

# TALES FROM THE PANCHATANTRA

## The Lion Makers



*I*n ancient India, four pious Brahmans walked along the road to the royal city. The first Brahman said, "We have studied long and hard. Surely with our great knowledge, we can make our fortune at the palace of the king. As friends since childhood, we should share our money equally."

"I disagree," said another. "We should not share equally since only *three* of us are accomplished scholars. *One* of us has only common sense."

Three Brahmans turned together and smirked at the fourth, who shyly eyed the ground.

He defended himself quietly, saying, "My common sense can be a valuable asset. It is true that you have learned much from books, but I have learned much from life."

One of the first three quickly retorted, "Your common sense will be useless when we have complicated tasks to perform at the palace. It is our great academic knowledge that will earn a fine wage from the king. You should have studied more!"

"Perhaps you are right," sighed the fourth Brahman, who hung his head in shame as they all continued toward the city.

Before long they came upon the dry skeleton of an animal lying beside the road.

"Now," said one Brahman, "let us see how powerful our academic knowledge can be. I know how to assemble the bones of this animal in perfect order."

"I know how to accurately put flesh and skin on this creature," said the

second.

"My knowledge is greater than either of yours," boasted the third, "for my studies have taught me how to bring this creature back to life."

The fourth Brahman humbly said, "I do not have extraordinary powers like yours, but I do know that this creature is a lion. My common sense tells me that bringing him to life is dangerous."

"Fool!" cried the three in unison. "You do not know much at all!"

"I know this much," said the fourth nervously. "If you are going to bring this lion to life, I am going to climb a tree."

With that, the fourth Brahman scampered up a trunk and sat watching from high up on a branch. The other Brahmans laughed and jeered.

Confidently, the first Brahman stepped forward and assembled the lion's bones. "There!" he boasted. "I have done an excellent job!"

The second Brahman scoffed, "Wait until you see what I can do!" He crouched over the skeleton and covered the bones expertly with flesh.

The third Brahman said, "Silence! I must concentrate as I accomplish the next truly difficult task." The third Brahman bent over the dead creature and breathed life into its body.

The lion roared loudly and stretched his limbs. Eyeing the three scholars, he hungrily licked his lips and pounced. The fourth Brahman watched with horror from the safety of the tree as the lion proceeded to eat all three.

That is why they say,

*Highly trained intelligence  
is useless without common sense.  
Vain scholars in their pride  
made a lion and they died.*

**Brahman:** a person from the priest class in India. In this case, think of them as wise men

**scholar:** a student who studies and learns a lot

**smirked:** a smile that is a little bit nasty or mean

**retorted:** replied; answered quickly

**flesh:** meat and skin

**jeered:** made fun of rudely or unkindly