second hour passed – no help was at hand.

Suddenly Gunan saw a little thundercloud appear far away in the sky. The cloud floated towards Gunan, growing larger as he watched.

“My elder brother is chasing this cloud towards us”, said the chestnut colt.

And so it was. When the black cloud was immediately above Gunan, it sank down to the shore and covered him like thick felt. Gunan and the colt jumped on to the cloud, the wind lifted it high in the sky and carried it across the Red Sea.

When the sea was out of sight behind them, the cloud descended on a road in the steppe and Gunan rode on. By morning he reached the realm of Iribsyn Khan. He saw many yurts and a diverse crowd of people.

“What festival is this?” Gunan asked. “Why are so many people gathered here?”

He was told,

“Today we have a great holiday. Two champions are competing in the games: Shamdagai and Urtu. Whichever of them is the victor will win the hand of Iribsyn Khan’s daughter.” Gunan rode up to the khan’s yurt and entered.

“What do you want?” Iribsyn Khan asked irascibly.

“I want to compete with your champions in the games”, Gunan replied.

“Fine!” the khan said, surprised. “Go right ahead!”

The games began at noon. First they competed in archery. A metal needle was driven into the stump of an oak. They rode a month’s distance away from the stump, and commenced.

Shamdagai was the first to aim. For two days he drew back the bowstring, and at dawn on the third day he loosed his arrow at the target. The arrow fell short of the target by a finger’s breadth and landed right in front of the stump. Shamdagai shrieked with rage and smashed his bow over his knee.

Then it was Urtu’s turn to aim. For four days he pulled back the bowstring, and at dawn on the fifth he loosed his arrow at the target. The arrow flew a finger’s breadth further than the target and landed just behind the stump. Urtu shrieked with rage and smashed his bow over his knee.

Then Gunan came out with his father’s bow. For three days he pulled back the bowstring. At the dawn of the fourth, he loosed his arrow at the target.

Gunan's arrow went straight into the eye of the needle.

After that it was time for the wrestling. For three days Shamdagai wrestled with Urtu, for three days they pressed each other to the ground. In the spot where Shamdagai pressed Urtu to the ground, there was a dent ten metres deep. Shamdagai strutted round the pit boasting,

"There is no champion stronger than me. The khan will have to give me his daughter as my wife."

Gunan told him,

"I am interested in pitching my strength against yours, and finding out just how firmly you stand your ground."

They began to wrestle. For five days they pressed each other into the ground. Gunan stamped his foot on the ground, and it cracked in that place. Shamdagai fell into the crevasse and there was barely time to pull the half-dead man out by his hair.

The day came for the last contest. That morning Shamdagai, Urtu and Gunan rode their horses out into the steppe. Shamdagai was astride a temperamental dun horse with sparks flying out of its eyes. Urtu was astride a ferocious roan with flames coming out of its nostrils. Gunan was riding his small, placid chestnut colt.

People laughed at the sight of Gunan.

"A horse like that is fit only for chasing sheep!"

Iribsyn Khan himself came to watch the race, and brought with him his daughter, the beautiful Tsetseg.

When the shepherd's son set eyes on Tsetseg, he immediately fell in love with her.

And the khan's daughter, as soon as she saw Gunan, said to her father,

"I shall be the wife of the champion who owns the chestnut colt!"

The khan was angered and shouted at his daughter,

"It is not for you to choose a husband! Whoever gallops to the mountain first is who will be your husband!"

The khan waved his sleeve and the three champions galloped towards the mountain. In the lead was the dun horse, followed by the roan, and last of all was the chestnut colt. When Tsetseg



saw Gunan being left behind, she wept bitter tears and ran into the yurt to be alone.

Gunan leaned over to the colt's ear and said,

"The dun and the roan have outpaced you. The beautiful Tsetseg will never be my wife, and I cannot live without her!"

The chestnut colt said,

"Do not be sad, smooth the furrows from your brow!"

So saying, he turned his head to the east and neighed.

Immediately, a hurricane blew up from the steppe and the roan and the dun faced a high headwind. Shamdagai and Urtu lashed their horses but they could not move. The chestnut colt overtook them and was the first to gallop to the mountain. All the people shouted out with joy. At this Tsetseg emerged from the yurt to see who had won her as their wife, Shamdagai or Urtu. She saw Gunan riding on his chestnut colt back to the khan, while the other two had not yet even reached the mountain.

The khan frowned and said to Gunan,

"You are a bator from a foreign land. I do not know what blood runs in your veins, but I am a man of my word – take my daughter as your wife. Only know that as a dowry I shall give you no gold or silver, no clothes or horses, no cows or camels, no sheep or pastures. As for the rest, ask for what you will."

Thus spake the khan, thinking to himself, "He will not want to take a wife without a dowry."

Gunan set his bride behind him on the chestnut colt and answered the khan,

"I need neither gold nor silver, neither clothes nor pastures. Instead of horses give me foals. Instead of cows give calves. Instead of camels give me camel calves. Instead of sheep give lambs."

The khan commanded that this be done.

Tsetseg and Gunan bade the khan farewell and drove their little herd of foals, calves, camel calves and lambs ahead of them. They rode only a short time before hearing a great commotion behind them. They looked round, and saw a vast herd following them.

Tsetseg was amazed, but Gunan said,

“A shepherd’s son understands the ways of animals better than a khan. This is how it always is: where the lamb goes, comes the sheep; where the camel calf goes, comes the camel. This great herd is following its little ones. The khan is powerless now to turn it back.”

Gunan went with his bride to far-off lands where never had there been a khan. There he made a good life together with Tsetseg.

And at the beginning of the first month of autumn, he mounted his chestnut colt and galloped to the old yurt of his parents.

He saw his father and mother by the yurt and said,  
“Gather your possessions and let us be off. You shall come and live with me.”

And so the old couple did. They went with him and lived until the end of their days surrounded by respect and love.

Gunan and his wife always saw to it that the chestnut colt had oats and fresh grass aplenty.





Hana Osama Ahmad

## THE BOY WHO WANTED TO BE A POET

On that day, they took us to schools. They said it was the safest place until this moment, but the school is somehow far from our city, they bombed it. At first I was happy, that my school was not demolished, at school I had a lot of friends, and I was very proud, that I am the leader there. I was the class leader, writing the names of the naughty boys on the board, and then when the teacher arrived I forgave them while looking at their innocent eyes knowing that they would sacrifice anything for their names to be deleted, I remember their boyish faces one by one, and now more than ever I miss them.

I rejoiced when I came back to school, after the war had visited us that now I had to prove to my family, my cousins, and my older brothers, who could hardly believe my adventures, that I was a leader with a word. And when I told my mother to enter the seventh grade 4 classroom, which is my class, I thought the place would know me as well as I do, because I am the leader there, the class sergeant, that was not my place, and there were no drawers or tables that we always studied on, not even a single chalk on the blackboard to write the names of the rioters then plead with me, and I loved the look in their eyes. I was no longer a leader, and I felt a violent inner shake, and I was cold, even though it was August. I did not know the place and did not find my friends. Not even school teachers.

In class, I became very frustrated, because I would not know more tales of the boys, the boys of the lane and because I was




in school and would be deprived of the joy of playing football, and playing the role of the leader. There was another family with us, the children of that woman were crying a lot, and I was annoyed to the end of the annoyance, and I did not want to be angry with them, so I went out walking around that wide square, in which we always played in two football teams, in those matches I was the leader, directing and instructing with a voice my enthusiasm is high, it's not just a matter of a match. I used to pass long passes, score goals and cheer with one voice, Gooooool. This stadium was ours, and while we were playing football in it, we imagined a large crowd, including my mother, my father and my sisters.

I also wanted to be a poet, and to write secret and sentimental letters to those I loved with the few words I knew from poetry, but the war came! No more messages were possible. There were no more poetic words to remember. And when I think about the letters, I feel a lump in my throat.

The so-called playground, rather the school yard, has turned into a large place where people spread sheets and bed sheets, wet bedding, and clothes that have become damp. Many other things until the square became an exhibition of inconsistent fashions and colors. A chaos that leaves no room for one to smile or play, and if you want this scene can be a poem, poems you can find everywhere, spread with colored sheets, or even lying there with the old man. By poetry, I could tell that these sheets were windows overlooking somewhere, or birds that were almost flying. If my dad could hear me

He would have told me that my silly analogies always appeared for no reason. And I would answer that we need a little imagination, or a lot of it, to fit in here

I wandered around from corner to another, there was the school canteen where we were standing in long queues, not queues but we were jostling to catch the falafel sandwich before it ran out. I would walk out of the middle of that little battle with my hair completely tousled, straighten my collar, and go on eating falafel proud that I had gotten it. Getting it was another



little battle, and we were fighting it complacent, determined not to be defeated. I sat under the flag, thinking about the many matches I dreamed of winning, and the poems I would steal excerpts from and put them together in letters and wait for others to tell me, you are the best poet. I would tremble at this moment, and my feet would tremble, do you know what it means for a boy to be a poet?

Here in front of the flag we stood all chanting with one voice, the national anthem before we entered the classroom, I thought of the children outside the world, far from here. What is the national anthem they sing every morning, and stop moving if they hear it out of respect for it? I wanted to be one of the Boy Scouts, but my excessive mobility and tendency to be a natural leader did not allow me to do so. I didn't stop moving, I was moving a lot. I tell a lot, and I have many stories that I haven't told anyone yet. Half of it is from the imagination, and my father always scolded me, saying that I was stuffing my head with foolishness, instead of studying mathematics, and that I was too young to master a lie, but I read somewhere that the imagination is always right. Those imagined stories were true to some extent, based on this saying, and shortly after the war I believed more that no one has the right to rob children of their illusions or dreams.

In the square now, many families from the camp, came to this school. A place that will not be bombed, and that no aircraft will change it, and that what happened in the distant school was a mistake. The war is all wrong with a mistake, and the war can never be right. What is right in killing, destroying, and ruining?

So the school bells won't ring for long, the kids are going to take new classes, while we're still in the tenth grade before we go home, before we repair the houses. When we got out of the house, we didn't take anything with us, there was nothing left to take. And when I looked at my father as he stood in front of the house that had fallen on himself, his eyes were big, very wide, and tears were swimming in them, and then he let out a very sharp, very loud scream, as if an angry beast had woken

up inside him suddenly, oh and my tears could not stop, I bit my lip and my eyes are wet. But we left with our souls, the notebook in which I write this little thought, and a pencil. I wanted to be noticed so I wrote stories, during the day I wrote, writing was a fierce and urgent need.

Without trying to borrow words to say that the war is terrible, terrible and what is happening here is crazy. I had a special way of inspiring and composing stories, looking at faces and then inventing stories. Those faces were afraid, more than they were in pain. It was the stories that eased the pain of war, and made me a leader on paper. I only wanted to talk, to speak because I know that irreparable havoc is taking place within those who have remained silent, and especially after the war they have remained silent, pretending that everything is normal while the world crumbles into a thousand pieces over their heads. But who cares what happens to the defeated?

It was different in school, it was one prevailing state of sadness and calm and fear, this strange mixture of feelings on the faces of all the fathers here, all the mothers here. But the children? Their game is play, they are there to play, the sooner the children turn around and form groups. Their loud laughter erupted here and there. Life quickly returned to school, even though we are in wartime

There are people who play football with something I don't know what it is, but it wasn't a ball. And the girls brought back the glories of the hopscotch again. And others slept on the floor of the rows and slept. They want to sleep more than play. As I sit here, writing a bad poem, neither metered nor rhymed, it is not a complete poem, it is a part of something in a bright little corner of my soul, the war has scratched the soul of that poet I wanted to be..

Before the war visits us

I had a story, an anecdote, and a few poems, non-poetic, and no one read them.

Home was a home and school was a school, and at school we learned poetry, but now I love it. It is my friend



The war is near, the sea is wide and I would like to tell you  
the story of the sea blue.

It shines like a diamond, and the waves come so fast, they  
come back to themselves again.

There was a family, smiling faces.

After the war visited us: the house became a big hole. And  
the school has become a house, and it seems that the house  
will not return soon, and the war is here in the back street,  
right behind us, right between us.

Today I sit at school and it became a home

I am no longer a leader, nor do I play ball.

We lost the house.

And they lost their homes

The ball stopped rolling

Hair stopped inside me

Life has stopped suddenly, and there is a strong ringing in  
my ears

Close bombing,

Again, someone, behind us. Has lost the house and family

Everything stops

Except the war, still going on

Can someone stop this war?





## Muhammad Talib Salman Aldwaik

### REAL FRIENDSHIP

There was a boy who was very much loved by his mother. One day she said to him, "Oh, son, I see something wrong with you, you leave late and come late, not like you used to." The boy said to her, "Mom, I have a friend, a very close friend. I spend time with him." Mother said to him, "I'm afraid that he can be a fake friend ... I will arrange a test for him and see. Invite him to dinner tomorrow and tell him not to be late." The boy said, Okay.

He told his friend what his mother had said. Friend says, "What will we have for dinner?" He said, "Mom has a chicken, she wants to cook dinner from it." The friend said, "Good."

Mother cooked a chicken for the dinner. The boy's friend came at the appointed time, the mother said to him, "Take a seat." They brought a plate, cheese and butter. Once the table has been served, the boy said to his friend, "I have some things to do, so please take a meal and have a rest. Eat until you're full." The boy had nothing to do, he just wanted to check his friend. He went out to his mother in her room.

A friend took the pieces from the thigh of the chicken, from the middle of the chicken and from its wings, took dates, spices and oils, mixed all of them and ate his fill. Then he moved the table aside. The boy came out to him and asked, "Have you had a meal?" His friend said, "Yes". "Did you drink coffee?" He said, "Yes, God bless you and he left". The mother came out and said, "He is not a true friend, my son, if you meet with him again, I will be angry. Son, you can make friends, but not with bad people. A true friend will never leave you in trouble,



he will sacrifice a lot for you and will lay down his life". The boy said, "Okay, mom, I will follow your advice." She said, "I do care about you."

Days went by and the boy got another friend and told his mother about it, "Mom, I have a bosom friend. He is a very good person. I have known him for almost a month. And every day I test him. He successfully passed all my tests. I hope you will like him." The mother said to him, "If so, then invite him to our place tomorrow." He said, "Good." "I will invite him to the dinner, and God send, everything will be fine." When he met a friend, he said, "Will you dine tomorrow with us?" A friend asks, "What will we have?" He said, "We have a rooster and my mother wants to cook it and told me to invite some of my friends. I don't have anyone but than you." His friend said, "Okay, I'll come. And what time?". He said, "After the midday prayer."

After the prayer they came to the boy's place. The boy put on the table all kinds of tasty food, onions, flatbread, chicken and delicious oils. Before they start eating, he said to a friend, "My mother asked me to do something important, but I forgot about it. I'll go out and be back very soon. Take a meal. Don't be shy, eat whatever you want." His friend said, "Okay."

The friend pushed the plate aside, covered it with a napkin, and waited until his friend is back. He was looking out the window, watching the passers-by. The boy returned in half an hour and asked his friend, "Did you take meal?" His friend said "No, I did not. How can I dine without you? I was waiting for you to come back." They came up to the table, had a dinner, talked, laughed. When they finished eating, the boy asked his mother, "What do you say, mom?" She told him, "He is true a friend, not like that bad person whom we invited before".



## LEATHERWORKER

Once upon a time there lived a leatherworker. He had a pregnant wife. He quietly put aside money from what he earned to raise money for the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). The leatherworker had a neighbor whose husband died, leaving her orphans. The woman had no income to feed her children. Once the children cried all night, could not sleep from hunger. She could hardly put them to bed, they immediately woke up and asked for food. Then the woman went to the place where people throw garbage and found the corpse of a dead animal. She returned home, put the children to bed, saying that she would bring food. She took a knife, and went back to the garbage, cut off part of the carrion and returned to the children.

She lit the fire and began roasting the meat while the children slept. The smell of fried meat reached the nose of the leatherworker's pregnant wife, and she wanted to eat fried meat. She said to her husband, "Go to our neighbor and bring me some fried meat."

The leatherworker says to his wife, "This is unreasonable. Ask for something else."

She says, "No, you should go to her. I want fried meat."

The man obeyed her and went to the neighbor. He knocked at the door. The neighbor came out to him and asked what he needed. The leatherworker says, "My wife is pregnant. She smelled the meat you're frying. Could you give me a small piece of meat?"

The woman was embarrassed, she hesitated a little, but then she said to him, "I am afraid of Allah and do not intend to hide the truth from you. This is the meat of a dead animal. I took it from the garbage, I wanted to give it to the children so that they would not cry from hunger."



The leatherworker was shocked by what he heard and how they live.

The woman said, "I have orphans. They are screaming with extreme hunger, and I have nothing to drown out their hunger, so I went to the dumpster and found the corpse of a dead animal there. I cut off a piece of meat from him to fry it and give it to them so that they don't cry."

The leatherworker returned to his wife, sad and depressed, and told her what he heard from the neighbor. Then the leatherworker thought and said to himself, "Am I allowed to perform Hajj while this mother and her orphaned children are dying of hunger?"

The Messenger, may the prayers and peace of Allah be upon him, advised him to help the neighbor.

Then he turned to Allah and said, "O Allah, I testify that I gave my pilgrimage to your house to this mother so that she would feed the hunger of her children with it."

The leatherworker took the money he had collected for the Hajj and gave it to his neighbor, saying, "This is your livelihood that God has sent you, take it and feed your children."

The neighbor was very happy, she prayed for him, asking Allah for success and blessings for her neighbor, then she took the money to buy food for her children. As for the leatherworker, he was unable to perform the Hajj.

During the Hajj, the pilgrims heard the voices of angels in Mecca: "God accepted the hajj of such and such person, the son of such and such person, the leatherworker."

Among the pilgrims who heard these voices was a man who knew the leatherworker. After returning from the Hajj, he came to the leatherworker and said, "Did you perform the Hajj?" The leatherworker says, "No." He asks in surprise, "How come you didn't perform Hajj?" The leatherworker says, "This time I was not destined to perform Hajj." He says, "My companions and I heard the voices of angels saying", "Verily, Allah accepted the Hajj of such and such person, son of such and such person, the leatherworker. So how is it?" The leatherworker said nothing. But since the man insisted, the leatherworker told his story about the orphans. This man had no choice but to collect money for the leatherworker so that he could fulfill his obligatory duty next year. And when the time came for the big Hajj, the leatherworker went to the house of Allah (Kaaba) happy and contented.

## THE TURNIP

Once upon a time the grandfather decided to grow a turnip.  
He planted a seed and said,  
“Let it grow, let it grow sweet! Let it grow, let it grow big!”  
And indeed, it grew sweet, and crunchy, and extraordinarily  
big.

The grandfather goes to pull up the turnip.  
He pulls and pulls and pulls, but the turnip will not budge!  
The grandfather calls the grandmother.

The grandmother pulls the grandfather,  
The grandfather pulls the turnip.  
They pull and pull and pull, but the turnip will not budge!  
The grandmother calls the granddaughter.

The granddaughter pulls the grandmother,  
The grandmother pulls the grandfather,  
The grandfather pulls the turnip.  
They pull and pull and pull, but the turnip will not budge!  
The granddaughter calls the dog.

The dog pulls the granddaughter,  
The granddaughter pulls the grandmother,  
The grandmother pulls the grandfather,  
The grandfather pulls the turnip.  
They pull and pull and pull, but the turnip will not budge!  
The dog calls the cat.

The cat pulls the dog,  
The dog pulls the granddaughter,  
The granddaughter pulls the grandmother,  
The grandmother pulls the grandfather,  
The grandfather pulls the turnip.  
They pull and pull and pull, but the turnip will not budge!  
The cat calls the mouse.

The mouse pulls the cat,  
The cat pulls the dog,  
The dog pulls the granddaughter,  
The granddaughter pulls the grandmother,  
The grandmother pulls the grandfather,  
The grandfather pulls the turnip.  
They pull and pull and pull, and they manage to pull up the  
turnip!





## THE LITTLE BEAN

Once upon a time there lived a rooster and a hen. The rooster was always in a rush and the hen kept repeating,

– Dear rooster, don't rush, there's no hurry!

One day the rooster was picking seeds in the yard and found a little bean.

– Cockle-doodle-doo, my dear hen. Would you like to eat this little bean?

– No, my dear rooster, why don't you treat yourself?

The rooster started to eat the bean so hastily that suddenly he choked on it. He stopped breathing and reacting and dropped to the ground as if he were dead.

The hen was frightened to death and dashed to the mistress.

– Dear mistress, please give me some butter to clear rooster's throat: he choked on a little bean!

– Hurry to the cow, ask her for some milk, and then I will churn butter and give it to you!

So the hen rushed to the cow.


– Dear cow, give me some milk, the mistress will churn butter out of it and I will clear rooster's throat with it: he choked on a little bean!

– Run to the master. Tell him to bring me some grass!

So the hen ran to the master.

– Master, master! Give some fresh-mown grass to the cow, the cow will give some milk to the mistress and the mistress will churn butter out of it. And I will clear rooster's throat with it: he choked on a little bean!

– Hurry to the smith and ask him for a scythe!



So the hen hurried to the smith.

– Smith, smith! Give a good scythe to the master! The master will bring some fresh-mown grass to the cow, the cow will give some milk to the mistress and the mistress will churn butter out of it. And I will clear rooster’s throat with it: he choked on a little bean!

So the smith gave a good scythe to the master, the master brought some fresh-mown grass to the cow, the cow gave some milk to the mistress, the mistress churned butter and gave it to the hen.

So the hen rushed to the rooster and cleared his throat with a piece of butter. The little bean slipped in. The rooster jumped and sang out:

– Cockle-doodle-doo!





## THE FOX, THE TORTOISE AND THE ANT

Once upon a time, a fox, a tortoise and an ant were walking along the highway, and by the roadside they saw a heap of wheat seeds.

“Let us sow the wheat and share the harvest equally,” said the fox.

They gathered the grains of wheat in a bag and looked for a good place to sow it.

“I think we should sow it there,” said the wise tortoise, pointing to level ground by a hill.

The fox, the tortoise and the ant set to work, but no sooner had they started ploughing than the fox stopped and began looking anxiously towards the hill.

“Oh! Oh! Oh! My friends, look over there! Seems like that hill is going to fall on top of us! We’ll come to a bad end and so will all our hard work! I’d better go and hold the hill up so you can work in peace.”

So saying, the cunning fox found a cosy spot behind the hill and fell sound asleep.

By evening the ant and the turtle had sown the whole field with wheat. They were tired, completely worn out, and decided to take a rest. Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, the fox was back.

“If I had not got there just in time,” the fox declared, “There would most certainly have been a disaster.”

When autumn came, the ant and the tortoise reaped a rich harvest. They winnowed and threshed the grain. Just as they



finished, the fox arrived and looked covetously at the golden mountain. He walked around it.

“Well, my friends! That is a very poor harvest. There’s not enough to share between three,” he said, pretending to be upset. “Let’s have a race, and whoever wins it will get all the wheat.”

“How?” the tortoise asked.

“Do you see that elm tree?” The fox pointed to the far end of the field.

“Whoever runs there and back first gets all the wheat.”

What could they do? They had to agree. The fox, the tortoise and the ant got ready to race.





“On your marks! Get set! Go!” the fox yelled and rushed off. The ant, however, without the fox noticing, had clung to his tail. The fox came running back and covered the golden hill with his fluffy tail.

“The wheat’s all mine! The wheat’s all mine!” he sang out happily.

“Hey, you! Get your tail off me! You’re squashing me!” the ant squealed with all his might. He had quickly jumped off the fox’s tail and was sitting on a large grain of wheat. “The wheat’s all yours? I don’t think so, my fine fellow. You’re much too late. I’ve been sitting here for ages waiting for you to catch up.”

“How could a little thing like you run faster than me?! I just don’t believe it! And actually, cheating other people is not a very nice way to behave.”

But just then, the tortoise came crawling back.

“Mr. Fox, my dear friend! Two big dogs are looking for you. Don’t you hear them baying? They are running this way and will be here any minute.”

Although the fox was very cunning, the thing he was scared of more than anything else in the world was – big dogs! He forgot all about the wheat and ran as hard as he could towards the forest.

And that is how the tortoise and the ant outwitted the fox, shared the harvest between the two of them, and lived happily through the whole of the winter.





## THE ARCHER AND HIS FRIENDS

Once upon a time there lived a hunter, a sharp-eyed archer who never came back from the hunt empty-handed.

One day as the hunter was returning home he met a poor peasant.

“Good hunting, archer! You have bagged a lot of game! That will surely fetch you a good price.”

The archer looked at the poor peasant and said,

“What is precious is only a sharp eye and a steady hand. I do not know how much others would give me for the game, but I will gladly sell it all to you. Give me for it whatever you can pay.”

“Oh, thank you kindly, brother, but it is not for me to be buying game. The taxes have taken my last penny. My house is empty, my farmyard is empty, and now all I have left is my only horse. A handful of flour and water is all we have to eat. I cannot think how we will last through until the next harvest.”

“Why then, take my game for nothing. I do not need your money. Eat it and may it bring you good health!” the archer said.

The peasant took his game and said,

“Thank you, friend. I will never forget your kindness. From this hour, consider me your friend. Whenever you pass by my house, be sure to come in. You will always be a most welcome guest.”

“So be it!” said the archer and went on his way.

A few days later the archer was again out hunting. He shot a lot of different kinds of game before returning home. When he entered the town, the archer saw a decrepit old man lying by a wall.

“Greetings to you, father! What ails you?” the archer asked.

“I am not well, my son, I am old and ill. All my life I served in the palace of the padishah and lived on whatever I was given. But now my strength is gone, I can work no more. I have no one to care for me and nothing to eat.”

“Take my game, father,” the archer said.

“No, my son, how can that be? I cannot take it,” the old man said. “The price will be too high for me.”

“Precious is only a sharp eye and a steady hand. Bagging this game was easy for me. Take it, you will have enough to last a long time,” said the archer and laid all the game before the old man. “Restore your strength and may you live in good health!”

The old man, touched by the archer’s kindness, wept and said,

“For as long as I live, consider me your friend. Whenever you are passing by, be sure to visit me and I will receive you as I would my own son.”

“I thank you,” said the archer and went on his way.

A few days later the archer again went hunting and bagged a lot of game. On the way home he saw wide open gates. A rich man was sitting on a carpet and drinking tea while, not far from the gate, in the street, on the bare ground near his house a poor man was sitting in a circle.

“Why are you sitting in that circle?” asked the archer. “What wrong have you done?”

“I took a loan from this rich man but now have nothing to repay the debt. So he has sat me in this circle and ordered me to sit here until evening. If by then no one has redeemed my debt, from tomorrow I shall be the rich man’s slave. And who is there to redeem the debt? I have no rich relatives. There is



nothing I can do. It seems I am destined to become a slave," the poor man said.

"That shall not be!" the archer exclaimed. "Here, take my game, give it to the rich man and he will release you from your debt."

The poor man looked at the archer in disbelief. He was already taking off his shoulder all the game he had killed and laid it in front of the poor man.

"Thank you, friend!" said the poor man. "You have saved me. But let me from this day be forever in your debt. There is the little gate to my house. Come to me whenever you will, stay the night. I will be saddened if you pass me by. From this day forward, consider me your friend."

"Well, fine. Some day I'll visit you," the archer said and went on his way.

Soon the archer went hunting again. This time he stalked the forest for a long time but had no success, unable to find anything to shoot. Distraught, the archer decided to go back home.

Suddenly in the forest he met the padishah's beaters. The padishah was pursuing a beast they had found, and loosed his arrows but just could not hit his prey. The servants encircled the beast. The archer joined the chain of hunters guarding the padishah's prey.

The cornered beast rushed about within the circle of hunters. The padishah shot at it but kept missing and became furious because of his failure. Suddenly the beast rushed towards the archer. In an instant it slipped past and was fleeing back into the mountains.

The padishah shot at the escaping beast, but missed again. Then the archer drew back the string of his bow, fired an arrow, and the beast fell as if scythed down.

The enraged padishah ordered the execution of this huntsman who had dared to join his hunt and kill a beast intended to be the prey of the padishah.

The archer was tied up, brought back to the town, and led to the gallows.

“My lord!” the archer called out to the padishah. “Give me two hours to go and say goodbye to my friend!”

The padishah was amazed that a man facing death should remember a friend. He delayed the execution and ordered the guards to escort the archer.

“Let him go to see his friend, but make sure he does not run away. In two hours’ time he is to be hanged.”

The guards led the archer to his friend. Meanwhile, the padishah slipped into the gatehouse of his palace, changed into peasant clothes, and followed the archer. He wanted to see what kind of friend the archer had and how he would receive him in his hour of need.

The archer went to the house of his first friend and knocked at the gate. The peasant came out. When he saw the archer, he was delighted, bowed to the ground and invited him to enter.

“O friend, do you not see I am under guard? Misfortune has befallen me!”

And the archer told his friend about his unsuccessful hunting, about his encounter with the padishah, about the beast he killed, and that he had only two more hours to live.

Then the peasant said,

“Wait, my friend, do not be sad. I will straight away take my horse to the padishah and ask him to free you.”

The padishah was standing nearby, among the crowd who had gathered to see what was happening, and overheard everything.

“What an amazing person!” the padishah thought. “Does he really not grudge surrendering his last remaining horse?”



The archer's friend quickly brought out his horse and walked together with the archer.

"Wait," the archer shouted. "Here is the home of my second friend. I must go to take my farewell of him for I will assuredly never see him again."

He knocked at the gate and called out to his friend.

The old man came out at his knock. As soon as he saw the archer, he rushed to him joyfully, embraced him, hugged him tightly and enquired after his health.

The archer told his friend of the fate awaiting him.

"No, I will never allow such misfortune!" the old man exclaimed. "I will fall at the feet of the padishah and beg him to forgive you. All my life I have served the padishah, and it cannot be that he will not honour my request. If he really needs someone's head, then let him rather cut off my grey head!"

The padishah was standing among the crowd of people and heard everything.

"This cannot be!" he thought. "No one would sacrifice his life for another person."

The archer began returning with his two friends and the guards to the padishah's palace.

Suddenly, as he walked along the street, the archer saw the gate of his third friend.

"Wait, I still have time!" the archer cried. "I must say goodbye to my third friend. He will be saddened if I pass his house and do not go in to see him!"

The guards did not want to let the archer go to see his third friend. They were afraid they would be late getting back to the palace and the padishah would order them to be executed along with the archer.

"Oh, come now! No one is ever late for their own death," said the archer.

The owner of the house came out to his gate when he heard all the noise. Seeing the archer, he joyfully rushed to him, hugged him tightly and said,

“What joy you bring, my friend! Come in, dear heart! Today you are without game, but that means I can offer my hospitality to you!”

“Oh, friend, I have myself become the prey!”

And the archer explained to him what had befallen.

“That shall not be!” the poor man exclaimed. “I am prepared to do anything to save your life! If the padishah should really decide to execute you, I shall rush at him and slit his belly with my dagger!”

When he heard these words, the padishah was amazed and thought,

“Has this slave of mine gone mad? How could he raise his hand against his padishah because of some hunter?”

Greatly indignant, he left the crowd, returned secretly to the palace, changed into his royal robes and waited for the archer to come to the palace with his friends.

When they approached, the padishah came out to the porch and ordered that the execution should begin.

The executioner pushed the archer towards the gallows.

Then the peasant came forth, bringing his horse.


“Oh, lord!” the archer’s first friend exclaimed. “Take this, my only horse, but spare my dear friend!”

The padishah remained silent.

Then, falling at the padishah’s feet, the old man cried out, “Oh, my lord! I have served you faithfully all my life. Grant me this request: pardon this good man! Take me to be executed in his stead!”

The padishah remained silent, and looked with surprise first at the archer, then at his friends.

At this, the archer’s third friend, without a word, seized his dagger and rushed at the padishah.



The padishah was scared out of his wits, waved his arms in the air and fled into the palace. Everyone took that to mean he had ordered the prisoner's release.

The archer was immediately led away from the gallows. His friends rushed to embrace him. All the people rejoiced, and said that loyal friendship was mightier than the wrath of a padishah.





Thanapol Chadchaidee Ph.D.  
FASCINATING FOLKTALES OF THAILAND

## THE STORY OF MAKATHO

This story dates back to the time of the Sukhothai Period.

There was a young man named Makatho. He was a son of the Mon merchant who lived in Kohwan Village in the city of Mortama, a city in the present Myanmar. When he reached the age of 15 years old his father died so he had to continue his father's business. One day he led his sales team comprising of 30 men carrying goods on their shoulders to be sold in the city of Sukhothai, a former capital of Thailand. On arriving at Matewa, one of his men suddenly felt sick. Out of sympathy, Makatho helped the man by carrying the goods on his shoulder. When he reached the top of the hill, there was heavy rain and a thunderstorm. A thunderbolt suddenly struck his stick used to carry the goods on his shoulder breaking it into pieces, but surprisingly he did not get hurt. Even though he changed the sticks three times, a thunderbolt struck it again and again. When he looked towards the west, in a flash of lightning there appeared perhaps a castle or a palace.

To know more about the strange occurrences, he went to see a fortune-teller and asked him to forecast what he saw. But the fortune-teller set a condition that he had to bring a huge sum of money equivalent to the heap which was to be as high as his head and then he would make a forecast for him. Though Makatho had a small amount of money equivalent to only a few baht, he was intelligent enough to place all the money he had on the termite hill and told the fortune-teller to look at it. The fortune-teller thought that this man was very intelligent. He thus made a prediction that Makatho was a man of great merit

and he would be promoted to a high position in the direction of the west.

Upon arriving at Sukhothai City, he sold all the goods and told his men to return home while he remained in the city. He then went to seek shelter with the mahout of Phra Ruang who was the King of Sukhothai. By nature Makatho was an industrious man so he helped the mahout looking after the elephants day and night. In turn the mahout was very kind to him. When he received his own salary from the king, he would share it with Makatho every time.

One day King Ruang came to see his elephants in the pen. While looking at the elephants from the raised platform, he saw Makatho sweeping the floor of the pen. The king then asked the mahout who that man was. After being informed of the truth, the king showed his kindness to him and instructed the mahout to take good care of Makatho. While looking at the elephants, the king released the areca-nut from his mouth and spat the saliva on the ground so strongly that dust floated in the air. A money cowrie shell suddenly emerged from the ground. The king told Makatho to pick it up. Makatho paid respect to the king and then picked up the money cowrie shell.

Makatho was very happy, though the money was just a small amount. He thought that it was very valuable to him as it was given to him by the king. So to make it more valuable, he went to buy lettuce seeds from the market. The seller did not know how to sell them as the amount of money was too small to count in exchange for the lettuce seeds. So Makatho told the seller a way out. He then raised his finger to touch the saliva from his mouth and then touched on the lettuce seeds.

“Alright! I just wanted this much. Nothing more,” said Makatho.

The seller smiled and praised him for his intelligence, and thought that this man would surely become a great person in the future.

After getting the lettuce seeds, Makatho prepared the soil and planted the seeds nearby. He used the elephant's dung as fertilizer to nourish the vegetable.

One day King Ruang again came to see his elephants. Makatho picked up a lettuce in a hurry and presented it to the king. To his surprise, the king asked where he got it from. Makatho told him the story. The king was very pleased and thought that this son of the Mon was very industrious and intelligent. Thus he was promoted to work in the royal kitchen. Makatho worked hard as usual. The king was very pleased with his performance, so he appointed him in the position of Khun Wang whose duty was to take care of the capital. Makatho worked hard and took his assignment seriously. The king treated him as his own son. Everybody showed him great respect.

Later Makatho asked permission to visit his home village. Since he was a good man, all people liked him and gave him due respect. The ruler of Mortama City named Alimamang was jealous of him and planned to eliminate him. However, Makatho knew about the plot, so he decided to get rid of Alimamang first and was then chosen as the new ruler. After his appointment, Makatho rebuilt the city of Mortama and sent offerings to King Ruang and informed him of the situation. To his pleasure, King Ruang gave Makatho a new royal name as Phra Chao Fa Rua or the King of the Leaking Sky. He expanded his territories far and wide.





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## A WOMAN WITH FRAGRANT HAIR

Once upon a time there was a king named Saenkham who ruled the kingdom of Wapi for several years. The king had a wife named Queen Khammaen. The royal couple lived together for a long time without having an heir to succeed to the throne. So the queen performed a ceremony to ask for a child from the deity.

Surprisingly, after performing the ceremony the queen became pregnant and then gave birth to a baby girl named Seeda. At the age of 15, the young princess became more beautiful than any other woman in the kingdom. Now it was time for the young princess to meet her soul mate, but she felt so uncomfortable that she had to ask permission from her parents to visit the forest for pleasure.

While strolling in the forest with pleasure, the princess and her entourage came across a giant who caught some of her men to eat. The princess was able to escape and hid herself in a hole of a tree.

After the giant disappeared, the princess searched for her entourage, but found no one. So she walked desperately without knowing which direction. When she felt thirsty, she drank water left in the footprint of a bull. Unfortunately, the water made her throat become drier than before. She thus scooped water up from the footprint of the elephant with her hands to drink. Suddenly, she felt much better and took a lonely journey. Finally, she was able to return to the palace safely.

Not long after the forest trip, the princess became pregnant without copulation with any man. The king tried to find out

the truth from her, but could not get any clue as the princess herself did not know how she became pregnant. After ten months of pregnancy, she gave birth to twin sisters. The elder one was given the name of Nang Phomhom meaning a woman with fragrant hair while the younger one was named Nang Lun. When the two sisters grew up, they were beautiful like their mother. One day they thought of their father whom they had never seen. So they decided to search for him in the forest.

After several days in the forest, the two sisters met the king of the elephants which was ferocious and wanted to hurt both of them. They thus asked for mercy from the beast and told it the purpose of their journey in this area. The beast suspected that the two sisters might be its daughters. So it made a wish that only its heir would be able to climb its tusk and sat on its back. After the wish, only Nang Phomhom was able to climb while Nang Lun fell down and died instantly. The elephant king thus took Nang Phomhom to its place and looked after her as its daughter.

Nang Phomhom spent five years under the care of her elephant father. When she reached the age of 20 years old, she felt like to meet people. So she put some of her fragrant hair in a small casket and crafted on it a message urging a person who was born to be her soul mate to meet her. She then floated the casket in the river.

The casket floated along the river and reached the kingdom of Rattana but no one could pick it up as it would go so quickly. The news of a strange casket reached King Phaengkham who was able to pick it up and upon reading the message and smelled the fragrant hair. He fell in love with the owner of the hair immediately so he decided to search for her.

On arriving at the water source, the king found a trace of the hair and he knew at once that he had come to the right place. He hid himself and waited for the time at which Nang Phomhom would come to take a bathe in the river. As soon as he saw her, he revealed himself to her. The two fell in love at first sight and secretly lived together as husband and wife without telling her elephant father. Though the elephant had some doubt about its



daughter's hidden secret as he could sense the human smell, its daughter never told the truth.

After three years of secret affair, the couple decided to face the truth and told the elephant about it and asked for its forgiveness. The elephant felt sad as its daughter had not told it everything and it fell seriously ill after knowing that its daughter was going to leave to live with her husband. Before taking a last breath, the elephant taught its daughter to be a good wife and performed perfect duty as a wife and died with tears in its eyes. The couple felt sad and paid it a last tribute. At that moment, one of its ivory tusks suddenly changed into a boat while the other one became an oar. King Phaengkham accompanied by Nang Phomhom then rowed the boat to his kingdom. After arriving at his kingdom, the king appointed Nang Phomhom as his queen. The couple ruled the kingdom of Rattana happily.





## THE REWARD FOR KINDNESS

Once upon a time, there was a farmer living in a village. One day, the farmer went to plough his field. While he was ploughing, he saw that the nearby forest was on fire. To put out the fire, he grabbed a stick rapidly and ran to the forest. The fire had just begun, only the grass had burnt and the trees had just started to catch fire. Trying to put out the fire with the stick he had, the farmer heard a sound from one of the trees catching fire. Approaching the tree, he saw that there was a snake atop the tree, whimpering.

The snake begged to the man, "Please, uncle farmer, save me!"

The farmer couldn't resist those pleas of agony and held out his stick to the snake on the tree. Having been saved from burning up, the snake hugged the stick that the man held out and started to descend slowly. Just as he was getting closer to the man's hand, suddenly, the snake jumped and tangled around the man's throat.

The farmer asked the snake,

– What are you doing, brother snake?

The snake answered,

– I will bite you.

The farmer,

– I saved you from the fire and now you are trying to bite me, is this the reward for the kindness I have shown you?

"You know that you are my enemy. You saved me, but I won't let you go," said the snake.



“What you’ve done is immoral. Let’s appeal to three referees together and implement whatever decision they make,” said the farmer.

The snake also agreed with him by saying “okay”.

The man and the snake set off, the snake didn’t leave the man’s throat along the way, of course. While walking on the road, they came across an old ox grazing on the edge of a field. The snake explained the situation to the ox, and the ox, without even listening to the farmer’s statement, said,

“Bite, bite so hard so that this man dies immediately. You see, when I was young, my owner took good care of me and made me work a lot, but when I got old, he kicked me out without even giving me a pinch of grass.”

Hearing these words the snake said to the man:

“Come on, get ready, I will bite you.”

“I thought we were going to appeal to three referees? This is just the first one, there is nothing to do if others say so!” yelled the farmer to the snake.

“All right,” said the snake and they proceeded on their way. After walking a little further, they came across an old mule on the road. The snake also explained the situation to the mule.

The mule also said,

“My owner once made me work hard. He always made me carry heavy loads, he had no mercy. And when I got old, he kicked me out of the house; I was left alone in the woods. So, bite this man, bite him in no time.”

The man began to shiver with fear.

“Come on farmer. Get ready. No time to waste,” said the snake.

Holding on to one last hope, the man said, “One more opinion left. Please, let’s listen to it, as well.”

“Okay, okay,” said the snake reluctantly and they set off once again. They kept walking a while and then went over the hills and far away. There they came across a fox. This time, the snake told the fox in details about what went on.





Seeing how pathetic the man looked, “I listened to you. Now let me hear the farmer, but first release the man’s neck. You will almost strangle him. Let him speak comfortably,” said the fox to the snake. So, the snake went down letting the man free and stood on top of its tail.

“Hey, farmer! What’s in your hand?” asked the fox. “It is a stick,” said the farmer. “You are such a dumb man. If you have a stick in your hand, then why don’t you hit this ungrateful snake with it,” said the fox.

After hearing the fox and getting back to his senses, the farmer hit the snake so hard on its waist that the snake laid down at length.

Thus, the vigilance of the fox saved the farmer’s life and the snake paid for its ingratitude. So, justice was served.





## THREE LAZY BROTHERS

Once upon a time, a farmer and his three sons lived in a village in a distant land. The farmer worked hard, ploughed fields, vineyards, and orchards to earn a living. While the farmer worked hard, his children were lazy a bit too much. The children did not like to work at all. Their father couldn't get them to work. They were wandering around and looking for ways to become rich the easy way, constantly saying, "Oh, if we were rich!..."

Anyway, days went by, months went by, years went by; when the time came, their farmer dad got old. Realizing that he was living his last days, the man called his sons and said to them, "My sons, I will tell you a secret before I die. I put what I've earned until today in a big cube and buried it deep somewhere in the field. After I die, take that money and live comfortably."

Hearing these words from their father, the children immediately wanted to learn the exact location of the gold in the field from him, but as soon as the old man said his last words, he died. The children were very glad that their father did such a thing for them. However, they also bewailed a little themselves, "Why didn't he tell us where the money was before?"

After the children paid their last respects to their father, they took a shovel and went out into the field. But the field was huge. They did not know where to look for the money. Also, as their father said, the money was hidden in so deep. They all sat down and argued together and decided to dig the field from one end to the other, inch by inch. Maybe it was going to take too long, but it was worth their effort.

Three lazy brothers started digging the field. They were digging every inch of the field, but while days were passing, they could not find the money. In the meantime, whatever was left from their father in the house ran out, food and materials were finished. Their last money began to drain. As the money ran out, they were digging more diligently to find the money in the field, but they could not find it. In the end, they had dug up the entire field, but there was no money.

They had nothing left anymore. Desperate children began to brood over. One of the brothers said, "We searched for so long but couldn't find the money. We have nothing left. Since we dug this field so much, we worked hard, let's at least plough this place and make a living with the product that comes out." His brothers liked this idea very much and they planted wheat in the field. After a while, the crops planted by the three brothers turned into many crops. The brothers starting to work for the harvest sold it after reaping and earned enough money to make a comfortable living. After this, the brothers who ploughed the field which was inherited from their father and harvested it said, "Our father really left us a treasure, but we didn't realize what it was. The real treasure is what one earns with his/her hard work." And from then on, they lived happily together without remaining lazy, earning by showing great efforts and not needing others.

The same goes to all the lazy people who don't appreciate work...





## THE THREE HEROES

Well, now ... Once upon a time, there was a man who was neither rich nor poor. He had three sons. All were as handsome as the moon, had learned to read and write, were altogether very bright, and kept away from people whose behaviour was not right. The oldest, Tonguch-batyr, was twenty-one; the middle brother, Ortancha-batyr, was eighteen; and the youngest, Kendja-batyr, was sixteen.

One day, their father called his sons to him, sat them down, looked warmly upon them, patting their heads and said,

“My sons, I am not rich, and the property I can bequeath will not suffice you for long. Expect and hope for no more from me. I have fostered three qualities in you, firstly, you have grown up healthy and become strong; secondly, I gave you weapons in your hands and you became skilful lancers; thirdly, I have taught you to fear nothing and you have grown up brave. I give you now three precepts. Listen carefully and never forget them: be honest – and you will live in peace; do not boast – and you will never have to hang your head in shame; do not be idle – and you will be content. As for all the rest, that is for you to decide. I have readied you three steeds: one black, one brown and one grey. I have filled your bags with a week’s provisions. Happiness awaits you. Be on your way, go out and see the world. Without knowing the ways of the world you will not be fully prepared for life. Go hence and seize the bird of happiness. Farewell, my sons!”



So saying, their father rose and left them.

The brothers began to ready themselves for the road. Early in the morning they mounted their steeds and set out. All day they travelled far. Come evening, they decided to rest. They dismounted from their horses, ate a meal but, before lying down to sleep, agreed among themselves as follows:

“This place is a wilderness. It will not be wise for us all to sleep. Let us divide the night into three watches and take turns to guard the sleep of those who slumber.”

No sooner said than done.

First, the eldest brother, Tonguch, began his watch while the others slept. Tonguch-batyr sat for a long time, playing with his sword and in the moonlight looking in every direction. All was silent. Everything seemed dreamlike. Suddenly, from the direction of the forest, he heard a sound. Tonguch drew his sword and readied himself.

Not far from where the brothers had stopped was a lion's den. Scenting humans, the lion got up and padded out into the steppe.

Tonguch-batyr was sure that he could cope with the lion on his own and, not wanting to disturb his brothers, ran off. The beast chased after him.

Tonguch-batyr turned round and struck the lion's left paw a blow with his sword, wounding it. The wounded lion charged Tonguch-batyr, but he jumped to one side and brought down his sword on the head of the beast with all his might. The lion fell dead.

Tonguch-batyr sat astride the lion, cut a narrow strip of its skin, used it to gird himself under his shirt and, as if nothing had happened, returned to where his brothers were sleeping.

Then it was the turn of Ortancha-batyr, the middle brother, to stand guard.



During his watch nothing happened. After him the youngest brother, Kendja-batyr, awoke and guarded his brothers' sleep until dawn. And so their first night passed.

In the morning the brothers set off again. They rode for a long time and covered a lot of land, and in the evening they stopped by a great mountain. At its foot stood a lone spreading poplar tree, beneath which a spring appeared out of the ground. Near the spring there was a cave, and deep within it lived Azhdar-sultan, king of the snakes.

The heroes knew nothing of the king of the snakes. They calmly tethered their horses, groomed them with a comb, fed them, and themselves sat down to supper. Before they lay down to sleep, they agreed to keep watch as they had the night before. First, the eldest brother, Tonguch-batyr, stood sentinel, after which it was the turn of the middle brother, Ortancha-batyr.

It was a moonlit night and silent all around. But then there was a noise, and soon Azhdar-sultan slithered out of his cave. He had a head like a ewer, a long, log-like body, and he crawled to the spring.

Ortancha-batyr did not want to disturb the sleep of his brothers and ran into the steppe, away from the spring.

Sensing a human being, Azhdar-sultan pursued him. Ortancha-batyr jumped to one side and struck the king of snakes a sword blow on his tail. Azhdar-sultan coiled up on the spot and the hero managed to strike at his back. Seriously wounded, the king of snakes rushed at Ortancha-batyr. Then the hero dealt him a final, fatal blow.

He cut a narrow strip from the skin of the snake and used it to gird himself under his shirt and, as if nothing had happened, returned to his brothers and sat back at his post. Then it was the turn of the youngest brother, Kendja-batyr, to be on guard. In the morning the brothers again set off on their way.

They travelled for a long time through the steppes. As the sun was setting they rode up to a lone hill, dismounted from



their horses and settled down to rest. They lit a fire, ate their supper, and again took turns to be on guard: first the eldest, then the middle brother, and finally it was the turn of the youngest brother.

Kendja-batyr sat, guarding the sleep of his brothers. He did not want the fire to go out. "It is not good for us to be without a fire," thought Kendja-batyr.

He climbed to the top of the hill and looked around. In the distance, a light flickered fitfully.

Kendja-batyr mounted his horse and rode towards it. He rode for a long time and finally came to an isolated house.

Kendja-batyr got down from his horse, tiptoed quietly to the window and peeped inside.

It was light in the room, and a cauldron of soup was boiling in the hearth. A score of people sat round it, all grim-faced and with their eyes bulging. Clearly, these people had something bad in mind.

Kendja thought,

"Oho, a gang of robbers has gathered here. To leave them and sneak away would be unworthy. It would not be right for an honest person to act like that. I'll try to trick them. I'll take a good look at them, win their confidence, and then I'll do what must be done."

He opened the door and walked in. The robbers reached for their weapons.

"Good sir," said Kendja-batyr, addressing the ataman of the robbers, "I am your insignificant slave, born in a distant town. Until now, I have engaged only in minor affairs but have long been wanting to join a gang like yours. I heard that your honour was here and have hastened to meet you. Do not disdain my youth. My only hope is that you will accept me. I have no few skills. I can dig tunnels, I know how to reconnoitre and scout the land. I will be of use to you in your business."



So skilfully did Kendja-batyr conduct this conversation that the ataman of the gang replied,

“You did well to come.”

Clasping his hands to his chest, Kendja-batyr bowed and sat down near the fire. The soup was ready. They drank it.

That night the robbers decided to rob the shah’s treasury. When they had dined, they mounted their horses and rode into the night.

Kendja-batyr went with them. They soon rode up to the palace gardens, dismounted, and began discussing how to get into the palace.

They finally agreed as follows: first, Kendja-batyr would climb over the wall and discover whether the guards were asleep. After that, the rest of them would climb, one at a time, over the wall, descend into the gardens and assemble there in order all together to burst into the palace.

The robbers helped Kendja-batyr to climb the wall. He jumped down, walked around the garden and, discovering that the guards were indeed asleep, found a cart and wheeled it up to the wall.

Kendja-batyr climbed on to the cart and, sticking his head over the wall, said, “This is the perfect moment.”

The ataman ordered the robbers to climb over the wall one by one.

No sooner had the first robber lain down on his stomach on the wall and, bending his head, prepared to clamber down onto the cart than Kendja-batyr swung his sword. The instant he brought it down on the thief’s neck, the head was severed.

“Jump down,” Kendja-batyr commanded the corpse, pulled the thief’s body over the wall and flung it down.

To make a long story short, Kendja-batyr chopped off the heads of all the robbers and then made for the palace.



He crept quietly past the sleeping guards into a hall with three doors. This was watched over by ten servant maids, but they too were asleep.

Unremarked by anyone, Kendja-batyr went through the first door and found himself in a richly ornamented chamber. Silken curtains embroidered with crimson flowers were draped on the walls.

In the room, on a silver bed engulfed in white linen, there slept a beauty, more exquisite than all the flowers on earth. Kendja-batyr approached her very quietly, removed a gold ring from her right hand and put it in his pocket. Then he went back out to the hall.

“Well, now, let’s take a look in the second chamber and see what secrets it contains,” Kendja-batyr said to himself. Opening the second door, he found himself in a sumptuously furnished room, adorned with silks embroidered with images of birds. In the middle, on a silver bed, surrounded by a dozen maidservants, laid a girl so beautiful that the moon and the sun disputed over which of them had given her such beauty.

Kendja-batyr quietly slipped a bracelet off the maiden’s wrist and put it in his pocket. Then he went back out to the hall.

“Time now to take a look in the third chamber,” he thought.

Here were even more adornments. The walls were covered in crimson silk.

On a silver bed, surrounded by sixteen beautiful maidenly servants, slept another beauty. The girl was so enchanting that even Tsarina Aiszd herself, the beautiful morning star, was willing to serve her.

Kendja-batyr quietly took a gold earring from the girl’s right ear and put it in his pocket.

Kendja-batyr came out of the palace, climbed over the wall, mounted his horse and rode back to his brothers. They were not yet awake, so Kendja-batyr sat up till morning, playing with his sword.



Dawn broke. The heroes breakfasted, saddled and mounted their horses, and went on their way.

A little later they entered a town and stopped at a caravanserai. Tethering their horses under an awning, they went into a teahouse and sat there to relax over a pot of tea.

Suddenly the town crier appeared in the street and proclaimed,

“Oyez, oyez! Hear ye, hear ye! This night in the palace gardens someone cut off the heads of twenty robbers, and the shah’s daughters each lost one piece of gold. It is the wish of our shah that all people, great and small, should assist and explain this incomprehensible event to him and point out the hero who performed such a valorous act. If anyone has visitors from other towns and countries in their house, let them immediately bring them to the palace.”

The owner of the caravanserai proposed to his guests that they should appear before the shah. The brothers stood up and walked unhurriedly to the palace.

The shah, learning that they were strangers, ordered that they be taken to a special, sumptuously furnished chamber. He instructed his vizier to learn their secret.

The vizier said,

“If they are asked directly, they may well not tell. Let us rather leave them on their own and listen to what they say among themselves.”

In the chamber in which the brothers were sitting there was no one besides themselves. A tablecloth was laid before them and various dishes brought. The brothers set about the food.

In an adjacent room, however, the shah and the vizier sat in silence, eavesdropping.

“We have been given the meat of a young lamb,” said Tonguch-batyr, “but it was clearly suckled by a bitch. Shahs do not spurn the meat even of a dog. But here is what truly does surprise me, the grape must has a human smell.”

“Indeed,” said Kendja-batyr, “all shahs are bloodsuckers. It would not surprise me if there was human blood mixed in with the must. One thing, though, that surprises me too is that the flatbread on the tray is stacked as only a good baker would know how.”

Tonguch-batyr said, “That must be the explanation. But we have been invited here because they want to know what happened in the shah’s palace. Of course, we will be asked. What are we going to say?”

“We shall not lie,” said Ortancha-batyr. “We shall tell the truth.”

“Yes,” answered Kendja-batyr, “the time has come to speak of everything we have seen during our three days on the road.”

Tonguch-batyr began by telling how he fought the lion on the first night. He took off his belt of lion skin and cast it in front of his brothers. Following him, Ortancha-batyr also told of what transpired on the second night and, removing his belt of skin from the king of snakes, he showed it to the brothers. Then Kendja-batyr spoke. After telling of what had happened on the third night, he showed his brothers the golden jewellery he had taken.

Now the shah and the vizier had learned the secret, but still they were puzzled by what the brothers had said about the meat, the grape must and the flatbread. They sent first for the shepherd. The shepherd came before them.

“Tell the truth!” said the shah. “The lamb you sent yesterday, was it suckled by a dog?”

“Oh, sovereign lord!” the shepherd pleaded. “If you will spare my life, I shall tell all.”

“Do so,” said the shah. The shepherd related,

“In winter, a sheep died on me. I felt sorry for its lamb, and gave it to the dog. The dog suckled it. Yesterday that was the lamb I sent you because I had no others. Your servants had already taken all the others.”

The shah then ordered the gardener to be summoned.

“Tell the truth,” the shah said to him. “Is there human blood mixed into the grape must?”

“Oh, my sovereign lord,” the gardener replied, “something happened. If you will spare my life, I will tell you the whole truth.”

“I will spare you, speak!” said the shah.

Then the gardener said,

“Last summer someone got into the habit of stealing every night the very finest grapes I had set aside for you. I lay down in the vineyard to keep watch. I saw someone coming. I struck him as hard as I could on the head with a cudgel. Then I dug a deep hole beneath the vine and buried his body. This year the vine grew wonderfully and gave such a harvest that there were more grapes than leaves. Only the grapes tasted a little different, so I did not send you fresh grapes but boiled them into bekmes.”

As for the flatbreads, they had been laid on a tray by the shah himself. It appeared that the shah’s father had been a baker.

The shah came into the chamber. He greeted the heroes and told them,

“Everything you said has turned out to be true, and that is why you find even greater favour with me. I have a request to make of you, dear, heroic guests. Please listen to it.”

“Speak,” said Tonguch-batyr. “If we find your request suitable, we will fulfil it.”

“I have three daughters but no sons. Stay here. I will give you my daughters in marriage. I shall arrange the wedding, calling together the whole town and treating everyone to free pilaf for forty days.”

“You speak very well,” Tonguch-batyr replied, “but how can we marry your daughters when we are not the children of a shah and our father is by no means rich? You have obtained

your wealth by ruling but we have been brought up to toil.” The shah insisted,

“I am the ruler of this land, and your father brought you up with sweat and manual labour, but since he is the father of such heroes as you, in what wise is he lower than I? In truth, he has greater wealth than I have. And now I, the father of girls over whom besotted shahs, mighty rulers of the world, have wept, stand before you and lament, begging you to accept the offer of my daughters for your wives.”

The brothers agreed. The shah organized a great feast which lasted forty days, and the young heroes went to live in the shah’s palace. Most of all the shah loved his youngest son-in-law, Kendja-batyr.

One day the shah lay down to rest in a cool place. Suddenly, a poisonous snake crawled out of a ditch and was about to bite him. Kendja-batyr arrived just in time. He drew his sword, cut the snake in half and cast it aside.

Before Kendja-batyr had time to put his sword back in its scabbard, the shah woke. Doubt assailed him. “Already the fact that I married my daughter to him is not enough,” thought the shah. “I see he is plotting to kill me and wants to become shah himself.”

The shah went to his vizier and told him what had happened. The vizier had long harboured feelings of enmity towards the heroes and was only waiting for such an opportunity. He now sought to turn the shah against them.

“Without seeking my advice, you gave your beloved daughters in marriage to these passing adventurers and now your favourite son-in-law is seeking to kill you. Beware, lest with cunning he may yet assassinate you.”

The shah believed the vizier and commanded,  
“Let Kendja-batyr be thrown in prison.”

Kendja-batyr was imprisoned. Saddened and sorrowful, the young princess married to Kendja-batyr cried for days and the



bloom in her cheeks faded. One day she threw herself at her father's feet and begged him to release his son-in-law.

The shah ordered that Kendja-batyr be brought from prison.

"Just see how wicked you have proved to be," the shah said to him. "How could you resolve to kill me?" In reply, Kendja-batyr told the shah the tale of the parrot.

### The Tale of the Parrot

Once upon a time there lived a shah. He had a favourite parrot. The shah so loved his parrot he could not bear to be apart from him for even an hour.

The parrot spoke words pleasing to the shah and entertained him. One day the parrot said,

"In my homeland in India I have a father and mother, I have brothers and sisters. I have lived in captivity for many years. Now I beg you to free me for twenty days. I will fly to my homeland, six days there, six days back, and for eight days I will feast my eyes on my mother and father, my brothers and sisters."

"No," was the shah's reply. "If I let you go, you will never return and I shall be weary." The parrot assured him,

"Sire, I give you my word and I shall honour it."

"Well, all right, in that case I shall let you go, but only for two weeks," said the shah.

"Goodbye, somehow I shall manage to return in time," the parrot squawked joyfully.

He flew from the cage to the palace wall, said goodbye to one and all, and flew off to the south. The shah stood, watching him go. He did not believe the parrot would return.

The parrot flew six days to his homeland in India and found his parents. The poor bird was jubilant, fluttered and frolicked. He flew from hill to hill, from branch to branch, from tree to tree, immersing himself in the green leaves of the forests, visiting relatives and friends, not noticing how the two days



passed. But then the time came when he was due to fly back to captivity, back to his cage. With a heavy heart, the parrot said farewell to his father and mother, his brothers and sisters.

The minutes of joy gave way to hours of sadness. His wings hung limp. Perhaps he would some day be able to fly back here again, but who knows? Perhaps not.

His family and friends came together. They all felt sorry for the parrot and advised him not to go back to the shah, but the parrot said,

“No, I gave my word. How can I not keep it?”

“Oh, come,” one parrot said. “Have you ever known a ruler to keep his promises? If your shah were a just man, would he have kept you fourteen years in captivity and released you for only fourteen days? Were you really born into this world to live in captivity? Do not let freedom slip away from you in order to keep someone entertained! There is more ferocity in a shah than mercy. It is as great a folly and danger to be close to a ruler as to a tiger.”

The parrot, however, did not heed this advice and prepared to fly back. Then the parrot’s mother spoke.

“In that case, heed my advice. The fruit of life grows in our land. Whoever eats even a single fruit is immediately made once more young. An old man becomes young, and an old woman becomes a young girl. Take the shah this precious fruit and ask him to set you free. Perhaps that will awaken in him a sense of justice and he will give you your freedom.”







Everyone agreed that was good advice. They immediately brought him three fruits from the tree of life. The parrot bade his family and friends farewell and flew to the north. Everyone watched him go, with great hope in their hearts.

The parrot flew six days to the palace, presented the shah with the gift, and told him what property the fruit possessed. The shah was delighted, promised to release the parrot, gave one fruit to his wife, and put the others in a piala bowl.

The vizier shook with rage and envy, and was determined events should take a different course.

“Before you eat the fruit brought by the bird, let us first test it. If it proves good, that will be time enough to eat it,” said the vizier.

The shah took his advice. The vizier, seizing his opportunity, injected strong poison into one of the fruits of life. Then he said, “Well, now let us test it.”

They brought two peacocks and let them peck the fruit. Both died immediately.


“What would have happened if you had eaten them?” said the vizier.

“I would have died too!” the shah exclaimed. He dragged the parrot from its cage and wrung its neck. Such was the poor parrot’s reward at the hands of the shah.

Shortly afterwards, a certain old man angered the shah and he decided to execute him. The shah ordered him to eat the remaining fruit. As soon as the old man ate it, his hair became black, he grew new teeth, his eyes shone with the brilliance of youth and he assumed the appearance of a twenty-year-old.

The shah realized his error in killing the parrot, but by then it was too late.

“And now I will tell you what happened while you were asleep,” Kendja-batyr concluded.



He went out into the garden and brought thence the bisected body of the snake. The shah began apologizing to Kendja-batyr, but Kendja-batyr said to him,

“Sire, allow me and my brothers, if you will, to return to our own country. With shahs no one can live a peaceful life in safety.”

No matter how the shah beseeched and implored them, the heroes would not agree.

“We cannot be courtiers and live in the shah’s palace. We shall live by our own hard work,” they said.

“Then let my daughters, at least, stay with me,” said the shah. But his daughters fell over each other to protest,

“We will not be parted from our husbands.”

The young heroes returned to their father, bringing their wives, and lived a happy life of hard work and prosperity.





## DISHONEST AIGRY AND HONEST TUGRY

In the olden days, a young man lived in a village in Central Asia. His name was Tugry and he owned nothing but his horse. He looked for work in one village after another, but without success. So he mounted his horse and rode far, far away to seek his fortune.

Tugry rode and rode and met a wayfarer. They got to talking. Tugry asked the wayfarer who he was, where he came from and where he was going.

“I’m going in search of work,” he replied.

“What is your name?” Tugry asked.

“Aigry.”

“And I’m Tugry. Let’s be friends, let’s work together and live together.” They agreed to be lifelong companions.

Tugry felt sorry for his friend who had no horse, and invited him to ride a little on his. Aigry mounted the horse, whipped it up and galloped away, vanishing into the distance.

Tugry was shocked. Someone who had sworn to be a loyal friend had treated him like his worst enemy.

There was nothing he could do about it, so Tugry trudged on his way.

When it began to get dark, Tugry found a narrow path and followed it. The path led him deep into dense forest.

He suddenly saw, in a grassy clearing, an old stove for baking flatbread, a tandoor.

“It really is dangerous to walk through the forest in the dark of night. I’ll sleep here until morning,” he decided, and squeezed into the stove.

Now that grassy clearing with the stove was where the foremost wild animals gathered at night: the shah of the forest – the lion; the viziers of the forest – the tiger and the bear; the bugler of the forest – the wolf; the flautist of the forest – the jackal; and the forest’s storyteller – the fox.

When the moon rose, the jackal loped in and howled. At his summons, all the animals assembled and their feast began.

The lion shah came, sat grandly in his place, and the animals came to tell him their secrets.

The storyteller fox began the telling,

“There is a cave not far from here where I have lived for ten years now. For ten years I have been collecting there all manner of goods: carpets, curtains, blankets, clothes ... Absolutely everything the humans have you will find in my house. And how many delicious provisions I have there!”

Tugry in his hiding place thought, “Aha! I would do well to go and pay a visit to this fox.” After the fox, the bear vizier spoke:

“There is nothing so amazing about that. Why, in our forest there is a tall tree, an elm, and beneath it are two young shoots. There is no illness that cannot be cured by the leaves of those shoots. The daughter of the shah of our town has been ailing now these seven years. The shah has ordered a proclamation to be made public that “Whosoever cures my daughter’s ailment, to him shall I give her in marriage! But whoever claims to be able to cure her and fails so to do, that person shall I execute.” The shah has already executed many healers. And yet, if anyone were just to pluck the leaves from those elm shoots, to boil them and give the decoction to the girl to drink, she would recover immediately.”

After the bear, the wolf bugler began his tale,

“At the edge of the forest, a wealthy bey has a flock of 40,000 sheep grazing. I eat two of them each day. No matter how hard the shepherds try, they never manage to catch me. Luckily, they do not know there is an old man living on a nearby hill who

has a dog. If the dog were guarding the sheep, he would tear me to pieces.”

The tiger vizier spoke,

“That bey the wolf was talking about has a herd of 10,000 horses. They graze at the edge of the forest and every week I carry one of them off. In that herd there is one white horse with black markings. If someone were to mount it, they would be able catch up with me. It is well for me that no one knows this secret.”

As the tiger finished his story, dawn was breaking. The beasts began to disperse back to their lairs.

When the clearing was empty, Tugry climbed out of the tandoor. He went and found that elm the bear had mentioned and plucked some leaves from the shoots.

Then he went in search of the flock of sheep. He found and greeted the shepherd and asked if all was well in his life. The shepherd complained,

“I am in great trouble. A wolf has got into the habit of coming to the flock and dragging the sheep away. I cannot imagine what my master may do to me for that. Great is my misfortune! How am I to be rid of that wolf?”

“Fear not!” said Tugry. “I shall rid you of the wolf.”

He went to the old man, asked him to let him have the dog, and gave it to the shepherd. The shepherd was rid of his misfortune. The dog attacked the wolf and ripped its skin.

Tugry went on his way, looking for the herd of horses. He greeted the herdsman, who complained to him about the tiger. Tugry advised him,

“Saddle up that white stallion with the black markings and give me a long, heavy stake.”

Tugry mounted the stallion, took the stake, and lay in wait on the path for the tiger.

At night the tiger vizier came and charged the herd. Tugry impaled it with the stake and the beast fell down dead.

The shepherd presented the stallion to Tugry.

Tugry mounted his steed and rode into town. At the bazaar the town crier was proclaiming,

“The shah’s daughter has been ailing these seven years. Whosoever cures her, the shah will make his son-in-law. But whoever claims to be able to cure her and fails to do so, that person the shah will execute.”

“I can cure the shah’s daughter!” Tugry exclaimed.

He went to the palace. The shah allowed the new healer into the presence of his daughter.

Tugry pounded the elm leaves, boiled them, and gave the decoction to the maiden to drink. Three days later, the girl was cured. The shah arranged a great feast and gave his daughter to Tugry in marriage.

“Well, now, which town should I appoint you to rule over?” the shah asked his son-in-law.

“I do not want to be a ruler,” Tugry replied. “Build a house for me on the mountain by the forest. I shall live there in the sweat of my brow.”

The shah was surprised, but did as his son-in-law requested. Tugry and his wife went to live on the mountain. One day Aigry came to Tugry.

“My friend, how have you gained all this?” he asked. “You have both a house and a farmstead. I stole your horse and thought I would become rich, but wherever I go I succeed in nothing.”

Tugry did not want to be reminded of Aigry’s perfidy, and he said only,

“I slept one night in the forest in an old stove and all this came to me.”

“Show me that place. I’ll go and sleep in the stove too.”

Tugry told him how to find the clearing where the animals gathered. When darkness fell, Aigry squeezed into the stove.

Again that night the beasts of the forest came to the clearing. The shah of the forest came – the lion; the vizier came – the bear; the storyteller came – the fox.

“Well, now, let us commence the telling of the stories! Why is not the tiger, my vizier, here?” asked the lion shah. The jackal got to his feet,



No, today we should not tell any stories. It is because of our stories that the tiger, your vizier, has been killed.”

At this, the bear reared up,

“The leaves from our elm have also been plucked,” he complained.

“And I have been left without food,” said the wolf. “The shepherd took that dog of which I spoke. Now I fear to go near his flock – the dog has quite maimed me.”

“Who has dared to tell our secrets?!” roared the dread lion. “I command that the traitor be caught and killed!”

But the animals did not know who had been eavesdropping on their secrets. The bear asked the jackal, the jackal asked the fox.

But a pheasant cried, “In the stove!” and flew on its way.

The animals rushed to the stove, dragged Aigry out and tore him to pieces.

And thus did honest Tugry gain everything he desired, while dishonest Aigry received the punishment he so rightly deserved.





## THE ORIGIN OF BANH GIAY AND BANH CHUNG

Banh Giay and Banh Chung are two types of delicacies which are very popular with the Vietnamese people.

Banh Giay is served regularly at festival and ceremonies. It is a rounded, convex cake of glutinous or nep rice, which resembles white dough, soft and sticky. Its cupola-shaped top is said to resemble the shape of the heavenly vault.

Banh Chung is served particularly at the Vietnamese New Year's festival, which occurs during the first three days of the first month of the lunar calendar. It is a square cake, wrapped in banana leaves and tied with lacings of flexible bamboo slivers. It is a very delicious and nutrient food for the interior contains a filling of bean paste to which may be added small bits of pork meat, both fat and lean. This filling, which is amply seasoned, is pressed between layers of glutinous nep rice. Its square shape is considered a symbol of the thankfulness of the Vietnamese people for the great abundance of the Earth, which has supplied them with nutritious food throughout the four seasons of the year.

Here is the story about the origin of Banh Giay and Banh Chung.

\* \* \*

King Hung the Sixth had already lived a long and useful life. When he had finally repelled the invaders and restored peace to his kingdom, he determined to relinquish the throne, with

all its worldly responsibilities, in order to enjoy mental repose during his declining years.

The king was the father of twenty-two sons, all worthy princes. From among them he had to choose an heir and successor. It was a difficult task and the king was not certain how to determine the qualities of a future sovereign in his sons. He thought about it for a long time and finally arrived at a novel solution. Since there is much to be learned from travel, he decided to send his sons on a journey.

He called the twenty-two princes together and said, "Go forth, all of you, to the farthest corners of the earth and search out for me recipes and food-stuffs that I have not yet tasted, but which I would greatly enjoy. He who returns with the best dish will rule this kingdom."

The princes dispersed and made their preparations. Twenty-one of them set out on distant journeys to search for the dish that would most please the king. Some went north into cold and inhospitable areas, and others journeyed south, east and west.

But there was one prince who did not leave the royal palace. He was sixteenth in rank and his name was Lang Lieu. His mother had died while he was still very young, and unlike his brothers he had never known the warmth of maternal love. He had only his old nurse to look after him.

Prince Lang Lieu was at a complete loss and had no idea about how he might set about procuring a new dish for the king. There was no one to advise him, so he remained in the palace, lost in gloomy meditation.

One night a genie appeared to the prince in a dream and said: "Prince, I know of your youthful loneliness and understand your anxieties. I have been sent here to help you, so that you will be able to please your royal father. Therefore, do not despair. It is a law of nature that man cannot live without rice; it is man's chief food. For that reason, you will first take a quantity of glutinous rice, some beans, some fat and lean pork meat, and spices. Pluck some banana leaves and from split bamboo cut

flexible lacings. All these materials symbolize the abundance of the Earth.

“Soak the rice in clean water and boil part of it. When it is well-cooked, pound it into a cupola-shaped, plain cake.

“Now prepare a stuffing of bean paste and bits of pork. Place this between layers of nep (glutinous) rice. Wrap the whole in banana leaves and press it into a square shape. Then bind it with the flexible bamboo lacings. Cook it for a day and the cake will be ready for eating.”

Then the genie disappeared and the prince awakened to find himself lying in bed, looking at the ceiling with wide-open eyes and repeating the words that he had heard. Could he have been dreaming? In the morning he revealed the secret to his old nurse and together they collected the proper materials and prepared the cakes as directed.


After the apricot trees had bloomed once, the twenty-one princes returned from their quests. They were weary from their long travels but happy with anticipation. Each prepared his dish with his own hands, using the special foods and materials that he had brought back with him. Each seemed confident that his dish would win the prize.

On the appointed day the dishes were brought before the king. Twenty-one times the king tasted, and twenty-one times he shook his head in disapproval. Then Prince Lang Lieu modestly presented his two cakes – one, white and “round as the sky” and the other, steaming hot and “square as the earth,” wrapped in banana leaves with flexible bamboo lacings. The prince untied the leaves and displayed a soft, sticky, green cake, which he cut with a bamboo knife. The inside was white and lemon-yellow and studded with opaline bits of fat and brown bits of lean pork meat.

The king accepted a piece of the square cake and tasted it. Then he picked up a second piece, and then a third, until he had eaten the cake completely. Then he ate the round cake also.

“Is there any more?” he asked, smacking his lips, his eyes dancing with pleasure.





“How did you make them?” he asked in wonder.

Prince Lang Lieu told the story of how the genie had appeared to him and had instructed him in the selection of foodstuffs and the manner of making the cakes. The Court listened in silence.

The king was greatly impressed with the revelation for it attested divine support. He surmised that in the handling of state affairs, divine inspiration would not be lacking for the young prince. He accordingly named Lang Lieu the winner and appointed him his heir and successor. He decided that the round loaf should be called *Banh Giay* and the square one, *Banh Chung*, and ordered his ministers to give the recipes to the Vietnamese people.



## THE STORY OF ONE HUNDRED EGGS

A long time ago, long after the creation of the sky and ground, people had already settled in the deltas of the Hong Ha River of North Vietnam. The living conditions were based on fishing and rice harvesting which depended on the rise and fall of the tides. One day, a god named Lac Long Quan appeared in the country of Lac Viet (what is today's Vietnam).

According to legend, Lac Long Quan is a descendant of Than Nong of the Northern regions of the Ngu Linh mountains. His grandmother was the Goddess Nui Ngu Linh who is also known as Vu Tien. His father Kinh Duong Vuong, a mountain god and king of Xich Quy, married Ho Dong Dinh, a water goddess. Through the union of a mountain god and a water goddess, Lac Long Quan was born. Because his mother was also a water dragon, Lac Long Quan had most of his mother's features. He took the nickname of Lac Long Quan as his real name is Sung Lam.

Kinh Duong Vuong gave Lac Long Quan the country of Lac Viet. North of Kinh Duong Vuong's country of Xich Quy is the Dong Dinh lake (Ho Nam); to the south lies Ho Ton (Champa); to the west lies Ba Thu (Tu Xuyen); and to the east lies the Nam Hai ocean.

Lac Long Quan proceeded to build a great imperial palace. Besides this tremendous architectural undertaking, he also built a beautiful home named Long Trang on top of a high mountain. The outside of Long Trang had long doors and a wide



garden with many trees. He even made an underwater imperial palace as his main home. He told the people that if they needed him to do a task for them, they need only come to a lake and say, "Oh father," and he would appear.

One day, a god named De Lai brought his wife (some people say it is his daughter) to visit the country of Lac Viet. De Lai is also a descendant of Than Nong, which means he and Lac Long Quan are related. De Lai arrived, while Lac Long Quan was in his water palace. He left his wife, Au Co, at a temporary residence while he and his legion went to visit the country. It is not known whether De Lai and his troops harassed the villagers, but they did make the villagers upset. The villagers went to call Lac Long Quan.

Upon arriving at the temporary residence, Lac Long Quan saw Au Co.

She was very beautiful, and he fell in love with her at that moment. He turned himself into a handsome and strong young man and appeared at her door, playing a lyre and singing a love ballad. Au Co saw him and took a sudden liking to this young man. The two married, and Lac Long Quan took her back to Long Trang.

When De Lai returned and noticed Au Co was missing, he became furious and ordered his troops to search for her. Meanwhile, Lac Long Quan heard the summons of the villagers and transformed himself into dragons, snakes, elephants, tigers, and creatures of that nature to block the roads. De Lai's men were frightened and returned to him to tell him to retreat. But De Lai did not listen. He wanted to stay and search for Au Co. The story of what transpired between Lac Long Quan and De Lai is not known, but it is known that De Lai was forced to bring his defeated army back to the North.

After living with Lac Long Quan for a year, Au Co laid a sac of one hundred eggs, from which hatched one hundred humans. These children did not need any child rearing. They grew up quickly and became normal healthy adults.

Still used to living in the water, Lac Long Quan continued to reside in his underwater imperial palace although Au Co



lived on land. Being away from her husband, Au Co began to remember her homeland. One day, she took all one hundred children with her to visit her native home.

By then, De Lai had been killed by Hoang De and his soldiers. When Hoang De heard that Au Co was arriving with a hundred people, he panicked and ordered a thousand men to stop her at the country's border. When Au Co saw the troops, she had no choice but to turn around. She feared they were going to attack Lac Viet, so she summoned her husband. The two had a final meeting at Dong Con.

At first, Au Co blamed Lac Long Quan for the situation in the North. She compelled her husband to solve the problem. She wanted to give all responsibility to him. Instead, Lac Long Quan told his wife and children the proper reason for his intended course of action,

“I am by nature like a dragon, while you are like a fairy. Our habits and customs are of different dispositions. We must live apart from each other. Although that is difficult, we have at least had our time together, now of our children, half will come with me to the underwater palace, and the other half will stay on land with their mother. Although half will live on land and the other half will live in water, if either group encounters misfortune, then the other group must help each other.”

The hundred children understood their father's wish and divided themselves into two groups. Fifty followed their mother to the mountains, and fifty followed their father into the ocean. This is where the ancestry of the Vietnamese people began. Au Co and her fifty children became rulers known as Hung Vuong. Because of that, Vietnamese people refer to themselves as the dragon and fairy's grand children.





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