

Vikram and Betaal Stories

Betaal Pachisi written nearly 2,500 years ago by Mahakavi Somdev Bhatt, are spellbinding stories told to the wise King Vikramaditya by the wily ghost Betaal. The tales of Vikram and Betaal possess a wealth of pageantry and splendor of long ago.



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The Meeting of Vikram and Betaal

Vikram was the name of a king. He ruled over a city on the banks of Godavari River. He was very famous for his bravery and courage. People loved him because he always rendered justice.

One day a sage came to the court of Vikram and gifted him a fruit. The king handed it over to his treasurer. Thereafter, the sage kept coming to the court daily to gift a fruit to the king. The king could not understand the reason behind this behaviour. But still he did not try to find out the sage's intentions.

However, one morning, Vikram noticed a monkey sitting on the palace wall and gave the fruit to it. The monkey had started eating the fruit when suddenly a dazzling gem fell out of it. The King was very surprised. He immediately ordered his treasurer to get him all the fruits kept in the storage. The fruits had gone bad but when the king had them crushed, each one of them yielded a precious gem. The generous King donated all these gems to the poor and waited for the sage's visit to the court.

The next day, the sage visited the court of Vikram with yet another fruit.

Vikram welcomed the sage and asked him "Your Holiness! Can you please tell me why you have been giving me such precious gifts? Without good reason, I cannot accept any gifts from you."

The sage replied, "I need the help of a brave man for a spiritual goal. Will you help me?" Vikram readily agreed to this. So the sage said, "O King, please come to the burial ground on the next moonless night. It is at a distance of 20 miles from here. I will wait for you under a banyan tree." Vikram agreed to follow the instructions.

On the said night, Vikram covered his head and body with a black cloth and unnoticed, reached the appointed spot in the forest. The sage was waiting for him and told him, "King Vikram! To the south of this forest is an old tamarind tree on which hangs a corpse upside down. Please bring it to me." The king immediately followed the sage's orders and reached the tamarind tree. On finding a corpse there, he cut it loose. As soon as the corpse fell to the ground, it laughed loudly with a cackling sound. The king realized that it was a ghost. But the courageous king carried the body over his shoulders and started towards his capital. A short distance later, the ghost left Vikram's shoulders and escaped to its original spot. The king climbed up the tree, brought down the ghost and placing it on his shoulders started walking again. "Who are you?" he asked the ghost. "I am Betaal" replied the ghost and in turn asked Vikram, "Why and where are you taking me away?"

"A sage has requested me to bring you to him," replied Vikram.

Betaal did not have any objection to going with Vikram but he laid down a condition. "We have to cover a long distance and to relieve the tedious walk, I will tell you a story. But you should not utter even one word till we reach the destination. If by chance you utter anything, I will fly back to the tamarind tree. Do you agree to this?" asked Betaal. Vikram agreed to this and silently listened to Betaal's story.



The three special brahmins

Once upon a time there lived a rich brahmin by name of Vishnuswamin, who was performing a huge sacrificial rite. He had three sons who were each very fastidious about three specific things. The eldest was fastidious about food, the second about women and the third about beds. Vishnuswamin wanted a tortoise for his sacrifice. So he sent his three sons to get one. They did find one but each of them refused to touch it and bring it back home, as each claimed to be as fastidious as the other.

Well then to decide, they approached the king with this matter of deciding who among them was the most fastidious. He decided to test them all. He invited the first one, to a very special feast prepared very exquisitely. But the first son, refused to touch the food claiming that the he smelt burnt corpses in the rice. On investigation, the king found that the grains of which the rice was cooked was from a field near a cremation ground. The king was impressed.

He then decided to test the second son by sending a very very pretty and beautiful concubine, to him. But the second son sent her away saying that she was smelling like a goat. On investigation, the king found that she had been fed goat milk when she was a child. The king was impressed.

Then he decided to test the third son, by letting him sleep in a bed with seven huge mattresses. In the middle of the night, the third son awoke with a lot of pain and a red mark on his shoulder. On verifying, it was found that there was a piece of hair in the bed below the seven mattresses. The king was impressed with all three and could not decide who was best but instead decided to use the skill of all three in his court and hired them. So Vishnuswamin could not complete his sacrifice.

Betaal stops and asks King Vikram asks this question: Who among the three is the most fastidious? Vikram replies with a lot of thought, "The third son, as he had definite evidence wit that red mark. The other two could have obtained information from elsewhere too."

As soon as Vikram had finished his answer, Betaal disappeared back to the tree.

The three sensitive queens

Once upon a time there lived a king of Ujjayani by name of Dharmadhvaja, who had three exquisitely sensitive queens. He loved all three of them very much, all of them were of unparalleled beauty.

On one occasion, while the king was playing with the first queen, he ruffled her hair. The lotus flower on her ear fell over her thigh, and made a wound and she cried out loud. The king was surprised at her sensitivity and immediately requested medical attention for her.

On another occasion, when he was with the second queen on a full moon night on the roof of his palace, the queen suddenly felt her skin burning of the moonlight. The king ordered medical attention for her too and was again surprised at her sensitivity.

On third occasion, when he was with the third queen, she collapsed on the floor on hearing of the sound of a mortar grinding rice, far far away. The king immediately ordered medical attention for her and was surprised too.

Since then he took utmost care of his three ultra sensitive queens.

Betaal stops and asks King Vikram asks this question: Who among the three queens is the most sensitive? Vikram replies with a lot of thought, "The third one, as she had not even been touched by the light or flower. She had only heard a noise from distance."

As soon as Vikram had finished his answer, Betaal disappeared back to the tree.



The Three suitors

Once upon a time there was born a beautiful daughter, Mandaravati, to a very famous priest. When the daughter grew of age, the father was worried about her marriage. Once, three eligible bachelors came to the father and each asked him for the hand of the daughter. Each of them threatened to kill himself lest the daughter be married off to any other of the three. The father decided not to marry her off to anyone.

One day, she caught a very high pitched fever and died suddenly. All three of them, grief-struck, cremated the body of Mandaravati. One of them decided to stay there and slept on the ashes of Mandaravati. The other took her bones and went to the Ganges. The third became an ascetic and wandered off.

On one of his wanderings, the third one reached a brahmin's house. The brahmin, by power of a spell, was able to bring the dead alive from the ashes. This was in a book which the brahmin guarded safely. But the third suitor, in the stealth of night, stole this book and went back to the cremation ground of Mandaravati. The second one had returned from the Ganges with the holy water, and the first one was still there sleeping on the ashes.

Then he with the help of the other two, recited the spell from the book and lo Behold!! Mandaravati was reborn! Then the three of them started fighting about whose wife she should be. Each of them claiming the revival being due to his effort

Betaal stops and asks King Vikram asks this question: Who among the three suitors should be the husband of Mandaravati? Vikram replies with a lot of thought, "The person who gave her the life by reciting the spell is her creator, it could be her father. The person who took her bones to Ganges shall be her son. But the person who committed himself to the ground and slept on her ashes out of love, can be her husband."

As soon as Vikram had finished his answer, Betaal disappeared back to the tree.

The exchanged heads

Once upon a time there lived a washerman named Dhavala. He once spotted a very beautiful lady at pond, who happened to be the daughter of another washerman. He instantly fell in love with her and pleaded with his parents to ask her parents for her hand in marriage. His parents did accordingly and the girl, Madanasundari, got married to him with her parents consent. She then went with Dhavala to live with him.

Once the brother of Madanasundari, came to Dhavala to invite his sister and brother-in-law to their place for festival season. Dhavala agreed and the three of them were returning to Madanasundari's home. On the way they happened to pass by the temple of Durga Devi, the all powerful goddess of power. Her brother wanted to pay a visit to the goddess, and went to the temple. But as soon as he came near the goddess, he wanted to make a massive sacrifice to the goddess. So saying he cut his head off for the goddess. Madanasundari was worried and she then sent her husband to see what the matter was. On seeing the state of his brother-in-law, the husband was also moved deeply and he decided to offer his own head too to the goddess and cut his own head with his scitmar. Madanasundari, after a long wait came and saw both her brother and husband lying on the ground and then decided to take her own life but asked the goddess to get the same brother and husband in the next life. The goddess was pleased and stopped her from dying and asked her to join their heads and bodies and then she granted them life. In a hurry, Madanasundari, exchanged the heads of her brother and husband and was perplexed.

Betaal stops and asks King Vikram asks this question: Who among the two is the husband of Madanasundari? Vikram replies with a lot of thought, "The body that carries her husband's head is is her husband. The head is the most important part of the human body, and the rest of the body is identified by the head."

As soon as Vikram had finished his answer, Betaal disappeared back to the tree.

A promise not kept

It was a dark night and was raining from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. There were strange noises and in between the thunderclaps the moaning of jackals could be heard. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces and there were strange and mysterious laughter of the spirits.

But inspite of such a weird atmosphere king Vikramaditya did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree to bring the corpse down and soon he began crossing the desolate cremation ground, with the corpse lying on his shoulder.

The Betaal that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King , I pity you as you are making untiring efforts without relaxing as if you wish to achieve something. Instead of enjoying a comfortable sleep on a cozy bed, you're still coming after me. You seem to be quite adamant. Such arrogance may not help you keep your promise if you had given one to anybody. You'll realize the futility of the whole thing if only you listen to my story."

The Betaal then narrated this story. The ruler of Kishanagar, Rajendra, was extremely strong and courageous. He was a good ruler and cared about his people very much as he would not do anything unjust. His subjects were happy and contented. They had no problems. His queen, Prema, gave birth to a beautiful daughter, Sona.

Being an only child, Sona enjoyed a lot of freedom and was brought up like a boy. She grew up clever not only in studies but in the use of the bow and arrow and sword. She learnt the art of self-defence. When she reached marriageable age, her parents began searching for a suitable husband for her.

But Sona disagreed to their proposal as she had some definite ideas and views.

She said to her parents that , "Dear Father, I want that my husband should be one who is highly skilled in fighting and who is able to overpower, me in fight. Suppose if our kingdom face an enemy in the future, he should be able to fight & defeat them in war. If you agree to this condition then, you may make an announcement".

The King & Queen were very proud to hear about their daughter's thoughts. The announcement was made in Kishanagar as well as in the neighbouring kingdoms. Thinking that Sona is only a girl, and it should not be

a difficult to win a fight with her, many suitors came forward to accept her challenge as they also knew that Sona being the only heir they would have complete sway over the kingdom once they married her.

But when they (the suitors) met Sona face to face these princes realized it was not that easy to defeat her. Everyone of them was routed by Sona, and they had to go back disappointed. She was taking on the suitors one after another, among them was Udayavarma, the prince of Chandanghar.

He watched the fight every day , by joining the crowd. He carefully watched how Princess Sona fought and the different strategies she adopted to meet the method of fighting followed by each prince. One day, he could not control himself when he saw a particular way she used the sword.



He got up and shouted "Bravo!" in appreciation and encouragement. Sona turned to look at him, wondering who he might be who could understand the intricacies of each and every stance and step during the fight.

But among such a large crowd she could only get a glimpse of him.

By now Udayavarma had learnt all her strategies, and the next day he was ready to fight with her. The two fought cleverly and fiercely. Neither of them was prepared to surrender to the other. During her fight Sona tried all her tricks, but Udayavarma was able to meet every one of them. She soon discovered that he was a good swordsman and that she would not be able to subdue him so easily. Soon Sona was defeated by Udayavarma. She stopped the fight and joined her parents.

Cheers rose from the audience who was watching the proceedings very eagerly. When Udayavarma came forward to present himself to the King and queen, Sona recognized him as the one who had cheered her in encouragement the other day. She asked Udayavarma and he confessed to it.

Now Sona knew how he had succeeded in overpowering her. She came forward and said to him that "My condition was that I would marry anyone who would defeat me in the contest. Though you've defeated me, I can't

marry you. You can yourself find out the reason." Udayavarma thought for a while and said . "Yes what you say is right, O Princess. I should not marry you." He bowed to her and left the palace.

The king and queen were surprised over their daughter's decision as according to her contest Sona insisted that she would marry only that man who would defeat her in the fight and Udayavarma had achieved it , but now she was not ready to marry him and even Udayavarma, too, had meekly accepted her decision, saying he could not possibly claim her hand. How strange! They were unable to guess what really was the cause?

The Betaal concluded the story and asked King Vikramaditya,

1) "O king ! I've some doubts.I think Sona was proud of herself that she was an expert in warfare and that's why she announced that she would marry only whoever defeated her, didn't she?

2) As she scored a victory over one prince after another, she was becoming more and more arrogant.

3) Then came Udayavarma who succeeded in overpowering her. Again it was her from keeping her word.

4) Why did she say he did not deserve her hand in marriage in spite of his victory over her?

It was all because of her arrogance, wasn't it? If you know the answers to my questions that speak out if you don't then I warn you that "your head will be blown to pieces!"

King Vikramaditya did not take much time to answer the questions Betaal had asked. He said

1 & 2) " I don't think Sona was arrogant."

3) Though she had agreed that condition that Udayavarma had defeated her in sword-fight but she didn't keep her word. That's true, but this doesn't makes her arrogant. If we think deep, we can find out what had prompted her to take such a stand. She certainly was one who would keep her word.

4) Unlike other princes, Udayavarma did not go for a fight with her straight away, instead he sat in the crowd and watched her fighting and in between he had studied all the



strategies that she adopted while fighting, just as a disciple would learn from his teacher.



And a teacher cannot marry his or her student. It's universally accepted that one's father, mother and teacher are all like a god. Sona realized that Udayavarma was first her student and then a suitor and she was not willing to accept that relationship for the purpose of marriage. Udayavarma too thought on the same lines and realized that he could not marry Sona, because she was like his teacher. So he respected the wishes of his teacher, that's why he decided not to press his claim to her hand.

The relationship between a teacher and his student is more sacred than that between others. That's why Sona went back on the condition she herself had stipulated. Betaal knew that king will definitely speak out the answer so he flew back to the ancient tree carrying the corpse along with him.

Vikramaditya drew his sword and went after the Betaal.



Reward of life

It was a dark night and was raining from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. There were strange noises and in between the thunderclaps the moaning of jackals could be heard. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces and there were strange and mysterious laughter of the spirits.

But inspite of such a weird atmosphere king Vikramaditya did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree to bring the corpse down and soon he began crossing the desolate cremation ground, with the corpse lying on his shoulder.

The Betaal that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King , I pity you as you are making untiring efforts without relaxing as if you wish to achieve something. Instead of enjoying a comfortable sleep on a cozy bed, you're still coming after me. You seem to be quite adamant. Such arrogance may not help you keep your promise if you had given one to anybody. You'll realize the futility of the whole thing if only you listen to my story." And the vampire began his narration.



Long long ago, Kanchannagar was being ruled by King Chandradeep . His daughter was Indumati . Being an only child, the princess was brought up like a boy, and given training in the use of arms and warfare. It was certain that whoever wed her would also become the ruler of Kanchannagar. The princes of many of the neighbouring kingdoms cherished a desire to marry Indumati, who was, besides everything else, extremely beautiful.

Whenever the king broached the subject of marriage, Princess Indumati, would hesitate to give him a definite answer, but one day Indumati said yes to his father, "Yes, father, but...". The king stared at her , waiting for her to complete the sentence.

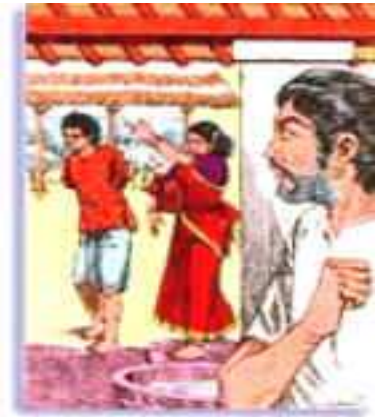
" Whoever marries me must be strong and brave. And he must succeed in the tests that I give." Indumati, then spelt out what kind of tests she was contemplating for her suitors.

The king was horrified. "Don't insist on any such test," he advised the princess. "They're all hazardous. No one will come forward to undergo the tests for fear their life. Just forget about them."

"Don't worry, father," Indumati, assured Chandradeep. "All those who profess that they love me than their life will certainly take these tests. You just watch!"

The king consulted his ministers. They came out with a suggestion. "If the princess is determined to impose the tests, let her wish be carried out," said the prime Minister. "But when we make the announcement, let us not spell out the details. They will be let known only at time of the test."

Chandradeep agreed to the suggestion. The royal announcement about the princess wedding merely stated that the suitors would have to take certain tests. The announcement was made in all the neighbouring kingdoms, including Jayanagar, where a young man named Kurupshana heard it.



He had been born with both hands stunted. His mother died soon after he was born, and his father took a second wife. The boy was named Kurupshana, the ugly looking.

His stepmother was not at all kind-hearted, and she ill-treated him much. It was seldom that he even got a full meal. She knew that the boy, with his handicap, would not be much use to her.

Kurupshana did not utter a word in protest or by way of complaint. But he lamented within himself. 'Mother is always scolding & harassing me under one pretext or other. Won't there be an end to all this? They feel that I'm no good and I had better die! I must take this as a challenge and show them that I too, can face life.'

He decided to go to Kanchannagar. Quite a few princes had by then assembled at Kanchannagar. There were some young men, too, wishing to try their luck, if the princes were to fail. They all spent their time guessing what kind of tests the princess would put them through. Some of them thought it could be

wrestling. Some others thought it could be their performance with the bow and arrow.

The time came to announce the details of the tests. The King & Princess Indumati came to the stage and sat next to the king, and on the other side of the king sat the Prime Minister. He got up from his seat and faced the princely suitors. " The contest is about to start! Several suitors are present here to win the hand of princess Indumati. It is her wish that they are put to certain tests. Whoever succeed in the test will qualify to wed her. You all can see the wall in front of you. You have to climb the wall and jump down into the three-tiered cage of sharp knives. The test is, while doing so, you must be careful not to injure yourself. There should not be a single scratch on your body from the blades of the knives. Whoever is willing to participate in the test may step forward!"

Many princes rose from their seats, and went and took a good look at the high wall as well as the cage of knives. One by they went back to their seats. The wall looked too high for them; the cage was placed deep down below; and the space between the knives was very small. They would not be able to jump down without injuring themselves. None dared even to make an attempt.

As they went back to their seats, some of them protested. "What kind of test is this? It could have been a sword- fight or wrestling or archery, or any other of that kind. But not this! It is almost trap from where one can't escape with one's life. Why should any one sacrifice his life for the hand of a mad princess in the world!"



It looked as though no suitor was willing to take the test. The king was in a dilemma. He regretted that his daughter did not accept his advice and desite from insisting ontests.

Kurupshana was watching all this from his seat. suddenly a thought struck him. After all, people back home, like his stepmother, were only wishing for his death. If he were to succeed in the test by the grace of god, he stood to win the hand of none else than a princess!

So, why should he not try his luck? And if he were to die, nobody would grieve over his fate. He left his seat and walked up to King Chandradeep . "Your Majesty, can I have your permission to take the test?"

The king was shocked. Who was this ugly- looking handicapped youth? Suppose he were to succeed in the test? His daughter would have to marry him- according to the rules of the game. And if that happened, she would have to spend the rest of her life in the company of a handicapped husband!

Princess Indumati, too, was in a similar dilemma. She was expecting to be married off to a prince, brave, daring and handsome. But look at this ugly youth! Would it be her fate to become his wife? She regretted she ever thought of tests for her suitors.

Suddenly a doubt arose in her mind: would this young man be able to climb that high wall? How would he avoid a scratch while jumping into the cage when he had no hands to guide him through the sharp knives? She almost concluded that he would only meet with his end if he were to be foolish enough to attempt jumping down from the wall. King Chandradeep waited for a moment to know his daughter's reaction, and then gave the permission to Kurupshana.



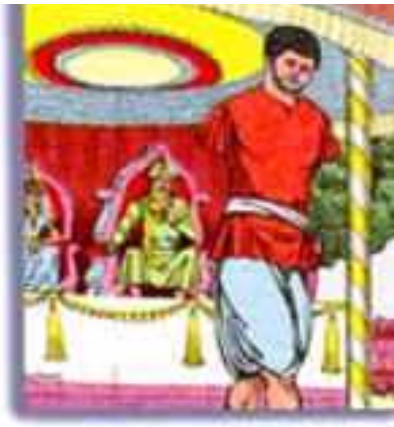
Kurupshana went up the wall and asked the soldiers to take him to the top of the wall.

He then took a good look at the cage and jumped down. He landed between the knives arrayed all around on all the three tiers. He was unscratched! A loud cheer arose from the audience.

The cage was slowly raised, to allow the young man to come out. He then walked towards the king and the princess. Their face had gone a milky white.

Kurupshana realised their predicament. "O King! Please don't worry. I didn't wish to marry the princess. I had only wanted to take a challenge and I know I've succeeded.

That itself is a big reward of my life and I can now face life." He bowed low before the king and retreated.



The vampire ended his narration there and turned to King Vikramaditya. " O King! Didn't Kurupshana behave like a foolish? If he had no intention of marrying the princess, why did he at all decide to undergo the test?

And after having succeeded in the test and qualified to wed the princess, why did not want to marry her? What was the reward he was referring to when he said he didn't want to aspire for anything more? If you know the answer and still decide not to satisfy me, beware, your head will be blown to pieces!

"True, Kurupshana was a handicapped young man," said the king. " He was fully aware of his handicap that bothered his stepmother. He really wished that she changed her opinion about him. She should not any longer feel that he was no good. Instead she should know that where people with no handicap had failed, he could, despite his handicap, come out a victor.



That, for him, was the biggest reward he could aspire for. He decided to undergo the hazardous test not with the hope of marrying a princess. If he married her, he would one day be called upon to rule the kingdom. But as a ruler, he wouldn't be able even to hold sword.

If that was the case, it wouldn't be proper for him to marry her. That was why he gave up his claim to her hand. It was not any act of a foolish person. On the contrary, it was the decision of an intelligent, wise person."



Betaal knew that king will definitely speak out the answer so he flew back to the ancient tree carrying the corpse along with him.

Vikramaditya drew his sword and went after the Betaal.

The four boys who made a lion

Once upon a time there lived four sons of a poor brahmin who taught them all the Vedas and the holy scriptures. On their parents death, they decided to go and stay with their mother's father. But on reaching there they found that they were unwelcome there and that their cousins were unreceptive to the brothers. Then the brothers decided to each go out into the world and learn a special skill and come back and meet at a common place after a while. So they dispersed and came back to the same place at the appointed time. Each told what he had learnt. The first one said, " I can create flesh of a creature from a single one of the creature". The second one said, " I know how to grow the hair and skin of a creature if it has flesh and bones." The third one said, "I can create the limbs of a creature if its form is complete with skin hair and flesh and bones". The fourth one said, " I know how to give life to that creature once it is complete in form with limbs".

So they set off into the forest to find a piece of bone on which they could test their skills. The first one they found was a lion's. So each of them displayed his skill and created a live huge Lion, which as fate would have it, killed all four of them and sped away.

Betaal stops and asks King Vikram asks this question: Who among the four brothers is responsible for the death of all of them? Vikram replies with a lot of thought, "The fourth one, as he was the one who gave life to the otherwise dead structure of bones flesh and limbs and hair"

As soon as Vikram had finished his answer, Betaal disappeared back to the tree.

True Reward

It was a dark night and was raining heavily and there were strange noises from every where and voice of the moaning of jackals could be heard.

Although there was a bad atmosphere king Vikramaditya did not fear a bit. He climbed the tree to bring the corpse down and soon he began to walk with the corpse lying on his shoulder.

The Betaal spoke: "O King , I pity you as you are making untiring efforts without relaxing as if you wish to achieve something. Instead of enjoying a comfortable sleep in your palace you're still coming after me"

King didn't speak anything because any word from his mouth would keep Betaal right back on the tree.

So Betaal starts his story.....

Long long ago, Kanchannagar was being ruled by King Chandradeep . His daughter was Indumati . Being an only child, the princess was brought up like a boy, and given training in the use of arms and warfare. The princes of many of the neighbouring kingdoms cherished a desire to marry Indumati, who was, extremely beautiful.

Whenever the king broached the subject of marriage, Indumati said "Yes, but... Whoever marries me must be strong and brave. And he must succeed in the tests that I give."

Indumati, then she listed out what kind of tests she was contemplating for her suitors. The king was horrified. "Don't insist on any such test, They're all hazardous. No one will come forward to undergo the tests for fear their life. Just forget about them."

Indumati said, "Don't worry father! All those who said that they love me than their life will certainly take these tests."

Minister said "If the princess wanted to impose the tests, let her wish be carried out"

The royal announcement about the princess wedding was made stated that the suitors would have to take certain tests. The announcement was made in all the neighbouring kingdoms.

When young handicapped man named Kurupshana from Jayanagar heard it. His mother died soon after he was born, and his father took a second wife. His step mother kept his name Kurupshana, which means ugly looking. His stepmother ill-treated him much. It was seldom that he even got a full meal. She knew that the boy, with his handicap, would not be much use to her.

He decided to go to Kanchannagar. Few princes had were there Kanchannagar. They were guessing what kind of tests the princess would put them through. The time came to announce the details of the tests. The Princess Indumati came to the stage and sat next to the king.

Prime Minister got up from his seat and faced the princely suitors. "Several suitors are present here to win the hand of princess Indumati. It is her wish that they are put to certain tests and Whoever succeed in the test will qualify to wed her. You all can see the wall in front of you. You have to climb the wall and jump down into the three- tiered cage of sharp knives. The important thing is, while doing so, you must not injure yourself. There should not be a single scratch on your body from the blades of the knives."

Many princes took a good look at the high wall as well as the cage of knives. The wall looked too high for them; the cage was placed deep down below; and the space between the knives was very small. None dared even to make an attempt. As they went back to their seats.

It looked as though no suitor was willing to take the test. The king regretted that his daughter did not accept his advice. Kurupshana was watching all this from his seat. Suddenly a thought struck him. After all, people back home, were only wishing for his death. If he were to succeed in the test , he stood to win the hand of princess So, he decided to try his luck. He left his seat and walked up to King Chandradeep. The king was shocked. Princess Indumati, too, was in a similar dilemma. She was expecting to be married off to a prince. Suddenly a doubt arose in her mind: would this young man be able to complete the test. King Chandradeep waited for a moment to know his daughter's decision, and then gave the permission to Kurupshana. Kurupshana went up the wall. He then took a good look at the cage and jumped down. He landed between the knives arrayed all around on all the three tiers. He was

unscathed! He then walked towards the king and the princess. Kurupshana said "Huzoor ! Please don't worry. I didn't wish to marry the princess. I had only wanted to take a challenge and I know I've succeeded. That itself is a big reward of my life and I can now face life." He bowed low before the king and retreated.

The Betaal ended his story and asked to Vikramaditya "King! Didn't Kurupshana behave like a foolish? If he had no intention of marrying the princess, why did he at all decide to undergo the test?" And after having succeeded in the test and qualified to wed the princess, why did not want to marry her? " , "If you know the answer and still decide not to satisfy me, beware, your head will be blown to pieces!"

"You are right, Kurupshana was a handicapped young man," said the Vikramaditya." He was aware of his handicap that bothered his stepmother. He really wished that she changed her opinion about him. She should not any longer feel that he was no good. Instead she should know that where people with no handicap had failed, he could, despite his handicap, come out a victor. That, for him, was the biggest reward he could aspire for. He decided to undergo the test not with the hope of marrying a princess. If he married her, he would one day be called upon to rule the kingdom. But as a ruler, he wouldn't be able even to hold sword and could not even protect his kingdom, so it wouldn't be wise decision for him to marry her. That's why he gave up his claim to her hand. It was the decision of a wise person."

Betaal knew that king will definitely speak out the answer so he flew back to the ancient tree carrying the corpse along with him. Vikramaditya drew his sword and went after the Betaal .

Reward for Gatekeeper

It was a dark night and was raining heavily and there were strange noises from every where and voice of the moaning of jackals could be heard.

Although there was a bad atmosphere king Vikramaditya did not fear a bit. He climbed the tree to bring the corpse down and soon he began to walk with the corpse lying on his shoulder.

The Betaal spoke: "O King , I pity you as you are making untiring efforts without relaxing as if you wish to achieve something. Instead of enjoying a comfortable sleep in your palace you're still coming after me"

King didn't speak anything because any word from his mouth would keep Betaal right back on the tree.

So Betaal starts his story.....

Once Upon a time there lived a king named Chandrakant. He is very brave and kind king. He was taking good care of his subjects. Everyone was living with peace in his kingdom.

Once a guard came to him and told him that "Huzoor! you must alert our soldiers, as enemy might attack our country within few days". Chandrakant asked him how could he say before the moment. The guard didn't reply anything.

Few days went away. Suddenly neighbour country attacked Chandrakant's Kingdom , but as his soldiers were alert. They fought bravely and defeat the opponent. Chandrakant remembered the advice of the guard.

After finishing war he came back to the palace. He was relaxing on his bed at the night. He decided to give good reward to the guard next day.

Next day, he called a guard. Guard came very happily to receive his reward. King gave him 1000 gold coins and asked him how you got an idea enemies were going to attack on our kingdom. Guard replied "Sir I can see future things which are going to happen in my dreams, that night while doing my

duty at night I had a dream that enemy was attacking us". King was pleased with him. He gave him 1000 gold coins. But suddenly he said "You have done good work by alerting us, but you are dismissed from the post of the guard". People were surprised by King's decision, but no one had a dare to ask him why. But the guard said "Yes sir, I must be punished and went away".

Betaal stops and asks King Vikram asks this question: Why King dismissed guard even if he helped him to win against the enemy?

Vikram replies with a lot of thought, "Betaal, duty of guard is to take care of palace's gate. As guard said he said he had a dream during the duty, king got the idea he was sleeping at the gate so although he helped him to win against enemy he forgot to do his duty so king dismissed him from the post of the guard."

As soon as Vikram had finished his answer, Betaal disappeared back to the tree.