

KING & THE WOODCUTTER – A Miraculous Story

**A Storyteller's Advice to his audience
(Extracted from Kalila Wa Dimna Vol.1 – Ramsay Wood)**

I must emphasize this point: my stories require, at this stage, no extra commentary, wretched imaginings, or vapid guesswork by you, me, or anyone else. The very worst would be that of moralizing away the effective substance. Thus the urge to tag tidy little rationalizations, persuasive formulas, intellectual summaries, symbolical labels, or any other convenient pigeon-holing device, must be steadfastly resisted. Mental encapsulation perverts the medicine, rendering it impotent. It amounts to a bypass around the story's true destination; to explain away is to forget. Thus, let the stories which you can remember do their own work by their very diversity. Familiarize yourself with them.

One day the King visited, in disguise, a woodcutter, living in a forest shack. 'What would you do if you could not sell your wood?' he asked. 'Respected Sir,' said the woodcutter, 'I would trust in God and find something.'

The next day the king had it proclaimed that no woodcutter were to be allowed into the city, and a day or two later visited the man again, in his disguise.

'How are you living, now that the king has taken such a strange attitude towards woodcutters?' he asked.

'Well, now I make leather belts and sell them to the shops. Trusting in God, I have enough to eat.'

The king left him and sometime later issued an edict that no item of leather was to be sold in the shops.

When the King visited his poor wood-leather-belt- maker again, he said: 'How are you getting on, now that Fate seems to be pursuing and has stopped your new career?'

'Sir,' said the other man, 'I trust in God and work as a market porter. All is well, and I have enough to eat.'

The king now caused all market porters to be conscripted into the palace Guard, without any pay, and not even to be given anywhere to sleep.



That night the king went in his disguise to see his friend, and found him in his hut, eating some food and whittling wood.

'What are you doing?' asked the king. 'I have been taken into the Royal Guard, but without food or anywhere to sleep,' said the man; 'so I have pawned the sword they issued, bought the necessary food, and I am making a dummy sword until my future shall further be known.'

The king went back to his palace.

The following morning the Commander of the Guard called the woodcutter and ordered him to behead a prisoner. They walked together to the place of execution, where the king, as was the custom, was waiting. The woodcutter did not recognize the king in his crown and royal robes, but saying 'Trusting in God', he drew his wooden sword and awaited the order to strike. The prisoner said: 'In the name of God, may this sword refuse to cut-for I am innocent!' The woodcutter dropped his sword on the ground. After an investigation the condemned man was found to be innocent after all. The king was so impressed that he made this man his Grand Vizier.

Story from – Learning How to Learn – Idries Shah

SAMBODHAN (Together Towards Awareness)



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Q) Are the 'miraculous' stories literally true, or are they designed to illustrate structures equivalent to what may happen, or are they intended to make people credulous or to 'think in a new way'?

Emotional Craving

People who are interested in the miraculous will either 'consume' wonder-tales from emotional craving, or may allow them to operate as alternative ways of thinking about things, to exercise the part of the mind which says: 'stereotyped reactions are constricting'.

Excerpt from 'Learning How to Learn' by Idries Shah