
The Hot Tempered Turtle

In a beautiful forest by a cool, calm and blue lake lived a Crane (Kokku in tamil) couple. They would spend their time wading through water, looking for some food in the shallow water. In the evening they would wait on the shores for their beloved friend, the Turtle. The Turtle had a treasure of stories and jokes that he shared with his friends. Thus the three spent their time in the joyful company of each other. The only drawback was that the turtle was hot tempered and he would get angry at the slightest provocation. He would then speak harsh, unkind words and leave.

One year there was no rain after a scorching hot summer. The lake began to dry up. All the water animals began to flee to other water spots. Then the Crane couple also decided to leave but they were sad to leave the Turtle behind. They went to meet him for the last time. When they reached there



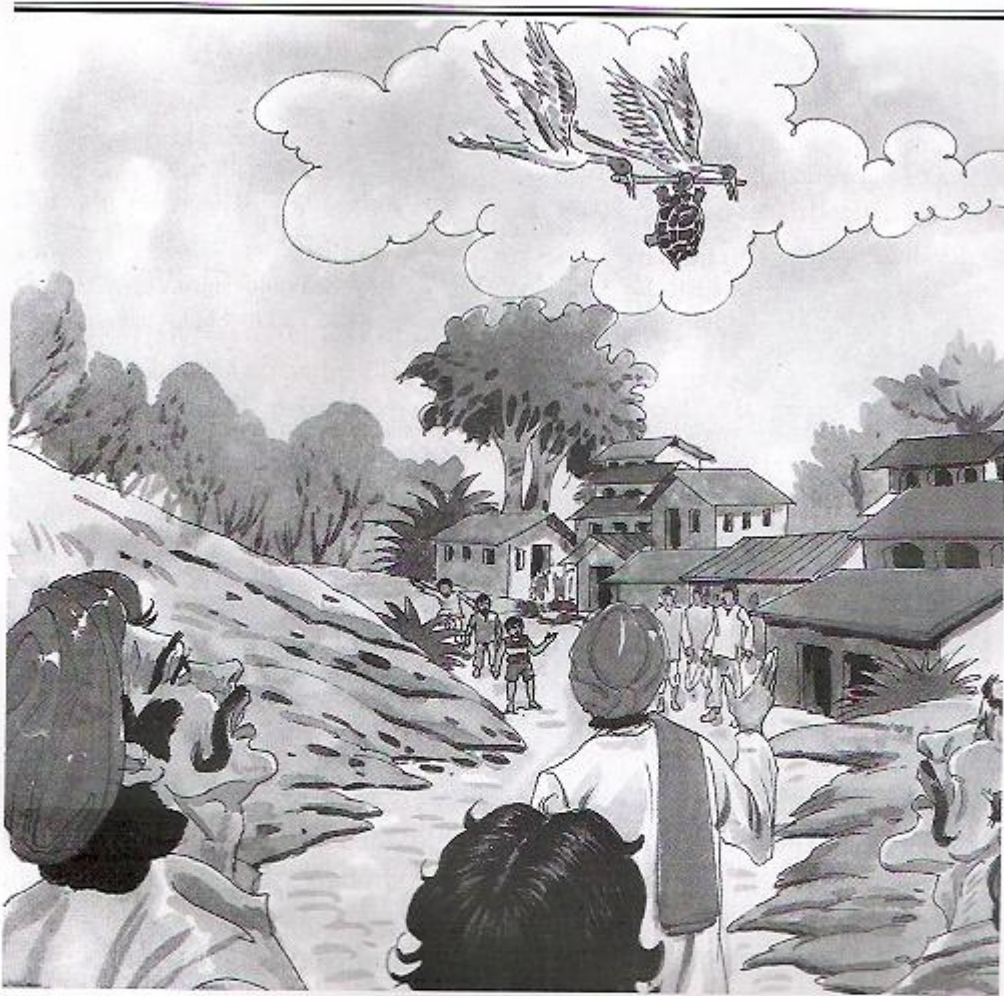


the Turtle was sitting with a sad expression. "My friends, you too are leaving," he said. "Soon the lake will dry up and I will die. I cannot crawl much for I am old now. Even if I leave where can I go because my relatives are not alive now."

This speech softened the Cranes' hearts with love and kindness for their friend. So they said, "Dear friend, we are sad to leave you behind but we will think of a way of helping you." And so the Cranes

started to think hard. Then the female Crane exclaimed, "Dear, I have a brilliant idea!" At this the male Crane and the Turtle looked at her eagerly.





"I and my husband shall find strong stick whose ends we shall hold in our beaks. Our friend Turtle can hold on tightly to the stick with his clenched teeth. Then we can fly off and the Turtle would accompany us wherever we stay. So his life will be saved and our friendship would continue." To this the Turtle readily agreed.

Then the male Crane said "I like the plan my wife has suggested but I must warn you my friend, not to speak when we are flying. No provocation must make you open your mouth. You must control your temper on the way." The Turtle promised the Cranes that he would do as they bid.