

## BUDDHIST TALES

### FOR YOUNG AND OLD

A.

#### The Careless Lion

Once upon a time, the Five Training Steps were not yet known in the world. There was a very wealthy man living in Benares who owned a large herd of cattle. He hired a man to look after them.

During the time of year when the rice paddies were filled with the green growing rice plants, the herdsman took the cattle to the forest to graze. From there he brought the milk and butter and cheese to the rich man in Benares.

It just so happened that, being in the forest put the cattle in a very frightening situation. There was a meat eating lion living nearby. Sensing the presence of the lion kept the cattle in constant fear. This made the cows tense and high-strung, leaving them too weak to give more than a little milk.

One day the owner of the cattle asked the herdsman why he was bringing such a small amount of milk and butter and cheese. He replied, "Sir, cows need to be calm and contented to give much milk. Due to a nearby lion, your cows are always afraid and tense. So they give hardly any milk."



"I see." said the rich man. Thinking like an animal trapper, he asked, "Is the lion closely connected to any other animal?" The herdsman answered, "Sir, there happens to be a variety of deer living in the forest. They are called 'minideer' because they are so small. Even the adults only grow to be about one foot tall. The lion has become very friendly with a certain minideer doe."

The rich man of Benares said, "So that my cows will be at peace and able to give their usual milk, this is what you are to do. Capture the lion's friend and rub poison all over her body. Then wait a couple days before releasing her. She will be like bait in a trap for the lion. When he dies, bring his body to me. Then my cows will be safe and happy again."

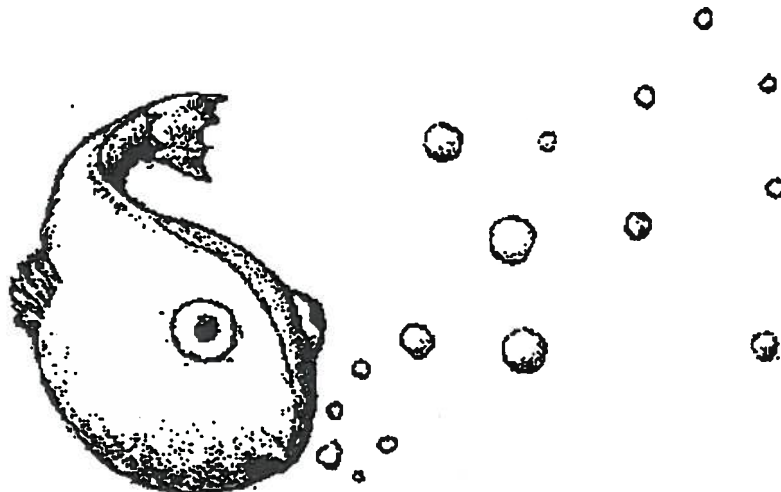
The herdsman followed his boss's orders exactly. When the lion saw his favorite minideer doe he was so overjoyed that he threw all caution to the wind. Without even sniffing the air around her, he immediately began licking her excitedly all over. Because of too much joy and not enough caution, he fell into the poisonous trap. The poor lion died on the spot.

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## BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

B

### The Fish Who Worked a Miracle



Once upon a time, the Enlightenment Being was born as a fish in a pond in northern India. There were many kinds of fish, big and small, living in the pond with the Bodhisatta.

There came to be a time of severe draught. The rainy season did not come as usual. The crops of men died, and many ponds, lakes and rivers dried up. The fish and turtles dug down and buried themselves in the mud, frantically trying to keep wet and save themselves. The crows were pleased by all this. They stuck their beaks down into the mud, pulled up the frightened little fish, and feasted on them.

The suffering of pain and death by the other fish touched the Enlightenment Being with sadness, and filled him with pity and compassion. He realized that he was the only one who could save them. But it would take a miracle.

The truth was that he had remained innocent. by never taking the life of anyone. He was determined to use the power of this wholesome truth to make rain fall from the sky, and release his relatives from their misery and death.

He pulled himself up from under the black mud. He was a big fish, and as black from the mud as, polished ebony. He opened his eyes, which sparkled like rubies, looked up to the sky, and called on the rain god Pajjunna. He exclaimed, "Oh my friend Pajjunna, god of rain, I am suffering for the sake of my relatives. Why do you withhold rain from me, who am perfectly wholesome, and make me suffer in sympathy with all these fish?"

"I was born among fish, for whom it is customary to eat other fish - even our own kind, like cannibals! But since I was born, I myself have never eaten any fish, even one as tiny as a rice grain. In fact, I have never taken life from anyone. The truthfulness of this my innocence gives me the right to say to you: Make the rains fall! Relieve the suffering of my relatives!"

He said this the way one gives orders to a servant.

And he continued, commanding the mighty rain god Pajjunna: "Make rain fall from

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the thunderclouds! Do not allow the crows their hidden treasures! Let the crows feel the sorrow of their unwholesome actions. At the same time release me from my sorrow, who have lived in perfect wholesomeness."

After only a short pause, the sky opened up with a heavy downpour of rain, relieving many from the fear of death - fish, turtles and even humans. And when the great fish who had worked this miracle eventually died, he was reborn as he deserved.

c

### The Shovel Wise Man

Once upon a time, the Enlightenment Being was born into a family of vegetable gardeners. After he grew up he cleared a patch of land with his shovel. He grew herbs, pumpkins, melons, cucumbers and other vegetables. These he sold to earn a humble living.

The shovel was his one and only possession in the whole world. He carried it in the same way a forest monk carries his walking staff. So he became known as the 'Shovel Wise Man'.

One day he thought, "What good does it do me to live the ordinary everyday life of a gardener? I will give up this life and go meditate in the forest. Then I will be peaceful and happy." So the Shovel Wise Man hid his one possession, his shovel, and became a forest meditator.

Before too long, he started thinking about his only possession, his shovel. He was so attached to this shovel that he couldn't get it out of his mind, no matter how hard he tried! Trying to meditate seemed useless, so he gave it up. He returned to his shovel and his ordinary life as a vegetable gardener.

Lo and behold, in a little while the Shovel Wise Man again gave up the everyday life, hid his shovel and became a forest meditator. Again he could not get his shovel out of his mind, and returned to being a gardener. All in all, this happened six times!

The next time the Shovel Wise Man gave up his forest meditation, he finally realised it was because of his old worn out shovel that he had gone back and forth seven times! So he decided to throw it away, once and for all, in a deep river. Then he would return to the forest for good.

He took his shovel down to the riverbank. He thought, "Let me not see where this shovel enters the water. Otherwise it may tempt me again to give up my quest." So he closed his eyes, swung the shovel in a circle over his head three times, and let it fly into the midst of the river. Realising that he would never be able to find the shovel again, he shouted, just like a lion roars, "I have conquered! I have conquered! I have conquered!"

It just so happened that the King of Benares was riding by at that very moment. He was returning from putting down a revolt in a border village. He had bathed in the river, and had just seated himself on his magnificent royal elephant. He was riding back to Benares in a victory procession.

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When he heard the triumphant shouts of the Enlightenment Being, he said to his ministers, "Listen. Who is shouting, just like a lion roars, 'I have conquered'? Whom has he conquered? Bring that man to me!"

When they brought the Shovel Wise Man to him, the king said, "I am a conqueror because I have won a battle. You say that you have conquered. Whom did you conquer?"

The Enlightenment Being replied, "Your lordship, even if you conquer a hundred thousand armies, they are meaningless victories if you still have unwholesome thoughts and desires in your own mind! By conquering the craving in my mind, I know I have won the battle against unwholesome thoughts."

As he spoke he concentrated his mind on the water in the river, then on the idea of water itself, and reached a high mental state. In a sitting position he rose into the air. He preached these words of Truth to the king: "Defeating an enemy who returns to fight you again and again is no real victory. But if you defeat the unwholesomeness in your own mind, no one can take that true victory from you!"

While the king was listening to these words, all unwholesome thoughts left his mind. It occurred to him to give up the ordinary world and seek real peace and happiness. He asked, "Where are you going now, wise one?" He answered, "I am going to the Himalayas, oh king, to practise meditation." The king said, "Please take me with you. I too wish to give up the common worldly life." Lo and behold, as the king turned northward with the Shovel Wise Man, so did the entire army and all the royal ministers and attendants.

Soon the news reached the people of Benares that the king and all those with him were leaving the ordinary world and following the Shovel Wise Man to the Himalayas. Then all the people in the entire city of Benares followed them towards the northern mountains. Benares was empty!

This great migration of people came to the attention of the god Sakka, King of the Heaven of 33. Never had he seen so many giving up worldly power. He ordered the architect of the gods to build a dwelling place in the Himalayan forests for all these people.

When they arrived in the Himalayas, the Shovel Wise Man was the first to announce that he had given up the ordinary world for good. Then all those with him did the same. Never was so much worldly power given up, or renounced, at the same time.

The Shovel Wise Man developed what holy men call the 'Four Heavenly States of Mind'. First is loving-kindness, tender affection for all. Second is feeling sympathy and pity for all those who suffer. Third is feeling happiness for all those who are joyful. And the fourth state is balance and calm, even in the face of difficulties or troubles.

He taught the others advanced meditation. With great effort they all gained high mental states, leading to rebirth in heaven worlds.

## BUDDHIST TALES

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#### The Whatnot Tree



Once upon a time there was a caravan leader. He went from country to country selling various goods. His caravans usually had at least 500 bullock carts.

On one of these trips his path led through a very thick forest. Before entering it, he called together all the members of the caravan. He warned them, "My friends, when you go through this forest be careful to avoid the poisonous trees, poisonous fruits, poisonous leaves, poisonous flowers and even poisonous honeycombs.

"Therefore, whatever you have not eaten before - whether a fruit, leaf, flower or anything else - must not be eaten without asking me first." They all said respectfully, "Yes, sir."

There was a village in the forest. Just outside the village stood a tree called a 'whatnot tree'. Its trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits look very similar to a mango tree. Even the colour, shape, smell and taste are almost exactly the same as a mango tree. But unlike a mango, the whatnot fruit is a deadly poison!

Some went ahead of the caravan and came upon the whatnot tree. They were all hungry, and the whatnot fruits looked like delicious ripe mangoes. Some started eating the fruits immediately, without thinking at all. They devoured them before anyone could say a word.

Others remembered the leader's warning, but they thought this was just a different variety of mango tree. They thought they were lucky to find ripe mangoes right next to a village. So they decided to eat some of the fruits before they were all gone.

There were also some who were wiser than the rest. They decided it would be safer to obey the warning of the caravan leader. Although they didn't know it, he just

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## The Whatnot Tree

happened to be the Enlightenment Being.

When the leader arrived at the tree, the ones who had been careful and not eaten asked, "Sir, what is this tree? Is it safe to eat these fruits?"

After investigating thoughtfully he replied, "No, no. This may look like a mango tree, but it isn't. It is a poisonous whatnot tree. Don't even touch it!"

The ones who had already eaten the whatnot fruit were terrified. The caravan leader told them to make themselves vomit as soon as possible. They did this, and then were given four sweet foods to eat - raisins, cane sugar paste, sweet yogurt and bee's honey. In this way their taste buds were refreshed after throwing up the poisonous whatnot fruit.

Unfortunately, the greediest and most foolish ones could not be saved. They were the ones who had started eating the poisonous fruits immediately, without thinking at all. It was too late for them. The poison had already started doing its work, and it killed them.

In the past, when caravans had come to the whatnot tree, the people had eaten its poisonous fruits and died in their sleep during the night. The next morning the local villagers had come to the campsite. They had grabbed the dead bodies by the legs, dragged them to a secret hiding place, and buried them. Then they had taken for themselves all the merchandise and bullock carts of the caravan.

They expected to do the same thing this time. At dawn the next morning the villagers ran towards the whatnot tree. They said to each other, "The bullocks will be mine!" "I want the carts and wagons!" "I will take the loads of merchandise!"

But when they got to the whatnot tree they saw that most of the people in the caravan were alive and well. In surprise, they asked them, "How did you know this was not a mango tree?" They answered, "We did not know, but our leader had warned us ahead of time, and when he saw it he knew."

Then the villagers asked the caravan leader, "Oh wise one, how did you know this was not a mango tree?"

He replied, "I knew it for two reasons. First, this tree is easy to climb. And second, it is right next to a village. If the fruits on such a tree remain unpicked, they cannot be safe to eat!"

Everyone was amazed that such lifesaving wisdom was based on such simple common sense. The caravan continued on its way safely.

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## The Strong-minded Snake

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Once upon a time there was a doctor who was an expert at treating snakebites. One day he was called for by the relatives of a man who had been bitten by a deadly poisonous snake.

The doctor told them, "There are two ways of treating this snake bite. One is by giving medicine. The other is by capturing the snake who bit him, and forcing him to suck out his own poison." The family said, "We would like to find the snake and make him suck the poison out."

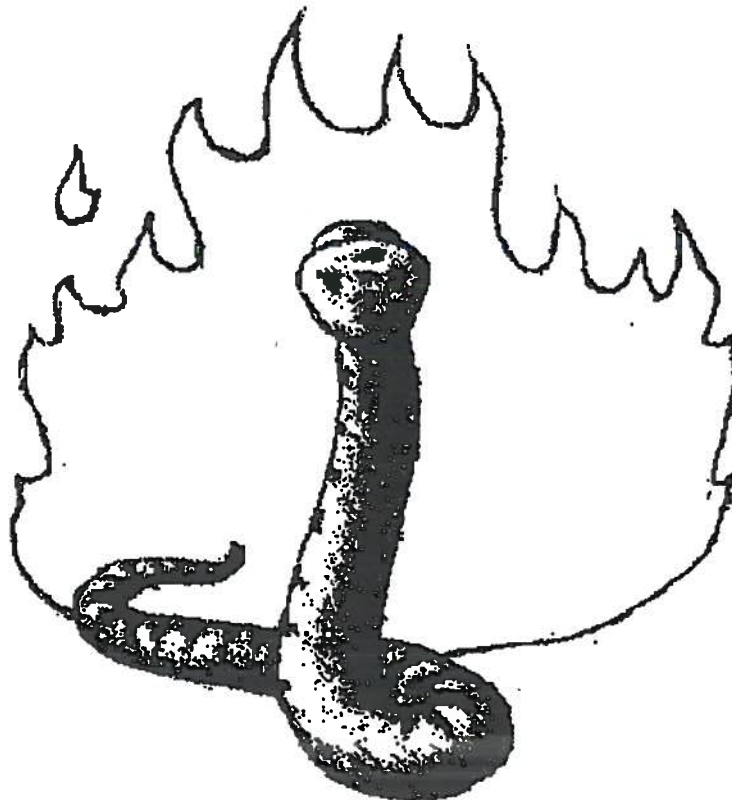
After the snake was caught, the doctor asked him, "Did you bite this man?" "Yes I did," said the snake. "Well then," said the doctor, "You must suck your own poison out of the wound." But the strong-willed snake replied, "Take back my own poison? Never! I have never done such a thing and I never will!"

Then the doctor started a wood fire and said to the snake, "If you don't suck that poison out, I'll throw you in this fire and burn you up!"

But the snake had made up his mind. He said, "I'd rather die!" And he began moving towards the fire.

In all his years, the snake bite expert doctor had never seen anything like this! He took pity on the courageous snake, and kept him from entering the flames. He used his medicines and magic spells to remove the poison from the suffering man.

The doctor admired the snake's single-minded determination. He knew that if he used his determination in a wholesome way he could improve himself. So he taught him the Five Training Steps to avoid unwholesome actions. Then he set him free and said, "Go in peace and harm no one."



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## BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

### F The Green Wood Gatherer



Once upon a time there was a world famous teacher and holy man in the city of Takkasila. He had 500 students training under him.

One day these 500 young men went into the forest to gather firewood. One of them came upon a tree with no leaves. He thought, "How lucky I am! This tree must be dead and dry, perfect for firewood. So what's the hurry? I'll take a nap while the others are busy searching in the woods. When it's time to return, it will be easy to climb this tree and break off branches for firewood. So what's the hurry?" He spread his jacket on the ground, lay down on it, and fell fast asleep - snoring loudly.

After a while all the other students began carrying their bundles of firewood back to Takkasila. On their way they passed the snoring sleeper. They kicked him to wake him up and said, "Wake up! Wake up! It's time to return to our teacher."

The lazy student woke up suddenly and rubbed his eyes. Still not fully awake, he climbed up the tree. He began breaking off branches and discovered that they were actually still green, not dry at all. While he was breaking one of them, it snapped back and poked him in the eye. From then on he had to hold his eye with one hand while he finished gathering his bundle of green wood. Then he carried it back to Takkasila, running to catch up. He was the last one back, and threw his bundle on top of the rest.

Meanwhile an invitation arrived to a religious ceremony. It was to be held the next day at a remote village. The holy man told his 500 pupils, "This will be good training for you. You will have to eat an early breakfast tomorrow morning. Then go to the village for the religious service. When you return, bring back my share of the offerings as well as your own."

The students awoke early the next morning. They awakened the college cook and



asked her to prepare their breakfast porridge. She went out in the dark to the woodpile. She picked up the top bundle of the lazy man's green wood. She brought it inside and tried to start her cooking fire. But even though she blew and blew on it, she couldn't get the fire going. The wood was too green and damp.

When the sun came up there was still no fire for cooking breakfast. The students said, "It's getting to be too late to go to the village." So off they went to their teacher.

The teacher asked them, "Why are you still here? Why haven't you left yet?" They told him, "A lazy good-for-nothing slept while we all worked. He climbed a tree and poked himself in the eye. He gathered only green wood and threw it on top of the woodpile. This was picked up by the college cook. Because it was green and damp, she couldn't get the breakfast fire started. And now it's too late to go to the village."

The world famous teacher said, "A fool who is lazy causes trouble for everyone. When what should be done early is put off until later, it is soon regretted."



### A Huge Lump of Gold

Once upon a time there was a rich village. The wealthiest of the villagers decided to hide a huge lump of gold to protect it from bandits and robbers. So he buried it in a nearby rice field.

Many years later, the village was no longer rich, and the rice field was abandoned and unused. A poor farmer decided to plow the field. After some time plowing, it just so happened that his plow struck the long forgotten buried treasure.

At first he thought it must be a very hard tree root. But when he uncovered it, he saw that it was beautiful shining gold. Since it was daytime he was afraid to try and take it with him. So he covered it up again and waited for nightfall.

The poor farmer returned in the middle of the night. Again he uncovered the golden treasure. He tried to lift it, but it was far too heavy. He tied ropes around it and tried to drag it. But it was so huge he couldn't budge it an inch. He became frustrated, thinking he was lucky to find a treasure, and unlucky to not be able to take it with him. He even tried kicking the huge lump of gold. But again it wouldn't budge an inch!

Then he sat down and began to consider the situation. He decided the only thing to do was to break the lump of gold into four smaller lumps. Then he could carry home one piece at a time.

He thought, "One lump I will use for ordinary day-to-day living. The second lump I will save for a rainy day. The third lump I will invest in my farming business. And I will gain merit with the fourth lump by giving it to the poor and needy and for other good works."

With a calm mind he divided the huge lump of gold into these four smaller lumps. Then it was easy to carry them home on four separate trips.

Afterwards he lived happily.



## BUDDHIST TALES

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#### A Motherless Son

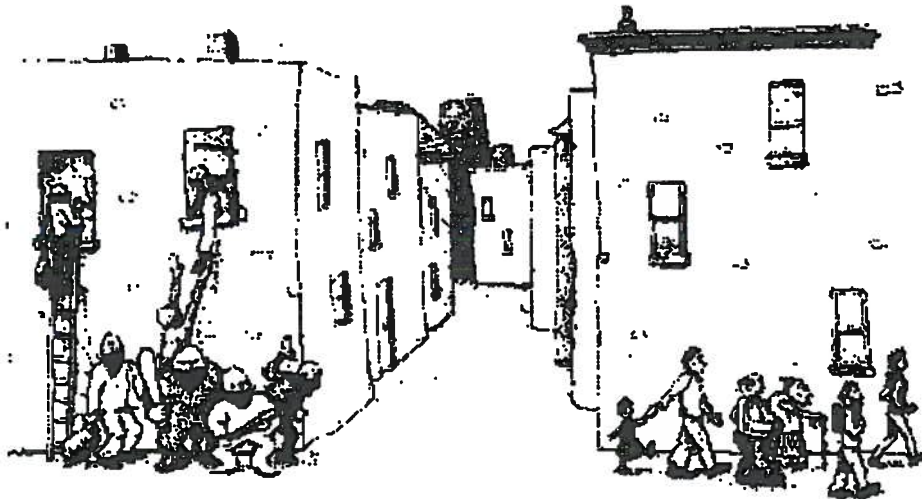
Once upon a time, King Brahmadata was ruling in Benares in northern India. He had a clever minister who pleased him very much. To show his appreciation he appointed him headman of a remote border village. His duty was to represent the king and collect the king's taxes from the villagers.

Before long the headman was completely accepted by the villagers. Since he had been sent by the just King Brahmadata, they respected him highly. They came to trust him as much as if he had been born among them.

In addition to being clever, the headman was also very greedy. Collecting the king's taxes was not enough reward for him. After becoming friendly with a gang of bandits, he thought up a plan to make himself rich.

The headman said to his friends, the robbers, "I will find excuses and reasons to lead all the villagers into the jungle. This will be easy for me, since they trust me as one of their own. I will keep them busy in the jungle, while you invade the village and rob everything of value. Carry everything away before I bring the people home. In return for my help, you must give me half of all the loot!" The bandits agreed, and a date was set.

When the day arrived, the headman assembled all the villagers and led them into the jungle. According to the plan, the bandits entered the unprotected village. They stole everything of value they could find. They also killed all the defenseless village cows, and cooked and ate the meat. At the end of the day the gang collected all their stolen goods and escaped.



It just so happened that on that very same day a travelling merchant came to the village to trade his goods. When he saw the bandits he stayed out of sight.

The headman brought all the villagers home in the evening. He ordered them to make a lot of noise by beating drums as they marched towards the village. If the bandits had still been there, they would have heard the villagers coming for sure.

## A Motherless Son

The village people saw that they had been robbed and all their cows were dead and partly eaten. This made them very sad. The travelling merchant appeared and said to them, 'This treacherous village headman has betrayed your trust in him. He must be a partner of the gang of bandits. Only after they left with all your valuables did he lead you home, beating drums as loudly as possible!

'This man pretends to know nothing about what has happened - as innocent as a newborn lamb! In truth, it's as if a son did something so shameful that his mother would say - 'I am not his mother. He is not my son. My son is dead!''

Before long, news of the crime reached the king. He recalled the treacherous headman and punished him according to the law.

I

### The Bull Called Delightful

Once upon a time, in the country of Gandhara in northern India, there was a city called Takkasila. In that city the Enlightenment Being was born as a certain calf. Since he was well bred for strength, he was bought by a high class rich man. He became very fond of the gentle animal, and called him 'Delightful'. He took good care of him and fed him only the best.

When Delightful grew up into a big fine strong bull, he thought, "I was brought up by this generous man. He gave me such good food and constant care, even though sometimes there were difficulties. Now I am a big grown up bull and there is no other bull who can pull as heavy a load as I can. Therefore, I would like to use my strength to give something in return to my master."

So he said to the man, "Sir, please find some wealthy merchant who is proud of having many strong bulls. Challenge him by saying that your bull can pull one hundred heavily loaded bullock carts."

Following his advice, the high class rich man went to such a merchant and struck up a conversation. After a while, he brought up the idea of who had the strongest bull in the city.

The merchant said, "Many have bulls, but no one has any as strong as mine." The rich man said, "Sir, I have a bull who can pull one-hundred heavily loaded bullock carts." "No, friend, how can there be such a bull? That is unbelievable!" said the merchant. The other replied, "I do have such a bull, and I am willing to make a bet."

The merchant said, "I will bet a thousand gold coins that your bull cannot pull a hundred loaded bullock carts." So the bet was made and they agreed on a date and time for the challenge.

The merchant attached together one-hundred big bullock carts. He filled them with sand and gravel to make them very heavy.

The high class rich man fed the finest rice to the bull called Delightful. He bathed him and decorated him and hung a beautiful garland of flowers around his neck.

Then he harnessed him to the first cart and climbed up onto it. Being so high class, he could not resist the urge to make himself seem very important. So he cracked a whip in the air, and yelled at the faithful bull, "Pull, you dumb animal! I command you to pull, you big dummy!"

The bull called Delightful thought, "This challenge was my idea! I have never done anything bad to my master, and yet he insults me with such hard and harsh words!" So he remained in his place and refused to pull the carts.

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The merchant laughed and demanded his winnings from the bet. The high class rich man had to pay him the one-thousand gold coins. He returned home and sat down, saddened by his lost bet, and embarrassed by the blow to his pride.

The bull called Delightful grazed peacefully on his way home. When he arrived, he saw his master sadly lying on his side. He asked. "Sir, why are you lying there like that? Are you sleeping? You look sad." The man said, "I lost a thousand gold coins because of you. With such a loss, how could I sleep?"

The bull replied, "Sir, you called me 'dummy'. You even cracked a whip in the air over my head. In all my life, did I ever break anything, step on anything, make a mess in the wrong place, or behave like a 'dummy' in any way?" He answered, "No, my pet."

The bull called Delightful said, "Then sir, why did you call me 'dumb animal', and insult me even in the presence of others? The fault is yours. I have done nothing wrong. But since I feel sorry for you, go again to the merchant and make the same bet for two-thousand gold coins. And remember to use only the respectful words I deserve so well."

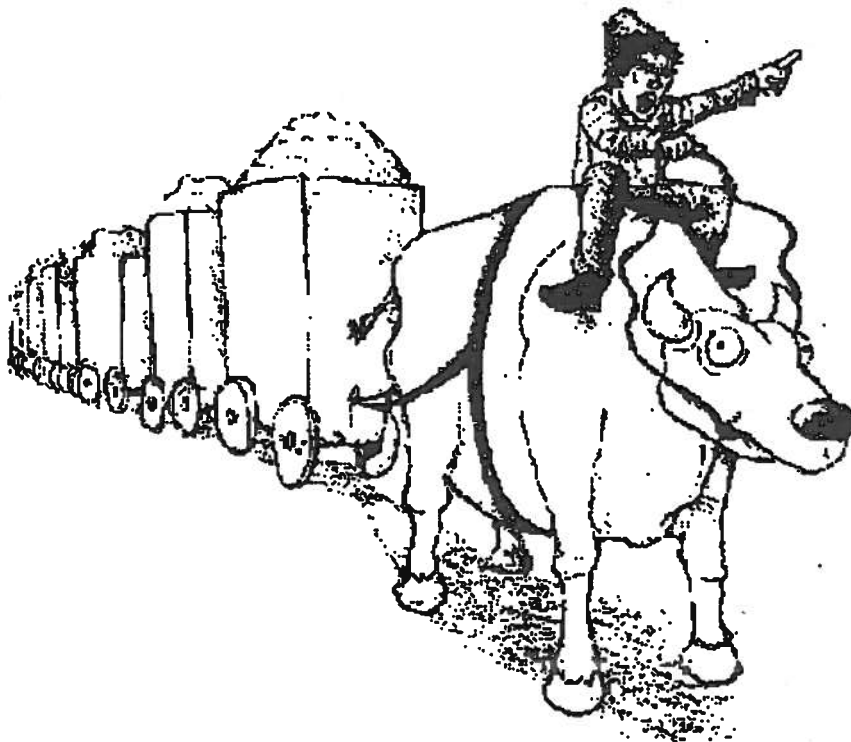
Then the high class rich man went back to the merchant and made the bet for two-thousand gold coins. The merchant thought it would be easy money. Again he set up the one-hundred heavily loaded bullock carts. Again the rich man fed and bathed the bull, and hung a garland of flowers around his neck.

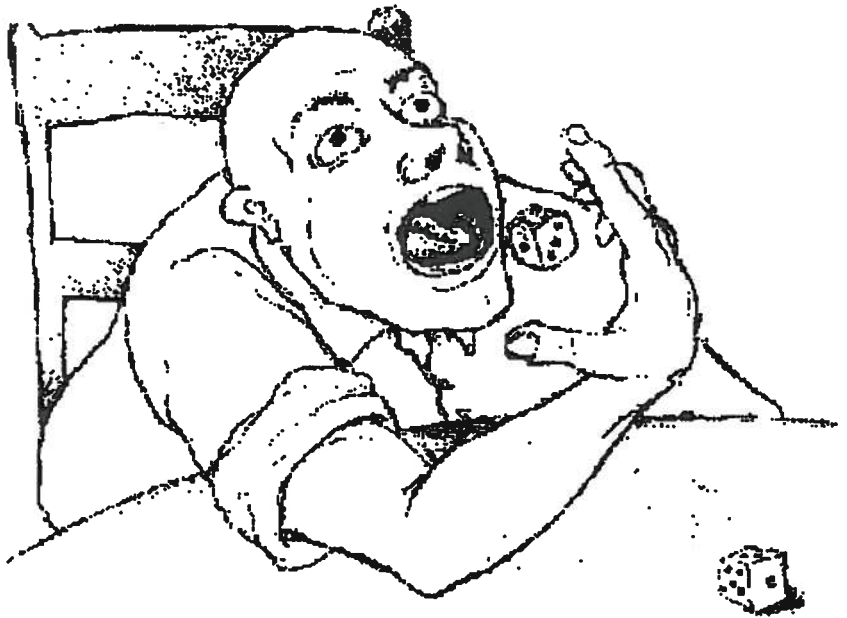
When all was ready, the rich man touched Delightful's forehead with a lotus blossom, having given up the whip. Thinking of him as fondly as if he were his own child, he said. "My son, please do me the honor of pulling these one-hundred bullock carts."

Lo and behold, the wonderful bull pulled with all his might and dragged the heavy carts, until the last one stood in the place of the first.

The merchant, with his mouth hanging open in disbelief, had to pay the two-thousand gold coins. The onlookers were so impressed that they honored the bull called

Delightful with gifts. But even more important to the high class rich man than his winnings, was his valuable lesson in humility and respect.





Once upon a time there was a rich man living in Benares who was addicted to gambling. He played dice with another gambling addict, a man whose mind worked in tricky ways.

While the rich gambler was very honest and above board, the tricky one was dishonest. When he kept on winning he kept on playing. But when he began to lose he secretly put one of the dice in his mouth and swallowed it. Then he claimed it was lost and stopped the game.

The rich gambler began to notice this trick. Then one day he decided to teach him a lesson. He smeared poison on the dice and let it dry so it was invisible. He took these dice to the usual place and said, "Let's play dice!"

His friend agreed. They set up the gambling board and began to play. As usual the tricky one began by winning every throw of the dice. But as soon as he began to lose he sneaked the dice into his mouth.

Seeing this the rich gambler said, "Swallow now, and then something you don't expect will happen. Your own dishonesty will make you suffer much."

After swallowing the poison dice the trickster fell down sick and fainted. The rich gambler, who was basically good at heart, thought, "Enough is enough. Now I must save his life."

He made a medical mixture to cause vomiting. He made him swallow it, and he threw up the poison dice. He gave him a drink made with clear butter, thick palm syrup, honey and cane sugar. This made the trickster feel just fine again.

Afterwards he advised him not to deceive a trusting friend again. Eventually both gamblers died and were reborn as they deserved.

