



# *The Honest but Rash Hunter*

Tales Of The Sun Or Folklore Of Southern India

Indian

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## Second Part

When the Second Minister's watch was over, he went to inspect the guard at the royal bedchamber, and Alakesa hearing his footsteps inquired who was there.

"Your servant, Bodhachandra, most royal lord," was the reply.

"Enter, Bodhachandra," said the king; "I have somewhat to communicate to you."

Then Alakesa, almost choking with rage, told him of the gross offence of which his colleague the First Minister had been guilty, and demanded to know whether any punishment could be too severe. Bodhachandra humbled himself before the king, and thus replied—

"My lord, such a crime merits a heavy requital. Can one tie up fire in one's cloth and think that as it is but a small spark it will do us no harm? How, then, can we excuse even slight deviations from the rules of propriety? Therefore, if Bodhaditya be really guilty, he must be signally punished. But permit me to represent to your Majesty the advisability of carefully inquiring into this matter before proceeding to judgment. We ought to ascertain what reasons he had for such a breach of the harem rules; for should we, carried away by anger, act rashly in this affair, we may repent when repentance is of no avail. As an example, I shall, with your Majesty's permission relate a story." The king having at once given his consent, the Second Minister began to relate the

Story of the Honest but Rash Hunter and His Faithful Dog.

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There dwelt in a certain forest a hunter named Ugravira, who was lord of the woods, and as such, had to pay a fixed sum of money to the king of the country. It happened once that the king unexpectedly demanded of him one thousand five hundred pons. The hunter sold all his property and realised only a thousand pons, and was perplexed how to procure the rest of the required amount. At length he bethought him of his dog, which was of the best kind, and was beloved by him more than anything else in the whole world. He took his dog to an adjacent city, where he pledged him to a merchant named Kubera for five hundred pons, at the same time giving the merchant his bond for the loan. Before going away, the hunter with tears in his eyes, thus addressed the intelligent animal:—

“Mrigasimha, [i.e., lion among beasts] O my faithful friend, do not leave thy new master until I have paid him back the money I have borrowed of him. Obey and serve him, even as thou hast ever obeyed and served me.”

Some time after this, the merchant Kubera had to leave home and proceed with his merchandise to foreign countries: so he called the hunter’s dog to his side, and bade him watch at his doors and prevent the intrusion of robbers and other evil-disposed persons. The dog indicated, both by his eyes and his tail, that he perfectly understood his instructions. Then the merchant, having enjoined his wife to feed the dog three times every day with rice and milk, set out on his travels. The dog kept his watch outside the house, and for a few days the merchant’s wife fed him regularly three times a day. But this kind treatment was not to continue. She had for her paramour a wicked youth of the Setti caste, who, soon after the departure of Kubera, became a constant visitor at the merchant’s house. The faithful dog instinctively surmised that his new master would not approve of such conduct; so one night, when the youth was leaving the house, Mrigasimha sprang upon him like an enraged lion, and seizing him by the throat, sent the evildoer to the other world. The merchant’s wife hearing the scuffle, ran to the spot to save her lover, but found him dead.

Though extremely grieved at the loss of her paramour, she had the presence of mind to immediately carry the body to the garden at the back of the house, where she concealed it in a great pit, and covered it with earth and leaves, vainly thinking that she had thus concealed her own shame. All this was not done, however, without being observed by the watchful dog; and, henceforward, the merchant’s wife hated him with a deadly hatred. She no longer gave him food, and the poor creature was fain to eat such grains of rice as he found adhering to

the leaves thrown out of the house after meals, still keeping guard at the door.

After an absence of two months the merchant returned, and the dog, the moment he saw him, ran up to him and rolled himself on the ground at his feet; then seizing the merchant's cloth he dragged him to the very spot in the garden where the youth's body was hidden, and began to scratch the ground, at the same time looking into the merchant's face and howling dismally, from which Kubera concluded that the dog wished him to examine the place. Accordingly he dug up the spot and discovered the body of the youth, whom, indeed, he had suspected of being his wife's paramour. In a great fury he rushed into the house and commanded his wife, on pain of instant death, to relate the particulars of this affair without concealing anything. The wretched woman, seeing that her sin was discovered, confessed all, upon which her husband exclaimed!—

“Disgrace of womankind! you have not a fraction of the virtue possessed by this faithful brute, which you have, out of revenge, allowed to starve. But why should I waste words on thee? Happy am I in having no children by thee! Depart, and let me see thy face no more.” So saying, he thrust her out of the house. Then the merchant fed the dog with milk, rice and sugar, after which he said to that lion of beasts (Mrigasimha, as he was called)—

“Thou trusty friend, language fails to express my gratitude to thee. The five hundred pons which I lent thy old master the hunter are as nothing compared with thy services to me, by which I consider the debt as more than paid. What must be the feelings of the hunter without thy companionship? I now give thee leave to return to him.”

The merchant took the hunter's bond, and tearing it slightly at the top as a token that it was cancelled, he placed it in the dog's mouth and sent him back to his former master, and he at once set off towards the forest.

Now by this time the hunter had contrived to save up the five hundred pons, and with the money and the interest due thereon, he was going to the merchant to redeem his bond and reclaim his dog. To his great surprise he met Mrigasimha on the way, and as soon as the dog perceived him he ran up to him to receive his caresses. But the hunter immediately concluded that the poor brute, in his eagerness to rejoin him, had run away from the merchant, and determined to put him to death. Accordingly he plucked a creeper, and fastening it round the dog's neck tied him to a branch of a tree, and the faithful creature, who was expecting nothing but kindness from his old master, was by him most cruelly strangled. The hunter then continued his journey, and, on reaching the merchant's house, he laid down the money before him.

“My dear friend,” said Kubera, “the important service your dog rendered me in killing my wife's paramour, has

amply repaid your debt, so I gave him permission to return to you, with your bond in his mouth. Did you not meet him on your way? But why do you look so horrified? What have you done to the dog?”

The hunter, to whom everything was now only too clear, threw himself on the ground, like a huge tree cut at the root, and, after telling Kubera how he had inconsiderately slain the faithful dog, stabbed himself with his dagger. The merchant grieved at the death both of the dog and the hunter, which would not have occurred had he waited until Ugravira came to redeem his bond, snatched the weapon out of the hunter’s breast and also stabbed himself. The news of this tragedy soon reached the forest, and the wife of the hunter, not wishing to survive her lord, threw herself into a well and was drowned. Lastly, even the wife of the merchant, finding that so many fatalities were due to her own misconduct, and that she was despised by the very children in the streets, put an end to her wretched life.

“Thus,” added the Second Minister, “five lives were lost in consequence of the hunter’s rashness. Wherefore I would respectfully beseech your Majesty to investigate the case of Bodhaditya, and to refrain from acting merely under the influence of anger.”

Having thus spoken, Bodhachandra obtained leave to retire to his own house.

### Third Part

At the end of the third watch of the night, Bodhavyapaka, the Third Minister of king Alakesa, went to see whether the royal bedchamber was properly guarded, and the king, summoning him to his presence, told him of the First Minister’s crime, upon which Bodhavyapaka, after making due obeisance, thus spake:—

“Most noble king, such a grave crime should be severely punished, but it behoves us not to act before having ascertained that he is guilty beyond doubt, for evil are the consequences of precipitation, in proof of which I know a story which I will relate, with your Majesty’s leave.”

Next: III. The Brâhmaṇ’s Wife and the Mongoose

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