TRANSLATIONS: SET LITERATURE 2025

THE MERCHANT AND THE SCALES

There was, in a certain town, a businessman's son named Jiṙṇadhana. Owing to a loss of wealth, he thought about going to another country. In his house there was a weighing scale that his ancestors had got made from solid iron. Having made that as a deposit in the house of a money-lender, he set out to foreign lands.

After that, having roamed about the other places for a long time, and having returned to his hometown again, he said to that money lender,

"O Respected Sir, please give me the scales that were deposited/pawned". He said, "O Sir, your scales do not exist. They have been eaten by mice." Jiṙṇadhana said -- "O Respected money-lender, it's not your fault , if they have been eaten by mice."

"This world is such. Nothing here is permanent.

Later I am going for a bath in the river. So send your own son, this one named Dhanadeva, with me, with bathing accessories in hand." The money-lender, apprehensive from fear of trickery, said to his son, - "O Son! This uncle of your is going for a bath in the river. Then go, together with him, taking the bathing paraphernalia"

Then, the money-lender's child, with cheerful face, taking the bathing accessories, set out with that person who had arrived. When matters had happened accordingly, the merchant, after bathing, having hidden that boy in a cave in the riverbank, having shut the entrance door with a large stone, quickly returned home. And he was asked by that money-lender, "O visitor, tell me, where is my son who went with you to the river?"

He said, "He was carried away from the riverbank by a falcon."
The money-lender said, "O liar - What? A falcon is able to carry off a child somewhere?" "Then, hand over my son!" "Otherwise I will inform in the court of the king."
He said, "O truth-speaker - Just as a falcon does not bring a young boy, so also mice do not eat scales made of solid iron! Hand over my scales, then, if your intention is to be reunited with your child."

THE LION AND THE CAVE

[The person who plans before taking action is successful; the one who acts before planning has to repent later.]

In a forest there lived a lion by the name of Kharnakhar. One day, oppressed by hunger, he roamed hither and thither for food but could not find any animal. At sunset, he saw a cave and entered it. He thought that during nightfall some animal will certainly enter this cave to rest. Therefore, I shall hide in the cave during the night.

A jackal, by the name of Dadhipucchḥ resided in this cave; sometime later he entered the cave. When he reached the mouth of the cave he noticed the paw marks of a lion entering the cave, but not coming out from there! He thought his death was now imminent. Surely, a lion is hiding inside this cave. What shall I do? How do I ascertain whether or not the lion is inside the cave?

He stood at the gate of the cave and said, "O cave! O cave!" and then waited silently. Not finding an answer he said, "O cave! Don't you remember our pact? Whenever I shall return from outside, I will call out your name and in turn you will call out mine. Or else, I shall go to some other cave."

Hearing that the lion thought – "surely this cave calls back at the visitor; but, presently it is not speaking anything due to fear. It is rightly said –

In a scared person, the hands and feet stop functioning, the voice turns silent and the body begins to tremble.

Hence, I shall respond (to the call of the jackal). Once he hears the response, the jackal will enter the cave and become my meal. When the lion roared the cave reverberated, and the animals, even in far off places in the forest became alert. The jackal heard the roar of the lion and made his escape. While running away, he read (recited) the shloka,

The person who plans before taking action is successful; the one who acts before planning has to repent later. I have grown up in this forest and now turned old, but am yet to hear the voice of a cave.

THE FROGS AND THE SNAKE

By carrying his enemies on his back at the right time, the snake killed all the frogs. Meghavarṇa said, “How is this?” Sthirajīvī tells the story,

In the region of the Varunaadri mountain lived an old snake by the name of Mandvish. One day he was wondering if there could be a way so that he can live life without making much effort. He reached upon an idea and then went to a lake full of frogs and moved about hither and thither restlessly. Watching him thus, a frog sitting near the lake asked –"Uncle! You are not busy looking for food as you have been in the past?" The snake replied,"Dear, unfortunate that I am, where is the will to eat? During the thirteenth of the fortnight, I started out in search of food. Looking for food I finally found a frog. I was planning to catch him but he saw me. He was scared for his life and ran away into a group of brahmins who were busy in their study. I did not see the frog again. He went away elsewhere. I did not realize that he had gone and in the confusion I bit into the thumb of the son of a brahmin. The boy had entered the water at the shore for a bath. Due to my bite, he died instantaneously. Hence, the grieving father of the boy cursed me,"

"Wicked! You killed my son without any reason. For this act of yours I curse you that you will carry frogs on your body and that will be your livelihood from now on."
