

Goso, the Teacher

Zanzibar Tales

African

Easy
8 min read

Once there was a man named Go'so, who taught children to read, not in a schoolhouse, but under a calabash tree. One evening, while Goso was sitting under the tree deep in the study of the next day's lessons, Paa, the gazelle, climbed up the tree very quietly to steal some fruit, and in so doing shook off a calabash, which, in falling, struck the teacher on the head and killed him.

When his scholars came in the morning and found their teacher lying dead, they were filled with grief; so, after giving him a decent burial, they agreed among themselves to find the one who had killed Goso, and put him to death.

After talking the matter over they came to the conclusion that the south wind was the offender.

So they caught the south wind and beat it.

But the south wind cried: "Here! I am Koo'see, the south wind. Why are you beating me? What have I done?"

And they said: "Yes, we know you are Koosee; it was you who threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Koosee said, "If I were so powerful would I be stopped by a mud wall?"

So they went to the mud wall and beat it.

But the mud wall cried: "Here! I am Keeyambaa'za, the mud wall. Why are you beating me? What have I done?"

And they said: "Yes, we know you are Keeyambaaza; it was you who stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Keeyambaaza said, "If I were so powerful would I be bored through by the rat?"

So they went and caught the rat and beat it.

But the rat cried: "Here! I am Paan'ya, the rat. Why are you beating me? What have I done?"

And they said: "Yes, we know you are Paanya; it was you who bored through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Paanya said, "If I were so powerful would I be eaten by a cat?"

So they hunted for the cat, caught it, and beat it.

But the cat cried: "Here! I am Paa'ka, the cat. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said: "Yes, we know you are Paaka; it is you that eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Paaka said, "If I were so powerful would I be tied by a rope?"

So they took the rope and beat it.

But the rope cried: "Here! I am Kaam'ba, the rope. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said: “Yes, we know you are Kaamba; it is you that ties Paaka, the cat; who eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Kaamba said, “If I were so powerful would I be cut by a knife?”

So they took the knife and beat it.

But the knife cried: “Here! I am Kee'soo, the knife. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said: “Yes, we know you are Keesoo; you cut Kaamba, the rope; that ties Paaka, the cat; who eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Keesoo said, “If I were so powerful would I be burned by the fire?”

And they went and beat the fire.

But the fire cried: “Here! I am Mo'to, the fire. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said: “Yes, we know you are Moto; you burn Keesoo, the knife; that cuts Kaamba, the rope; that ties Paaka, the cat; who eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Moto said, “If I were so powerful would I be put out by water?”

And they went to the water and beat it.

But the water cried: “Here! I am Maa'jee, the water. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said: “Yes, we know you are Maajee; you put out Moto, the fire; that burns Keesoo, the knife; that cuts Kaamba, the rope; that ties Paaka, the cat; who eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Maajee said, “If I were so powerful would I be drunk by the ox?”

And they went to the ox and beat it.

But the ox cried: “Here! I am Ng’om’bay, the ox. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said: “Yes, we know you are Ng’ombay; you drink Maajee, the water; that puts out Moto, the fire; that burns Keesoo, the knife; that cuts Kaamba, the rope; that ties Paaka, the cat; who eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Ng’ombay said, “If I were so powerful would I be tormented by the fly?”

And they caught a fly and beat it.

But the fly cried: “Here! I am Een’zee, the fly. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said: “Yes, we know you are Eenzee; you torment Ng’ombay, the ox; who drinks Maajee, the water; that puts out Moto, the fire; that burns Keesoo, the knife; that cuts Kaamba, the rope; that ties Paaka, the cat; who eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Eenzee said, “If I were so powerful would I be eaten by the gazelle?”

And they searched for the gazelle, and when they found it they beat it.

But the gazelle said: “Here! I am Paa, the gazelle. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said: “Yes, we know you are Paa; you eat Eenzee, the fly; that torments Ng’ombay, the ox; who drinks

Maajee, the water; that puts out Moto, the fire; that burns Keesoo, the knife; that cuts Kaamba, the rope; that ties Paaka, the cat; who eats Paanya, the rat; who bores through Keeyambaaza, the mud wall; which stopped Koosee, the south wind; and Koosee, the south wind, threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

The gazelle, through surprise at being found out and fear of the consequences of his accidental killing of the teacher, while engaged in stealing, was struck dumb.

Then the scholars said: “Ah! he hasn’t a word to say for himself. This is the fellow who threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. We will kill him.”

So they killed Paa, the gazelle, and avenged the death of their teacher.

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