Right-Mind and Wrong-Mind

From the Panchatantra
Translated by Arthur William Ryder

In a certain city lived two friends, sons of merchants, and their names were Right-Mind and Wrong-Mind. These two traveled to another country far away in order to earn money. There the one named Right-Mind, as a consequence of favoring fortune, found a pot containing a thousand dinars, which had been hidden long before by a holy man. He debated the matter with Wrong-Mind, and they decided to go home, since their object was attained. So they returned together.

When they drew near their native city, Right-Mind said: “My good friend, a half of this falls to your share. Pray take it, so that, now that we are at home, we may cut a brilliant figure before our friends and those less friendly.”

But Wrong-Mind, with a sneaking thought of his own advantage, said to the other: “My good friend, so long as we two hold this treasure in common, so long will our virtuous friendship suffer no interruption. Let us each take a hundred dinars and go to our homes after burying the remainder. The decrease or increase of this treasure will serve as a test of our virtue.”

Now Right-Mind, in the nobility of his nature, did not comprehend the hidden duplicity of his friend, and agreed to the proposal. Each then took a certain sum of money. They carefully hid the residue in the ground, and made their entrance into the city.

Before long, Wrong-Mind exhausted his preliminary portion because he practiced the vice of unwise expenditure and because his predetermined fate offered vulnerable points. He therefore made a second division with Right-Mind, each taking a second hundred. Within a year this, too, had slipped in the same way through Wrong-Mind’s fingers. As a result, his thoughts took this form: “Suppose I divide another two hundred with him, then what good of the remainder, a paltry four hundred, even if I steal it? I think I prefer to steal a round six hundred.” After this meditation, he went alone removed the treasure, and leveled the ground.

A mere month later he took the initiative, going to Right-Mind and saying: “My good friend, let us divide the rest of the money equally.” So he and Right-Mind visited the spot and began to dig. When the excavation failed to reveal any treasure, that impudent Wrong-Mind first of all smote his own head with the empty pot, then shouted: “What because of that good lucre? Surely, Right-Mind, you must have stolen it. Give me my half. If you don’t, I will bring you into court.”

“Be silent, villian!” said the other. “My name is Right-Mind. Such thefts are not in my line. You know the verse:

A man right-minded sees but trash,
Mere clods of earth, in other’s cash;
A mother in his neighbor’s wife;
In all that lives, his own dear life.
So together they carried their dispute to court and related the theft of the money. And when the magistrates learned the facts, they declared an ordeal for each. But Wrong-Mind said: “Come! The judgment is not proper. For the legal dictum runs:

Best evidence is written word;
Next, witnesses who saw and heard;
Then only let ordeals prevail
When witnesses completely fail.

In the present case, I have a witness, the goddess of the wood. She will reveal to you which one of us is guilty, which not guilty.” And they replied: “You are quite right, sir. For there is a further saying:

To meanest witnesses, ordeals
Should never be preferred;
Of course much less, if you possess
A forest goddess’ word.

Now we also feel a great interest in the case. You two must accompany us tomorrow morning to that part of the forest.” With this they accepted bail from each and sent them home.

Then Wrong-Mind went home and asked his father’s help. “Father dear,” said he, “the dinars are in my hand. They only require one little word from you. This very night I am going to hide you out of sight in a hole in the mimosa tree that grows near the spot where I dug out the treasure before. In the morning you must be my witness in the presence of the magistrate.”

“Oh, my son,” said the father. “We are both lost. This is no kind of scheme. There is wisdom in the old story:

The good and bad of given schemes
Wise thought must first reveal;
The stupid heron saw his chicks
Provide a mongoose meal.”

“How was that?” asked Wrong-Mind. And his father told the story of

**A Remedy Worse Than the Disease**

A flock of herons once had their nests in a fig tree in a part of the forest. In a hole in the tree lived a black snake who made a practice of eating the heron chicks before their wings sprouted.

At last one heron, in utter woe at seeing the young ones eaten by a snake, went to the shore of the pond, shed a flood of tears, and stood with downcast face. And a crab who noticed him in this attitude said: “Uncle, why are you so tearful today?” “My good friend,” said the heron, “what am I to do? Fate is against me. My babies and the youngsters belonging to my relatives have been eaten by a snake that lives in a hole in the fig tree. Grieved at their grief, I weep. Tell me, is there any possible device for killing him?”
On hearing this, the crab reflected: “After all, he is a natural-born enemy of my race. I will give him such advice – a kind of true lie – that other herons may also perish. For the proverb says:

Let your speech like butter be;
Steel your heart remorselessly;
Stir an enemy to action
That destroys him with his faction.”

And he said aloud: “Uncle, conditions being as they are, scatter bits of fish all the way from the mongoose burrow to the snake’s hole. The mongoose will follow that trail and will destroy the villainous snake.”

When this had been done, the mongoose followed the bits of fish, killed the villainous snake, and also ate at his leisure all the herons who made their home in the tree.

“And that is why I say:
The good and bad of given schemes . . .
And the rest of it.”

But Wrong-Mind disdained the parental warning, and during the night he hid his father out of sight in the hole in the tree. When morning came, the scamp took a bath, put on clean garments, and followed Right-Mind and the magistrates to the mimosa tree, where he cried in piercing tones:

“Earth, heaven, and death the feeling mind,
Sun, moon, and water, fire and wind,
Both twilights, justice, day and night
Discern man’s conduct, wrong or right.

“O blessed goddess of the wood, which of us two is the thief? Speak.”

Then Wrong-Mind’s father spoke from his hole in the mimosa: “Gentlemen, Right-Mind took that money.” And when all the king’s men heard this statement, their eyes blossomed with astonishment, and they searched their minds to discover the appropriate legal penalty for stealing money, in order to visit it on Right-Mind.

Meanwhile, Right-Mind heaped flammable matter about the hole in the mimosa and set fire to it. As the mimosa burned, Wrong-Mind’s father issued from the hold with a pitiful wail, his body scorched and his eyes popping out. And they all asked: “Why sir! What does this mean?”

“It is all Wrong-Mind’s doing,” he replied. Whereupon the king’s men hanged Wrong-Mind to a branch of the mimosa, while they commended Right-Mind and caused him satisfaction by conferring upon him the king’s favor and other things.

**WHAT MORAL(S) ARE TAUGHT IN THIS INDIAN FABLE?**