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REAP AND ACT

BOOK THREE



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Orient Longmans



READ AND ACT

5155

BOOK THREE



by

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PREFACE

The READ and ACT series consists of five books each of which contains ten scenes. The scenes have been based upon well-known stories from history, mythology, legend and folk literature. Most of the stories are known to the boys and girls in our schools and so they have been presented without any introduction; those that are not so widely known have, however, been prefaced with short introductory notes. These introductory notes describe the setting of the scenes and are a help in the right understanding and appreciation of what is said and done by the characters.

The scenes included in this series of books are, however, not meant merely to be read, understood and appreciated. They are also meant to be acted. This can be done on certain days and special occasions as part of an institution's extra-curricular activities; and this can also form a part of the regular English teaching programme of a progressive school or college. To act these scenes in the classroom it will not be necessary to make any special preparations. Their purpose will be served if the pupils are able to read out the parts of the different characters in them with appropriate gestures and feeling.

The books have been graded both in respect of grammatical structure and content vocabulary, and all care has been taken to avoid the use of out-of-the-way words. A few of the words in these books may at first appear to be difficult but they will be understood easily when they are read in the contexts in which they are presented. It will, however, be useful to explain such words in similar other contexts before the pupils are asked to act a particular scene. Sometimes it may also be necessary to acquaint the pupils with the story of the scene before they act it.

In order that the pupils may read out their parts correctly and effectively, they *must* first read the whole scene silently and get their language difficulties, both of meaning and pronunciation, removed. Then the teacher should read out the different parts to set a model before the pupils. This, it may be stressed, puts a heavy responsibility on the teacher, for the pupils will always try to imitate him.

The themes of most of the scenes in these books are inspirational, and they should have an uplifting effect on the minds of young students. It may, however, be mentioned that the books do not aim at preaching any moral lessons. They only present some noble deeds or some admirable qualities of character and the young readers are left alone to 'receive' what they will. The humorous scenes provide a lot of laughter but the laughter is not born of any malice or ill-will. It is simple and innocent.

The READ and ACT series can be profitably used as supplementary readers both in the English medium and non-English medium Secondary Schools. In those schools where the teaching of English starts in class VI, Book I can be used in class VIII and Books II, III, IV and V in classes IX, X, XI and XII respectively; but in those schools where English is taught from an earlier stage, the first two books can be used in the Junior High School classes. In English medium schools the first book can be introduced in the third or fourth year when the pupils are 8—9 years old.

Activity methods have proved a great success everywhere in teaching all schools subjects including languages, and it is hoped that the READ and ACT series will make some small contribution to the effective teaching of English in our schools.

Twelve of the scenes included in the last two books of the series have been translated and adapted from late Sri Dwijendra Lal Rai's plays, and the debt is gratefully acknowledged.



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1. THE TRIAL OF HARISHCHANDRA THE TRUTHFUL

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Characters

HARISHCHANDRA: the king of Ayodhya

SHAIVYA: the queen of Harishchandra

ROHITASHWA: King Harishchandra's son

VISHWAMITRA: a sage

SANKAT: the owner of the burning ghat of
Kashi

INDRA: the king of the gods

DHARMA, AGNI } gods
and NAGRAJ }

A Brahman

SCENE I

[In a narrow street in Kashi, King Harishchandra, his queen Shaivya and his little son Rohitashwa are standing. A sage named Vishwamitra is talking to Harishchandra. He looks angry.]

VISHWAMITRA: (addressing Harishchandra) O king, you promised to give me ten thousand gold coins besides your kingdom. Have you forgotten your promise?

HARISHCHANDRA: Great Brahman, I haven't forgotten it. I'm in your debt. I'll pay off your debts.

VISHWAMITRA: But when? You asked for time, and I gave you a month. Today is the last day of the month.

HARISHCHANDRA: Sir, I'll pay off your debts before the end of the day. I'll sell my wife, I'll sell my child, I'll sell myself, and pay your debts.

VISHWAMITRA: I must have ten thousand gold coins before sunset today. If you don't pay this sum, I'll curse you. (Goes away.)

SHAIVYA: Dear husband, please sell me to some Brahman. I'll work as a maid in his house. There is no other way to get money to pay off the debts to Vishwamitra.

HARISHCHANDRA: (loudly, controlling his grief) Is there any Brahman in Kashi who wants a maid?

(*Harishchandra, Shaivya and Rohitashwa walk along a street, and Harishchandra asks the same question every two minutes. After some time, an old Brahman comes forward.*)

BRAHMAN: I need a maid who will do everything for me in my house.

SHAIVYA: I'll do all jobs for you in your house.

BRAHMAN: That's good. I'll pay four thousand gold coins for you. (*Gives four thousand gold coins to Harishchandra. Shaivya takes a step forward to go with the Brahman, then looks back at Rohitashwa and stops.*)

SHAIVYA: Brahman, sir, please buy my son too. He'll do odd jobs for you and will share with me the food that is given to me.

BRAHMAN: All right, I'll buy him for a thousand gold coins. (*Gives a thousand gold coins to Harishchandra and goes away with Shaivya and Rohitashwa. Harishchandra turns his face away from them. A few minutes later, Vishwamitra arrives, and Harish-*

chandra gives him five thousand gold coins.)

VISHWAMITRA: How did you get this gold?

HARISHCHANDRA: Sir, I haven't begged for it. Nobody has given it to me in charity. I sold my wife and son for five thousand gold coins.

VISHWAMITRA: That's all right; but you've yet to pay me another five thousand gold coins. The sun is about to set! You haven't more than an hour. (*Goes away.*)

HARISHCHANDRA: (*walking about*) Citizens of Kashi! I offer myself for sale! My price is five thousand gold coins! I'll be the slave of the man who gives me five thousand gold coins to pay off my debts!

(A 'chandal' named Sankat, who is the owner of the burning ghat in Kashi, comes forward.)

SANKAT : I need a slave to work for me. I'll buy you for five thousand gold coins.

HARISHCHANDRA: Who are you, please?

SANKAT : I'm Sankat, the owner of the burning ghat in Kashi. You'll have to collect a piece of cloth from the shroud of each dead body which is

brought to the burning ghat. You mustn't allow anyone to burn a dead body without paying this tax.

(Vishwamitra enters and looks at Sankat and Harishchandra.)

HARISHCHANDRA: *(loudly)* Is there no Brahman or Kshatriya to buy me for five thousand gold coins?

VISHWAMITRA : I'll buy you for five thousand gold coins. Are you willing to be my slave?

HARISHCHANDRA: *(happily)* Most gladly, sir. You're very kind.

VISHWAMITRA : Very well, you're my slave now. I've got the money which you promised to pay me.

HARISHCHANDRA: I don't know how to thank you, sir. I'll be a most obedient and loyal slave to you.

VISHWAMITRA : *(to Sankat pointing to Harishchandra)* This is my most obedient, loyal slave, but I don't need him. I sell him to you for five thousand gold coins. I'm not making any profit on him.

SANKAT : *(giving five thousand gold coins to Vishwamitra)* I'm grateful to you, sir.

VISHWAMITRA : Harishchandra, you've paid your

debts to me. You've kept your word.
May God bless you! (*Goes away.*)

SCENE II

[*It is a dark night. Harishchandra is walking about on burning ghat. The upper part of his body is naked, his feet are bare and he has a big, strong stick in his hand. He is shouting, "Don't burn your dead without giving me a piece of the shroud." Suddenly, he hears a woman crying and goes to her. The woman is Shaivya. She has brought the dead body of Rohitashwa to the burning ghat.*]

HARISHCHANDRA: Please let me have a piece of the shroud. This is the tax you've to pay to the owner of the burning ghat.

SHAIVYA : (*crying*) I tore off a piece from my sari to cover the dead body of my child. If I give you a piece from it, half of the body will remain uncovered. Please take pity on me. I'm the most unfortunate woman in the world. I've lost my only son. He died of snake-bite.

HARISHCHANDRA: I'm sorry for you, unhappy lady; but I can't allow anyone to burn a dead body without paying the tax. I can't cheat my master.

(Shaivya starts crying loudly. Suddenly, there is thunder and lightning in the sky. Shaivya recognises her husband and falls at his feet unconscious. Harishchandra stands where he was and is dumb with grief. A few seconds later, the burning ghat is lit up with many-coloured lights. Indra, the king of the gods, appears on the scene. Shaivya stands up, and Rohitashwa stands up too.)

INDRA : (addressing Harishchandra) Maharaj Harishchandra, you are indeed Harishchandra the Truthful. You have lost nothing. All this was your trial, and you have come out of it successfully. Your name will live for ever in the world. I'm pleased with you. What shall I give you? Please ask.

HARISHCHANDRA: (joining the palms of his hands) Sir, allow me to return to my people with my wife and son, and be always kind to us and to them.

INDRA : You, your queen, your son and your people will always be happy. (giving him a bundle of clothes) These are new clothes for all three of you.

Put them on and go to the main gate of Kashi where a carriage is waiting for you. It will take you to Ayodhya.

(Vishwamitra enters.)

VISHWAMITRA : Victory to Harishchandra the Truthful! Maharaj, I've come to tell you that you and your queen did not serve men but gods. Sankat is the god Dharma and the Brahman who bought Queen Shaivya and Prince Rohitashwa is the god Agni. I may also tell you that the snake which bit Rohitashwa is the god Nagraj himself. Here they are!

(Harishchandra, Shaivya and Rohitashwa bow to the gods.)

VISHWAMITRA
and the **GODS** : Victory to Harishchandra the Truthful!

2. THE PUNISHMENT OF A KING



Characters

- SRAVAN KUMAR : a young man of about 30
DASARATH : the king of Ayodhya
An old, blind man } : Sravan Kumar's parents
An old, blind lady }

[On the banks of the river Saryu near Ayodhya. A young man named Sravan Kumar and his old blind father and mother are resting on the platform under a pipal tree. Beside them there is a bag of food, an empty pitcher, a big walking stick, and two baskets in which Sravan Kumar carried his blind parents.]

SRAVAN : Father, what shall I give you to eat?

- FATHER : Nothing, son. I'm not hungry. Ask your mother.
- SRAVAN : Are you hungry, mother? What will you eat?
- MOTHER : Thank you, son. I won't eat anything. I'm not hungry.
- FATHER : Sravan!
- SRAVAN : Yes, father. What can I do for you, father?
- FATHER : Son, I'm thirsty. Is there any water left in your pitcher?
- SRAVAN : (*shaking the pitcher*) Father, I'll go and get water for you from the river.
- MOTHER : Ah! I'm thirsty too; but how far is the river from here? I'm afraid to send you to the river for water.
- SRAVAN : Don't worry about me, mother. The river isn't far from here. I'll be back soon.
- FATHER : Take your stick with you, son.
- SRAVAN : Very well, father. (*Goes towards the river with the pitcher in one hand and the stick in the other.*)
- FATHER : In this world it is impossible to find another son like our Sravan.
- MOTHER : May God bless him! He has been kind, gentle and obedient since he was a child.
- FATHER : He never refused me anything.

- MOTHER : He never said an angry word to me.
FATHER : Have you heard of any other son carrying his old blind parents in two baskets to holy places?
MOTHER : No, I haven't. I think there has never been such a son.
FATHER : I think so too. May God bless him!
MOTHER : Let's pray for his happiness and long life.

(Both of them pray silently for some time for their son, and then start talking again.)

- FATHER : Sravan said he would come back soon. He hasn't come back yet. I am worried.
MOTHER : Perhaps the river is not as near as he thought.
FATHER : But it can't be very far. Let's pray for him again.

(They pray silently for a few minutes, and then hear the sound of footsteps a few paces away from them.)

- MOTHER : Here he comes!
FATHER : Yes, our Sravan has come back with water for us. Come on, son. May God bless you!

(King Dasarath of Ayodhya puts the pitcher of water on the platform near the couple and remains standing. He does not speak to them.)

MOTHER : What has happened to you, son? Why don't you speak to us?

FATHER : Sravan, my son, we won't drink any water until you speak.

(Dasarath falls at the feet of the old man and his wife.)

FATHER : *(feeling the head, shoulders and hands of Dasarath)* You are not Sravan. You are not our son. Who are you? Where is our son?

MOTHER : *(passing her hand gently over Dasarath's face)* No, he is not our son. He has killed our son. Speak, man. Where is our son? What have you done to him? Speak. If you do not speak, I will curse you and your family.

DASARATH : *(sorrowfully)* Good gentleman and good lady, I am Dasarath, the king of Ayodhya. I have committed a great sin. I have killed your son. Please do not hasten to curse me. I killed your son by mistake. While he was drawing water from the river, I was walking about a few paces away from him. As the water entered the pitcher it made a strange noise. I thought it was a wild animal and shot an arrow in that direction. The arrow struck Sravan Kumar in the chest and he cried and fell down. I ran

to him and took him in my arms and asked him to forgive me. He said, "Go and give this water to my thirsty old parents," and died.

FATHER : Alas! my son. (*Faints.*)

MOTHER : What did you say? My Sravan is dead! You killed him! Can it be true? No, no, it can't be true. My son can't leave his old blind parents here to die of hunger and thirst. But where is he? Where is he? Where is he? (*Faints.*)

(*King Dasarath sprinkles water on their faces, and when they become conscious he helps them to sit up.*)

FATHER : O king, is it true that our son has been killed?

DASARATH : Sir, I'm sorry to say that it is true.

MOTHER : Who has killed him? Please bring that man here.

DASARATH : Noble lady, that unfortunate man is standing in front of you. Punish him! Curse him! But please do not forget that he killed your son by mistake.

FATHER : O king, the duty of a king is to help his people, not to harm them. It is to protect them, not to kill them. You have committed a great sin; you have done a great wrong to us! It is true that you killed our son by mistake, but you must

Read and Act

receive some punishment for what you have done. You have separated us from our dear son. He is dead and we are soon going to die. You will be separated from your dear son too and you will die of the grief of separation; but your son will not die. This is your punishment. Now, please take us to the river-bank and burn us with the body of our son. We can't live without him. O king, please be quick. (*King Dasarath puts the old man and his wife in the baskets and carries them towards the river-bank.*)

3. JUSTICE



Characters

The CHIEF of a forest tribe in Central Asia

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

HASHIM and QASIM : two tribesmen

[The house of the chief of a tribe in the forest in Central Asia. The chief and his guest, Alexander the Great, are sitting together to eat their dinner. Dates made of gold have been served on a plate to Alexander. He looks at them and feels them, and is surprised.]

ALEXANDER: Do you eat golden dates here?

CHIEF : No, we don't. We eat the natural dates.
We've plenty of them here.

ALEXANDER: Then why do you give me these golden dates to eat?

CHIEF : I thought you were not satisfied with the natural fruits which grow in your country and were killing people of other lands to get golden fruits.

ALEXANDER: (*feeling ashamed*) I don't want any gold from you. Please let me eat what you're eating.

CHIEF : Very well, you can have the natural dates which I eat every day. (*Serves him the natural dates from a basket.*)

ALEXANDER: Please tell me about the life of your people.

CHIEF : You'll soon know something about it. Let's finish our dinner first. (*When they have finished their dinner, two tribesmen named Hashim and Qasim enter and stand in front of their chief. The plates and the basket of dates are removed by a servant and the chief nods to the two men.*)

HASHIM : Sir, I bought a piece of land from this man. When I ploughed it, I found two bagfuls of gold under the soil. I took the gold to this man but he refused to take it. Sir, I bought the piece of land only, not the gold in it. How can I keep this gold?

QASIM : Chief, this man is not at all fair to me. When I've sold the piece of land to him, how can I take what he finds in it? Today he's asking me to take the gold which he has found under the soil; tomorrow he may ask me to take the fruit which he grows on it. No, no, I can't take what does not belong to me.

ALEXANDER: (*softly to himself*) I've never heard such a case before in my life. Let me see how the old man decides it.
(*There is silence in the room for a few minutes. The chief thinks hard and then smiles.*)

CHIEF : (*to Hashim*) You have an only son, haven't you?

HASHIM : Yes, chief, I have.

CHIEF : (*to Qasim*) And you have an only daughter. Am I right?

QASIM : Yes, sir, you are right.

CHIEF : Then the solution is very easy. Go and marry your daughter to Hashim's son and let the gold be a dowry to the couple. Do you both agree?

HASHIM and

QASIM : We agree, sir.

(*Hashim and Qasim go out. Alexander is greatly amazed.*)

CHIEF : How do you like my decision, great conqueror?

ALEXANDER: How do I like it? I must say I'm amazed. I've never seen such a thing happen before.

CHIEF : How is such a case decided in your country?

ALEXANDER: Such a case is not possible in my country. There, if a man finds a buried treasure, he hides it carefully for his own use.

CHIEF : And what does your government do if it comes to know that a buried treasure has been found?

ALEXANDER: The government takes the whole of it and punishes the man who hides it.

CHIEF : How strange! Taking the wealth for which you have not worked, and punishing the man who has been lucky! You can't call it justice, can you?

ALEXANDER: I must say I'm confused.

CHIEF : Well, let me ask you a few more questions. They may help to clear your mind. Does the sun shine in your country?

ALEXANDER: What a question! The sun shines all over the world. It shines as brightly in my country as it shines here.

CHIEF : And does the rain fall on your land?

ALEXANDER: Yes, it does. We have plenty of rain and sunshine in our country.

CHIEF : Wonderful! There are many gentle, harmless animals in your country, aren't there?

ALEXANDER: There are. But why do you ask these funny questions?

CHIEF : My questions aren't funny, sir. I was wondering why the sun shines and the rain falls in a country where there is no justice. I've got the answer now. The sun shines and the rain falls there for the sake of those gentle animals.

ALEXANDER: I don't know why the sun shines and the rain falls in my country, but I've learnt a lot today; and I thank you for it.

4. PURU THE BRAVE



Characters

ALEXANDER: the King of Macedon who conquered Greece, Persia, etc.

PURU : a king of northern India
Four Greek generals and six soldiers

[The camp of Alexander on the banks of the Jhelum. Alexander is sitting in a high chair and his four generals are sitting in low chairs. Two Greek soldiers are standing at the door. Alexander is having a talk with his generals.]

ALEXANDER: The battle of the Jhelum will go down in the history of our country.

FIRST

GENERAL : It'll go down in the history of India too.

SECOND

GENERAL : It'll go down in the history of the world.

THIRD

GENERAL : I've never fought such a battle before.

FOURTH

GENERAL : I haven't either. Till the last moment I couldn't believe that we would be able to defeat the army of Porus.

ALEXANDER: Yes, it has been a great battle—perhaps the greatest of my life. I must say every Indian soldier fought like a tiger.

FIRST

GENERAL : They fought like devils, Your Majesty.

ALEXANDER: The Indians are good soldiers. They know how to fight. They fight better than our men.

SECOND

GENERAL : But their generals aren't as good as ours.

ALEXANDER: If you mean they aren't as brave as the Greek generals, I don't agree with you.

SECOND

GENERAL : But they aren't very skilful, sir.

ALEXANDER: I see what you mean, and here I agree with you. The Indian generals are still following the old methods of warfare. Their battle plans are faulty and they

depend too much upon their elephants. But as fighters they are wonderful. I have the highest respect for them.

THIRD

GENERAL : I was amazed to see how Porus fought in the battle of Jhelum.

FOURTH

GENERAL : He continued to fight even when others had left the field. I think he killed at least a hundred of our men with his sword.

SECOND

GENERAL : And injured many more.

FIRST

GENERAL : He was badly injured himself.

THIRD

GENERAL : That's why we were able to capture him.

ALEXANDER: Oh! he is a brave man and a great soldier. I wish he were one of my generals.

SECOND

GENERAL : He is a proud man, Your Majesty!

ALEXANDER: A soldier is not a soldier if he is not proud. I'm not at all angry with him. He was not frightened by the news of my victories and refused to bow before me.

FIRST

GENERAL : He will be brought to Your Majesty soon. Let us see how he behaves.

ALEXANDER: I'm sure he will not behave like a coward.

(A soldier enters and bows to Alexander.)

SOLDIER : Sir, Porus has been brought to the camp.

ALEXANDER: Has he been put in chains?

SOLDIER : Yes, Your Majesty.

ALEXANDER: Go and remove the chains, and bring him in. I don't want to see a brave man in chains.

(The soldier bows and goes out.)

ALEXANDER: They should not have put him in chains. He is a king and a great soldier.

(Puru enters with four Greek soldiers following him. Alexander and the generals stand up to greet him. Puru joins the palms of his hands and raises them to his forehead to return the greeting.)

ALEXANDER: *(to the soldiers)* You may go. *(The soldiers bow and go out.)*

ALEXANDER: *(to Puru)* Well, how are you, Porus?

PURU : My name is Puru.

ALEXANDER: All right. Are you sorry for the mistake you made, Puru?

Puru : I made no mistake, sir.

ALEXANDER: Didn't you reject my proposal?

PURU : I did. I refused to be your vassal.

ALEXANDER: Do you know that many kings have gladly agreed to be my vassals?

PURU : I know that, and I also know that none of them is Puru.

FIRST

GENERAL : (*softly to the Second General*) He is, indeed, a very proud man.

ALEXANDER: Don't you realise that you are my prisoner?

PURU : I do, but that doesn't make any difference to me. I'm still the lawful king of my country.

ALEXANDER: How shall I treat you?

PURU : As a king should treat another king.

ALEXANDER: Puru, you are a brave man. I'm pleased with you. I want to make friends with you. Will you be a friend to me?

PURU : On one condition.

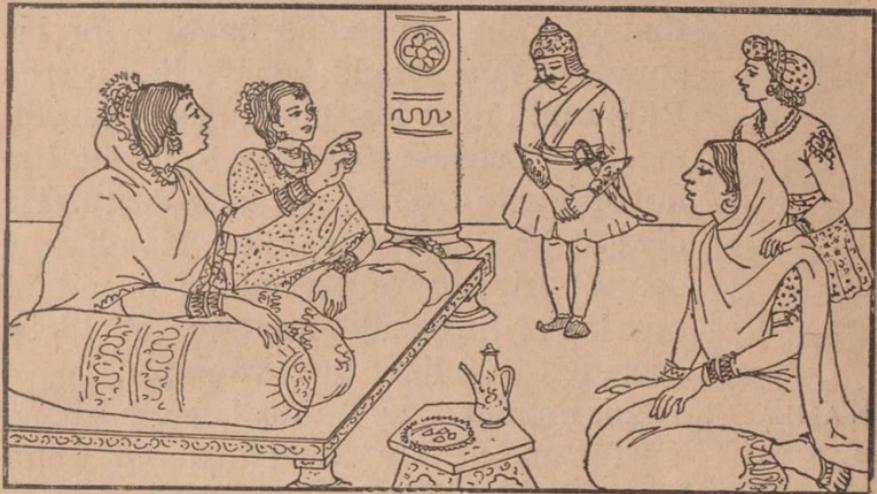
ALEXANDER: What is that condition?

PURU : My kingdom should remain independent and you should treat me as your equal.

ALEXANDER: Agreed. (*after a pause*) I'm proud of your friendship, my brother.

PURU : I'll do my best to be worthy of the friendship of Alexander the Great.
(*The generals bow to Alexander and Puru.*)

5. A RAJPUTIN



Characters

- LADI DEVI : the Queen of Raja Dahir
KAMLA DEVI : the widow of the First General of Dahir
RAMBHA DEVI : the daughter-in-law of Dahir
JAI SINGH : Dahir's son
BHIM DEO : Kamla Devi's son
The Minister of the Queen
A soldier

[*The palace of Raja Dahir in Rewar (Sindh). Ladi Devi, the Queen of Dahir, is sitting on a low chair and is talking to Kamla Devi, the widow of the Raja's First General. Her daughter-in-law, Rambha*

Devi, is sitting on her left. Kamla Devi's ten-year old son, Bhim Deo, is standing behind his mother.]

QUEEN : Cheer up, Kamla. You should be proud that your husband died fighting for his country. You should behave like a true Rajputin. I'm no less unfortunate than you are. I've become a widow too. But I'm not grieving over the Raja's death. He died as he should have died. Kamla, my dearest friend, we should be proud of our brave husbands, and we should be prepared to follow their example.

KAMLA : Rani, I'm not sorry for my brave husband or for myself. I'm worried about Bhim Deo. What will happen to him?

QUEEN : I'm sure he'll not be taken as a prisoner to Basra. He'll fight as his father fought and die as his father died. All of us will fight and die in the same way. We've lost the battle but we shan't lose our honour.

BHIM : You're right, Aunt. I'll fight and die as Fahter and Uncle fought and died. I'll kill at least a dozen of the Arabs before I'm killed. They can't take me prisoner.

QUEEN : Do you hear, Kamla? Is it not your brave husband speaking through his ten-year old son? You're a fortunate mother, Kamla. I envy you.

RAMBHA : (*to the Queen*) Mother, why do you say we've lost the battle? My husband is still fighting the enemy. He has about five hundred brave men with him.
(*A young soldier named Hiru enters and bows.*)

QUEEN : What's the news, Hiru?

HIRU : Rani ji, the Prince has come back.

QUEEN : (*surprised*) What? Jai Singh has come back! Has he run away from the battle-field? Is he afraid of the Arabs? I wish you had not brought this news to me. I wish you had brought the news of his death instead.

HIRU : Please don't say such words.

QUEEN : What words? How dare you plead for a coward before me? You call yourself a Rajput! You should be ashamed of yourself. Get out of my sight.

HIRU : I'm sorry, Rani ji, but the Prince is waiting outside. What shall I say to him?

QUEEN : Tell him to get out of here. Tell him that I don't want to see his face. The Raja has died fighting for his country, and now I'm the ruler. Tell that coward that there is no place for him in my kingdom.

BHIM : She is right. We don't want any cowards here.

KAMLA : Keep quiet, Bhim.

QUEEN : Why should he? He is a Rajput. This coward of Jai Singh has disgraced the whole Rajput race. I wish I had died before I gave birth to such a coward. Oh God! why did I give birth to such a son? Why did I bring him up? Why did I not kill him while he was still a baby? What will the world say about me? Oh! Oh!

KAMLA : Be calm, Rani ji. We must make plans for tomorrow's battle.

QUEEN : *(to the soldier)* Please tell him to go away from here.

SOLDIER : Is that the Princess' wish too?

RAMBHA : *(angrily)* It is, most certainly I'm ashamed to be the wife of a man who has run away from the battle-field.

QUEEN : *(to the soldier)* Have you heard the Princess' wish?

SOLDIER : I have, Rani ji.

QUEEN : Then you may return to your hero and tell him what you've heard.

RAMBHA : Wait a minute. Tell your brave Prince that Rambha has cut off all her connections with him and that she'll soon follow the example of her great father-in-law.

BHIM : I'll follow it too. My brave father followed it, didn't he, mother?

KAMLA : He did, son. You're rightly proud of him.
(The soldier bows and goes out.)

QUEEN : (*thinking aloud*) To have such a son! It's the result of some sin committed by me. But I don't know what sin I committed. I've tried to be faithful to my husband, loyal to my friends, kind to strangers and good to my people. I've feared God and said my prayers regularly. Then why did I get such a son?

(*The Minister enters and bows.*)

QUEEN : What news have you brought Mangal Dev ji?

MINISTER: Mir Qasim has sent a messenger with a peace proposal.

QUEEN : I see. Where is the messenger?

MINISTER: He's waiting outside.

QUEEN : Please give him a hundred gold coins and tell him that the Queen of Dahir does not want to receive any messengers from Qasim.

MINISTER: Very well, Rani ji. (*Turns to go.*)

QUEEN : Wait. The Arab invaders are thieves and robbers. There can be no peace with them. Go and make preparations for the last fight. Let it be tomorrow. I'll take command tomorrow. I'm a Rajputin. I must die fighting for my country.

6. GOD BLESS MAHMUD OF GHAZNI!



Characters

MAHMUD OF GHAZNI who invaded India
seventeen times

The **VIZIER** of Mahmud

HAMID
ZAHID } Mahmud's army officers

[*The camp of Mahmud in a deserted town in India. The time is evening. Mahmud is sitting on a mound of earth. Around him are sitting his Vizier and two of his army officers—Hamid and Zahid. The buildings in the town are all in ruins.*]

MAHMUD: It has been a very tiring march. How do the soldiers feel about it?

HAMID : All I can say is that they haven't enjoyed it.

MAHMUD: How could they? For the last few days they haven't had enough to eat and drink.

VIZIER : And all along they had to march in the burning heat of the sun.

MAHMUD: That's true. I haven't allowed them any rest. All our camels are loaded with gold, silver and precious stones. We must get back to Ghazni as soon as we can. We mustn't waste any time in this strange country.

ZAHID : It isn't a strange country for us now, sir. This is our seventeenth visit to it, and we know it pretty well.

MAHMUD: I doubt it very much. We haven't yet seen even one-tenth of India. It's a vast country—almost a continent.

HAMID : And the people in the south are very much different from the people in the north.

ZAHID : Yes, their food, dress and language are all different.

VIZIER : The climate of the south is different too from the climate of the north.

MAHMUD: That's why I say it's almost a continent. I don't understand why they call it a country.

VIZIER : Perhaps because the people of the north and the south have a common culture

and a common way of life. Their beliefs, forms of worship and social and religious customs are nearly the same.

MAHMUD: I agree. I've noticed that.

VIZIER : Sir, I've noticed another thing too.

MAHMUD: What's that?

VIZIER : The Hindus are a highly civilized people.

MAHMUD: I don't know that. I'm not a learned man.

HAMID : Sometimes I feel sorry for these people.

MAHMUD: Why do you feel sorry for them?

HAMID : We've killed thousands of them and burnt down hundreds of their towns and villages.

ZAHID : You aren't talking like a soldier, Hamid.

MAHMUD: I don't blame Hamid for talking like that. He's a soldier but he's also a man and has a wife and children at home.

ZAHID : We left this town about five months ago. I'm surprised that the people have not returned to it yet. It is still completely deserted.

VIZIER : We've come across many such towns on this return journey of ours, haven't we?

ZAHID : (*sadly*) Yes, we have.

MAHMUD: I don't want you men to feel sad about it. We want gold, silver and precious stones to carry to Ghazni, and to get them we've to fight and kill. It isn't our fault if the people have not returned to their

towns and villages. But listen, what's that?

(There is silence for a minute.)

ZAHID : It's an owl hooting.

HAMID : There are two.

MAHMUD: Where are they?

ZAHID : I think they're sitting on the walls of a building which is in ruins.

MAHMUD: I wonder what they're talking about.

ZAHID : Sir, the Vizier is a learned man. He should know what they're talking about.

MAHMUD: *(turning to the Vizier)* Oh yes, once you told me that you know the language of birds.

VIZIER : I understand it, sir, but I can't speak it.

MAHMUD: I don't want you to speak it. I want you to tell us what those owls are saying.

VIZIER : Very well, sir. Let us listen to them quietly for a few minutes.

(All of them keep quiet for some time and listen to the owls.)

MAHMUD: Let's hear what they're saying.

VIZIER : They aren't saying any pleasant things, sir.

MAHMUD: I don't expect owls to say pleasant things. You needn't be afraid. Let's hear the unpleasant things they're saying.

VIZIER : Excuse me, sir, I shouldn't repeat their words.

MAHMUD: You must. You must tell us everything they've been saying.

VIZIER : Sir, promise me that you'll spare my life and I'll tell you what they're saying.

MAHMUD: All right, I promise that no harm will be done to you.

VIZIER : Thank you, sir. Please listen. One of these two owls has a son and the other has a daughter, and they're talking about their marriage.

HAMID : That's interesting.

ZAHID : How can this talk be unpleasant?

MAHMUD: (*to the Vizier*) Carry on. I'm interested.

VIZIER : The owl which has a son wants a dowry of five ruined towns.

MAHMUD: What did the other fellow say to it?

VIZIER : Sir, he said something very funny. I shouldn't repeat it.

HAMID : What's the harm?

ZAHID : Perhaps he said something vulgar.

MAHMUD: (*to the Vizier*) You should repeat every word which he said. I've told you that you shouldn't have any fears.

VIZIER : Sir, he said cheerfully to the other owl, "You haven't asked for too much. What's five ruined towns? I can give you five hundred. God bless Mahmud of Ghazni!"

HAMID : That owl is a very rude fellow.

ZAHID : Let's shoot him.

MAHMUD: (*after a pause*) No, he isn't rude. Don't shoot him. He has told the truth. He has opened my eyes. From this day on I shall not kill people and I shall not destroy their villages and towns.

7. A GREAT SACRIFICE



Characters

- PANNA : the nurse of the infant prince Udai Singh
- PADMA and CHAMPA : maids
- BANBIR : a half-brother of Udai Singh, who was ruling Mewar for Udai Singh

[The bed-chamber of the infant prince Udai Singh in the palace of Chittor. The prince is sleeping on his ivory bed, and his nurse Panna, who is a young Rajput woman, is sitting on another bed. Her little son, who is the same age as the prince, is lying asleep

beside her. A maid named Padma is sitting on the floor in front of Panna. Panna is talking to her.]

PANNA : Everything has been going wrong since the death of Rana ji. Nobody seems to be happy. The nobles are quarrelling among themselves. They have become mean and selfish, and Banbir does what he likes. Do you think the nobles like him?

PADMA : They have to like him. They are not strong enough to dislike him.

PANNA : But, Padma, they put him on the throne of Mewar to rule till the prince becomes older. Isn't he grateful to them?

PADMA : Grateful! Can a snake ever be grateful to anyone? Banbir and gratefulness belong to two different worlds. I say, sister Panna, this Banbir is a curse to the house of Mewar. We have to be careful of him.

PANNA : But isn't he a son of our late Rana and a half-brother of our prince?

PADMA : He may be anything, but I don't trust the man. He has crushed the nobles. They don't dare to say or do anything against him. They are afraid of him, and he does what he likes. There is discontent among the people and there is discontent in the army.

PANNA : How do you know all this, Padma?

PADMA : You don't have to go far to know this.

You see it on the face of every man, woman and child in Mewar. They don't say anything, but they can't hide their unhappiness.

PANNA : Why don't they throw him out?

PADMA : They can't. Banbir has formed a party of his own. There are some strong men on his side, and so everyone is afraid of him.

PANNA : Unfortunate Mewar! your troubles will never end. What can we do, Padma? We are helpless women.

PADMA : We can do a lot, sister. Let the time come. I haven't yet told you the worst about Banbir.

PANNA : What is it, Padma?

PADMA : (*softly*) Listen. Banbir wants to be the permanent Rana of Mewar. I fear he may kill the prince any day.

PANNA : (*sadly*) I fear so too. If the prince is killed what shall I say to the Rani when I am with her? While she was dying, she said to me, "Panna, I leave my dear child to you. Be a mother to him and protect him from all harm." I told her that I would give my life to save the life of the prince, and she died smiling. (*after a pause*) No, no, this can't happen. This shan't happen. Banbir can't kill the prince as long as Panna lives. The prince will live

to rule over Mewar. I will fulfil my promise to my late mistress.

(The sound of somebody running outside.)

PADMA : Listen! There is somebody outside! Who can it be?

PANNA : It must be one of the guards.

(A maid named Champa enters panting.)

CHAMPA : Make haste! Do what you can to save the life of the prince. You haven't any time to lose. Banbir will be here in a few minutes. He's talking to a man outside. He's only a hundred yards away from here.

PANNA : How do you know he's coming to kill the prince?

CHAMPA : He has a naked sword in his hand.

PANNA : *(calmly)* All right. The time to do or die has come. I must save the life of the prince or die with him. *(to the maids)* Champa and Padma, please help me to save the life of Rana Sanga's child. *(Quickly lifts the prince from his bed, changes his clothes and puts him in a basket and then covers him with a piece of cloth.)* Take this basket out of the palace, hide yourselves near the gate and wait for me there.

PADMA : *(lifting up the basket)* I'll carry this most precious basket under my arm. *(to Champa)* You follow me quietly.

CHAMPA : (*to Panna*) Where are we going to take the prince tonight? No one in Mewar will keep him in his house.

PANNA : Don't worry. I've already thought about it. We'll take him to Asa Shah who is a good man and a friend of ours. I'm sure he will protect the prince. Now hurry up and be careful.

(The maids go out taking the infant prince with them. Panna quickly dresses her own child in the clothes of the prince and puts him in his bed. She looks at him for a few minutes, kisses him several times and lies down on her bed and starts reading a book.)

PANNA : (*softly to herself*) I'm sacrificing my own child to save the life of the child of my dear mistress, and I'll sacrifice my own life when there is need for it. I'll keep my promise to my kind noble mistress. (*loudly and firmly*) Rana Sanga's child will live. Udai Singh will live to rule over Mewar. *(The sound of footsteps outside. Banbir enters the room hurriedly. Panna gets up from the bed.)*

BANBIR : Where is the Prince?

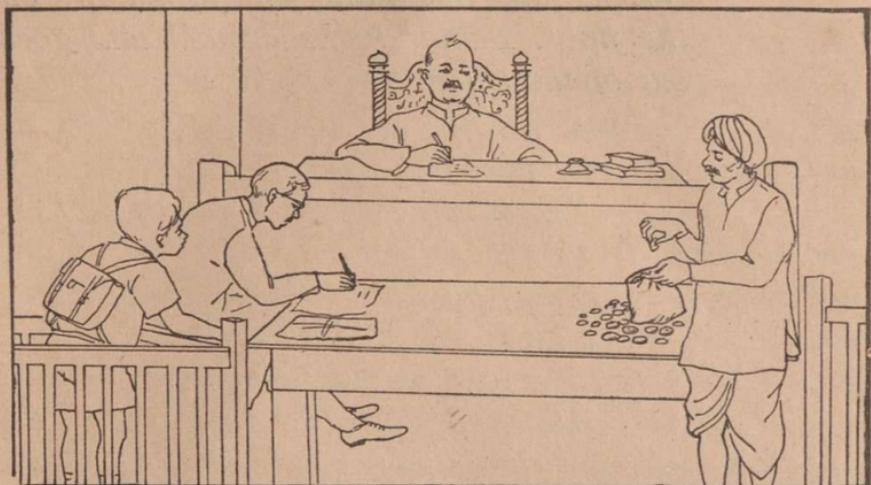
PANNA : Not so loud, please. He is asleep.

BANBIR : Where is he?

(Panna points to her child with her trem-

bling hand. Banbir rushes to the bed and kills the child with his sword. Panna shrieks, and then faints and falls down on the floor. Banbir looks around and goes out of the room.)

8. THE REWARD OF HONESTY



Characters

SATYA SINGH : a schoolboy of about fourteen

KHOTE LAL : a village money-lender of about fifty

JUDGE : an elderly man of about fifty-five

The judge's clerk and a peon

[On the road near a village court of law. Satya Singh, a boy of about fourteen, is returning home from school. His bag of books is hanging from his shoulder. He sees a purse lying on the road and picks it up. He looks at it and starts thinking and talking to himself.]

SATYA SINGH : (looking at the purse) It's a nice purse,

and it's full of money. Who dropped it here? (*looks around*) There isn't anybody here. Let me open it and count the money in it. (*Opens the purse, takes the money out of it, counts it, puts the money back into the purse and closes it.*) A hundred rupees! It's a big sum! I'm sorry for the man who dropped the purse here. What shall I do with this money? It is not mine. I can't take this purse to my house. Shall I leave it here? No, no, I shall take it to the police station and leave it there. (*Puts the purse into his pocket and turns to go to the police station. Suddenly he hears a man shouting at a distance and looks back. The man is running towards him. He is Khote Lal, the village money-lender.*)

KHOTE LAL : Hi, boy, stop there!

SATYA SINGH : (*Smiles and waits for the man to come near him.*) Why are you shouting and running? Have you lost anything?

KHOTE LAL : I have. I've lost everything I had. I've lost all my money. It was in a beautiful little purse. What's that in your pocket?

SATYA SINGH : Never mind. What colour was your purse?

KHOTE LAL : It was black and it had a lot of money in it.

SATYA SINGH : (*taking the purse out of his pocket*)
Is this your purse?

KHOTE LAL : Oh yes, it's mine. I dropped it on this road while I was going to the bazaar. You're a very good boy. What's your name?

SATYA SINGH : My name is Satya Singh.

KHOTE LAL : Where do you live?

SATYA SINGH : I live in Kuntipur.

KHOTE LAL : Oh, you live in Kuntipur! It isn't far from here.

SATYA SINGH : It's only a mile from here.

KHOTE LAL : Who is your father?

SATYA SINGH : My father is Mr Bhajan Singh.

KHOTE LAL : Oh, you're Mr Bhajan Singh's son! He's a rich man, isn't he?

SATYA SINGH : I don't know. Please take your purse.

KHOTE LAL : (*taking the purse slowly from the boy and thinking*) You didn't open it, did you?

SATYA SINGH : I did. I opened it and counted the money in it. There are a hundred rupees in it.

KHOTE LAL : (*showing surprise*) What? Only a

hundred rupees! There were a hundred and fifty rupees in it. Have you stolen fifty rupees from it?

SATYA SINGH : I haven't taken a rupee from it. Please don't accuse me. I never take other people's things.

KHOTE LAL : You're a thief. I'm going to call the police.

SATYA SINGH : If you don't believe me, let's go to the judge.

KHOTE LAL : All right, let's go to the judge. He will get my money out of you.

(Both of them go to the village judge's court, and stand at the door in front of the judge who is talking to his clerk. The judge sees Satya Singh and Khote Lal and tells his peon to bring them to him. The peon goes to them and takes them to the judge. They stand in front of him.)

JUDGE : *(to Khote Lal)* What's your name?

KHOTE LAL : Sir, my name is Khote Lal.

JUDGE : What brings you here?

KHOTE LAL : Sir, I dropped my purse on the road. There were a hundred and fifty rupees in it. This boy found the purse and stole fifty rupees from it. He says there were only a hundred rupees in it. He's a thief, sir. I've

- brought him to you, sir. Please order him to return my fifty rupees to me.
- JUDGE : (*Looks at Satya Singh for a minute and then speaks to him.*) What's your name?
- SATYA SINGH : My name is Satya Singh, sir.
- JUDGE : Did you steal Khote Lal's purse?
- SATYA SINGH : No, sir, I didn't steal it. I found it lying on the road.
- JUDGE : Did you open it?
- SATYA SINGH : Yes, sir, I opened it and counted the money in it.
- JUDGE : How much money was there in it?
- SATYA SINGH : Sir, there were a hundred rupees in it.
- JUDGE : Are you sure?
- SATYA SINGH : I'm quite sure, sir.
- JUDGE : Very well. Where is the purse?
- KHOTE LAL : Here it is, sir. (*Takes the purse out of his pocket and gives it to the judge. The judge takes the purse and looks at it carefully.*)
- JUDGE : Was all your money in one-rupee coins?
- KHOTE LAL : Yes, sir, it was all in one-rupee coins.
- JUDGE : (*smiling*) I see. Khote Lal, here is your purse. Open it and put another fifty rupees into it.
- KHOTE LAL : I haven't got fifty rupees, sir.

JUDGE : Very well, take fifty rupees from me.
(*Opens a box, takes fifty one-rupee coins out of it and gives them to Khote Lal. Khote Lal begins to tremble now. He opens the purse and tries to put some more coins into it, but cannot do so. The purse can hold only a hundred one-rupee coins.*)

JUDGE : (*laughing at Khote Lal*) Khote Lal, you can't put any more coins into that purse. It can hold only a hundred one-rupee coins. It isn't your purse. Let me have it.
(*Khote Lal gives the purse and the judge's fifty one-rupee coins to him. He is very, very frightened.*)

JUDGE : I give this purse with the hundred rupees in it to Satya Singh. He is an honest boy. This is the reward of honesty.
(*Satya Singh takes the purse from the judge, bows to him and goes out. Khote Lal also bows to the judge and goes out.*)

9. A RAJPUT'S WORD



Characters

- HET SINGH } two young Rajputs who are great
NET SINGH } friends
BHIM : Het Singh's son—a boy of about
fourteen
AJAI : Net Singh's son—a boy of about twelve
BHOLA : a servant

[Two young Rajputs are sitting in an open space in the forest. Their guns are lying on the ground beside them. Two boys are sitting in front of them. A servant, who is a young man of about thirty, is sitting

behind the boys. A bag containing food for all of them is beside him.]

NET SINGH: It isn't a lucky day for us. We entered the forest at 5 in the morning and it's 10 now. We've been wandering about for five long hours, but we haven't got anything yet.

HET SINGH: Well, I can't say it's an unlucky day. The day isn't over yet. We have still six or seven hours before us to wander about. I'm sure we'll get something in the afternoon.

NET SINGH: Let's hope so.

BHOLA : Sir, an unlucky morning is often followed by a lucky afternoon. I'm sure we are going to shoot a big deer this afternoon.

HET SINGH: We may get a panther too. The other day uncle Sher Singh shot one.

BHOLA : It's quite possible, sir.

HET SINGH: Cheer up, Net Singh. We're going to shoot a deer and a panther this afternoon.

AJAI : (*to Net Singh*) Father, if you shoot a deer, may I have its skin? My teacher, Mr Pujari, wants a deer-skin and I've promised to give him one.

NET SINGH: (*smiling*) I'll do my best to shoot a deer, son.

(to Bhim) Do you want a deer-skin too, son?

BHIM : No, uncle, I don't want a deer-skin today. Let Ajai have it. He has promised it to Mr Pujari.

HET SINGH: All right. If we shoot a deer, Ajai will have its skin.

NET SINGH: Don't you want the skin of a panther either, son? It's soft and beautiful.

BHIM : I'll be grateful if I get it, uncle. I'll give it to my teacher, Miss Chako, for her sitting room. She'll be very pleased.

HET SINGH: Agreed. If we shoot a deer, Ajai will get its skin; and if we shoot a panther, you will get its skin.

NET SINGH: Let's see who is lucky.

BHIM : I'll be happy if you shoot a deer. Ajai is always kind to me. I wish it may be his day!

BHOLA : And what am I going to get, sir?

HET SINGH: The hoofs of the deer and the meat of the panther.

(All of them, including Bhola, laugh loudly.)

NET SINGH: *(looking at his watch)* We've been sitting here and talking for more than half an hour now. Shall we eat something and then lie down to rest?

HET SINGH: I'm not hungry.

NET SINGH: What about the boys? Are you hungry, boys?

AJIT : I'm not.

BHIM : I'm not, either.

BHOLA : (*softly to himself*) Poor Bhola, nobody will ask you. Well, when they go into the jungle, I'll stay here and help myself to some of the food.

(*Net Singh overhears him and smiles.*)

NET SINGH: Aren't you hungry, Bhola?

BHOLA : I? Well, I... Sir, to be honest, I'm very hungry.

BOYS : There is plenty of food in your bag, Bhola. Why don't you eat some of it?

HET SINGH: That's right. You may go and eat, Bhola.

(*A sound among the leaves on the ground at some distance. Net Singh looks in that direction.*)

NET SINGH: Be quiet and listen. There is an animal in those bushes.

HET SINGH: (*softly*) It's moving slowly.

NET SINGH: What can it be?

BHOLA : (*coming closer to Net Singh and trembling*) I hope it is not a panther. I don't like panthers. My great-grandfather was killed by a panther.

HET SINGH: Forget your great-grandfather and be quiet.

AJAI : It's coming this way.

NET SINGH: Yes, it is. Het Singh, let's load our guns and get ready to shoot.

(They take up their guns, load them and get ready to shoot.)

HET SINGH: I'm sure it's a big deer.

(Suddenly a big deer comes out of the bushes into the open and looks towards the hunters. Het Singh and Net Singh fire their guns at the same time and the deer drops on the ground.)

BHOLA : Good shot, sir! It has dropped on the ground!

NET SINGH: Be quiet. It may run away.

(They wait for about five minutes and then run to the deer.)

HET SINGH: Ah, it's a big, fat deer! Look, I shot it in the neck and it dropped dead. I don't see another bullet wound on its body. How did you miss it, Net Singh?

NET SINGH: I don't think I missed it. I aimed at its neck. But let us not worry about that. We have got it. It doesn't matter who shot it.

HET SINGH: It matters a lot. I shot it, and the skin is mine. I'm going to give it to my Bhim.

AJAI : *(to Het Singh)* Uncle, please give the

skin to Bhim. He's my dearest friend, and I'll be happy if he gets it.

BHIM : (to *Het Singh*) Father, what has happened to you? Did you not promise to give the deer-skin to Ajai? Are you going back on your word? Is a Rajput's word so cheap? My friends will point to me and say, "This is the son of the Rajput who cannot keep his word." Please shoot me as you've shot this deer. I don't want to live.

NET SINGH: (taking *Bhim* in his arms) Take it easy, son. Don't talk like that to your father. He was joking.

HET SINGH: (feeling ashamed) I wasn't joking. I was breaking my promise. I was disgracing the Rajput race. Bhim, I'm sorry, son. Dear Net Singh, won't you forgive me?

NET SINGH: Don't worry, Het Singh. Let's forget about it. Let's now try to shoot a panther. We've promised a panther-skin to Bhim. Let's try to keep our word.

10. FOUR WISE MEN



Characters

The King of Ujjain

Four young men named Ram Datt, Shiv Datt, Har Datt and Dev Datt

A merchant

Two sentries

[Four young men named Ram Datt, Shiv Datt, Har Datt and Dev Datt are going along the road to Ujjain. They are going to Ujjain in search of jobs. They are only about half a mile from the city of Ujjain. The city is seen clearly from where they are.]

RAM DATT : We've come a long way from home

but haven't yet has been able to get any jobs.

HAR DATT : How long have we been travelling?

SHIV DATT : For more than a week, I think.

RAM DATT : For ten days exactly.

DEV DATT : Well, ten days isn't a long time. We may have to travel for many more days before we get suitable jobs for all four of us.

RAM DATT : If we could have an interview with the King of Ujjain, I am sure he would take us into his service.

SHIV DATT : I think so too.

DEV DATT : All of us think so, and that's why we are going to Ujjain.

HAR DATT : It is not easy to get an interview with the King of Ujjain. We'll have to make a careful plan.

DEV DATT : We'll think about it when we get to Ujjain.

SHIV DATT : Look, a camel has gone this way. Let us study the tracks it has made.

RAM DATT : We'll study them as we go.

SHIV DATT : That's what I mean.

(The four of them go along the road, and as they go on they study the track made by the camel.)

RAM DATT : I've found one special thing about this camel.

SHIV DATT : I've found one too.

HAR DATT : So have I.

DEV DATT : I have found something about it which, I think, none of you has found.

HAR DATT : As soon as we find a big, shady tree by the roadside, we'll sit down and talk about the things we've found about the camel. But here comes a man running! Who can it be?

SHIV DATT : He looks like a merchant.

RAM DATT : Yes, he's a merchant. I think he has lost his camel.

(The merchant stops near the four men and greets them.)

MERCHANT : Good morning, gentlemen.

ALL FOUR : Good morning, brother.

MERCHANT : Gentlemen, I've lost my camel. Have you seen it?

Ram DATT : Is it lame in one of its legs?

MERCHANT : Yes, it is.

SHIV DATT : Is it blind in the right eye?

MERCHANT : Yes, yes, it is blind in the right eye. It's a one-eyed camel.

HAR DATT : Its tail is short, isn't it?

MERCHANT : You're quite right. It has a short tail. You gentlemen have noticed everything about it. I hope....

DEV DATT : Wait a minute. Isn't it suffering from a pain in the stomach?

MERCHANT : You seem to be a vet! The poor animal has been suffering from a pain in the stomach for the last two weeks. I'm prepared to pay your fees if you treat it. Will you please tell me where it is?

RAM DATT : We don't know where it is.

SHIV DATT : We haven't seen it.

MERCHANT : Has none of you seen it?

DEV DATT : No, none of us has seen it.

MERCHANT : Then how did you know so many things about it?

HAR DATT : We knew all about it from the tracks which it made on the road.

MERCHANT : I don't believe you. You are thieves. You found my camel and sold it to someone. I'm going to complain to the King.

DEV DATT : Please yourself, sir. If the King wants us, please come back and let us know. (*pointing to a banyan tree by the roadside in the distance*) You will find us sitting under that banyan tree.

MERCHANT : I don't trust you. I must take you with me to the King.

ALL FOUR : All right. Let's go to the King.
(*The four men follow the merchant to the King. At the gate the merchant says something to one of the sentries*)

who takes him to the King. The sentry and the merchant bow to the King.)

SENTRY : Your Highness, this man is a merchant of Ujjain. He has come to make a complaint against the men who have taken away his camel. (*Bows again, and the merchant also bows.*)

King : Where are the men who have taken away your camel?

MERCHANT : They are at the gate, sir.

KING : (*to the sentry*) Bring them in.
(*The sentry bows and goes out. He comes back with the four men and all five of them bow to the King.*)

KING : (*to the sentry*) You may go.
(*The sentry bows and goes out.*)

KING : (*to the merchant*) How do you know that these men have taken away your camel?

MERCHANT : Sir, they know everything about it and yet they say they haven't seen it.

KING : (*to the four men*) Is that right?

RAM DATT : Your Highness, each of us has found one special thing about the merchant's camel, but none of us has seen it.

KING : (*to Ram Datt*) What have you found about this camel?

RAM DATT : It is lame in one of its legs.

KING : How did you find it?

- RAM DATT : Sir, I studied the tracks which it had made on the road and saw that there were only three-footprints.
- KING : (to Shiv Datt) What did you find about the camel?
- SHIV DATT : Your Highness, I found that it was blind in the right eye.
- KING : How did you find it?
- SHIV DATT : I saw that it had eaten the leaves of the trees on the left side of the road only, and so I knew that it was blind in the right eye.
- KING : Excellent! (to Har Datt) What did you find?
- HAR DATT : Sir, I found that it had a short tail.
- KING : How did you know that it had a short tail?
- HAR DATT : I saw a few very small drops of blood in the track, and I knew that they came from mosquito bites. The mosquitos could not have bitten the animal so much if it had a long tail to brush them away.
- KING : That's very good reasoning. (turning to Dev Datt) What did you find about the merchant's camel?
- DEV DATT : I saw that the prints of the camel's forefeet were deep and clear and the prints of the good hind foot were very

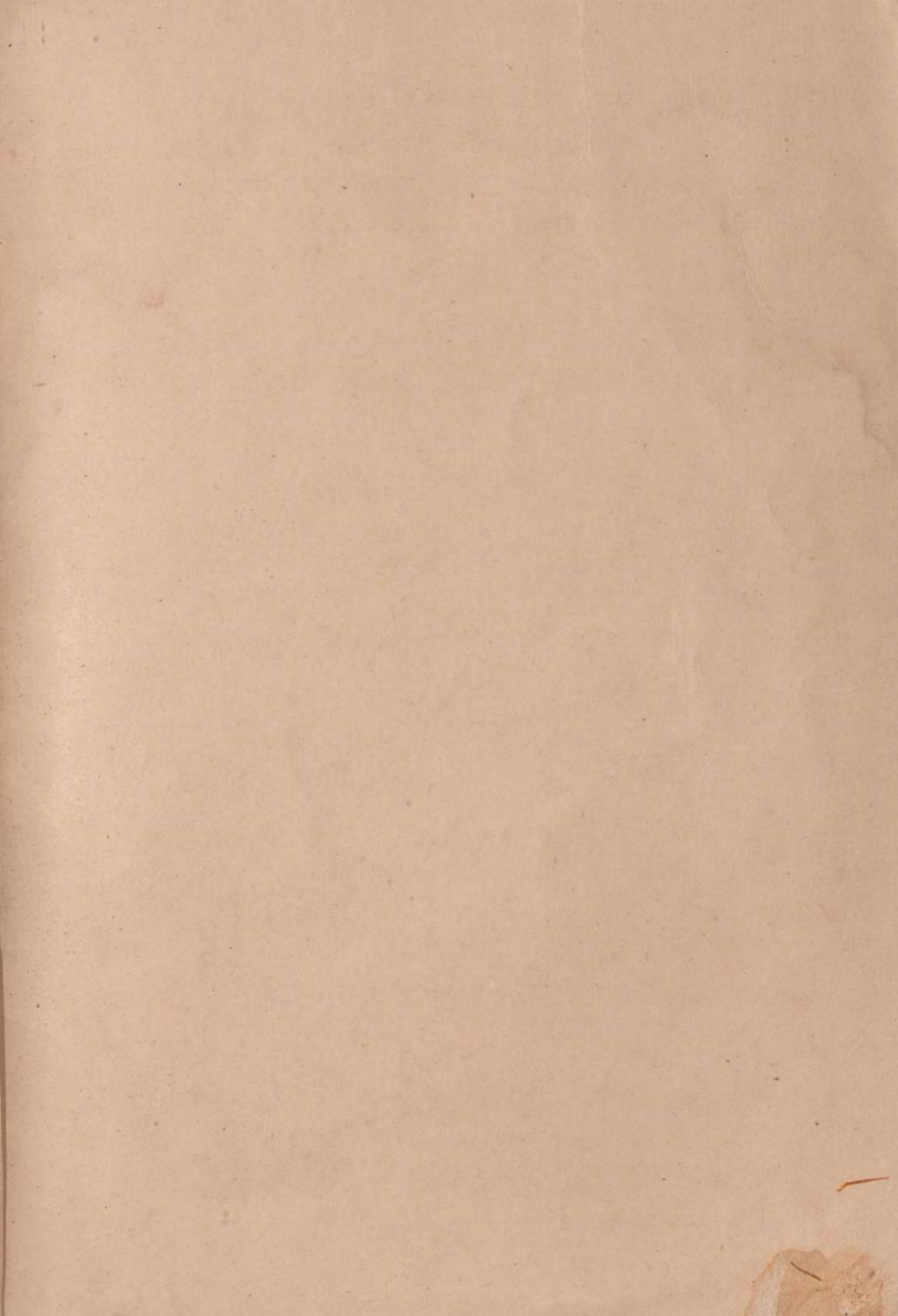
light. From this I knew that the camel drew up its hind legs because it had a pain in the stomach.

KING : Marvellous! (*turning to the merchant*) I'm satisfied that these four gentlemen have not seen your camel. They are very wise men. You may go and search for your animal.

(*The merchant bows and goes out.*)

KING : (*to the four men*) Gentlemen, I'm pleased with you. You are wise men. I want to take you into my service. I want to make you my advisers. What do you say to that?

ALL FOUR : We're at your service, sir.



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READ AND ACT

BOOK THREE



875 To 918

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