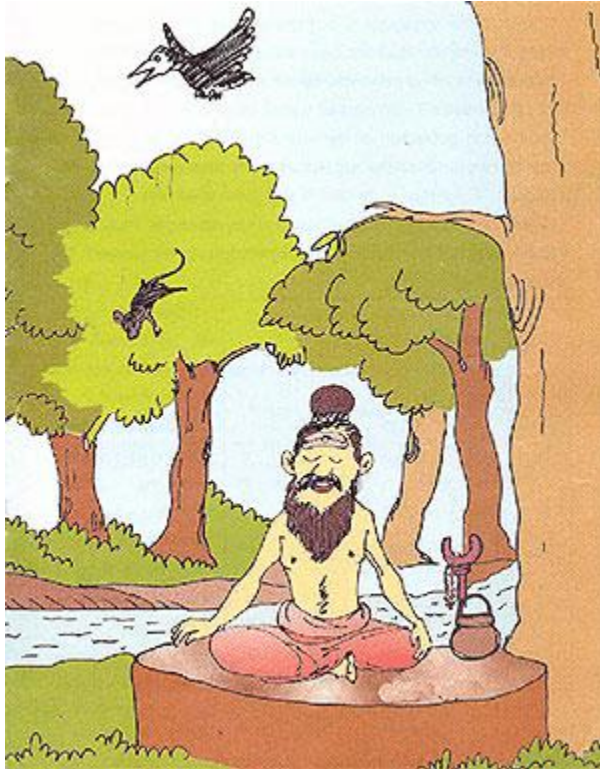


THE SAGE AND THE MOUSE

image: <http://www.kidsgen.com/stories/panchatantra/img/the-sage-and-mouse.jpg>



There lived a famous sage in a dense forest. Everyday, the animals of the forest came to him to listen to his spiritual preachings. They would gather around the meditating sage and the sage would tell them the good things of life.

There was also a little mouse living in the same forest. He too used to go to the sage daily to listen to his preachings.

One day, while he was roaming in the forest to collect berries for the sage, he was attacked by a big cat, who was watching him from behind the thick bushes.

The mouse was scared. He ran straight to the ashram of the sage. There he lay prostrate before the sage and narrated to him the whole story in a trembling voice. In the meantime, the cat also arrived there and requested the sage to allow him to take his prey.

The sage was in a fix. He thought for a moment and then with his divine powers transformed the mouse into a bigger cat.

Seeing a huge cat before him the other cat ran away.

Now the mouse was carefree. He began to roam about in the forest like a big cat. He meowed loudly to frighten other animals. He fought with other cats to take revenge on them and in this way killed many of them.

The mouse had hardly enjoyed a few carefree days of his life, when one day, a fox pounced upon him. This was a new problem. He had never taken into account that there were yet bigger animals who could easily maul him and tear him into pieces. He ran for his life,- He, somehow, saved himself from the fox and ran straight to the sage for help. The fox too was in his hot pursuit. Soon both of them stood before the sage.

The sage seeing the plight of the mouse this time, transformed the mouse into a bigger fox. Seeing a big fox before him the other fox ran away.

The mouse became more carefree and began roaming about in the forest more freely with his newly acquired status of a big fox. But, his happiness was short-lived.

One day, while he was moving around in the forest freely, a tiger pounced upon him. The mouse, somehow, managed to save his life and as usual ran to take shelter in the ashram of the sage.

The sage, once again, took pity on the mouse and transformed him into a tiger.

Now, the mouse, after acquiring the status of a tiger, roamed fearlessly in the forest. He killed many animals in the forest unnecessarily.

After having been transformed into a tiger, the mouse had become all-powerful for the forest animals. He behaved like a king and commanded his subjects. But one thing always bothered his mind and kept him worried; and that was, the divine powers of the sage. "What, if, one day for some reason or the other, the sage becomes angry with me and brings me back to my original status," he would think worriedly. Ultimately, he decided something and one day, he came to the sage roaring loudly. He said to the sage, "I'm hungry. I want to eat you, so that I could enjoy all those divine powers, which you do. Allow me to kill you."

Hearing these words the sage became very angry. Sensing tiger's evil designs, he immediately transformed the tiger back into the mouse.

The worst had happened. Now the mouse realised his folly. He apologised to the saint for his evil actions and requested him to change him again into a tiger. But the sage drove the mouse away by beating him with a stick.