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Folktales of Zambia

Edited by CHIMAN L. VYAS, P.O. Box 262, Lusaka, Zambia

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Chiman L. Vyas



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Folktales of Zambia

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RASIKBHAI

of S. J. Patel (Zambia) Ltd., Lusaka

in memory of his wife

SARALABEN

and

in the interest of Zambian culture.

TO
SHRADDHA
PATHIK
DIPTI
RASHMIKANT
MAYA
KALPANA
RAJESH
ASHOK
and
their folk
who
never get tired of hearing tales.

PREFACE

Tales in this collection were heard and recorded in villages and then translated with the help of interpreters in Lusaka. My visits to the villages were neither smooth nor long. Many of them took place at nights only. Colonial agents took me for a politician and watched me carefully. If some of them threatened me on the spot, two of them asked my Department of Education to warn me not to enter villages and mix with the people. One District Commissioner boxed me in my right ear when he saw me talking to the Lunda people in Mwinilunga.

The original texts were lost to the police in one of the political incidents I was obliged to suffer during Zambia's struggle for independence, but the stray translation was taken for my teaching notes and left behind. This I was able to put in order with the help of Alick Nkhata and Peter Frankeil. When I came in contact with Mr. M. Yeta, the Director of the Department of Cultural Services, I was greatly encouraged to prepare the manuscript for publication. When my overseas cultural tour was sponsored by his Department, some of the tales entertained the peoples in Egypt, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Russia and Georgia in 1967. In 1968, they were warmly received by the people in Gujarat State, India also. The first story in the book won a first prize in the Barclays Banks Folktale Competition in 1968.

I agree with Ella E. Clark who has said, "A tale that is delightful when heard, lacks life when put on paper, for the dramatic quality of the storyteller is lost." If the art of storytelling, which is still found in its full form, is encouraged in Zambia, I believe the result would be amazing and the traditional lore will not be lost. Such an experiment is successful in Saurashtra, Gujarat State, India.

5, Gandhi Road, Lusaka.

November 2, 1969.

Chiman L. Vyas.

FOREWORD

Brother Kalindawalo and you Sichivumo, you are old enough to tell us the folktales of our old mothers. You should also tell us the old hunting stories of our forefathers because in Zambia and indeed the whole of Africa we have never run short of folktales, stories and songs. I know you are old enough to know all these because our cultural knowledge has been passed from generation to generation like our lovely waters of Musi-o-tunya that never stop to flow—thus singing the songs of continuation and never to stop.

Alas, we cannot stop also to listen to the tales of Kalindawalo and Sichivumo because they are giving us the fertilizer of our culture and the security of our true citizenship. Keep on telling me, Sichivumo, you are the angel of our dear past and you will make us see the good past and march into the future with pride because we shall ourselves be the true Zambians.

All minds are weak and useless until they are well trained to serve mankind.

As this timely book suggests, may I look forward to see that brother Vyas identifies himself with both Kalindawalo and Sichivumo and collects more wisdom, nothing less than that, and brings more challenge to the educated Zambians.

22nd February, 1969.

Lusaka.

S. M. Kapwepwe.

LUNDA MYTH OF CREATION AND DEATH

Nzambi is the God and Creator of the Alunda living in the Mwinilunga District of North-Western Province in Zambia.

In the twilight of antiquity, Nzambi slid down to earth on a rainbow. He landed on the bank of the Katubang'ony (a river in the Congo Kinshasa, not far from Mwachiamvu's village) in the Kato (bush). He found the place a pleasant spot. To add to the scene, Nzambi created trees, animals, birds, etc. Having not satisfied with what he had done, Nzambi created, as a crown of his work, the first pair of a man and a woman. It is said that there are still the footmarks of these human beings, the spoor of a dog, the spoor of a bush pig and the traces of man's early hunting activities, on a rock near the river.

Having not contented with this creation, he blessed the first-born couple: "Sumbukeni, semenu anyana (Marry, and have children)" They married and gave birth to children. Now Nzambi rejoiced seeing his own blood moving around. In the beginning they all lived together. They also walked in njilu yimu (the same path). In due course they became many, more than they could be accommodated in one place. Multiplication was followed by multiplication. To solve the problem of habitation, the elders decided to go forth in search of land where they could live peacefully. Yet the struggle of existence went from bad to worse. Fights broke within their own folk. Therefore, the first-born ancestors prayed to Nzambi.

They said, "You Nzambi, our creator, with what would you be pleased to solve the problem? Pray, tell us. Nothing is more valuable than the fulfilment of your wish."

Nzambi realised that he had made a blunder by giving his blessings, to hear children. He accepted the prayer and told them: "Now I am laying down a restriction on you all. From now onwards," he warned, "if you sleep while the moon strolls in the sky, the penalty for doing so will be death to you. This will come to you any time, not necessarily the very night.

This means I shall call back the akashi (spirits) I have placed in your bodies. This shall apply to all. So err not to sleep in moonlight or prepare to die."

The couple returned to spread the message of the Creator. They thought that some of them would die and give place to the new comers on earth. But the children of Nzambi proved a match for him. No doubt, they feared the death. Nonetheless, they became alert and active not to let the death rejoice. They did not sleep at night. They hunted for the whole night and rested the whole day. No one died for some time.

Now it happened like this. An old 'Adam' began to lose sight. He began to fail to see the moon at night. However, the young people kept him well-informed about it and this continued for a long time. Once it so happened that he was left alone by the Alunda who went to a ceremonial feast in the far away land. The moon was hiding behind the dark clouds heavy with rain that night. So he thought it was still day. And he slept. He slept for ever. He became prey to death.

Since then everyone has been dying in turn, some while sleeping, some while ailing and some without any cause.

NYAMBE LEAVES THE EARTH

At first, Nyambe the Creator of the world, lived on earth with his wife Nasileli, the Goddess. There was nothing on earth at that time. There was only land surrounded by water. After some time, walking alone, singing alone, eating alone and living alone, Nasileli grew tired of loneliness.

One day, she asked Nyambe: "Make the earth full of bright and beautiful things. People it with men and women like us and with variety of living things and make me happy or I shall weep and be sorry."

Nyambe loved her so much that the very idea of her being sad with tears in her eyes made him uneasy. So he got busy creating things that might please her. First he made trees. Then he made animals and birds, and in between he made fish and reptiles.

"This," cried Nasileli, "is a very clever creation!"

"Now, what else shall please you?" Asked her husband.

"Now, some companions of both the sexes," she said.

"I will do any difficult thing that will please you, but think twice before you insist on me to create human beings. Once that creation is done our days will be full of woe and worry."

Nashileli started to weep. Nyambe could not stand the sight. He thought and considered the shapes and sizes of human beings, though he was not willing to do so. Then he made a man and named him Kamunu. This man was as clever as the God himself. Whatsoever Nyambe did, Kamunu did without any mistake. If Nyambe carved a spoon from a log, he did exactly the same. If the god smelted iron, Kamunu was not lagging behind. When he saw his creator erecting a hut, he also erected it of the same size and shape. At this, rejoiced Nashileli, but not Nyambe who was afraid that the temptation of imitating his creator will make Kamunu a strong opponent.

And he was not wrong in his thinking about Kamunu. One day, he envilled a sharp-pointed iron rod and threw it at a hare. The hare was killed. Kamunu ate it with taste. The following morning, he speared lechwe and enjoyed its flesh and then narrated his valour before Nyambe and Nashileli.

Nashileli showed her approval with her maddening eyes, but Nyambe became angry on hearing the story. "You have killed and eaten your brothers, the children of your parents," he said. "So you are asked to be away, out of sight, from your parents."

Kamunu felt insulted and left them soon. He went to the far off land. There he found himself helpless. He gathered that he was unable to do anything on his own. He was growing clever simply by imitating Nyambe. Therefore, he returned to Nyambe and apologised for his past deeds. He was not allowed to apologise before Nyambe whose anger had not yet calmed down. therefore, he did so before Nyambe's messenger. The messenger first went to Nashileli who in turn persuaded Nyambe to forgive Kamunu. Nyambe then sympathised with him and permitted him to make a garden in the vicinity to earn his living. Mealies grew tall and fine in Kamunu's garden. When the crop was nearing to harvest, an eland entered the garden and ate away all the grain. Kamunu got angry at this. He chased the eland. He killed it and ate it.

Nyambe came to know this, but this time Kamunu was justified. So he was forgiven. But Nyambe could not live at ease. He was worrying a lot about Kamunu who was creating troubles for himself by killing the children of his own parents who expected him to take their care. After few days Kamunu's dog died. He went to Nyambe and asked for medicine to make him alive.

Nyambe said, "Yes. I can give you such potence, but with one condition: If you use the potence to make alive any one whom you happen to kill."

Kamunu did not like the idea as he had made some enemies by this time. He wanted to kill them one by one. Naturally, he did not agree with the Creator and returned home thinking that he

would find another dog to tame. On his arrival he placed a pot on the fire to cook mealies. He forgot to keep the heat normal and his pot broke. He tried to join its pieces together but failed. So he went back to Nyambe, and requested him to show how to mend the pot. Nyambe did not say anything. His silence was more than a hiding for Kamunu. Disappointedly he returned home and slept hungry that night. The other day his hut fell to ground in a cyclone. He went again to Nyambe who now said angrily, "Go away from here and never come to show your face to me."

Yet he was found coming to Nyambe the very next morning. Seeing him approaching, Nyambe decided, "I must leave him here, otherwise he is not going to let me live in peace." He reported his decision to Nashileli, and then jumped into a broad river nearby, swam and reached a small island. His wife followed.

At once, Nyambe called all the creatures on the island to hear him and act in future accordingly. When they gathered he said, "Kamunu is stronger and cleverer than anyone of you. Therefore, be on your gaurd, and don't let him have any chance to kill you."

Hearing this, the weaker creatures started to run away before they would be seen by their brother Kamunu who was not treating them as his brothers and sisters. The ferocious beasts resolved to hurt him if he hurt anyone of them. Kamunu realised the situation and approached mildly. He did not offend the wild animals. He sat by the side of the parents and kept quiet. It was Nyambe who broke the silence. He said, "Kamunu, bring wood and make fire. I want to cook porridge to eat."

Kamunu obeyed hasitatingly. When the fire was in its flames and the pot was boiling, Nyambe told him; "Here is the real test for you, Kamunu. If you take the pot off the fire, using your skill, I will appoint you the Chief of the people."

Kamunu did not get puzzled. He collected some hay and soaked it in the river water. With that in his hands he took the pot off the fire without any injury to his limbs. Nyambe installed him as the Chief of all, but the action of his son made him restless, for he was afraid of Kamunu's might.

That night he could not sleep. Finding him awake at mid-night a spider appeared. "What causes you so great an agony, sire?" he asked.

Nyambe observed silence.

"Pray, tell me if you don't mind. It will be a matter of joy if I, who is born of you, would be of any use to you. I promise to help you to the best of my ability," entreated the spider.

"If at all you wish to help me, don't ask me 'why', but do what I say," said Nyambe convincingly.

"I'll do that, father," replied the spider.

"Then spin the web from earth to sky," ordered Nyambe.

This was done fairly soon. With Nashileli, Nyambe climbed the web and ascended beyond the clouds where they rested for ever.

THE SPEAR BROUGHT FIRE

In a village, there were two men who had married two sisters. Whereas one of the brothers-in-law was a blacksmith, the other was a carpenter. The blacksmith forged all sorts of weapons; axes, spears, arrows, etc.

One night a herd of elephants was heard trumpeting very near the village. So the carpenter's wife incited her husband to hunt one of the elephants. The carpenter went to the blacksmith and borrowed a spear, and went into the bush to kill an elephant. After a hard chase he managed to thrush the spear into the elephant's thigh. The elephant gave a loud yell and started to run fast with the spear in his thigh.

The carpenter followed him up to the edge of the bush, but failed to find him. Disappointed he returned home. In the morning his brother-in-law came to ask for his spear. The carpenter narrated how he lost the spear, but the blacksmith insisted to return his spear to him. The carpenter was quite prepared to buy him another spear but this did not please the blacksmith who began to make a big noise to get the same spear that he had lent.

Wearily the carpenter set off with his dog in search of the speared elephant. He travelled all day long and rested on a tree at night. In this way, he spent nine days and nine nights searching for the elephant, but not to find him. On the tenth day he happened to see some elephants. He went to them and asked:

"O! Gracious animals! Can anyone of you tell me whereabouts of the wounded one?"

One of them came forward and informed him: "That one has left the earth and gone to the under-world carrying the spear that he could not manage to take off."

"Do you know the way to that world? If so, I pray, you show it to me."

"Turn to your south, climb up and down the three hills and cross the three rivers, and you will find your way leading to the place"

The carpenter started off. He climbed the three hills and crossed the three mighty rivers and he saw the footprints of the elephant. Following the track he reached the under-world. It took forty days and forty nights to arrive at the place. Then he approached the Chief of the world. After an exchange of greetings he asked the Chief whether he had received the speared elephant.

The Chief first served him some food and water and asked him to eat and drink and wait for the reply. When he finished his eating and drinking, which he shared with his dog, the Chief said:

"Yes. There is one elephant who has brought a spear with him in his body."

"May I, then, see the spear and take it back?" asked the carpenter.

"Certainly. It is of no use to me or my people here," replied the Chief.

"Then show me the spear for which I have come a long way."

"There's no harm in doing so, but there's a difficulty in the way. I can take you to my armoury, and show you all the spears, but it is up to you to find your own. They are all mixed up. I myself am helpless. If you can distinguish one from them you may take it with pleasure," smiled the Chief.

The Chief entered the armoury. The carpenter followed him with his dog. All the spears were standing by the wall. Seeing the large number of them the carpenter was perturbed. All were of the same size. All had gone rust. It was not easy to distinguish one from others, the one that belonged to his brother-in-law. In order to hide his inability to find the spear he patted his dog. As if the dog understood his master's difficulty, he began his task. He began to smell spear after spear. In few minutes, smelling one of them, he pulled it out and threw it straight on the floor. Then he came back to his master and looked at him anxiously. He looked at him and looked at the spear. He looked at the spear and looked again at his master. The carpenter brushed his forehead with his

hands and came forward. First he bowed down before the Chief, lay himself down at his feet and said in a happy voice:

"O! Owner of the under-world! I have found the spear," saying this he picked up the spear and showed it to the Chief.

The Chief was amazed with the skill of the carpenter and his dog.

"You are a clever being," exclaimed he. "Your dog is equally clever. I must reward you for showing your skill. Ask anything you like and it will be given to you,"

The carpenter thought for a while. He recollected how difficult it was for him to find the way to the under-world, the way that was completely dark and black. He also found that there was fire burning here all day and night. But he could not ask for it.

The Chief asked him again, "Tell me, you man of another world. What should I give to you?"

At this the carpenter got bold and said, "May I have, then, some fire, if you wish?"

"Why not? Why not? I can imagine your difficulty to find way home. You may take some and keep it with you for ever to use it for you and for all of your kind," said the Chief and asked his messenger to give some of the fire to the man.

With the spear and the fire and the dog, the carpenter went home. When he arrived at the village, people could not recognize him for a while. It was only when he went to the blacksmith to return his spear they all discovered that he was their carpenter.

When he told the whole story of his exploration, of his dog and of the secret of the fire, the whole village became very delighted. Even their Chief came to greet and to welcome him back to the village. The blacksmith presented the spear to his brother-in-law and the village was made merry.

SUSPICION SPREADS

When there were animals only upon this earth, the elephant was the king of all, and the hare was his councillor. The hare was very fat; the elephant was very thin.

Once the councillor had a question: "Why is my king so thin?"

Though the question had arisen in private, the elephant heard it.

The councillor himself answered the question: "May be, because he is a king."

This was also done in private, but was heard by the elephant. He thought and thought for days. Then he told the hare: "I am thin, perhaps, because I eat leaves and grass."

"You may be right, my king," said the hare with sympathy and added: "then, there's a way out of it."

"How, my councillor! Tell me, how may I grow fat?" asked the elephant anxiously.

"I don't know myself well, but we can seek advice from our subjects."

"Yes, yes. Let it be so. Delay not. Summon the animals to a meeting and discover the cause as well as the cure,"

"That will be done, my king," said the hare and moved away.

He sent a message to all the animals. The messenger proclaimed to each of the animals he met: "There is going to be a general meeting tomorrow morning at king's place. Each one of you is required to carry with you the kind of food you eat. This will help the king to decide upon his problem."

This was heard by all including a lizard, who thought to take the message in his own way. He went on his errand.

On the way, he saw a lion to whom he said, "You, mighty animal! the king has asked me to tell you that it is not necessary for you to attend the meeting; you would better guard the kingdom. What he wants from you is a piece of your skin for some magic performance and that's why I am before you."

The lion obeyed. He clawed off some of his skin and gave it to the lizard to take it to the king.

Next he met a leopard to whom he said, "You, humble servant of the king, you need not attend the meeting, but guard the gate. What the king wants from you is some of your spots for a special use and that's why I am before you."

The leopard obeyed. He took off some of his spots, gave them to the lizard to take them to the king and lay bleeding for some time.

Then he stopped an eagle flying and gave an order: "You, the highest flier in the sky, need not attend the meeting. Simply you watch the enemies and go on flying. What the king wants is one of your feathers to use in witchcraft and that's why I am before you."

The eagle also obeyed. He pulled out a feather and gave it to the lizard to take it to the king.

After this he approached a cat. To this he said, "You, the angel of the king, you need not attend the meeting. You are free to go to the skirt of the kingdom. What the king wants is some hair of your whiskers to protect himself from the evil effects of other creatures, and that's why I am before you."

The cat also obeyed.

When the cat disappeared, he shouted at an elephant: "You, the clan of the king, you need not attend the meeting. After all, you are his folk. What the king wants from you is your tusk to give it to a two-legged being to keep him away from attacking your people ever after, and that's why I am before you."

The elephant broke his tusk and gave it to the lizard to take it to the king.

Loading himself with these articles, the lizard, then, came to the meeting and sat behind all of them.

The king authorised the hare to inspect the food the animals were accustomed to eat and to find out one that could make him fat. The hare stood up to carry out the order. While examining the food he came across the lizard. He asked him to show his food. The lizard showed what he had brought.

"Do you eat these things?" queried the councillor. "If so, it's strange! Very strange! If not, you have insulted the king and you will be dealt with for your misbehaviour".

The lizard requested the hare to hear him patiently. Then he began to say loudly:

"I bow to you all who have assembled here. You all have brought the food you eat. I also had my food with me, but on the way some creatures prayed to me to carry their food to the meeting as they declared their inability to attend the meeting in person. The load was so heavy that I had to drop my food in order to help them in this way."

Saying this, he began to show the articles one by one. First he showed the lion's skin, holding it high. Seeing this the eland got frightened and fled away. When he showed the leopard's spots the monkeys and the antelopes got on their legs. Seeing the eagle's feather all the fowls disappeared. When he held the cat's whiskers up, the doves and mice made way quickly. Lastly, he showed the tusk to the remaining audience and the king himself left the place. On the way he first saw the lion. To him he said, "I appoint you the king of the forest from today to take over my duties."

Thus, the meeting broke away, but the fear got grip on the animals. Since then they have remained on their guard against their suspected enemies. The eland tries to keep away from the lion, the antelopes and the monkeys from the leopard, the fowls from the eagle, the doves together with the mice from the cat, and so on.

As for the elephant, because he left the worrying responsibility of kingship he grew fat. Nonetheless, he has been trying to keep away from the hunters who make their livelihood by killing him to get more money for the tusks.

WHY ZEBRA REMAINED HORNLESS

One day all the animals wearily got together. They wanted to find out an intelligent way to defend themselves against flesh-eaters.

The sable said, "We must have long and curved nails on our toes to save us from becoming prey to lions and leopards."

The oribi seconded the sable.

The buffalo argued: "Would it not be better to have some defensive organ little above our hind legs?"

The gnu, the kudu and the lechwe supported the buffalo.

The puku, warthog and the buck said, "We should better have our body as thick as that of a tortoise."

The eland and the antelope were of the opinion that their tails should be like those of the crocodiles.

Hearing all the views, the elephant rose to reflect on what was he thinking about: "Well. We have heard enough, but there seems one or another difficulty in accepting one or another proposal. In my opinion, to have nails on our toes would not be as advantageous as we think. Defensive organs above the hind legs cannot save us from an attack coming from opposite direction. And my experience says that thick skin cannot protect the grass-eaters. At least it has not protected me and the rhinoceros. Therefore, if you don't mind, I have an idea. May I put it to you?"

"Yes! Yes! Say and solve our problem if you can," cried all.

"Then hear me. I feel that we should have some protective organs over, under or around our head, where they suit well to each of us. Then we can defend ourselves against any attack from any direction."

At the end, they resolved that the elephant should approach Leza and put their case before him. The elephant went to God and explained to him how easily they were becoming prey of mighty animals. Leza heard the request, considered it carefully and granted the wish.

He said, "Tomorrow, at noon, you shall have variety of things you want. Apply where you want so that the new organs may add to your beauty as well."

Hearing the message of Leza the animals waited eagerly for the fixed time.

Right at noon of the day, almost all the animals rushed to the fixed place where Leza had promised to leave the gifts for them.

On the way some of them saw the zebra grazing. "Where are you all going fast?" asked the zebra.

"To the place where Leza is to leave defensive organs for all of us. Don't you want to equip yourself?" retorted the duiker.

The zebra did not pay attention to it and continued grazing. The animals went to the place. There they found hard pointed things of various shapes and sizes. They were horns. All began to select the size and shape they liked and to stick them where they suited them. The elephant stood there watching and helping others in their selection. They all changed their appearance. At last, there were two tusky things left. The elephant stuck them in his temples.

One after another the animals returned rejoicing at what they got. Seeing them happy the zebra ran towards the place. What did he find there? There were a drooping lip, and a striped skin. As soon as Leza found him hurriedly putting on the lip and the stripes, he cursed, "You glutton! You deserve to be hornless."

TINY TITI'S CLEVER TRICK

It was a very bad day for animals who did not eat flesh. The hunting lion had killed many of their friends. So they had nothing in their minds but fear. They were thinking hard how to live without fear of the lion and other beasts of his kind, but they were unable to find any solution to the problem.

Tiny Titi-bird heard about their trouble.

"Shall I bury your worry?" asked Titi.

"How can you? None of us, tall and strong animals, is able to get rid of the lion. Who are you in comparison with us?" the buffalo asked unkindly.

"What harm can you see in letting me try?" said Titi.

"Troublesome fellows like you can easily double the trouble. And how can you help us by making more?" the giraffe said thoughtfully.

"So it is better if you keep quiet, Titi! Let us find a way to put an end to the trouble," warned the eland.

"This is the last time that I shall ask you to let me help you. Have you any objection if I try to overcome the lion in my own way while you decide on the issue?" This was the final word from Titi.

"All right. Do what you can, but see that you don't push a spear into the wound made by an arrow," said the wise elephant, and he gave Titi permission on behalf of all the animals.

No one protested at this idea. With a happy heart Titi flew up over them and away into the sky.

The animals remained standing where they were; none of them knew what to do.

As soon as she saw the lion, Titi flew down. Drawing his attention she sat on a branch of a tree. Then she spoke to the lion: "I greet you, lion, as the king of the forest but scorn you because you are unable to catch any bird, let alone me."

These words made the lion angry. He had been killing all kinds of big animals and feeding on them, but he had never, at any

time, thought of catching a bird. What reason was there to catch a bird? Yet today this was pointed out to him as his weakness. So he decided to try. And what reason was there to search for another bird when Titi was right there in front of him?

"Suppose I catch you and eat you, Titi?" asked the lion.

"I'll speak to you from your stomach, you proud lion!" sang Titi.

"How is it possible for such a tiny bird to speak to me after getting into my stomach, well chewed?" the lion asked himself. "I have fed on big animals and human beings very often. None of them has ever spoken to me from my stomach. Nothing of this kind has ever happened to me."

Still Titi went on singing, "Titi tit! I will speak to you! I will speak to you!" And while she was singing this, she began to fly round and round over the lion's head.

The lion could not bear her making fun of him. He got angry. Raising his paw just a very little from the ground he caught Titi and said, "Now, I have caught you, that is certain. I shall put you into my mouth and chew and chew and chew. Then I shall eat you and eat you and eat you bit by bit and see how you speak to me."

As soon as he had said these words the lion opened his mouth wide and placed Titi in it. This was easy for him, but just as he placed Titi in his mouth, she bit his tongue so sharply that it made him breathe very deeply. This action of the lion pushed Titi well down into his stomach.

Then the lion thought that the Titi bird would no more make fun of him. With happiness he began to sing;

"I caught the bird easily,
I did not chew her,
But she is in my stomach.
Small and big,
All creatures I kill."

Singing and dancing he began to wander in the forest. When he came near a herd of buffalo, Titi warned them from inside the lion's stomach:

"Run away all, you animals! The lion wants to eat one of you."

When they heard Titi's warning the buffaloes fled away. The lion also heard Titi speaking but, although he looked around, he couldn't see her anywhere. The lion went on his way singing:

"I caught the bird easily,
I did not chew her,
But she's in my stomach.
Small and big,
All creatures I kill."

When he approached a herd of elands, Titi warned them from inside his stomach:

"Run away all, you animals! The lion wants to eat one of you."

The elands fled away out of sight of the lion who now wanted to catch Titi but he could not see her anywhere around.

In this way Titi saved duikers, impalas, kudus, bucks and many other animals and the lion was still hungry. For days and days he remained without food. He began to grow thin and weak and at last he died because of his pride. When he was dying Titi came out of his stomach and out of his mouth; then she started to fly from tree to tree, from herd to herd, from animal to animal telling the news of the lion's fate.

All the animals were very happy to hear the news. They gathered together to hold a special meeting, and it was resolved that tiny Titi bird should be respected by all four-footed animals. To show their respect they decided she should be allowed to ride freely on the back of anyone of them whenever she wished.

THE FISH WIFE

There was a girl. She was very ugly. She was very small-size. She would neither hoe nor cook. She did not know how to put on clothes even. She had no parents. She had no relatives either. She had no home, no cattle.

So no young man married her. One day she started to weep for her hard luck. A diviner pitied her. He took her to his hut. He introduced her to his wife, a well-known witch-doctor. Both the husband and wife planned to help her to live a married life.

"Do not weep", said the diviner. "I can help you".

"Hear me well", said the witch-doctor. "I want to help you".

The girl stopped weeping. When she stopped sobbing, the diviner said, "If you want to marry, first of all you should build a hut to live. Then you should make a garden."

"If you do this," said the witch-doctor, "I shall help you to get a nice husband."

So the girl learnt to build a hut. Near her home she made a garden too. Then she came to the diviner and asked for a young man to marry.

Now it was witch-doctor's turn. She instructed the girl in fish-catching and trap-making. When she learnt the skill well the witch-doctor advised her to be ready to receive the husband.

"Go to the river, you girl! Set your trap and wait for the catch. As soon as you catch a fish, make sure that it is a male. When this is so, put him in a pot half-filled with water and bring him home. When this is done the rest you leave to me," said the witch doctor.

The girl knitted a trap and went fishing. First she caught a female fish which she cooked and ate away. When she caught a male she put him in a big, long, broad pot and carried home. Then she called the witch-doctor who spoke some magic words, placed some medicine into the pot and covered it with a cloth. Then she advised the girl not to open it before dawn.

The girl, out of eagerness, could not sleep at night. Early morning she knocked at the door of the doctor. After a while both came where the pot was. Before the doctor opened the pot she asked the girl:

"Promise me not to eat monkey's fruit. If you eat it under any circumstances, your husband will turn into fish, not to be man again."

The girl, mad to marry, was ready to agree to do anything, whereas this was no difficult thing. She at once promised.

No sooner was the pot uncovered than there seemed a man as small as the fish. "This also shall make me happy," said the girl. Then she married him and became his wife. "Now I am proud to be a wife," she told the people.

The couple began to live happily. The girl hoed and fished and the fish-man gathered monkey's fruit for food. No other food suited the man.

One year there was a great famine. Nothing grew in the garden. Fish also grew very scarce for want of water in the river. For many days the fish-wife had to live hungry, but not the fish-man. He was able to manage to gather at least a couple of monkey's fruit every day.

One afternoon the man brought some monkey's fruit and placed them in the hut and came out to rest in the open. The fish-wife was so hungry that she ate some of the fruit. While she was hiding the skin of the fruit, the fish-man entered. After he made sure that his wife had cheated him, he turned back and started to run river-wards. The woman followed him entreating, "I will never do it again, never do it again, never do it again!"

This was in vain. The fish-man jumped into the little water of the river, changed himself into the fish and was no more seen. However, the fish-wife hoping against hope, sat down on the bank of the river and never came home again.

PLIGHT OF MIGHT

"Kambi kusuwa (on a certain day)" said a story-teller, "a lion grew furious." This is the tale of that furious lion.

He started to kill the game one by one, day and night. In a few days there spread a great scarcity of beasts. Mostly the lion alone was seen in the forest. To prey was hardly possible now. To satiate his hunger he thought of raiding the villages. He began to rush to the people who were scared of his roaring. They tried, in the beginning, to defend themselves. They came out with sticks, spears and arrows and bows. They made a big cry. In one of such battles their Chief was killed by the lion who feasted on his body. It was not that the lion was totally safe. He was wounded badly in several fights. So he stayed for many days in his den, but as soon as he recovered from the pain he began to come to the villages as usual.

In one of the villages, the Chief's son called all the young men of his age and told them to take revenge on the lion. In the presence of the old he promised the youth: "He who kills the lion shall marry my beautiful sister." Being encouraged with these words, the young men of the village put their might and main at stake to win the favour of the Chief.

Of all the young villagers, whoever tried to kill the lion were killed by the lion. Luck was against them. The lion proudly began to tell the story of his strength to hyena. Hyena in turn began to spread the story all over the forest. A hare happened to hear it one day.

The hare went to the sable and said, "Can you help me, my friend?"

"I shall try if it is not to face the lion," replied the sable.

"There is no question of facing the lion. There's a way how to pull out such a thorn from the forest. I want you to be of some use in this matter."

"Then I am with you," responded the sable.

"Well done," enlightened the hare. "That's what I expected of you."

"What shall we do then?" asked the sable in turn excitedly.

"You simply go to the village and make sure whether the offer announced by the prince is in fact an offer or not. For the rest you don't worry," the hare expressed his confidence in himself.

The sable went to the skirt of the village and waited for the chance to hear people talking.

"I don't think we will ever be able to place our people out of danger of the lion," heard the sable. "The prince has wisely placed the crooked matter straight by offering his sister to the emancipator from the lion." The young men of the village were talking suspiciously among themselves.

The sable ran to report this to the hare. Having convinced of the stake, the hare took a trap that never caught the lion before and set off to the den of the lion. As the lion was out hunting, he began to wander with caution and care in the forest. At noon he saw the lion resting. He approached the lion and greeted him humbly and said, "May I make fire for you, O king of the forest?"

"What makes you say so?" roared the lion.

"I know, sire, that you are hungry for some days. I also know that you have seen me. I, again, know that you are bound to chase me to death to eat me. I know still further that at the end you will succeed to kill me. So I have decided not to run away from you. If I do that you shall have to chase me with no food in your tummy. Eventually, my life will be my death. Then why should I not do a good turn to you before I become a dead body?" the hare stated.

"Don't talk much," interrupted the lion. "Tell me, how will the fire make the matter easy?"

"It's not to make anything easy at first, but everything will be easy after you finish with my existence."

"I don't understand your wisdom."

"That is always the case with great people. They don't understand small things. Let me make the point clear. Before you kill me

let us light fire. When I am dead you roast my flesh on the fire and see how tasteful it is. You have eaten raw flesh throughout your life. Can't you try the roasted meat? Once you try, you will want to roast the meat every time. This is certain."

The lion thought to himself: "There's no harm in trying that," and murmured to the hare, "all right. Make the fire and please yourself."

"Then help me to collect fuel and sticks to rub to make the fire," requested the hare.

Both of them went together and collected the wood. They found the sticks too. Before the hare started to rub the sticks to make fire he told the lion to hold his trap high.

"Why? Leave it on the earth," retorted the lion.

"That's another thing that you don't understand. This is a magic trap. Have you not seen that all this day I have never placed it on the earth? The magic, you see?"

"What is the magic about the trap?" The lion expressed his curiosity.

"If a small creature goes into it, even by chance, you cannot lift it up; if a very heavy-weight person enters it you can easily do so. When it is my good luck to die at your paw, why should I not do another turn to you? I want to leave this trap for you to use in future. When you kill a heavy prey you will be able to easily carry it to your den. This is what I wished to make clear to you." The hare explained the position.

"Is that so? Then leave the fire-making aside and get into the trap. First I want to try your magic. Remember, if you prove wrong I'll crush you to death and eat you raw at the very moment," commanded the lion.

Soon the hare entered the trap. The lion tried to raise the trap above the earth, but he could not. There was a trick. Through the gaps between the knots of the trap the hare had got hold of the strongest root of the tree where the trick was being tried. He had stuck to the root so fast that the lion was unable to lift the trap even a bit high.

On coming out of the trap, the hare said smilingly, "But I can lift you above my shoulders if you wish to try."

"It will be a great fun! Will you mind to come to my den and perform the magic in the presence of my wife and two cubs?" The lion expressed his desire.

"I will not mind at all. After all you are the king of the forest. How can a creature like me disobey you? I will do as you wish. Not only that but I may lift the whole of your family at a time, if you wish," said the hare and smiled sarcastically.

"That's right. That will be a greater fun. Let it be so."

Upon these words they set off, all the way talking amusingly. On their arrival, without waiting for a moment, the lion asked his family to enter the trap, and enjoy the trick with him.

After they all four were in the trap the hare politely requested the family not to be in a hurry. "Let me tie the trap from its mouth very fast lest it might cause you injury somehow. I don't want that blame on me." With these words he tied the trap as he wished. Then he tied the last end of the string to the trunk of a tree that was near the den.

"Why do you delay?" asked the lion. "We are losing some of the pleasure of the fun. Lift us high now and now."

"I have perspired so much that I feel thirsty. After all, to tie you altogether in one trap was not within my energy. So just a moment and I'll be back after drinking some water from the stream," said the hare and started off.

Where did he go? To quench his thirst? No. Not at all. He bounced to the village and asked the Chief: "If I help you in killing the lion....?"

"Then the sister of my son is yours," said the Chief in the presence of his people.

"Well, then, Come along. Come with me with spears only. Nothing else is required to kill that mighty enemy of yours and his family together," said the hare.

They followed the hare who took them to the lion family that was in the trap. In a trice the lion's family was speared to death.

Amidst much dancing and prancing and drinking, and eating the lion's flesh the Chief's daughter married the hare.

THUS FAILED THE RHINOCEROS

A family of the rhinoceros was sitting to rest after having their food. They were talking about earth and heaven. Some thought of the heaven as the happy abode whereas some liked the earth. While examining the life of animals on earth they came upon a topic of the turtle.

"Poor creature! It cannot run fast even when in danger," said one.

"Yet it's a fine little being," praised the mother.

"Isn't it easy to win in a race with him?" asked the youngest.

"May be, but he's clever too," replied the father.

"How can this be? doubted the youngest. "I am sure I can defeat him in a race."

With this pride in mind he left his parents and came to a stream where he had seen a turtle before. He had not to wait any long to find one. Seeing him the rhino said, "Turtle! How small a creature you are!"

"Yes. I am small indeed. And I am not ashamed of my size," responded the turtle.

"What? Not ashamed? If I were you I would never have spoken like you!"

"That's up to you."

"And to you?"

"To me it's no shame to be small. I am in my place; you are in yours."

"Silly creature!"

"Don't call me names. Do I swear you?"

"How can you? You are nothing before me."

"Cut the matter short, dear friend and tell me, what are you here for?"

"I want to bring you down to your sense," retorted the rhino and added, "I trust you'll be wise then."

"I think you need to mend *your* senses. If you agree let us prove our sanity."

"That's what I am here for," agreed the rhino.

"Done?"

"Done"

"Suggest the way, then," asked the turtle.

"To-morrow morning we shall have a race of crossing all the four streams on our way to the south."

"I don't mind that."

"And if I lose the race, I'll give my sister to you," proposed the rhino quite confidently.

"Good. Be here after the sun is seen," agreed the turtle.

As they departed, the turtle called many of his relatives, consulted them and asked their help to kill the pride of the rhino. They all consented. One of them went to the first stream on the race track and stayed there. At the same time he sent the other one to the second stream. This one sent the other one to the third stream to stay there as was decided. This one sent from there the other one to the fourth stream to stay there and act as he was told when he saw the rhino.

In the morning, the rhino came running and shouted at the turtle "Are you ready? Let us finish the matter."

"With no delay," said the turtle, "let us ask the monkey sitting on the tree to give us order and then we shoot off."

"Monkey or no monkey, I have won the race before it is started. However, let your will be done," remarked the rhino.

At the word, "Go," from the monkey, both set off; no, only the rhino with his head low. The turtle stayed there and there laughing at the running rhino!

As the rhino approached the first stream, the turtle from the water said, "Young and insolent rhino! You have already been defeated on the first leg of our race!"

"Never mind. Still it's a long way. Ultimately I will win and not you," said the rhino and continued running.

Before he arrived at the next stream he heard the turtle saying from its water, "I am game. Your sister is at stake, rhino! Do you remember? You shall have to keep your word."

Yet the rhino crossed the stream and ran in the direction set for the race. No one knows whether he heard the turtle taunting him from behind! "He simply knows how to run!"

At the third point also the rhino heard the turtle challenging him: "Come and overtake me, if you can, or lose your sister. Don't you see, I am still ahead of you? If you want to compromise, I don't mind."

Hearing these last words, the rhino rejoiced. He thought that at last the turtle had got exhausted, otherwise why should he talk of coming to terms? He got on his legs to try hard now, saying, "No. No compromise at all. I am going to win. This is certain. Now it is more certain than ever."

The turtle in the stream laughed: "Inexperienced chap has no brain and yet runs fast!"

How can you defeat me, vain rhino? Don't you see, I am already in the last stream of our race?" Shouted the turtle from the water when the rhino appeared on the spot.

Seeing the turtle in the stream before he reached there, the rhino stood still with shame.

The turtle smiled and said, "As for your boast, you have already been hurt by your stupidity. As for your sister, let her marry another rhino like you to teach you good manners if she proves to be clever."

Since then, this race has remained a topic of laughter among the turtles. They talk of the rhino who has no brain to understand their trick. If a rhino appears where the turtles are, they begin to jeer at him and he goes to the other side of the stream to quench his thirst.

USE OF BRAIN

Long, long ago, when the life was long and time was waiting for every man's turn to be happy, there was a village that was sad, and sorry. For want of happiness in the village, the Chief was sorry. He was so sorry that he was unable to think even of his princess who had overgrown for marriage. For want of peace of mind of the Chief, the whole village was gloomy and grieved.

Can you guess what was the reason? Was it a fight against enemy? No. Was it a quarrel among the Chief and his family members? No. Was it a trouble from any plague? Not at all. Would it be a famine of years? No one would say that even. What was it then that made all of the people great and small sad and sorry?

In the centre of the village grew a huge tree and right at the top of it was living a python with two mouths. The python was as thick as wild banana tree growing in the crack of a hill. He was so fierce that nobody could kill him. He, in turn, thought and acted as if he was the monarch of the land. Guess, what did he do that made the whole village sad and sorry?

He often came down the tree and ate away fowls and their eggs. Often he gulped calves and kids and lambs. Often he bit cattle and sucked their blood. The people tried to kill him, but were unable to get rid of him. The village elders had tried to put an end to him, but they were not able to produce any favourable result. The Chief himself had tried every tool and trick, but had failed to establish any might or right over him. Despite all this, the desperate villagers unusually complained to the Chief about the python. The Chief had nothing else to do but say: "I am as sorry as you, my people, are, but I have not a single man left who should be asked to take measures to kill the reptile."

One day, the Chief's advisors suggested: "The tree should be cut off so that the creature should not have his abode in it and there would be an end of misery."

To this the Chief did not consent because the tree was not only the totem of his family but also of the whole village. He was afraid that if the tree was felled all of them would die unnatural death.

So there was no end to this sad and sorrowful story.

No odd thing or trick succeeded to kill the monster. At last they suggested to the Chief that he should be prepared to give his princess in marriage to him who might kill the devil. Seeing no other solution to the trouble, the Chief agreed to act accordingly.

He sent his men all around to make known the reward. Many known and unknown warriors, archers, spearmen and all from far and near tried their luck, but this was to defeat themselves and not the python. The luck was far remote from each of them. Knowing the failure of any future action the Chief thought to please his people who also had desire to live, and not to die, by felling the tree. He called his men and said:

"Go to the forest. Go to every corner of it. Shout at every beast, big or small, and tell him to try to win the stake, my princess."

The message spread over the forest. All birds and beasts came to know the position of the village of the Chief. Some were afraid of the python. Some thought they were happy with what they had in the bush. None but the hare came along.

He came to the village with a goat and a dog. In his one hand was grass and in the other a piece of meat of a buffalo. Thus, he came to the village. He stood under the tree and shouted at the villagers who happened to see him:

"Bring your Chief before me, the Chief who seeks cure of the curse. Then allow me to speak to him in his own terms and your life will be saved."

When the Chief was introduced to the hare, he was requested to repeat his promise in the presence of all. The Chief proclaimed:

"If you invent a permanent cure of the obstruction in our way of progress I will give my princess to you in marriage."

Then the hare asked the people to keep yards away from the foot of the tree. As they did so, he took the grass and placed before the dog. Then he took the piece of meat and placed it before the goat. Then he patted both the animals one by one and asked them to eat the food placed before them.

Naturally, the goat and the dog stood still. They did not eat what was served to each of them. At this the hare became angry. He became very hot too. He kicked them and bade them to eat what was before them. How would they eat what was not their food?

Making sure that they were not obeying the order, the hare requested the people: "May I have an axe? I want to kill them if they do not eat what I want them to eat. Please, help me any one of you."

One villager laughed at the hare: "How can your killing the goat and the dog serve our purpose?" Others also did not understand the action.

However, the Chief ordered one of them to bring the axe for the hare. When the axe was produced, the hare said happily: "You people have brain; it's not that you have not. But you have not used it rightly to be free from your difficulty. Just now you will have what you have not done yourself."

Out of curiosity all stood quiet. The hare raised the axe and asked his pets; "Come on. Eat or die," and he went near them.

The python was looking this from above. He pitied the faithful dog and the milk-giving goat. He was unable to witness their death. Out of sympathy he rushed down the tree before the axe fell upon their necks. He wanted to show the hare the right food of each of his pets because he had thought that the hare was a fool. As soon as he was down he began to replace the grass for meat; the grass he wished to place before the goat and the meat before the dog. While the evil reptile was busy serving the right food to the right

pet, the hare flung the axe and cut the arch-enemy of the village into two.

Now the Chief had no other alternative but to give his princess in marriage to the hare. He did as was said and built a big hut for the hare and his family. The village rejoiced and feasted for days. They also fed and clothed the hare for ever.

WERE YOU MY FATHER

This happened long long ago. A boy had grown up into a man. His mother was advised by the women in the neighbourhood: "How long will you wait? Don't you understand that your son has fully grown up? Go and find a wife for him."

The mother went. She spoke to her relatives in the village and other places. A distant relative asked her in one village, "What is in your mind and why are you going from village to village?"

"I have come to find a suitable girl for my son who has grown up. Can you help me in the selection?" The mother said.

"Why not? Why not? Here in my village close to my home is a family that have a fine grown up girl. If you wish we may try," the relative replied.

The agreement was not difficult. The marriage took place after few days. The newly-wedded young woman came to the village of her young husband and started to live married life. In due course, she gave birth to a son. Again she became pregnant. "What a fruitful woman!" exclaimed the villagers.

At this stage the year went dry. Famine spread over the area. On one side was the joy of the fruitful couple, and on the other side was complete scarcity of food and flesh, let alone fish. In order to satiate hunger, to help the growth of the first child and to have nourishment for the child in the womb, the husband talked to the wife: "Let us migrate somewhere to get food and to save the life of us all."

The wife replied: "Why somewhere? Why not to the village of my parents who send for us now and then? I have not seen them for long."

The decision was reached in favour of the wife who got ready in a short time and said, "Come then. I am ready. Delay not as the distance is long."

Next morning, the family set off. The multiplication of hopes with hopes in their minds did not allow them to feel hungry

or thirsty for a pretty long time. They felt this when the first-born began to cry for food. In the distance they saw a fig tree. Pointing at it, the father said, "Mwana, have some strength till we reach the tree which seems to have some fruits. I'll climb the tree and throw the figs down for you and your mother."

They reached the point where the tree was. The figs were few but ripe and red. Without delay, the husband went up the tree and began to shake its branch after branch. The wife gathered the figs that fell on earth and the son began to eat as many as he could find himself. When he got down the husband also helped the wife in gathering the fruits. As he had worked hard on the tree, he felt very thirsty. He had seen a waterless yet wet pool from the tree. So he wanted to try to find some water if possible.

"Do not eat the figs till I quench my thirst and return," ordered the husband. "Then we will eat together," said he and made off in the direction of the pool.

From the tree the pool seemed near, but in fact it was far away. When he arrived at the spot, he found no water. Yet it was a watery place after all. So he began to dig a small hole with his hands and legs and some dry stick that he found near. He dug and dug till he found water. He could make his dry lips wet at last. He also made his loin cloth wet for his wife and the child to make their lips wet too. On the way back he saw a hungry leopard groaning. So he climbed the nearest tree and remained on it till the leopard left the place. No sooner were his legs on the earth again than he ran as fast as he could to meet his family.

In the meantime, it so happened that the wife, finding no signs of her husband's return, got weary and felt lonely in the thick of the bush. When her patience had exhausted, her hunger commanded her to eat figs. Though she began to eat them one by one and that too at a long interval she finished them all as they were few in number. When the husband was back there were hardly one or two of the fruit left.

Hungry as he was and because he did not find figs there he got furious. Hunger joined with anger made him wild. He took out an assegai from the bundle of household kits and stabbed his wife who was pregnant. In a breath she died and lay flat. When the husband realised what had he done out of wrath he got scared and sorry to death. He could not stand the sight. He threw away the assegai, took the son on his back and ran and ran and ran without looking behind. Though he was out of the sight of the dead wife, he felt guilty.

Here on the death-place, the child that was in the womb of the mother was pushed out by the thrust of the assegai. He also started running in the direction of his father. While running he was holding his naval cord in his hand. While running he was singing also:

"Father, you wait;
Were you my father, you wait,
Father, who killed my mother, wait.
Father, you wait, just wait."

These words reached the tired father's ears. They went straight into his heart and mind and began to pierce his body. They shook his existence. He turned his back. He saw a strange thing. He stared at the little thing following him. He turned his eyes aside, but the eyes did not obey him. They stared and stared at the living being born recently. Again he heard the song and closed his eyes with his hands. He ran faster, leaving behind his son also. Still he heard the song:

"Father, you wait;
Were you my father, you wait.
Father, who killed my mother, wait.
Father, you wait, just wait."

He heard it again and again. The song echoed from all directions. He heard it from the north. He heard it from the south. He heard it from the east and the west. He grew nervous and desperate. He thought how to save himself from the chasing baby and the crime. He stopped where he was. The baby arrived there. At once he killed

his own baby, threw it away and began to run with his breath in his hands.

Yet the song followed him. His ears could not bear the weight of the words of the song. He turned back and rushed towards the baby. He pressed him from neck and killed again. Then he ran in search of the assegai he had thrown away. He brought it and cut the baby into pieces. Not only that, but also he dug a deep hole and buried him.

Again, he was on his heels, in speed, in speed. He neither slowed down nor looked behind. Off he shot like an arrow. At last he reached the hut that belonged to his parents-in-law. He was received with joy and smiles. His mother-in-law was called to greet him. She inquired after her daughter and said: "Happy we are that you have made an appearance. Had you brought my daughter....."

"I have come to collect some food from you. There's a famine there, you see? She has been left at home simply because she is carrying a baby in her womb. When she will be free from pregnancy she will come to see you all."

Food was cooked for him. In the meantime, he took a nap. When a call for food was heard, the song of the baby was also heard. The baby who was cut into pieces and buried had come to life and pushed himself out of the hole and had followed the path of his father.

He was now heard more and more distinctly. He was singing the same song. The people heard it, but they could not make the sense of it.

Yet, the reaction was there. They found that the son-in-law was getting gloomy. In a few minutes he flung out of the kraal and began to be in bewilderment.

Everyone gazed at the little one that was singing with his umbilical cord held in his hand. When he was among them he looked at his father with scorn and began to sing the same song. His grand-mother did not fail to notice that the little red baby was

looking like her daughter. She suspected that the son-in-law had murdered her daughter.

The man was now darker than his body, darker with shame and fear of consequences of his crime. Nothing was required to convince the villagers now. All the men of the village surrounded him and asked him to plead guilty. He stood motionless. Then the first-born child made some actions to declare that the mother was killed by the father. Thereupon, all the assegais pointed at him and finished him in a moment. His body was thrown in the west for the vultures to feast. Then they began a search for the umbilical child, but he was no more to be seen.

FOOL WEDS FAIRY

When there were only a few human beings on earth and wild animals ruled over the world, all were chiefs on their own. It was good that the human beings realised to bring order on earth and very soon established chieftainship. Above the chiefs also they elected Chief Mukuru.

This Chief Mukuru's first and last child was a daughter. There was no match for her on earth. So beautiful! So charming! So graceful! She continued to be more beautiful day and night, by wits and deeds.

When she was very near to complete her teenage, she looked divine. All young men and women began to talk about her among themselves. Every youth fell in love with her at the first sight. He explored all ways and means to win her favour. She acted in such a way that all longed for her. She spoke less. She smiled less. She appeared before them less. Yet, her every action was enough to charm each of them, and still to keep them at a distance. It was not that she did not want to marry. Her father was so proud of his daughter's beauty that he wished the wisest youth to marry her.

He waited and waited to find a match for her but failed to find one. When he found her overgrown for marriage he sent a word over the land: "Any youth who wishes to marry my daughter should bring meat of an animal who is neither a male nor a female."

Everyone who heard the proclamation got puzzled and lost the hope of a fairy-like hand. "Does such an animal exist on earth? Or is the Chief Mukuru growing mad with his age?" These were the two questions on all the lips.

On the top of a nearby hill lived a man all alone, all alone. He laughed with no reason. He wept and rolled down the hill for nothing. He never went to hunt. He did not eat when food was before him, and asked for it when there was not. He tamed the lion but was afraid of the rat. He helped not others, but blamed all

including Chief Mukuru for not helping him. So the Chief considered him to be the most foolish man ever born on earth. He was given the name "Mhala."

Some children broke the news of the Chief's declaration to him for fun. However, he picked up the news and began to tell the passers-by "Now the princess is mine and of nobody else, the princess is mine and of nobody else!" Who would believe him? All laughed at this. Some mischief-mongers excited him more by describing the princess to him.

The princess herself was growing big and bright.

Mhala had once seen a male eland badly injured in the genital organ. He had also made sure later on that the same eland had lost the organ and yet was living healthily. So he went in search of this animal who was neither a male nor a female.

"Where are you going, Mhala?" Asked the people who saw him going into the forest with his bow and arrows.

"In search of meat of an animal who is neither a male nor a female," said he. "Now the princess is mine and of nobody else."

None believed him.

After a day, he was seen again. He had found the eland, stuck an arrow in his body, killed him and dragged him to the place where the Chief Mukuru and his beautiful princess lived.

There he was heard shouting: "Now the princess is mine and of nobody else."

People gathered around him and the hunt and checked the fact. Chief's messenger carried the detailed description of the kill to his master. The people murmured: "However foolish Mhala is, the Chief should keep his word."

Chief Mukuru sent another word. "The father of the princess cannot see the suitor and his killed, if he cannot greet him at a time which is neither day nor night."

At this the fool burst into laughter and cried: "Even now the princess is mine and of nobody else." Despite this confident cry the people thought, now there was no hope for him to take princess to his home.

Mhala did not move because of their words. He was all confident. He wanted to marry the princess by every wit. He waited till the sun began to sink in his bed. Right at the time of twilight he cried: "Chief Mukuru, my father-in-law! Come now, and see the husband of your princess. Now it's neither day nor night, but in-between."

True. It was neither day nor night. The day was dying, the night was not born. But how could a father give his daughter to one who had been stamped "FOOL" all the time?

He sought the last resort. He sent a word back: "The Chief Mukuru can only see the man and keep his word if the candidate can manage to greet him at a spot which is neither inside nor outside the Chief's home."

The people lost the faith in the Chief now. They gathered that he did not want to part with his princess to the man who has been proving himself quite a match for his dear one. They began to doubt the honesty of their protector. But Mhala did not move an inch from his determination to marry.

He said, "Now certainly the princess is mine and of nobody else."

Immediately he was found at the threshold of the Chief's kraal. He laid his one leg inside the house and kept the other outside it. Then he greeted the Chief saying: "My father-in-law, this is the spot which is neither in home nor outside it. You have tried me enough. Try any more if you wish, but remember, the princess is mine and of nobody else. Now tell me how long should I keep longing for your darling you have given birth?"

The people were no longer to keep quiet. They shouted at their Chief who had not proved worth the fool. "Give your princess to the man who seems to be the cleverest of all of us," they said and brought drums. Amidst the dancing subjects Chief Mukuru blessed the princess at her marriage with the wisest fool who was destined to rule over the land.

THE CRUEL ARE KIND TOO

Two teenage girl-friends went to a river to fetch water for domestic use. Both filled their pots with water, put them on their heads and walked homeward. On the way they saw two handsome young men going to hunt some animal. At the sight of the youths both became bashful from tip to toe. While trying to capture them in their eyes, one of them dashed against a rock and broke the pot.

Her joy was changed into sorrow. She began to cry and weep, weep and cry. She sat down in that unhappy condition. She began to think how her mother would get angry and severely beat her for breaking the pot. While consoling her, the other girl advised her to stay where she was till she went and returned. Saying this she shot off homeward. There she told the news to the mother concerned. As was natural, the mother was very cross. "I'll cut her into pieces when she returns," she said angrily.

Quickly the friend made a return run to the spot and reported the affair. Then she advised her to go to her elder sister's village and stay there till her mother's wrath cooled down.

In the absence of her friend the two young men had a conversation with the girl who had broken the pot. Shyly yet smartly she had attracted one of them who not only sympathised with her but also thought that he would have her as his wife. At the arrival of the girl from home the two men hid themselves into the bush. They heard what her mother was preparing to do on her going home. Then they appeared.

"We will help you," said the youth who thought of her to be his wife.

"We will safely escort you to your sister's village, added the other. "Trust us to that extent."

The desperate girl wanted to save her life. She knew the consequences if she returned to her parents.

She took the way to her sister's. One of the young men showed

her the way, while the other followed her. On the way they saw a baby hare running out of breath.

"Why are you running?" Asked the youth.

"You also run like me if you value your life; a leopard is chasing me to eat me," came the panting voice from the sweating body.

At the same time they heard a gruff voice of the leopard. The girl got scared at the sight of hungry leopard. She left the escort and ran towards the hill in order to hide herself. Both the men did the same. When they climbed the hill they found that the leopard was coming after them.

On the top of the hill there was a hole broad enough for the human beings to jump in but short and narrow enough for the leopard to chase them in it. Finding no way to save themselves, all the three jumped into it. On climbing the hill the leopard looked into the hole. For a while he thought that the prey was caught. He took several rounds to catch the creatures out of the hole of the hill.

In the meantime, the hole had led the runaways to the den of the rhinoceros's family at the foot of the hill. The family was frightened at the fall of human beings from the hill. They thought they were attacked unexpectedly as the hunters did. They got on their feet to kill the beings who were amidst them by the grace of God. At the same time they heard the girl crying: "Save! Save! Save from the leopard."

Hearing this merciful voice, and that too of a girl, the male rhinoceros stopped his family who had prepared to jump aggressively on the three.

Hearing the noise of all, the leopard thought it to be the right time to jump into the hole to feast on them all. He peeped into it and the hole broke from the mouth. This led the leopard into a jerk that in turn pushed him into the hole. Down came he on the people and the animals. All of them rushed on the blood-thirsty beast, forgetting the difference between the human and the wild beings as they were. The main part was played by the

equally ferocious rhinoceros and his family who pierced the leopard to death in moments.

"How kind you are!" Exclaimed the people when they were safe.

"We are cruel too!" smiled the bull of rhinoceros's family.

When the night fell its darkness made the den darker. "Don't you worry of darkness that may show us really ferocious; you are safe for the time being," consoled the cow and licked her baby's neck.

The human beings, being hungry, they feasted on the flesh of the dead leopard.

There in the village of the girl, on her father's arrival from hunt, everything was changed. The whole village had lighted torches and the young and the old were out in search of the girl. Some of them, including her father, had reached the hill. Hearing shouts and cries, the girl and the young men peeped out of the den to find out who they were. The girl recognized her father and rushed out to greet him. The young men also came out with her. When they saw the girl, the shouts became louder, "Anyati mwana! Anyati" (Come quickly child! Come quickly!)

When they reached the village, the parents appreciated the service of the young men to their daughter and married her to the one whom she had loved at the first sight.

FRIENDS IN FAMINE

In the days of old there were two men. They lived in a village. They were called Awumbi and Mwawumbi. They were the laziest of all the villagers. They never went to hoe in the garden. They set traps and obtained their food. They wanted to roam care-free all their life. So they did not marry.

They lived together in the same house. They ate the same food. They slept together in the same bed. Both went together to the bush and set traps. They were the fastest friends ever born on earth. All that they did or said led to one thing and that was 'Friendship.'

One year there was a famine. Nothing grew in the gardens. Water grew scarce in the area. The bush animals and birds began to leave the jungle for watery place. The tame ones were either dying of dreadful disease or were killed by their masters for food. The friends, Awumbi and Mwawumbi, were failing now to catch any creature to eat. For days they lived hungry. Time went dry and life passed dry too.

One hot morning, the friends desperately set a trap and came back with a hope to catch something. The following day they woke up early. With soundless steps they came near their trap. When they saw the trap shaking, both rejoiced and prayed to their ancestors for the fortune. They rushed to it. A hare was caught. They carried the hunt home.

"You make preparation for cooking the hare, and I go to fetch water if it's our good luck," said Mwawumbi and started off.

Awumbi waited till late evening for his friend to return. At last he lost hope of his return and he ate the flesh of the hare and threw away the bones behind the hut. Then he pretended to be asleep. Mwawumbi had gone further and further. Because he was tired also he slept hungry and thirsty under a leafless tree in the bush. Then he took some juicy cactus plants with a view to squeeze them

and use the juice for water. On his arrival he shouted at Awumbi to help him in cooking.

Awumbi yawned and yawned at first. Then stood up and pretended to search for the hare. Both looked here and there, high and low, but the hare was not to be found. Then they turned towards the back of the hut. Shouting and pointing at the hare's bones, now Awumbi said, "I suspect wild dog has eaten it away."

What could Mwawumbi say?

So they drank the cactus juice and lay quiet till the morning sun peeped into the hut. They again started off to set the trap. On the way they came near a monkey-fruit tree. The fruits were small and unripe, but the hunger was not to see that.

Awumbi asked Mwawumbi to go and set the trap while he climbed the tree and plucked the fruits. He gathered many to take home. When he got down and counted the fruits, they were twenty. "This will be a nice day and the fruits will be a tasteful food," said he and rejoiced at the luck. Then he got fast asleep having the support of the trunk of the tree.

On his return Mwawumbi felt happy seeing the monkey-fruit in big number. At once he sat down and began to eat them. In a short time he finished the whole bag of fruit. Then he looked at the friend. He felt he should hide his misdeed. He took off his loin-piece and bark cloth. He covered the face of Awumbi with the bark cloth and tied him to the tree so speedily and in such a way that Awumbi was unable to defend or see who the offender was.

Then Mwawumbi took the bag, and filled it with stones and covered them with the monkey-fruit skin. Then he came back and placed the bag in its original place. Again, he went farther running. After some time he returned, shouting at his friend: "May I know Awumbi, how many fruits have you gathered?"

"Fruits I gathered many," said Awumbi, "but look at my plight and come quickly to my aid and set me free."

Mwawumbi approached coughing and asked, "Who on earth dare tie you up in this way, my friend?"

"Before you can find out the rogue who did all this, help your helpless friend, help him to be free."

"How did this happen? Tell me the tale while I release you," said Mwawumbi.

"Yes, yes. That I will do, but begin to untie me."

As Mwawumbi began to make him free, Awumbi said: "When I was fast asleep a man came up and tied me up in this way. At first I thought it was you who was doing all this for the sake of fun. So I did not resent. Then I shouted your name and asked to bring me to my real life, but the man was not heard at all. Therefore, it was too late for me to do anything else but to remain like this. My friend, I will never forget this day, not in my life."

When he was untied, Mwawumbi pointed his finger at the bag and asked: "What does your bag contain?"

"They are unripe monkey-fruits as we wanted. We'll keep them for few days and then eat them together," replied Awumbi.

Mwawumbi hid his smile and led the friend home wards carrying the bag. On their return journey, they saw that a lion had killed a man and was dragging him away into the bush to feast upon his body. Among the man's belongings was a calabash of beer. When the days were passing away without having any food, they found a calabash of beer! They picked it up and brought it to the village. They sat in the village-centre and began to drink it in order to make the people envious. Beer-drinking was truly a surprise for any of them. "When there is not a grain to eat, how can the laziest ones obtain a calabash of beer?" This was the question on the tip of every tongue.

No sooner did the friends finish drinking than they brought drums. Both were expert at the playing of the drums. They could make the drums talk. When Awumbi played the drums, Mwawumbi danced. Awumbi's drums began:

I ate all the hare,
All the hare, all the hare,

Gathering the meaning of the drums Mwawumbi slapped Awumbi and said, "Now you dance and I play the drums. You

also hear very carefully what my drums have to say to you."

And he began to beat the drums that voiced:

"I tied him to a tree,
And blinded him with a bark;
I went into the bush
And ate away the fruits;
Hark! Hark! Hark!
There are pebbles in the sack,
Let him eat them well;
Hark! Hark! Hark!"

Thus the talking drums revealed the secret and made both of them cross. Before they shot arrows at each other the villagers interrupted and asked them to throw all the blame on the female and save their friendship.

THAT GIRL HAD GAINED

A good number of girls in a village thought to mark their age of puberty.

This is what they did.

All of them started off to find a doctor who would notch or knock out two of the front teeth of the upper jaw to celebrate their maturing age. All went but one. She had a step-mother who forbade her joining her mates going for the ceremony.

Instead of pleasing the motherless daughter, she ordered, "Go to the river and fetch some water."

"Will you then let me go to the doctor, mother?" she asked.

"First you fetch the water and then I'll see," was the reply.

After doing what was told to do, the girl stood gloomily for not having an opportunity to do what her mates were out to do and awaited her mother's word. Seeing this the mother ordered again: "Don't stand like the trunk of a fallen tree. Sit down at the grinding stone and grind."

This was also done by the girl with a hope that she would be allowed then to go to the doctor. When she was grinding, another order came from the step-mother: "Remember, when you finish grinding you make fire. Make fire and put the pot with water on it. Put the pot on the fire and cook."

Now the girl lost hope and began to do what was asked. She began to do the work like a bewitched being. She obeyed and stirred the porridge for the parent. When the porridge was ready the mother said, "Now serve the porridge and let us sit together and eat."

The girl whose patience had completely exhausted said shedding tears: "Mother you better eat and let me follow my friends, otherwise I will not be able to join with them."

"First you do what I say and then run if you wish to reach them," shouted the step-mother.

She ate a little and said, "Mother, I have finished eating."

"Yes. I have eyes to see that. But who do you think will wash the pot and plates?"

Without any argument the girl carried out this order too, but as soon as she finished this, she went off before a word was heard from her mother for any other household work.

Running to the crossroads, she diverted to the path other than her friends had followed. After a fast long walk she was standing in front of a little hut made of little bamboo sticks and little wild leaves of various kinds. Strange was the sight. She was tired. She was thirsty also.

"What have you come to do here?" came a voice from the hut.

"I want to have my teeth marked. For this I wish to join with my friends who have left the village for the doctor. Have they passed by this way? Or have they gone another way? I am tired and thirsty," said she and sat down at the door.

"Don't you worry, my child," said a little old woman coming out of the hut. "I'll give you water with one condition. After you quench your thirst you shall have to go to the river and fetch water for me. Do you agree?"

"There's no question of agreement. A desperate girl will agree to any demand. That's what I have done for my step-mother," said the girl.

"May you enter the hut then. As for the marking of teeth, I am also a doctor; I will do that for you," the woman satisfied her.

The girl entered the hut. The sight was strange for her. There was a snake in the corner. There was a rat beside it. Near them was a wild cat. A mongoose was playing with them. Seeing them together she feared a lot. The woman herself was smelling of ulcer.

"Don't be afraid of any of these," the woman gave courage to the girl. "I have been living amidst them all my life." Then she gave her water to drink. After that she gave her a pot and asked her to fetch the water from the river. "Go by the monkey-fruit tree

across the hill and bush where you will find a river," instructed the woman.

Taking the pot, the girl looked at the tree. "Wait," said the woman to draw her attention. "Let me make a coil for you to put on your head to carry the pot to the river and back." And she took the snake and coiled it for the girl.

"I am afraid. I can't put the snake coil on my head," cried the girl.

"Just put it on your head as you do with an ordinary coil. It will not harm you at all," advised the mongoose.

Hearing this, the little woman laughed, and the girl put the snake coil on her head and started off.

The river was far off. She walked and walked till she got tired and nervous. The snake then spoke in a low voice, "Now the river is just in sight. So don't be nervous and walk a bit further."

The river was reached. The pot was filled with water and the way was measured back to the hut. "Now cook some porridge," were the words of the woman. "Then eat it before your teeth are marked. After they are marked you won't be able to eat or drink for some time and you will go hungry and thirsty."

The maturing girl suspected the woman as she did her stepmother but there was no other go. Fetching water from a distant river and cooking and eating the porridge brought the day to dusk. Sunlight was not to be seen bright. Therefore, the little woman asked the girl, "Come into the hut, climb the ladder, reach the loft of the roof and sleep there."

As she had bitter experience at home, the girl requested, "Ma! Let me sleep with you. The place is strange. Strange are the things, and strange is your instruction."

"I know that, but do as is said by me," shouted the woman. "I have a son who likes to eat people. If he finds you in the hut with me when he returns from hunting, he will kill you and eat you up. Tomorrow, when he leaves the hut for the bush, I will notch your teeth and you shall go home with pleasure. I want to keep you alive, you see?"

"Don't you worry, girl," mewed the wild cat. "There's no harm in doing that. I shall keep a watch on the man and guard you from killing."

"And I will also do a service to you if necessary," squeaked the rat.

Poor girl had had to do what was told.

At the darkening time of the sky there appeared a young man. He was that little woman's son who was a cannibal. As he stepped into the hut he smelt human flesh. "Ma, I smell human being in the hut," rejoiced the man.

"That's me and nobody else. Do you want to eat your mother also?" The woman tried a trick.

"No. There's somebody else that smells human. You don't smell human because of ulcer," cried the son.

"Are you crazy? Or is it because you have returned home without any hunt? Don't you know that the human beings keep miles away from our hut, simply because of you?" asked the mother.

"Say what you want, ma. I smell human flesh and I want to eat it. I climb the loft from where the distinct smell comes. I have not eaten such flesh for months." Saying this the son began to climb the loft.

The wild cat mewed wildly to warn the girl. The rat heard this and squeaked and began to bite the man on his feet. The snake coiled round his legs and the mangoose pulled his one leg down. Because of this, the man fell down. He fell on the earthen pot of grain that broke into pieces. Its one big piece hit a pot of salt. The grain and the salt mixed badly and the mother was cross.

Loss of this kind gave the woman an excuse. She got angry upon her son. She hit him hard and weakened his strength. Then she tied him to a rope to her waist. The son wept and sobbed till morning. When he was untied he left the hut in anger.

Then the little woman supported the girl to come down. In a short time she notched the teeth of the girl who was now anxious to return home. Yet there was some treatment to be done. In the

gap of the upper jaw the woman placed a variety of medicine. She also made the girl to drink some potency and advised to keep her mouth shut till she arrived at the border of the village.

Happy as she was now because her teeth were notched and because she had passed through terrible day and night, the girl went musing along the road.

In the village was a great uproar. All the other girls had returned the same day whereas, the girl of the step-mother was not back yet. Her father hit his second wife half-dead and sent for the girl's grand-mother, who came at once to the village to look into the matter.

After hours, the girl was seen standing at a distance. The whole village went to bring her home, but she did not move an inch from where she stood. She simply shed tears of blame on her step-mother. When the people insisted that she should open her mouth, she obeyed and added surprise to the strange happening. No sooner was the mouth open than she began to vomit.

What did she vomit? She vomitted cattle. She vomitted goats. She vomitted fowls. Thus, all that could be in a village did she vomit. The people she had given birth in her vomiting grew big in a trice and began to clear the bush. Then they erected huts and kraals and..... and

There she was installed as a chieftainess of the village born of her. Then her friends, being rebuked by their relatives, came to the chieftainess to ask for the magic she had brought with her. When they were told about the strong woman, with wonder in their mind, they went to the place, but there was neither a woman nor a hut.

HUNTING HELPS

There were two brothers: Singambala and Kabweli. Both were skilled archers. One day they went hunting. On the way they saw a woman crying and running after a hyena who had a baby in his mouth. Singambala shot an arrow. It stuck right into the front parts of the jaws of the animal in such a way that the baby was unhurt. The baby neither fell down nor the teeth of the hyena could press him to death. Singambala's arrow was followed by one from Kabweli. It made hyena further helpless. The animal could neither move nor fall down.

Then they took the baby out of the dog's mouth and passed him on to his mother. The woman, as if she were spelled, could neither express her gratitude to the two brothers nor greet them out of obligation on her.

The brothers continued roaming in the bush.

They came near a cave they had never seen before. The cave was decorated with paintings of animals. At the door were two beautiful young women, of the same age, sitting gloomily. At intervals they were sobbing.

"What's the matter?" asked Singambala.

"Are you afraid of us?" asked Kabweli.

"We are not afraid of you who are so handsome, but the matter is serious," replied one of the wailing women.

"Is that the matter that you cannot tell us? If you have no harm in letting us know it, do inform us of the thing that worries you so much," consoled they.

The elder of the two sisters told them the tale from beginning to end: "There are two hares who harrass us. They say you marry us or we shall show your cave to the lion who will devour both of you at a time."

The bow-men laughed heartily hearing this. Then the elder of the two said, "This is no matter at all. This shouldn't cause you so much sorrow."

"May be. But we are not men. We are not hunters too. And we are alone." The younger woman made the position clear.

"If this is the thing that makes you wail so loudly, it makes us merry. Will you allow us to stay in your cave till the hares approach you again? The rest will depend on us. Not a hair of your body shall be hurt," said the younger man.

The women examined the features of the young men and rejoiced at their sight. They were charmed. They looked shy at first and then with a bashful smile received the visitors into the cave. Silence spread into the corners, high and low, in the cave.

Suddenly they heard some steps leading to the cave. The brothers got alert. They hid behind the mouth of the cave. They were hares. The women told the men that they were same hares who harrassed them very often.

The hares started to show their cleverness. They shouted at the cave: "Maidens of the cave, listen. Decide to marry us or we shall show your cave to the lion who will devour you both at a time."

The women shivered at the words, but the men took the chance. They cast a snarl on the hares and caught them. After that they came out and asked: "Tell us now, who wants to marry which woman?" and they laughed.

Their boldness brought the women out of the cave.

"Now you marry the hares or kill them to eat if you want," said the men to the women and left the place.

The women, leaving the hares in the snarl, followed the men without exchanging a word with them. They followed them as if they were their shadows. This made the brothers to resolve to marry them and to take them home. After the day's hunting they returned to the cave to celebrate their marriage.

At night, they heard footsteps of some human beings coming towards the cave. The men prepared to fight. The women got alert too. At the same time they informed their husbands that a chief in the village in the bush was ill. "He has been ill for many months. His indunas are going from place to place. These ministers, however,

have failed to find any witch-doctor or diviner who can cure their chief. As there are torches in front of the people coming here, it seems that Chief's Ngambela, the Prime Minister himself, is on the errand," said the elder woman.

"We know the medicine of the bush, but the hares have not allowed us to go to the village to cure the Chief and win his favour," added the younger.

"Well, then Be alert and tell us the medicine that can cure the chief and we will approach the Ngambela," asked the younger man.

This was done. The brothers shouted at the people going through the forest and promised them to cure the chief. The next morning, the brothers were in the village with the medicine that their wives had brought to them from the bush. The chief was cured in a day. In order to mark the occasion, the chief gave a village and a number of cattle to each of the two brothers who settled down with their beautiful wives and lived long.

A MATCH FOR ANY MAN

This story is about a woman who was a match for any man. Her parents had died when she was a child of six. In the village all the children were boys except herself. She grew up in the way the boys grew. She went fishing. She went hunting. She did all that the boys did. When she was old enough to marry, no boy in the village wanted to make her his wife. She had outdone with them all at one time or another. They were no match for her.

As she was growing out of marriage-age, the young men of the village began to hate her because she was the cleverest. They feared that she might prove more vigilant than they were. Gradually they began to keep away from her, especially when she was quite anxious to meet them. This treatment became more and more unbearable for the girl. So she went away into the bush and built a hut there to live in. She lived on fishing and hunting. She never showed herself to any of the village men.

Here, it so happened that she gave birth to a daughter. The baby grew into a child and the child into a girl and the girl into an adult. By this time the girl had learnt to climb trees and to swim in the river. There was a tree near the hut. This was a tall and leafy tree with a place where she used to sit quite high up among the branches. Sitting alone, she used to weave baskets, which she sold to the passers-by. The girl was more beautiful than her mother.

One day, when the mother went fishing, her daughter took her seat on the tree and began to weave a basket. A man came along that way. He had come a long distance. He wondered how a human being could live in such a wild place where fierce beasts and poisonous snakes were found by day and night. Whoever would dare live there? How terrible for a young girl to sit high in a tree and watch the forest!

When he was sure that nothing was wrong with his eyes he spoke to himself: "If my chief marries this beautiful girl, will not all his wives flee away with shame when they see her beauty? Let them flee."

They are nothing but ordinary women compared with this one." Then he returned to his village.

"Chief! Chief!" he reported. "I've brought good news for you." And he began to tell his adventures. When he found the chief was eager to hear more from him he told the story of the young woman who was weaving baskets sitting high on the tree.

Immediately the chief sent his men ordering them to bring the woman to his kraal. They measured the height of the tree with their eyes and tried to climb it. As they began to climb, the magic of the tree came to life. The tree began to grow higher and higher, and its trunk began to grow broader and broader. The more they tried to reach the girl the higher the tree grew. Suddenly a fierce wind blew through the branches of the tree and the men were thrown to the ground and killed.

With the wind flew the loin cloth of one of the men the chief had sent to fetch the woman. It fell at the feet of the chief, when he was sitting outside the kraal waiting to hear good news from his men about the woman whom he desired to marry, the chief recognised the cloth as it had been given as a gift by him to one of the men. So he was disappointed.

But he did not lose hope. He ordered another group of men to sharpen their axes and go to carry out his orders. They all ran to the tree with determination to cut it down and to get the woman for their chief. But no sooner had they made two or three cuts in the tree than the mother of the woman dropped from the air. She fixed her eyes on them for a moment and they all fell dead except one.

The mother seized this man and threw him to the ground. As he fell she said to him: "Don't think that I could not put you to death if I wanted to. I have kept you alive to go to your chief and tell him to come himself if he wishes to try his luck."

When he was released, he ran to the village, as fast as he could. On hearing his report, the chief ordered his bravest warriors to be ready to go to the tree early next morning to get the woman for him.

The band of warriors set off. The bush was filled with their noise. Very soon they were, under the tree, looking up at the young woman who was fit to be the chief's wife. She seemed to make all the tree beautiful by sitting there high among the branches.

However, this time they had no chance to prepare themselves for any action. The mother burst out of the hut and fixed her eyes on them. The look from her evil eyes struck them where they stood; they could not move from that place. Then she brought a very long needle with a very broad eye. In it was a thick thread stronger than any other thread ever made by man on earth. One by one she stitched them together so that they died. But the mother allowed one to climb the tree and speak to her daughter about his chief and to find out what her wishes were in the matter. The daughter gave a basket to him to take it to the chief as a gift to show her love for him.

The following day the chief himself came with his followers. When the mother rushed at them to kill them with her magic, the daughter said, "Mother! Let the chief do with me as he wants. After all I am a girl who has reached marriage-age."

At these words, the mother gave way. After a hard struggle, the chief climbed the tree and reached the top. When he came close to the young woman and could see her well, he became mad with love for her.

"If you marry me, I shall do as you wish," begged the chief.

"Men cheat women," said the girl.

"I will not. This I promise,"

"If you ask me to fetch water?"

"I will not. This I promise."

"If you ask me to hoe?"

"I will not, This I promise."

"If you ask me to pound maize?"

"I will not. This I promise."

"Then ask my mother and marry me," said the girl satisfied with the replies, and came down with the chief.

When they both entered the hut, the chief greeted the woman with high regard and respect. They were married the very moment. While returning to village, the chief begged of his mother-in-law to bring the dead men to life.

"This will be done," said she and looked at the corpses with delightful eyes. She spoke a few indistinct words too. The men came to life.

"Stay where you are, and, build the houses where you are, and, let your families come to live with you," ordered the woman and followed invisibly the newly wed couple.

There, in the village, the other wives of the chief envied the newly married woman from the bush.

"What shall we do now?" queried one.

"The chief will not love us now!" mourned the second wife.

"He won't come to us either," suspected the third.

"Let's try our best to remove this thorn from the flesh," suggested one.

"Yes, yes. Let's try tricks," agreed another.

"And let's kill her," murmured the other one.

So they mixed poison with water and served it to the new wife from the bush.

"Don't drink it. There's poison," commanded the mother from the air.

"How d'you know that?" Asked the new wife from the bush.

"Why? My ancestral spirits are cleverer than any wife of the chief," replied she, took away the calabash and served the water to a dog. Soon after drinking the water the dog died.

Then some food was mixed with poison and brought for the new wife.

"Don't eat it, or you'll die," voiced the invisible woman.

"How d'you know that?" Asked the chief's new wife.

"Why? My wits surpass those of the chief's wives," replied she, took away the plate and served the food to a cow who died on eating it.

So the new wife sent for the chief who became angry seeing the dead dog and the cow.

With stern eyes, he looked at his wives who had got baffled now. Before the chief could act upon them all, the old wives fled to the bush and hid themselves there for ever.

WHEN THE CHIEF WAS AWAY

One afternoon an order came from the Chief's senior wife: "Quickly you grind the mealie into meal. See that it is enough for fifty men. The Chief is going to-morrow morning to hunt the elephants."

The order was carried out.

The next morning, the Chief set out with his hunting team and slaves. Two wives of the Chief were left behind in the village which was now nearly manless. They were the mother of Ndime, the son and the mother of Nsere, the daughter. Nsere's mother was the junior of the two. She felt very lonely in the absence of the Chief. Ndime's mother felt lonely too, but she got busy with the household work and was able to keep her spirit up.

Nsere's mother spent the day sitting outside the kraal. Late in the evening she requested Ndime's mother, "Will you let me take Ndime to my kraal to sleep with Nsere? I feel very lonely!"

Ndime's mother wanted to dust and sweep the kraal that night so that she would receive the Chief in tidy surroundings when he returned. So she consented.

Both the children took their supper together. They played for some time and went to sleep. They were required to share the same blanket. In sleep the blanket uncovered them. This was the time when the mother of Nsere had come near them to retire to sleep.

The half moon of the month was peeping in through the thatched roof. The mother happened to look at the children. Her own child was a girl and yet was not even as lovely-looking as the son of her mate. He was very very handsome. She remembered how the Chief kissed the boy out of joy. He also patted him times without number.

"Heaven help me! I cannot bear the sight!" cried the woman as she looked at the boy closely. Immediately she was away standing in the corner, standing and thinking cruelly as a jealous woman does.

Even then she could not stand the sight. She rushed to the children and covered them in the blanket. She went outside and came in. This she did several times. She was in a hurry to do something, but could not decide and therefore, she was growing crazy.

Suddenly an idea came to her mind. She went into the backyard and brought some wood that was chopped for fuel. She lighted the fire. She brought a knife and held it in the fire. When she was doing this the moon hid herself behind the dark clouds unexpectedly. When she was doing this Ndime sat up in sleep, stood straight for a moment, went on the other side of the step-sister and slept stretching the blanket on both of them.

With the knife in her hand the woman that had no control on herself now drew near the sleeping innocents. Out of rage and relying upon her memory she at once thrust the red-hot knife into the tummy of the child who was thought to be Ndime. The child gave a shrill cry and was no more living. The cry made Ndime to awake. Seeing him alive she removed the blanket from the other child who was her own daughter. She distressfully wailed, "Ma! Ma! Ma! I have killed my own Nsere!"

She thought of the consequences and grew brute. She stopped weeping and wailing. She had to stop mourning as much was left to be done to hide her crime. She thought: "Ndime is in sleep. Even if he has seen what I have done, he is a small child of six after all. He won't remember this when he will awake in the morning. That's why, before long I must complete rest of my bruteness."

It took very little time for her to plan out. She put the dead body in a big pot and hid it in a corner. Ndime had seen all her evil action holding carefully the blanket away from his eyes. It was simply out of fear that he neither had moved a bit nor showed that he was awake.

In the morning, before the rays of the sun touched Ndime's body, he left the kraal. However, he was so scared and frightened that he did not dare to go to his mother. "Would my mother do the same?" This logic of his own bade him to leave the village

and go in search of his father. He went in the direction the hunting party had gone. There on the side of the road was a big fig tree.

He climbed it to cast his eyes in all directions to know whether the hunters were seen anywhere. He waited on the tree.

After a long time the party was heard singing. He climbed the top-most branch of the tree and saw that the people were his own and were now returning. It seemed they had killed many elephants. The slaves were carrying the flesh as well as the tusks. The hunters were joyfully singing while walking in the direction of their village.

"Let us rest under this fig tree before we begin our last leg of the journey to our people," said the Chief and sat down. This was imitated by the rest of the party. "Leave the loads here," ordered he, "and go and wash in the pool and bring some water for me to drink."

Some went for wash. Some began to roast some flesh to propitiate the spirits of the ancestors. The Chief got busy counting the tusks. While he was doing this, he heard a song:

"While you were on your journey,
While you were on your journey,
She killed her own child
Mistaking Nsere for me.
Mistaking Nsere for me,
She killed her own child."

The Chief stopped doing anything and listened attentively. In the meantime, the hunters returned from the pool. They also heard the song. "Is this a bird that is singing?" said one and raised his head high. "No. It's a boy in his body," replied the other. In a short time they found that he was Ndime, the Chief's son.

"What are you for on the tree, Ndime?" asked the Chief.

"Go and ask my mother, the mother of Ndime," replied the boy.

"What is it that you are singing, Ndime?" asked the senior man in the party.

"Go and ask my step-mother, and not me," replied Ndime.

"You come down and join with us. We will surely ask your stepmother," advised the Chief.

"I won't come with you. I fear my mother as well," said Ndime and began to climb higher.

The carriers climbed the tree and followed him. They put him on the shoulders and brought him down. The party returned home hurriedly and gloomily. As they entered the village, all the people followed the party to the Chief's home. At once the Chief ordered, "Bring my child Nsere to me."

The junior wife began to search for her daughter. She got busy shouting and pretending that she was very near before a few minutes. But the child was not to be found. She baffled and worried as if the child was lost before her father had returned. When Ndime found that he was safe near his father and that his step-mother had shown signs of guilt, he whispered something in the ear of the chief, his father.

The Chief stood up solemnly. He walked slowly to the kraal of his junior wife. He began his search in every nook and corner of the kraal. He saw the pot as Ndime had mentioned in whisper. He lifted all things which hid it. "Nsere!" he wailed and cried and fainted. He lay half-dead.

His wives were called in. The elders of the village came in. The hunters followed them. Every inch of the kraal was peopled. It looked more crowded with human beings than a hill would be with ants. The Chief was brought back to life from swoon. He was comforted a little. Then he asked his men to carry him out in the open air.

"Why hast thou killed my child?" asked the Chief to the guilty.

She stood deaf and dumb.

The Chief asked for the pot to be placed in his front. Then it was placed on her head to carry it to the river. When the crowd reached the river, the Chief asked the murderess to walk into the river where the waters were deep and whirling. As she hesitated, she was forced to obey. Amidst muttering of hatred she was drowned with the pot.

KAONDE MYTH

The creation of all things on earth has been ascribed by the Ba-Kaonde to Leza, their Supreme God. They say, though Leza is not seen, he is a working power present everywhere. He is also regarded as the founder of religious beliefs, rites, ceremonies, social customs, moral laws and political order.

This Leza was alone long long ago. He did not like to be alone. So he created two people, our first ancestors, in the north-west corner of Zambia. They were Mulonga the first man and Mwinambuzhi the first woman. Mulonga was strong and fearless. Mwinambuzhi was delicate and wavering. This was the only difference between them. Otherwise they looked similar. They were not assigned any sexual difference at that time. They were without any genital organs. This deficiencies in their anatomy caused them much discomfort for a long time. So Mulonga went to Leza who was living on a hill, and consulted him about the unbearable affair of being attracted to each other without any pleasure-giving intercourse.

Leza gave two different roots of herbs and advised: "Take these roots. This one you put at night in your crutch, and this, the small one, is for your Mwinambuzhi to use in the same manner."

Mulonga took the return journey. As the way was long, he was forced to spend one night on a tree. Before he slept, he placed the root between his legs. In spite of his unsound sleep, in the morning he found that he was a man complete in that respect. Then he curiously examined the other root. He found it smelling bad. He thought it had decayed. So he threw it away.

When he arrived, Mwinambuzhi was amazed with the wonderful change he had gone through. She also wanted an appropriate change. So she asked Mulonga about it in detail, but he did not say a word about the root he had thrown away.

Now was Mwinambuzhi's turn to go to Leza for the root. After finding the fact, Leza gave her a fresh root. So she also became a perfect woman.

Then, their sexual desire grew uncontrollable. Both imagined the carnal knowledge about sex relations and practised accordingly, but after the passion-pleasure was over they felt anxious and got frightened. They hastened to Leza to solve their doubts.

Leza assured them that their imagination and act of intercourse were instinctively right and had done nothing wrong to them. Then he added: "However, Mulonga! You have sinned by throwing away the root given for your partner, so you pay her a Muketo (marriage gift). Since then the Muketo has been given to a bride in marriage among the Kaonde.

When they were walking away Leza laughed on their innocence but suddenly became serious. He worried about their future. After a while, he called Mayimba (the honey-guide bird), and asked him whether he knew the place of the couple. Being a friend of the man and the woman, Mayimba was ordered by Leza to take three gourds to them. Each of them was closed with wax at either end.

"Take these, and hand them over to the couple," said Leza, "but remember. Do not open any of them on the way. And hear. The big and the small gourds contain seeds for sowing. However, the middle-sized needs my instruction before it is opened. Tell your friends to use the two and wait for my advice to open the middle-sized."

Mayimba took the gourds and set off, speculating about the contents of the forbidden gourd. The more he thought of the gourd, the more did he grow curious to know the secret. At last he grew so anxious that he opened the forbidden gourd.

What was inside? There were all manners of carnivora, poisonous reptiles and shrubs, sickness of every kind as well as death (lufu). No sooner did he open the gourd than they all escaped and spread over the earth. Mayimba tried to catch them and put them back into the gourd but in vain. He could not catch any. Such was their speed and magic. So fast they spread over.

Thus, the death was set on the life of living beings.

THE DOG THAT MARRIED THE BOYS WITH THE GIRLS

A thick forest was divided into two by a river. On the northern bank of the river was a village, inhabited by the young men only, and in the village on the southern bank were living young women only. Formerly, there were not two villages like these. All men and women were living in one village on an island in the middle of the river. Once a dreadful plague spread over the village. The people began to die daily. So they consulted a witch-doctor who advised them to form two villages out of one. "All the men, unaccompanied by any of the women, should go and build their village on the northern bank of the river and all the women, unaccompanied by any of the men, should do the same on the southern bank," he said.

This created an embarrassing position. There were no other villages in the forest. So there were no other men and women there. Nonetheless, they liked to live. No one wanted to die, but the decision was not easy. By the time they decided to build separate villages, all the old folk had been dead, only the young boys and girls had survived. Reluctantly they acted upon the advice of the witch-doctor who was neither a man nor woman. What would you call a person who is half man and half woman? He or she? There you are! When the boys and girls left their birthplace, the witch-doctor shut himself/herself, call what you may, in the hut of the dead chief, set the hut on fire and burnt himself/herself alive.

With little skill they had, both the boys and girls built their dwellings on the banks of the river. Then the boys began to gather on the bank at the end of the day. The girls too did the same thing, and both sexes exchanged fun. They liked to join themselves to be husbands and wives and bear children but for fear of death they did not dare act in that direction. This separation continued for years. They mourned the unbearable situation. They composed songs of sorrow and curse and lived to wait for the death who joined the human beings with their ancestral spirits.

The bachelors had tamed a wild dog who killed animals for them. One dog was enough. Guess, how? Well, they fed him on

maggots mixed with strong medicine that kept him extraordinarily powerful. Had the girls a similar dog to provide them with food? No. What did they do then? Well, they lived on fish from the river.

It so happened one year that there was a drought. This was followed by a famine. The river went dry. So the spinsters dug broad wells in the sands of the river and developed fisheries. These also dried up soon. Now what should they do? They worried a lot. They began to grow thin and weak. On the other bank, the boys began to put on weight. Do you know, why? Their dog had a magic with him. Then, owing to the drought the forest animals had grown weak. So the dog was able to hunt more animals than ever. Thus, the boys had more food this year than before.

One hot night, which was hotter than the day, the girls could not sleep. For want of food, they were losing their energy. They got together to find a solution.

"Can we not borrow the boys' dog at intervals?" said one.

"How will this solve the problem?" asked another.

"I think he will hunt for us," added the third girl.

At last they nominated the most beautiful girl to approach the boys. She dressed herself to add to her beauty and went to the boys.

"Will you have mercy on us?" asked that girl.

"What can we do for you?" came a question from the head-boy.

"May you be kind enough to lend us your dog at intervals?"

"We don't mind that but what will you give us in return?"

What could the girl say? Nothing. However, the head-boy, bewitched with the beauty and manners of the girl, agreed to lend the dog to the girls with a condition.

"Look, Beauty! This is a super-animal. Only one girl can command the dog to charge upon the animals. If all of you would begin to order the dog to hunt for you, he will go mad, run away into the bush never to return", said the head-boy.

"Will this happen?" asked another boy.

"Why? It could surely happen. Don't you know when women talk they do so all at a time?" the boys laughed at the words of their mate.

"Then we shall lose the dog for ever. Why should we run a risk like that?" doubted the fourth boy.

"Come what may. I am not prepared to lose our manly attitude towards women. We are gallant and so shall we remain. I don't want the girls say that the boys are selfish," remarked the head-boy and handed over the dog to Beauty with a mindful warning. Beauty thanked him wordlessly and left for her folk.

For a few days everything went well. The dog killed enough animals in a day. One day's hunt lasted for four days for the girls. So every fifth day Beauty borrowed the dog. Now one day it happened like this. When Beauty was asleep, three of the girls came out. Out of innocence they all ordered the dog at a time. The dog went crazy. He went mad. He ran into the bush and never returned.

Days after days passed. The boys grew weary. They grew hungry too. They sent a word to the girls to return their dog but the messenger returned to tell the sad news of the dog's disappearance. So the boys went mad too. They rushed to the girls' village to take revenge. The girls knew that they would not be able to defend themselves. They also knew that the boys would devour them, if they resented any way.

Therefore, they thought and thought. As they saw the boys approaching the village, the girls entered their huts, beautifully dressed themselves and sat at the threshold waiting for the fate.

When the bachelors arrived, they were received by the girls with marriageable warmth. The boys' wrath melted into love. Needless to say that the dog was forgotten and they married to live till death joined them with their ancestral spirits.

THE BELL BEWILDERED THE LION

There lived a small and simple hunter in a small and simple village. He had a small but clever dog. The hunter did not go out without the dog. Not only the dog was his instrument in hunting, but also a companion. He was his protector too. Very often he had saved the hunter from wild attacks of the wild beasts. He had tied a bell to the dog's collar.

Whenever he went hunting, he carried a home-made gun with him. He knew the whole forest. He knew its corners. He knew its swamps and hills. He knew its vegetation. He knew the abodes of birds, beasts and reptiles. He knew their habits too. As hunting was his life he was an expert hunter.

One day he went hunting as usual. He carried the gun and the dog accompanied him. He went here and there and looked high and low but could not spot even the weakest beast to shoot. After roaming for miles he got tired. So he sat to rest under a tree.

Suddenly the clouds gathered in the sky. They covered the sun completely. Darkness spread all around. After a while it began to rain. Shortly it started pouring. The hunter and his dog took shelter under a bigger and broader tree but could not save themselves from rain. On the contrary, their bodies began to pour streams down the earth.

After a while they began to feel cold. So the hunter cast his eyes far and wide. He succeeded to spot the broad hollow of a tree. He led his dog to it and both took refuge in it. When they entered it, the hunter was amazed to find that the hollow was bigger and longer than it was imagined to be. For a few moments they rested at the mouth of the hollow and then began to explore its darkness. When they went five yards into it, a lion entered the hollow to protect himself from the rain. Without noticing the hunter or the dog he sat in such a way that the darkness grew darker. The hunter gathered from the smell of the lion's sweat that it was a danger to stay in the hollow for long. The dog also could not bark out of fear.

At last the hunter had an idea. He untied the bell of the dog took off his loin cloth and waited for the chance. When the lion got fast asleep he tied the bell to the lion's tail so cleverly that there was no mishap. After a while, the lion moved his body in sleep. This made the bell jingle. The lion looked around with the sleepy eyes. As he turned around, the bell broke into music. The lion got up with fright. The bell rang more. The lion jumped out of the hollow. The jingling followed. He had known that the hunter, with his dog having a bell, was an expert in shooting. So the lion was scared. He ran with all his might. He ran without looking behind. He ran without thinking. He ran without feeling the bell tied to his tail. He simply ran and ran: fast, faster, fastest till he was exhausted and broke down.

The hunter came out of the hollow happily and took the way home with the dog. All the way he was whistling in praise of his deed.

CHIYOVO

One day a hunter went out hunting with his dog. He roamed and wandered, wandered and roamed for several miles but did not come across a single animal or beast. So, he sat under a tree wearily.

"How could resting help me in hunting?" He asked himself and stood up to search for the prey. In due course, he came to a plane where he saw a very shiny thing lying like a stick.

"Could this be a snake? No. How could it be? I have never come across a snake with two mouths like this!" He brooded over the sight for sometime then suddenly cried, "CHIYOVO".

Do you understand what he said? "CHIYOVO" is a Luchazi word. It means, unfortunate.

The hunter thought; "How unfortunate I am that I have come across a living thing with two mouths joined together — never seen before!" So he cried, "CHIYOVO".

Hearing this the creature said, "Then you must die." At the end of these words the hunter died on the spot.

The dog licked the dead master's body, moved near and far, times without number and then as if he knew what the death was, ran to the village. He went to the hunter's wife with a sad face and double space. When she saw the dog without her husband she wondered.

She took little time in understanding dog's barking and pulling her dress. He was saying: "My mistress, don't wonder. Don't be surprised. It is the wonder or the surprise that has taken away my master's spirit".

Hearing this, the woman wept and cried bitterly. She began to weep with mourning songs. The neighbours gathered around her. They sent for her relatives also. They all followed the dog who directed them to reach the plane where the hunter's body was lying like a log. They carried with them spears and axes.

"You've lived with my husband, you dog, but have not died with him. Can you not show me the way to get him back to me? I beg of you", the widow mourned.

"There is a way to get him back," replied the dog.

"Tell us, please, tell us the way. We want our renowned hunter to life," said the mourners.

"Then do what I say," asked the dog.

"What?" asked the crowd anxiously.

"Come with me. I will show you the surprise that took the toll of your beloved hunter, my master. At the same time I warn you if you get surprised, or wonder, or cry out 'unfortunate,' you also shall meet the same fate," instructed the dog.

The dog's warning was repeated by an owl sitting in the hollow of a tree by the path.

The people followed the dog, deaf and dumb. They were also surprised but did not show the surprise on their faces. They also wondered but did not show any sign of desperation. They stood deaf and dumb near the creature watching its movement.

Then the dog ordered: "Now, all of you go with your axes and spears and cut some creppers from the rock looking down on you so that coffin basket can be made for the dead body."

Before the dog stopped instructing, the crowd got on their feet to reach the rock. At this, the awful creature said, "I have neither seen nor heard a dog ordering human beings. "CHIYOVO"! CHIYOVO!"

Then the dog said, "If that is so you also meet the same fate as my master. You die because you have uttered the same words as my master. May my master come to life".

Really, the creature died and the hunter woke up as if from slumber. When the people returned with creppers, they were amazed to find the hunter alive. So they went home singing songs of achievement.

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