

32. The Noble Monkey



In a forest glade, on the banks of the River Ganga, there was a tall shady mango tree. Every year, it bore big juicy mangoes that were very sweet to taste. In the forest, there lived hundreds of monkeys with their king. The monkey king was bigger, stronger and also wiser than all the other monkeys.

The monkeys loved the mango tree for its spreading branches, cool shade and delicious fruit. They often played about on the tree and enjoyed eating the tasty mangoes. Their king warned them, “Don’t let even a single mango fall into the river. If the current carries it down to the land of men, they will come here in search of the heavenly fruit and destroy the peace in this land.”

One day, however, a ripe mango fell into the river and was carried with the flow to the city of Benaras. It was found by a fisherman who had never seen anything like it before. So, he presented it to the King. When the King tasted a slice of the fruit, he liked it very much. He shared it with his queen and ministers. They all loved its flavour and in the end it was decided that a search party should be sent to find the tree that bore such divine fruit.

A fleet of rafts sailed up the river carrying many of the courtiers and the King himself. By and by, the fleet of rafts reached the forest glade on the bank of the river and also found the mango tree laden with fruit. The King and the courtiers were overjoyed.

When the King’s men noticed the monkeys enjoying the fruit, they were annoyed. They decided to drive them away mercilessly. They sent volleys of arrows to kill the monkeys and to scare them away for good.

The monkey king swung to the other side of the river and ordered the others to do the same.

“Move quickly! Save your lives by vanishing deep into the forest on the other bank,” he urged. However, he soon realized



that the river stream was too wide for the others to follow. Quick as lightning, he did something very unusual. Catching hold of a tall cane with his legs, he swung back to the side where the other monkeys waited. Then he took firm hold of a branch of a tree. This way, he made a bridge across the river with his own strong body.

The monkey king then ordered the monkeys to rush to the other side, over his own body. The monkeys lost no time in following his command. The monkey king's body was being trampled upon and bruised and injured by the rushing hordes of monkeys, but he did not waver. He kept a tight hold over the cane and the branch till the last monkey landed safely on the other side. By then, he was badly injured and had lost all his strength. He fell down in a swoon.

The King of Benaras was watching this with amazement. He was touched by the bravery and sacrifice of the great monkey king. He asked his men to stop shooting arrows. The unconscious monkey king was gently lifted from the bank of the river and placed on a couch near the King of Benaras.

The King tried his best to revive the great ape. After a while, the monkey king slowly opened his eyes.

“Why did you sacrifice your life in this way?” said the King of Benaras.

“The monkeys are like my children. I am their chief and guide and it is my duty to protect them. They are now safe and I die a happy death. I am glad I could do my duty.” So saying, the great ape closed his eyes forever.

The King of Benaras never forgot the great sacrifice that he had witnessed.

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● **glade** : an open space or clearing in a forest. ● **delicious** : tasty, with a pleasant taste or smell. ● **heavenly** : Here, it means wonderful. ● **divine** : of god or gods. Here, it means excellent. ● **laden with fruit** : with great quantities of fruit on it. ● **mercilessly** : without any mercy or pity. ● **volleys of arrows** : many arrows sent or shot at the same time. ● **vanishing** : disappearing, going away. ● **swoon** : faint, (when a person swoons, he/she is not able to see, feel, hear, touch, move, etc.) ● **revive** : bring back to life.

Things to do :

1. Answer the following questions :
 - (a) Where did the monkeys live with their king ?
 - (b) Why did the monkeys love the mango tree ?
 - (c) What did the monkey king warn the others to do ?
 - (d) How did the King of Benaras come to know of the fruit ?
 - (e) Why did the King’s men decide to drive away the monkeys ?
 - (f) How did the monkey king save the other monkeys ?
2. Form pairs or groups. Try to write short conversations for the following occasions :
 - (a) The monkey king warning the other monkeys.
 - (b) The King of Benaras enjoying the fruit with the others.
 - (c) The monkeys trying to escape to the other bank.
3. From the lesson, find the words that are used to describe the following words :

* mango tree

* mangoes

* the monkey king