

The Empty Pot

Long ago, there was an old king. He didn't have a son or daughter. There was nobody to take his place after he died.

So, he made a plan to find a young person to be the future king or queen.

One day in April, he invited children from the village to his garden. He gave each child one seed. He told them to grow a flower. The person with the best flower would be the future leader.

One boy was happy. Ping loved to grow things. He thought he could grow the best flower.

He went home and planted the seed. Every week, he gave it the right amount of water and sunshine.

For weeks, nothing happened.

He showed his father the empty pot. Ping said he didn't want to meet the king. His father said, "No my son, go to the king and tell him you worked hard."

The next day, the king's garden was filled with kids. Ping looked around. Everyone had a beautiful flower, except him.

The king studied the plants, but didn't smile. Then he saw Ping. He walked over and asked him, "Why is there nothing inside your pot?"

Ping said, "The seed wouldn't grow."

The king smiled. He raised his arm and spoke with a kind voice, "Thank you all, but I do not know how you were able to grow these things. I gave you a bad seed. It wasn't possible to grow anything. This boy has an empty pot. He is honest. He will be the next king."

The Elephant and Blind People

Long ago, some students were having a heated discussion about god, religion and truth. Nobody could agree on anything. Each person thought their idea was right and the others were wrong.

Like many discussions about religion, few people were interested in listening to others. Instead, each person wanted to be heard. Soon the discussion became a shouting match.

Finally, one person suggested an idea. She said, "Let's talk to the old professor. He is very wise. Perhaps he can settle this argument and tell us what god is."

Everyone agreed and they walked to the teacher's house.

The old teacher welcomed the students into his home and listened to their questions. After careful consideration, he made a rather strange request. He asked the group to go outside, find a large elephant and three blind people and then bring them back to his home.

The group was a little confused, but they did as the old teacher asked.

The following day, the elephant and three blind people were standing in the front yard of his home. The old teacher asked the blind people to do one thing: find out what the elephant looked like.

Each person touched one part of the elephant and made a statement.

The first person touched the leg and said, "I know what it is. It's a tree."

The second person felt the tail and said with confidence, "No, you're wrong. It's a long piece of string."

The third person put her hand on the animal's stomach and declared, "I'm certain that all of you are wrong. I know what it is. It's a wall."

The old teacher listened and then spoke. "Each person believes they know the truth, yet everyone has a different description of the elephant. Who has the correct answer?"

The Stone Cutter

Long ago, an old man worked as a stone cutter. He cut large rocks into small pieces and sold them in the market.

Life was difficult and the old man wasn't happy. He wanted something different. He sought power. The spirit in the mountain heard his wish and decided to help him.

One early morning, the old man went to the forest in search of the most powerful thing in the land.

He looked up at the sun. "Nothing could be stronger than the sun! All life depends on its energy. I wish I were the sun" he said to himself.

The mountain spirit heard the old man and changed him into the sun. For several days, he was happy. His light traveled around the world.

Then a cloud appeared in the sky. It blocked the sun's light and made the land dark. The sun, he learned, wasn't so powerful.

"Nothing is stronger than a cloud! I wish I were a cloud" he shouted.

The mountain spirit listened to his cry and changed him into a cloud. He was the largest cloud in the sky. He made storms and he was content.

Then he saw a rock. He tried to move it with heavy rain and strong winds, but failed.

"Nothing is stronger than a rock! I wish I were a rock" he said.

The mountain spirit heard the old man's voice and turned him into a huge rock. The old man was pleased. He rested on the mountain side thinking his great size made him powerful.

Some months later, a young stone cutter climbed the mountain. He approached the rock, opened his bag and took out some tools.

Suddenly, the old man heard a noise. He felt his body changing.

He soon realized the stone cutter was more powerful than a rock.

The Tea Cup

Long ago, there was a great teacher. He was famous in all the nearby villages for his wise instructions and gentle teaching methods.

Many people came to visit him. They wanted to learn. They were seeking answers to important questions.

The great teacher was also kind and generous. He talked to almost everyone who visited his home.

One late afternoon on a cool fall day, a stranger came to the teacher's house. He was a rich and powerful man. He wore expensive clothes made from the finest material. He told the monk that he wanted to be wise. He wanted to learn. He wanted the teacher to open his mind.

The man did not speak like a student in search of knowledge. His words and tone sounded like a person who enjoyed commanding other people.

The great teacher welcomed the man into his home. He suggested they drink tea together. The two men sat on the floor. A few minutes later, a young monk brought in a pot of warm green tea and two small cups.

The teacher picked up the pot and poured tea into the man's cup. He poured and poured and poured some more. He didn't stop. Eventually, the tea flowed out of the cup and onto the table. Some of the tea landed on the man's fancy clothes.

The man was surprised and angered by the teacher's unusual behavior. He asked, "What are you doing? Stop pouring. Can't you see the cup is full?"

The great teacher stopped pouring. He turned his head, looked at the man and said, "Your mind is like this cup. Nothing new can be added because it is so full of opinions. Come back to me when your mind is empty."