

The Story of Wali Dad

(retold by Kristina Rodanas, From Lang The Brown Fairy Book) This version cuts out the Peri's.

The difficulty of giving a gift expecting nothing in return. There is more happiness in giving rather than receiving. God has given us a gift in His son Jesus Christ, a gift we can never repay. We are but poor sinners. But God does not want us to repay him for his gift. He rejoices when we simply accept that gift with thanks.

But some people don't know how to receive gifts. They feel obliged to pay it back with bigger and bigger gifts, often unwanted and unneeded, so that they won't owe anything. There is a way we show our thanks to God. We can offer that gift God has given us to others.

* *** *

Long ago in India there was an old man known as WALI DAD Gunjay or Walidad the bald.. He lived all alone in a small mud hut at the edge of the jungle and made his living by cutting grass and selling it as horse feed. although he earned little, WALI DAD was very happy. Since his needs were few he even managed to save a several pennies a day which he hid in a large clay crock. One evening after a particularly profitable day, the grass cutter saw that the clay crock was overflowing with coins. It was time to spend his money.

Early the next day, with the money crock in his arms, WALI DAD headed for the marketplace. Each merchant beckoned to him, and he thoughtfully considered their wares. But what could a simple old man do with expensive fabrics, intricately woven rugs and exotic perfumes that were offered him? He shopped for many hours but could find nothing he wanted to buy.

Finally WALI DAD came to a last stall in the marketplace, a jewelry shop. A plain little bracelet caught his eye. Its smooth gold surface glowed in the afternoon light and invited him to take a closer look. He turned the bracelet over and discovered a beautiful pearl, carefully inlaid at the center, He purchased the bracelet at once and happily returned home.

WALI DAD soon realized the little bracelet was too wonderful to hide away in his mud hut. He wanted to share his treasure. So he went to the house of a traveling merchant who was his dear friend, and asked for the name of the kindest and most beautiful woman he had ever met.

The merchant had visited many different countries, so he had to think for a long time. "The PRINCESS of KHAISTAN," he replied at last, "is by far the most beautiful, for she is known by all to be the most kind." "Very well, then," said WALI DAD, handing over the bracelet. "I would like you to give her this. Tell her it is from someone who admires virtue far more than he desires wealth"

Much amused, his MERCHANT friend agreed to deliver the gift on his next journey.

Months later the MERCHANT passed through KHAISTAN and presented the little bracelet to the Princess. She was delighted. To show here gratitude to the mysterious giver, she sent the merchant back with a return present, a camel-load of fine silks, plus a present of money for himself.

As requested, the MERCHANT delivered the silks to WALI DAD's mud hut. The old man was stunned, and could not imagine what to do with so precious a gift. again he asked his Friend for a name - the name of the most honorable young prince in all the land.

As before the MERCHANT thought and thought. "Well I have traveled from Delhi to Bagdad and from Constantinople to Lucknow, and..." he finally concluded, "the PRINCE of NEKABAD is certainly the most honorable man I have met."

Excellent," said WALI DAD. "Would you please take these silks to him as a humble tribute to his worth and greatness? I am sure he will find a use for them."

the MERCHANT promised to find the Prince when he next traveled to NEKABAD.

True to his word, the MERCHANT journeyed to the royal palace of NEKABAD, where he delivered the camel-load of silks. Indeed, the young PRINCE was most grateful. to repay the favor, he chose from his stable twelve splendid horses and told the MERCHANT to take them to the very generous WALI DAD giving him a substantial reward as well.

As the herd of horses approached Wali Dad's hut, the old man got very excited - "A troop of horses coming. They are sure to want quantities of grass" and he set to work cutting as fast as he could.

The grass cutter was astonished when the spirited horses pranced into his yard lead by his friend the MERCHANT. "They are for you, WaliDad a gift from the Prince!" "I have no stable, and I could never cut enough grass to feed them!" he cried.

He gave two horses to the merchant and persuaded his friend to take the remaining ten to the PRINCESS of KHAISTAN. The Merchant departed chuckling.

Time passed, and when he next traveled to KHAISTAN, the MERCHANT presented the PRINCESS with the beautiful horses. Although she was very pleased, this time the PRINCESS was somewhat perplexed. Such horses, she presumed, could only have come from the stables of a rich and powerful man. She wanted to know more about WaliDad and what courtesy might she return to one so wealthy? The Merchant was a honest man, but couldn't bear to tell her that WaliDad was a old man who cut grass for a living. So he told her only that his friend had heard of her goodness and longed to lay the best he had at her feet.

Then the PRINCESS asked her father for advice. Together they decided on a return present which they hoped the unknown giver would not feel obliged to repay. For each of the ten horses, the PRINCESS requested that ten mules loaded with silver be sent to WALI DAD.

The merchant had to hire a number of armed men to protect the treasure of the caravan. The merchant led the procession of one hundred mules loaded with treasure to the humble thatched hut of WALI DAD.

When Walidad saw the cloud of dust, he again got very excited. A Caravan! Surely they would buy his grass. So he hurried out again with his sickle, cutting as fast as he could.

When the mules arrived kicking and braying, WALI DAD was dismayed. "Riches! what does an old man with one foot in the grave such as I need with such wealth. Having no need for such wealth, he directed the Merchant to take six of the silver laden mules for himself and convey the remainder straight to the PRINCE of NEKABAD.

The PRINCE this time was more embarrassed than grateful. Such presents, he thought, must certainly be taxing the resources of the generous stranger. Hoping to put an end to this exchange of opulent gifts, he ordered up a herd of twenty of his swiftest camels, his most magnificent horses, and his strongest elephants, all decorated in the finest of silks, leathers and jewels.

With the help of a small troop of men, the MERCHANT hastened the caravan to WALI DAD's door. When Wali dad saw this magnificent Caravan approaching, He started jumping for joy. Such a caravan. Horses and Camels and Elephants too. They will need much grass. And he set to work cutting even more of the grass.

When he realized this was another gift for him, the horrified WALI DAD waved them on to the PRINCESS of KHAISTAN, insisting his friend keep two camels, two horses, and two elephants for his trouble.

You can well imagine the excitement at the gates of KHAISTAN when this incredible parade appeared. "What is the meaning of such generosity?" wondered the PRINCESS.

The King thought he knew. "Of course," he said, "the great and princely WALI DAD would like to meet you. Perhaps he is trying to win your hand in marriage. We must pay him a visit!"

The PRINCESS agreed they should visit WALI DAD at once. A giant caravan was formed, complete with mounted soldiers, trumpets and flags, royal servants, magnificent chests of gold, bejeweled horses, camels, and elephants - and the King and PRINCESS of KHAISTAN.

Reluctantly the merchant guided the procession toward the home of WALI DAD.

The caravan moved slowly. As they came closer to their destination, the MERCHANT grew increasingly nervous. If only he had revealed the simple truth about his friend! The feelings of the merchant could hardly be imagined. He was fearful the King would be angry when he found out Wali Dad was a poor old grass cutter. But much more he was afraid for his friend.

When he reached WALI DAD's mud hut, the merchant found his friend seated on a straw mat, munching his evening meal of dry bread and onions.

WALI DAD gasped when he heard the MERCHANT's news. "My house is far too small to receive all those guests." He cried, "and I haven't enough food to share with them! What am I to do?"

The MERCHANT felt responsible for the situation and he desperately wanted to help. "My dear friend," he said, "I have many servants and more than enough food to feed a caravan. Allow me to take care of the preparations. We will have a glorious reception for the King and PRINCESS of KHAISTAN.

WALI DAD gratefully accepted the MERCHANT's offer.

That evening with the help of his loyal servants, the MERCHANT began to prepare for the royal guests. WALI DAD had little to do but watch while servants trimmed what little of the jungle grass that remained surrounding his hut into a large courtyard. Exhausted he fell asleep.

When WALI DAD awoke he blinked his eyes in disbelief. Colorful pavilions glittered in the sunlight. the lawn was ablaze with beautiful gardens. Flocks of peacocks strutted past his window while uniformed servants scurried from tent to tent. Banners fluttered from the roof of WALI DAD's house.

The MERCHANT, looking tired but relieved, appeared in the doorway and presented WALI DAD with a bundle of embroidered clothing. "all is ready!" he announced proudly.

Amazed, WALI DAD sent the merchant back with his humble invitation to the King and PRINCESS of KHAISTAN.

The royal caravan arrived with a roaring of trumpets. WALI DAD, feeling very awkward being clothed in silks and jeweled turban, welcomed his guests into the courtyard, where a tremendous feast was about to be served.

The King of KHAISTAN was most impressed and thanked his host for the generous reception. Then he took WALI DAD aside and asked, "Is it true that you wish to marry my daughter?"

WALI DAD was shocked by the question. He tried to think of a way to thank the King for the honor. "I am much too old and far too ugly to think of marrying the beautiful PRINCESS," he replied at last. "But permit me to send for a loyal young friend who is far more worthy of winning your daughter's hand - the honorable PRINCE of NEKABAD.

The merchant departed at once for NEKABAD and quickly returned with the PRINCE.

At first glance he fell in love with the PRINCESS and she with him.

There, that very day, the two were married, In their honor a splendid wedding feast was held which went on for three days and nights. Everybody celebrated their happiness.

But the happiest of all was WALI DAD. He had recognized the little gold bracelet proudly worn by the beautiful Princess of Khaistan.