

# TRACE

**Traditional Children's Stories for a common  
Future**

## **The Traveller and the Goldsmith**



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Relate to me, said king Dabschelim to Bidpai, the fable of the man who bestows his favours on unworthy objects, and yet hopes to meet with a good return.

It is right, says the philosopher that kings as well as others should select, as objects of their bounty and kindness, persons in whom they may hope to meet with gratitude, sincerity, and moderate pretensions; and not exhaust their generosity on relations and friends, who have often no better claims than what the peculiarity of their situation gives them. It is then that the distinctions which a king confers become a title of honour to the receiver, when the noble as well as more humble pretender to royal favour is indebted for the notice of his sovereign to the opinion which is entertained of his sensibility to kindness, and to the proof which he has given, that he is incapable of falsehood and ingratitude ; and the conduct of a king in submitting the pretensions of those who look up to him for promotion and reward to this severe trial, resembles the practice of the prudent physician, who in his treatment of a patient is not satisfied with the bare symptoms which his looks betray, but feels his pulse, and prescribes the medicine which lie is to take according to the knowledge which he has in this manner acquired of his complaint. And the sensible man if he finds amongst persons of low extraction any possessed of integrity, and a feeling alive to gratitude; or if he discovers even amongst irrational animals any whom instinct has endued with a sensibility to good treatment, and a power to discriminate their benefactor; he will endeavour by affability and kindness to win them to his interest, against the day when he may have occasion for their services : and thus we sometimes see, that a man, whose good sense is indisputable, is obliged, from distrust of his fellow-creatures, to use precautions against those with whom he associates, whilst he is not afraid to wrap up the weasel in his cloak, and takes a bird and places it on his hand ; for it is unwise to despise either man or beast, small or great, without having examined their utility, which is the proper rule for the conduct to be observed towards them: and this is a maxim which has often been in the mouths of wise men of old, and is contained in the following fable.

A number of persons dug a pit, and there fell into it a goldsmith, a serpent, a monkey, and a tiger ; and a traveller, who was passing by, stood over the pit, and saw the man and his companions, and said to himself, I cannot perform any deed that will plead more strongly in my favour in the life to come, than by saving this man from the enemies by whom he is surrounded ; so he took a rope, and let it down into the pit; and the monkey, owing to his dexterity and nimbleness, was the first to cling to it, and climb up; he then let it down a second time, and the serpent twisted himself round it, and came out ; then a third time, and the tiger took hold of it, and he drew him up. Then the three beasts thanked him for his having assisted them to escape, but begged him not to release the goldsmith, adding, that men in general, and especially the person in question, were incapable of gratitude. And the monkey said to him, I live on a mountain near a city called Nawadarkht: the tiger said, I live in

a wood close by this city: and the serpent, I dwell in the walls of the city, and if you pass in our neighbourhood at any time, and have occasion for our services, call to us, and we will come and reward you for the kindness which you have shown us. But the traveller paid no attention to what they had told him of the ingratitude of the man, but let down the rope again, and brought out the goldsmith, who thanked him for what he had done, and said. If ever you come to Nawadarkht, enquire for my house; I am a goldsmith, and shall be happy to be of any use to you I can for the service you have rendered me. Then the goldsmith returned to the city, and the traveller continued his journey.

Sometime after the traveller had occasion to go to Nawadarkht, and as he was walking along, the monkey met him, and saluted him, and kissed his feet, and made apologies for the inability of monkeys to do much for a friend, but begged him to sit down, and wait till he returned ; then the monkey went away and very soon came back, bringing some choice fruit which he placed before the traveller who having eaten as much as he chose, continued his journey : and as he approached the gate of the city, the tiger advanced towards him, and placing himself in an- humble posture before him, said, Wait a moment, and I will very soon come back to you ; then the tiger went away, and entered the city by one of the walls, and killed the king's daughter, and tore off her trinkets, and brought them to the traveller, without informing him by what means he had procured them. Then the traveller said to himself. These beasts have rewarded me very handsomely, and I am now curious to see what the goldsmith will do; if he is poor, and has no means of showing his gratitude, he may at least sell these trinkets for their full value, with which of course he is acquainted, and divide with me the sum of money which he obtains for them. So he went to the goldsmith, who, as soon as he saw him, saluted him, and made him enter his house: and observing the trinkets, he immediately recognised them to be those which he had made for the daughter of the king. He then told the traveller that he had no provisions in the house good enough for him, but if he would wait a little while, he would fetch him something to eat: then he went out, and said to himself, This is an opportunity not to be lost; I will go to the king, and inform him of the discovery I have made, and he will no doubt acknowledge and reward my zeal. Then he went to the antechamber of the king, and announced himself by a message to the following purport: The person who has killed your majesty's daughter and stolen her trinkets, is at this moment in my house. Then the king desired the traveller, to be brought before him, and as soon as he saw the jewels in his possession, he immediately ordered him to be put to the torture, and after that to be led through the city, and in the end put to death. Whilst the punishment was being executed, the traveller began to weep, and cry out with a loud voice, If I had attended to the hints which the monkey, the serpent, and the tiger gave me of the ingratitude of this man, I should have escaped this misfortune; and as he repeated the same words several times, the serpent heard what he said, and came out from her hole, and knew

her benefactor again, and was so distressed at the situation in which she found him, that she immediately thought of some contrivance to release him, and went and stung the son of the king ; and the king called together the wise men of his kingdom, who endeavoured to charm the bite by their incantations and magical arts, but all to no purpose.

Now the serpent had a sister, who was one of the Genii; so she went to her, and informed her of the kindness she had experienced from the traveller, and of the misfortune into which he was fallen; and the sister felt pity for him, and went to the king's son, and rendering herself invisible told him, that he would not get well, unless the man who had been punished so undeservedly pronounced an incantation over him. Then the serpent went to the traveller in prison, and reproached him for not having attended to her advice concerning the goldsmith; and she gave him leaves, which she told him served as an antidote to her poison, and desired him, when he was called to charm the bite which the king's son had received, to make the young prince drink a decoction of the leaves, which would cure him; and if the king enquired into his circumstances, he must give a true account of himself, and by the favour of heaven he would by these means escape. Then the king's son told his father, that he had heard the voice of someone speaking, who said to him, that he would not get well, unless the man, who had been unjustly imprisoned, charmed the sting of the serpent ; upon which the king ordered the traveller to be sent for, and desired him to charm his son. The traveller replied. Incantations will be of no use to him, but if he drinks a decoction of these leaves, he will with the assistance of heaven be cured. Then he made him drink, and the child got well, to the great joy and satisfaction of his father; and the king desired the traveller to give some account of himself, and the latter related his history.

Then the king thanked him, and made him a handsome present, and commanded that the goldsmith should be put to death in his stead; and the sentence was carried into execution, as a just punishment for the false evidence which he had given, and the bad return he had made to a good action. So in the ingratitude of the goldsmith towards the traveller, continued Bidpai, and the gratitude on the other hand of the beasts towards their benefactor, by the means of one of whom he escaped from the danger which threatened him, is contained a salutary lesson for those who will listen to instruction, and matter of reflection for the considerate man, who will learn from this example to select, from motives of prudence as well as interest, those only as objects of his generosity and favour, who possessed of integrity and honourable sentiments, in whatever rank or condition of life he may find them.