

talk  
to  
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

## Moments

### 4. In the Kingdom of Fools

#### Kannada Folktale edited by A.K. Ramanujam

#### 1. Summary

Once, there was a kingdom ruled over by a foolish king and his silly minister. They decided that everybody should sleep during the day, and work at night. There were many other strange laws. One day, a guru and his disciple wandered into this city and realised that the city was full of fools so he decided to leave this place. The disciple decided to stay.

One day, a thief broke into a rich merchant's house; as he was sneaking out with stolen goods the wall collapsed on him and he died. The thief's brother went to the king and demanded justice for his brother. He claimed that the merchant was responsible for the death, as the wall that had fallen on his brother was very weak and badly built. The king decided to have the merchant executed. The merchant however passed the blame onto the bricklayer. The bricklayer passed the blame onto a dancing girl, and so on. Finally, the king decided to execute the disciple of the guru.

The guru rushed to the kingdom to help his disciple and thought of a plan to save him. The guru asked to be executed instead of his disciple. However, his disciple said no, no he wanted to be killed first. The king was surprised by this eagerness to be executed. The guru explained that they both wanted to die first because the first man to be executed would become king in his next life and the second man, his minister. On hearing this, the foolish king decided that he should die immediately and after him, his minister. This would make them king and minister in their next lives! So they were executed.

Now the kingdom had no king! The people begged the guru and his disciple to become king and minister. They agreed, and changed all the foolish laws.

#### 2. Vocabulary

1. **Dangerous** – something or someone that is harmful  
This is a **dangerous** area and you can be attacked at night.
2. **Kingdom** – a place ruled by a king or queen  
The United **Kingdom** is ruled by Queen Elizabeth.

3. **Disobeyed** – not do what you are told to do  
Sunita **disobeyed** her teacher and continued talking in class.
4. **Project** – something that is planned with the idea of achieving a particular aim  
The flyover **project** in Delhi was delayed.
5. **Disciple** – the follower of a teacher or leader  
Jesus Christ had twelve main **disciples** who helped to spread his teachings.
6. **Stirring** – moving  
It was hot and still that day and no leaves on the trees were **stirring**.
7. **Strangers** – people you have never met before  
Two **strangers** entered our house suddenly and demanded money from my father.
8. **Amazed** – very surprised  
I was **amazed** when my teacher told me that I had stood first in my class.
9. **Wandered** – walked slowly about a place without any purpose  
I **wandered** around the mall looking at the shops.
10. **Groceries** – food or other items that you can buy at a supermarket or at the local grocery store (kirana/ pansari)  
My mother stops to buy **groceries** for our dinner on her way back from office.
11. **Delighted** – very pleased  
I was **delighted** to hear that we were going on a school trip to Agra.
12. **Wisdom** – the ability to make sensible decisions or judgments because of your knowledge or experience  
I had the **wisdom** to stop arguing with my brother before he got too angry.
13. **Sacred** – relating to a religion or considered to be holy  
The Ganga is a **sacred** river for the Hindus.
14. **Merchant** – someone whose job is buying and selling goods, usually in large amounts  
The rich **merchant** fed the poor outside the temple every Saturday.

15. **Sneaked** – to go somewhere very quietly so no one can hear or see you  
I was late getting to school, so I **sneaked** into my class, as I didn't want my teacher to see me.
16. **Loot** – stolen goods, especially during war  
Burglars disconnected the alarm and **looted** the store.
17. **Collapsed** – suddenly fall down  
The walls of the mud house **collapsed** during the earthquake.
18. **Complained** – said that something is wrong or that you are annoyed about something  
I **complained** to the hotel manager about the dirty bathroom.
19. **Pursuing** – trying to achieve something or continuing to do something over some time  
My brother is **pursuing** a degree in law because he wants to join my father's law firm.
20. **Ancient** – from a long time ago  
This is an **ancient** temple, built five hundred years ago.
21. **Wrongdoer** – a person who does something bad or illegal  
The **wrongdoer** was brought to the police station and handed over to the police.
22. **Compensate** – to make up for something, give (someone) something, typically money, to make up for a loss, suffering, or injury  
Nothing can **compensate** for the death of my dog.
23. **Injustice** – a situation where there is no fairness and justice  
My father was falsely accused of theft, so that was definitely an **injustice**.
24. **Summoned** – ordered someone to come to a particular place  
The Prime Minister **summoned** an emergency meeting of all the ministers to discuss the pollution problem.
25. **Burgle** – to break into a house or building to steal  
My uncle's house was **burgled** of all his cash the night he went out to attend a wedding.
26. **Accused** – person who is charged with a crime  
The five men **accused** of car theft, asked the judge to give them one more week to prove their innocence.

27. **Pleads** – appeals, begs  
The man accused of murder **pleaded** for forgiveness.
28. **Guilty** – having done something wrong, broken a law  
The three boys were **guilty** of stealing their teacher's money.
29. **Helpless** - unable to do anything to help yourself or anyone else  
I looked on **helplessly** as the mother continued beating her child.
30. **Execution** – to kill someone as a legal punishment  
The murderer's **execution** was delayed due to an appeal in court.
31. **Jingling** – tinkling  
The little bells hanging in the temple were **jingling** in the breeze.
32. **Complicated** – difficult  
The math question was very **complicated** and I could not answer it.
33. **Trembling** – shaking slightly because you are cold, frightened or emotional  
He was **trembling** with cold when he came back home after the walk.
34. **Distracted** – unable to concentrate or give attention to something  
I was very **distracted** by the loud music outside my window so I could not concentrate on my homework.
35. **Innocent** – not guilty  
The **innocent** man was freed by the judge.
36. **Scoundrel** – someone who cheats and deceives others  
He was a thief and a **scoundrel**, but he was so pleasant that most people did not realize his true nature.
37. **Weighing the evidence** – examining at all the facts  
The judge decided to free the accused person after **weighing the evidence**.
38. **Evidence** – anything that helps to prove that something is or is not true  
There was enough **evidence** to prove that Rita had stolen the money.
39. **Bailiff** – a law officer who makes sure that the court's orders are obeyed  
The **bailiff** was sent to our neighbor's house to evict him because he was staying there illegally.

40. **Accusation** – a claim that someone has done something wrong or illegal  
There were many **accusations** of corruption against the minister, yet he did not resign.
41. **Impatient** – not willing to wait  
My brother makes a lot of mistakes in his work because he is always so **impatient**.
42. **Original** – the first, creative  
Sometimes it is hard to tell if a painting is **original** or a clever copy.
43. **Consult** – to get information or advice from a person  
Many people **consult** an astrologer before deciding on a wedding date.
44. **Decisive** – able to make decisions quickly and confidently  
My mother is very **decisive** about family matters.
45. **The root of** – the cause, the reason for some event  
Widespread corruption was at **the root of** the revolt.
46. **Stake** – a strong stick that is pushed into the ground to mark something  
The area where the execution was to take place was marked by **stakes**.
47. **Impaling** – piercing with a sharp instrument  
**Impaling** murderers was a common punishment in the old days.
48. **Decree** – an official order  
An official **decree** states that all children above five years of age must go to school.
49. **Vision** – an idea or image of something  
The holy man had a **vision** that there would be an earthquake the next day.
50. **Scrape** – a difficult situation caused by one's own unwise behaviour  
My brother often gets into **scrapes** in school because he is so naughty.
51. **Whisper** – to speak very quietly, using the breath, but not the voice, so that only person close to you can hear  
Hafiz leaned over and **whispered** something in his wife's ear.
52. **Addressed** – spoke to  
The Principal **addressed** all the students at the school assembly.

53. **Clamour** – a loud and confused noise, specially of people shouting  
The children in my class **clamoured** for a holiday the day after the exams were over.
54. **Puzzled** – confused because you do not understand something  
I am still **puzzled** as to why my father got angry so suddenly.
55. **Behaviour** – the way that someone acts or behaves  
The children were on their best **behaviour** when the Inspector visited the school.
56. **Mystery** – something strange or not known that has not been explained or understood.  
It is still a **mystery** how stone temples and pyramids were built in ancient times.
57. **Solemn** – serious and without any humour  
Everyone looked very **solemn** at the funeral.
58. **Earshot** – the distance within which a sound can be heard  
I waited till my brother was out of **earshot**, and then complained to my mother about his bad behavior.
59. **Ascetic** – a simple and strict life, usually because of religious belief  
The Swami lived a very **ascetic** life up in the mountains, away from all human contact.
60. **Postponed** – delayed an event to a later date  
My trip to Mumbai got **postponed** because I fell ill the day before I was supposed to travel.
61. **Criminal** – someone who breaks the law, commits a crime  
The men locked up in the city jail are dangerous **criminals**.
62. **Disguised** – changed one's appearance in order to conceal one's identity  
The criminal **disguised** himself as a policeman and escaped from jail.
63. **Promptly** – to make something happen quickly  
My friend **promptly** answered my parents' questions about our plans for our trip to Agra.
64. **Panicked** – suddenly feeling great fear or desperation  
The crowd **panicked** and started running away when the police arrived.

65. **Confusion** – a situation in which people do not understand what is happening, what they should do, who someone, or what something is  
There is some **confusion** about the exact date of the exam.
66. **Mourned** – feel or express great sadness specially over someone's death  
The country **mourned** the death of their beloved Prime Minister.
67. **Discussed** – talked or wrote about a subject in detail  
The entire family **discussed** what should be done when the landlord asked them to vacate the flat.
68. **Unnoticed** – without being seen  
We managed to leave the party **unnoticed** and hurried back home.
69. **Persuade** – to make someone do or believe something by advising or urging  
I **persuaded** my friend to come over and play badminton with me.
70. **Condition** – an arrangement that must exist before something else can happen  
I will help you with your project on the **condition** that you will clean up your room.

### 3. Questions

1. **What are the two strange things the guru and his disciple find in the Kingdom of fools?**
2. **Why does the disciple decide to stay in the Kingdom of Fools? Is it a good idea?**
3. **Name all the people who are tried in the king's court and give reasons for their trial.**
4. **Who is the real culprit according to the king? Why does he escape punishment?**
5. **What are the guru's words of wisdom? When does the disciple remember them?**
6. **How does the guru manage to save his disciple's life?**

#### 4. Talk About It

In Shakespeare's plays the fool is not really foolish. If you have read or seen Shakespeare's plays such as *King Lear*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, you may talk about the role of the fool.

Do you know any stories in your language about wise fools, such as Tenali Rama or Gopal Bhar? You can also read about them in Ramanujan's collection of folk tales.

#### 5. Suggested Reading

- *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb
- *Folk Tales from India: A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-two Languages* Selected and Edited by A.K. Ramanujan
- *Classic Folk Tales from Around the World* Edited by Robert Nye