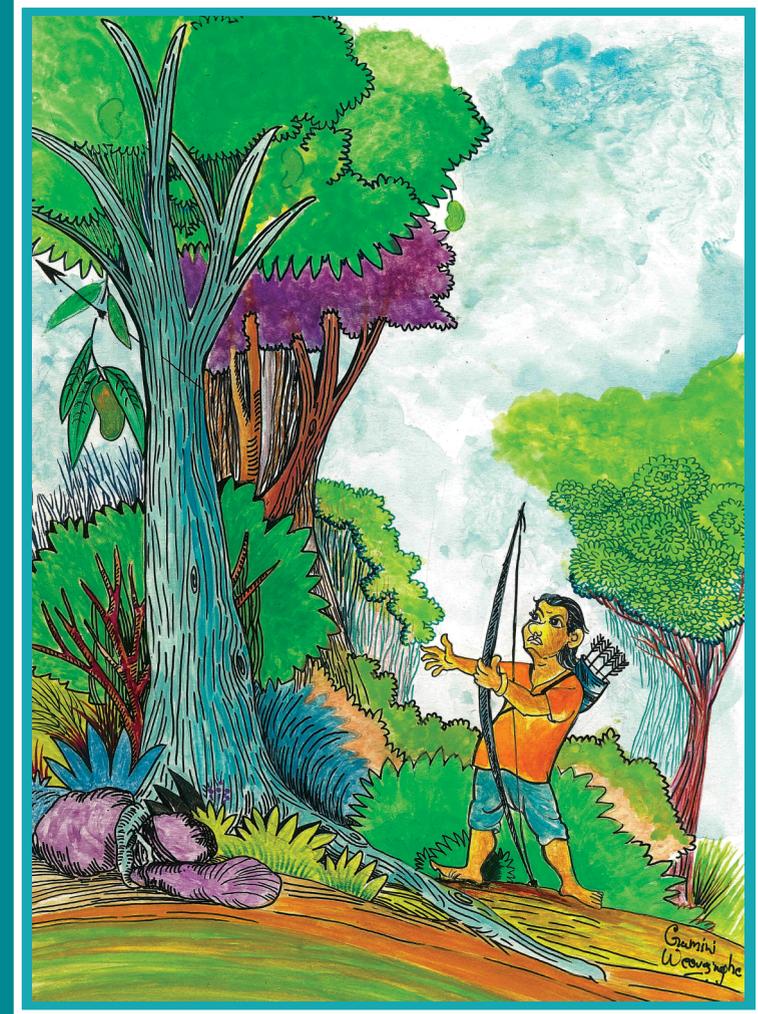


## *Nipunna: Smart Little Archer of Taxila*

Children love stories, especially those that carry a moral ring. Parents, caregivers and teachers should make a deliberate effort to cultivate their inborn interest to probe and learn by developing the reading habit through moving holistic stories.

This book is designed to stimulate curiosity, imagination, oratory skills and other important learning traits in a child by ingraining a holistic learning approach that would become second nature in adult life. The child would naturally become a life-long learner as well. It is also crafted as an inspiring guide for personal self-development among the young. It can be used to stage a play in school as well.

Discussion and reflection time encourages the child to have a clearer understanding of the text as well as trigger interactive learning and to apply the story line in real life. Finally, the colourful illustrations that animate the major happenings and portray the principal characters help to promote creativity. The holistic education books make excellent bed-time stories for children. Parents can spend enjoyable quality time with their child as young as three years by using them to narrate the story.



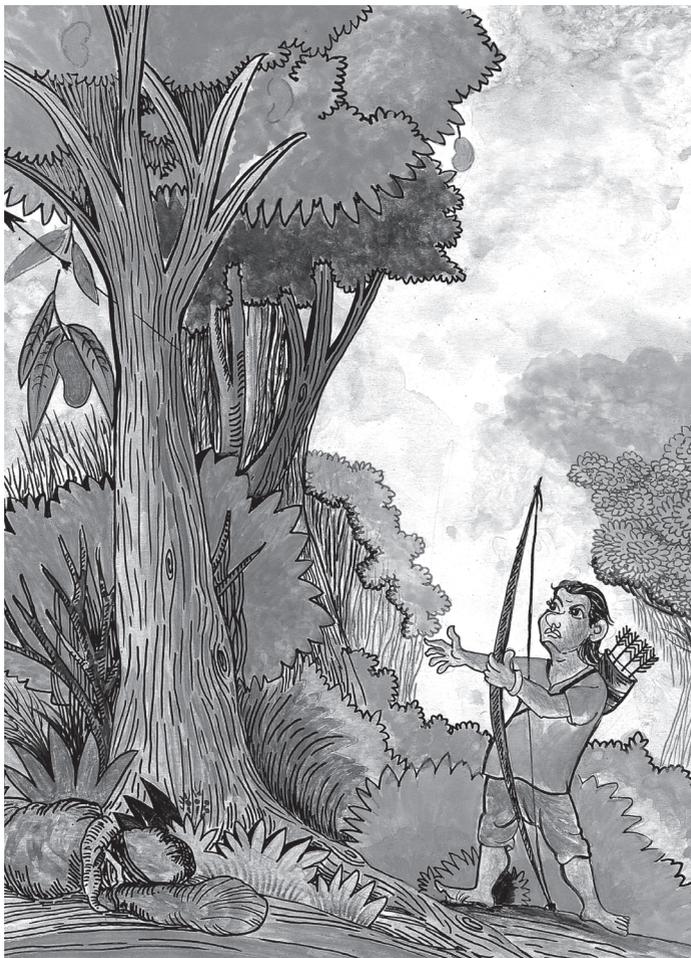
*by*

**G. K. ANANDA KUMARASIRI**



Holistic Education Books

# *Nipunna: Smart Little Archer of Taxila*



by

G. K. ANANDA KUMARASIRI



Holistic Education Books

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## About the Author



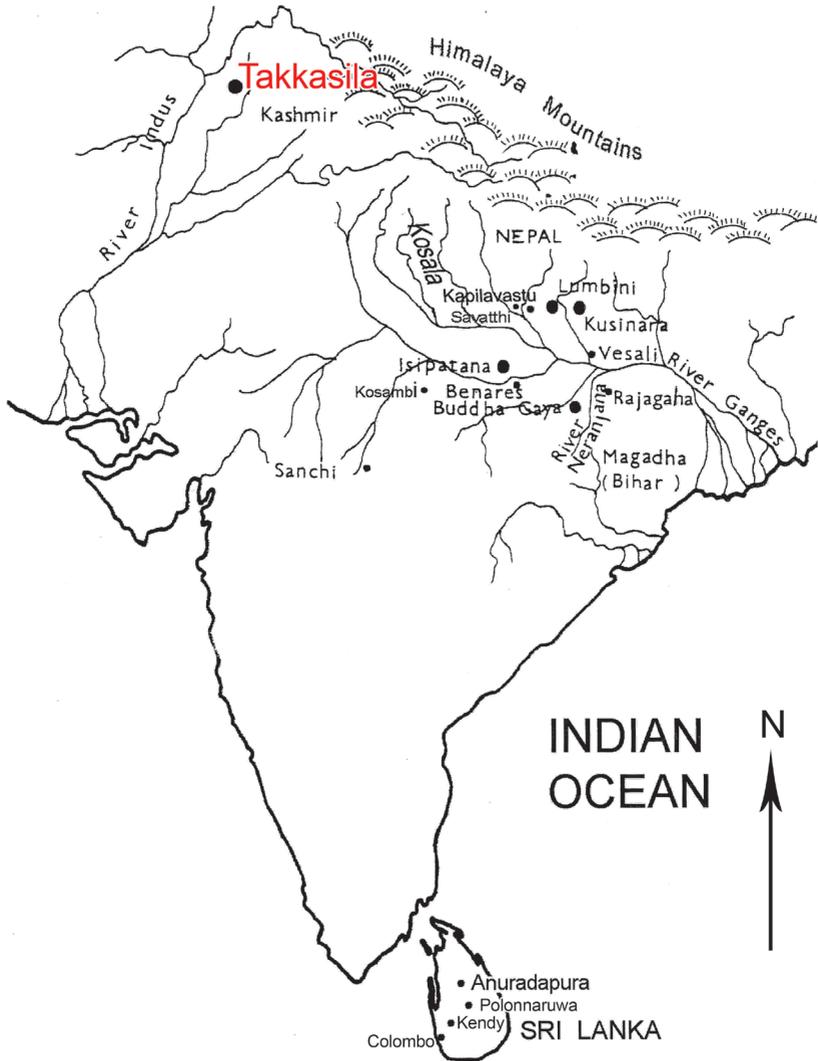
Ambassador Dato' Dr. G.K. Ananda Kumara-seri was a distinguished career ambassador. (1966-1995). He has the rare distinction of setting up and heading the Centre for International Relations and Strategic Studies (1979-1981) for the Malaysian public service. The assignment stimulated his interest in education, human resource development and professional training. He retired in 1995 as Director-General ASEAN. He is the founder president of the Human Development and Peace (HDP) Foundation. Apart from being appointed Adjunct Professor at University Utara Malaysia, he is an active Dhamma speaker, giving regular public talks across the country and abroad. He has authored several landmark books:

- My First Word Book: Buddhist Pedagogical Approach
- A Compendium of Buddhist Personal Names: Heritage and Significance of Adoption
- Living Buddhism: The Way Forward
- Living Buddhism: Advancing from Knowing to Being
- My Alphabet Book : Buddhist Pedagogical Approach
- SIDDHARTHA : The Prince of Peace
- Professional Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management: An Ambassador's Insight
- Siddhartha : My First Story Book

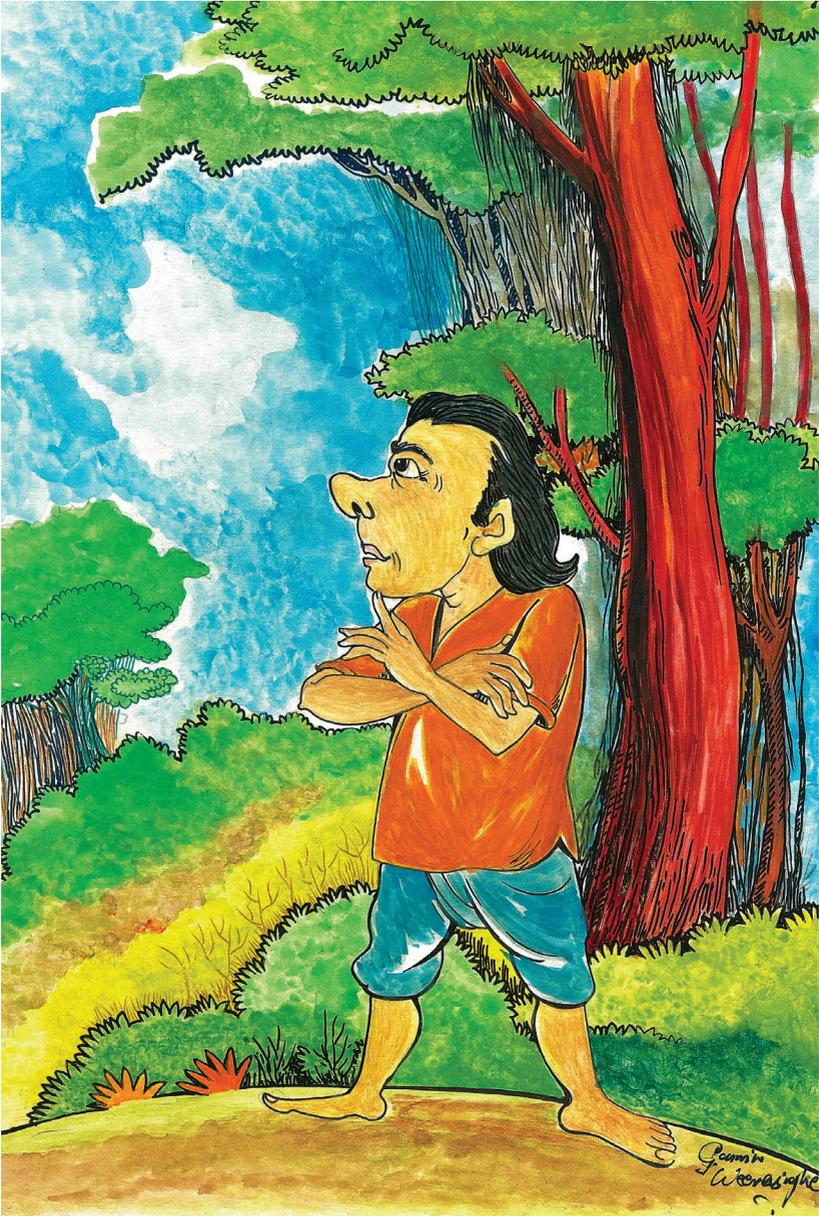
- The Way of Siddhartha : Glorious Righteous Prince
- The Terrifying Drug Menace: Relevance and Role of Buddhism
- Welcoming the Birth of a Child
- Angulimala : Transforming Life
- Matu Posaka : Joy of Honouring Parents
- Mothercare and Parenting: Key to Social Structuring.
- King Bimbisara the Great: A Father's Unremitting Love
- SIDDHARTHA : Colouring and Drawing Book
- Glorious Prince Siddhartha
- The Great Matu Posaka
- Dhamma Weera: Wise Student of Nagaloka
- Mother's Boundless Love

Over two thousand years ago, in the ancient city of Takkasila (known today as Taxila) located in North India (present day Pakistan), lived a dwarf named Nipunna. Though Nipunna was very small in size, he was a smart lad. Taxila was a famous centre of learning in ancient India. So Nipunna was able to receive a sound education from renowned *acariyas* (tutors or teachers). He also had the opportunity to share ideas with the brilliant students and scholars of Taxila. They came to the university-city from all regions of India and even from other parts of the world to study under the famous *acariyas*.

Not only was Nipunna physically small, he looked different from other children because of his large nose and big bushy eyebrows. He was often teased for his unusual looks. Many people used to pass unpleasant remarks at him like, “Look at that funny looking fellow. I wonder from which planet he has come. It would be better if we locked him up in a zoo to show people what an odd looking person he is.”



Historical Map of India

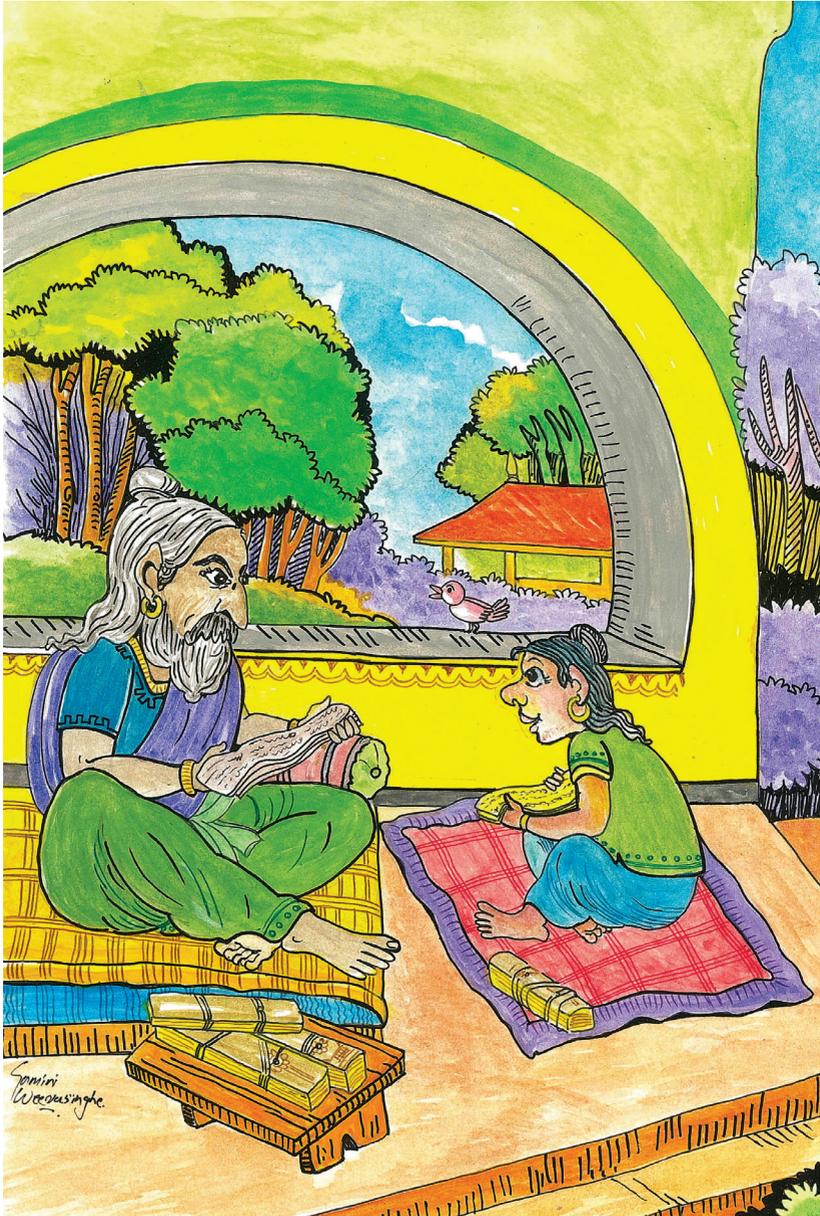


Pint-sized Nipunna

However, Nipunna did not allow such rude remarks to upset him or feel depressed or become angry. He just dismissed them as mere words that were only fit for the rubbish heap. As a result of this positive thinking and attitude, his *sraddha* or confidence and self-esteem remained as strong as ever. As a matter of fact, the hurtful comments made him all the more determined to succeed in life despite his physical disadvantages.

Well before Nipunna completed his education, his wise old *acariya*, Maha Buddhi, advised him that since he was small built, he should master skills in archery. He pointed out that this would enable him to have a good future when he grows up. Further, in order for Nipunna to excel, his *acariya* advised that he should cultivate a clear and positive mind.

Among other instructions, Acariya Maha Buddhi stressed that first and foremost Nipunna should develop a strong *patthana* or aspiration



Acariya Maha Buddhi tutors Nipunna

to succeed in whatever he wished to accomplish. For example, to become an excellent archer, he should first of all feel deep inside him a strong desire to be the best archer in the whole of Taxila. For, without such an aspiration, it is unlikely that he would succeed in whatever he hoped to fulfil in life.

In addition, Nipunna was trained to develop a firm *adhitthana* or resolute determination to achieve his life-goals. Acariya Maha Buddhi emphasized that Nipunna should at the same time strengthen other key requirements for success. In particular, he should strengthen the twin ingredients of *viraya* and *vinaya* or positive energy and discipline respectively. In short, he must at all times give his best effort if he wished to succeed in life.

Nipunna thus mindfully gave his best shot to whatever he endeavoured to achieve. As advised by his wise teacher, he practised marksmanship with his bow and arrow for several hours daily.



Nipunna practices archery diligently

He was totally committed to perfecting his archery skills that he proved an expert marksman in quick time. He perfected his archery skills to such an extent that he was recognised as the best archer in Taxila. Nipunna's reputation in archery soon spread throughout the city so much so that he was nicknamed, "The Little Expert Archer of Taxila". He was so skilled with his bow and arrow that he could easily shoot down a mango from a tree from a distance of fifty strides.

Upon completing his studies, Nipunna went out to seek a job. But no one was interested in employing him because he was such a puny little person. Some prospective employers he approached were very unkind. They passed hurtful remarks like, "You are so stunted that I doubt you can carry my *chapples* (leather slippers), little fellow. Is there anything else that you can do besides shooting arrows into the sky?" Some others passed rude remarks like, "You scrummy little dwarf, get out of here. You are not fit for any job, so don't waste my time! Why, your bow

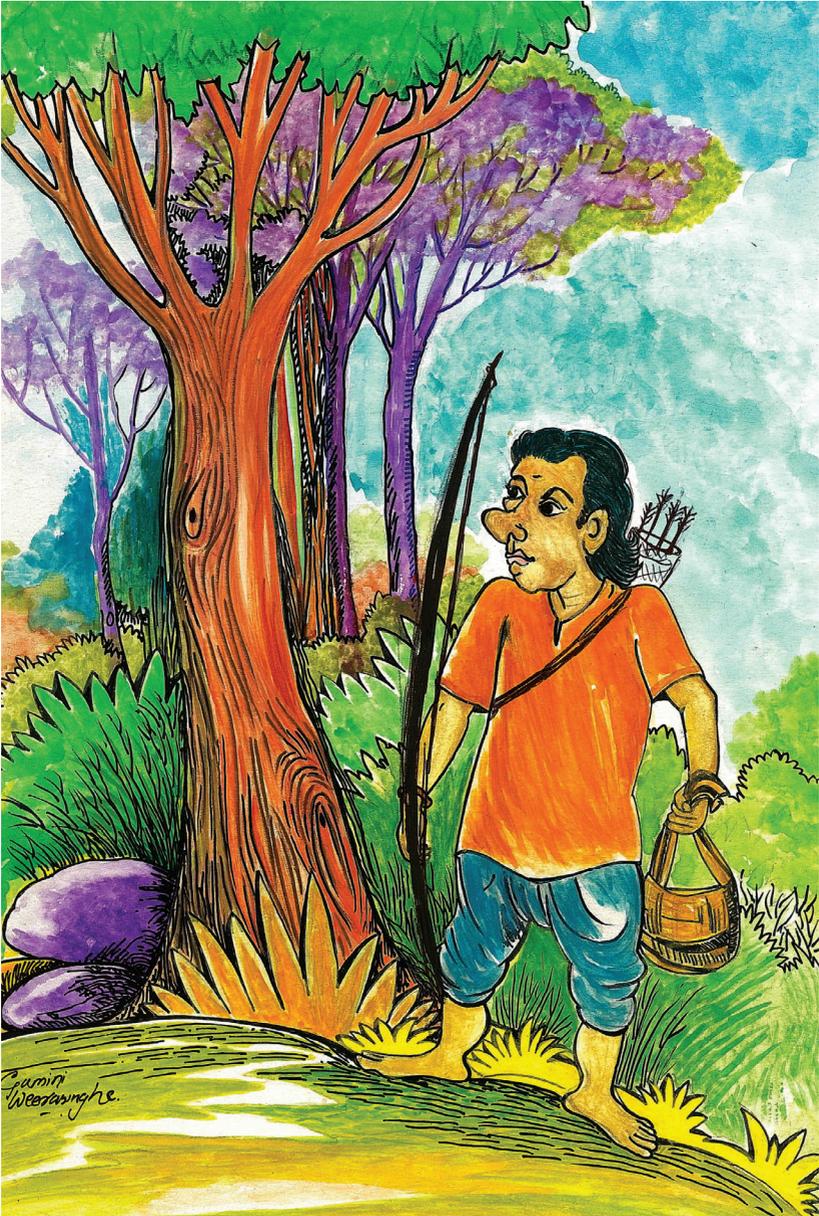


Nipunna proves an excellent archer

itself is taller than you!” Though these crude remarks were discouraging and painful to the ears, Nipunna never gave up trying to find a good job.

One day as Nipunna sat and pondered deeply about his future, he thought to himself, “Perhaps its best that I find my fortune and fame in Kosambi, the famous trading city of the neighbouring Kingdom of Vatsa. Hopefully, people there would be more compassionate and not mock me for my looks and small size.” Mid-way on his long journey to the city of Kosambi, Nipunna stopped at the popular trading town of Kanchi to have a meal. Here he came across a big-built man with very broad shoulders busy weaving baskets. He wondered, “What a waste of muscles it is for this broad-shouldered man to just sit down and weave baskets all day long?”

As Nipunna reflected on this rather strange sight, it struck him that here was an opportunity to work out a useful partnership with the giant of a man. He thought to himself, “This is my lucky



Nipunna leaves for Kosambi

day. I shall befriend this strong man and form a friendly relationship with him. His huge size and strength will make up for my small build in a partnership.”

Nipunna went up to the big man to have a friendly chat. Wearing a charming smile, he asked him, “My dear big strong man, what is your good name?” “Bimsara it is little fellow”, he replied in a hoarse voice. Nipunna responded tactfully, “That’s a really wonderful name you have my dear chap. You must be as friendly a person as your name sounds?”

Bimsara smiled back and thanked Nipunna for his kind compliment. Having struck a friendship, Nipunna politely asked Bimsara as to why he chose to sit down and spend his time weaving baskets instead of using his muscular body for a more productive and profitable vocation.

Bimsara replied, “My friend, weaving baskets is the only skill I have learnt. I can’t think of doing any other job but to sit down and weave baskets



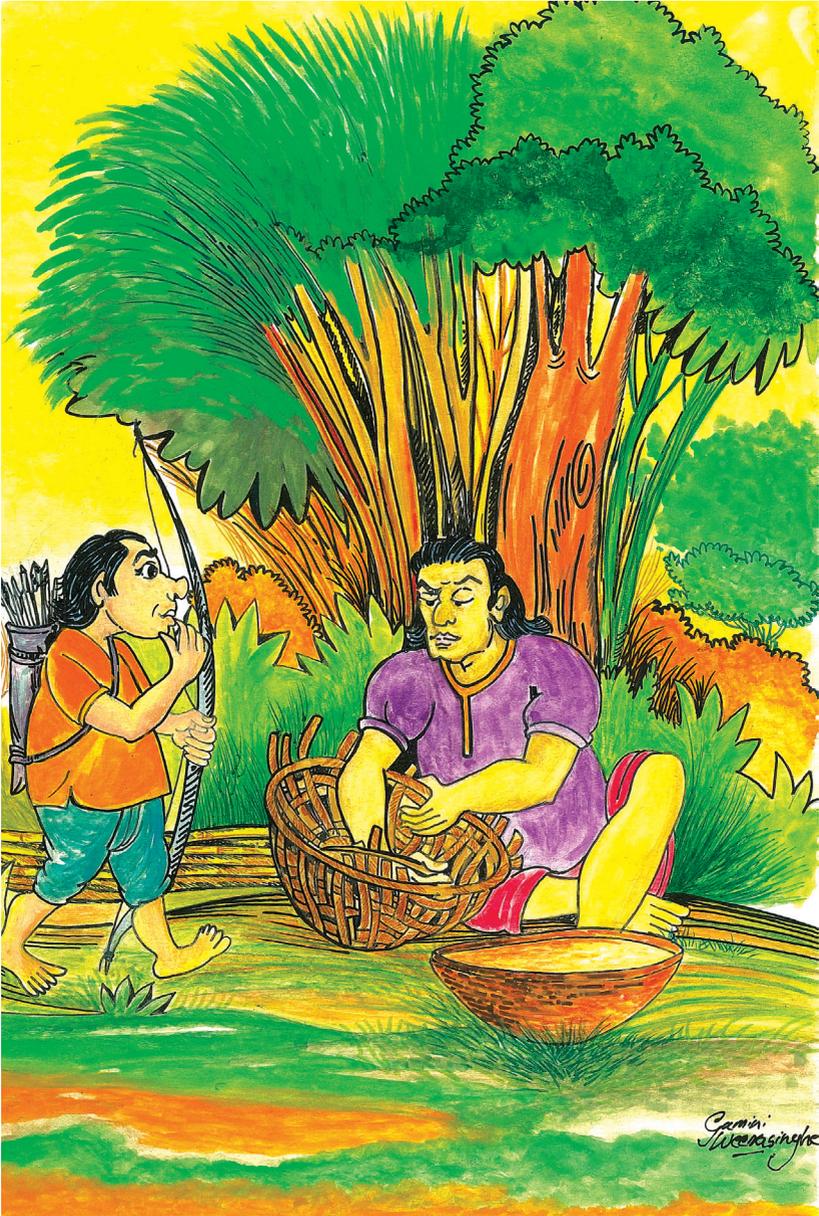
Nipunna comes across a giant basket weaver

all day long.”

Nipunna quickly exclaimed, “Well my dear Bimsara, from today onwards you no longer have to do the boring work of weaving baskets! Moreover, this is not a man’s job, but one that is usually done by women. I have a wonderful plan for you that will give you great satisfaction as well as bring you a good fortune.”

Big Bimsara was all ears. Nipunna elaborated eagerly, “Bimsara, with your big build, broad shoulders and muscular arms, and, my expert skills in archery, we can form a great winning partnership. Together we will be able to earn a great deal of money. I am heading for Kosambi. I am sure both of us would be able to make a better living there if we were to work as close trustworthy partners.”

Bimsara readily agreed to Nipunna’s suggestion and journeyed with him to Kosambi. As soon as the two partners reached the capital city, Nipunna suggested that they head straight to the Royal



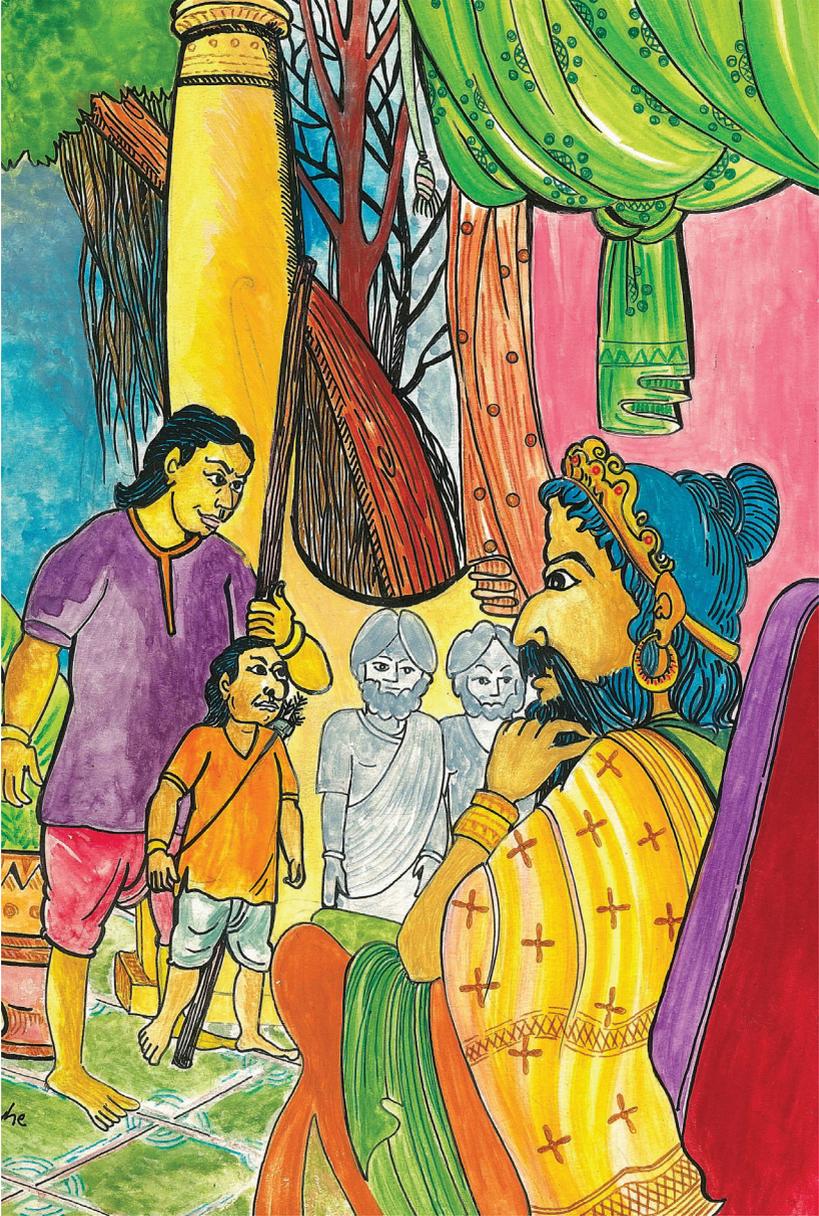
Nipunna has a friendly chat with Bimsara

Palace to have an audience with King Bandu.

As good fortune would have it, the King was holding court. He granted an audience to Nipunna and Bimsara as he was keen to find out the intentions of the two strangers. When they entered the Royal Court, the king straight away questioned them, “Who are you and why have you come to Kosambi?”

Nipunna stepped forward, bowed respectfully and thanked King Bandu for granting an audience. In a confident voice, he declared, “Your Majesty, I am Nipunna, the Little Expert Archer from Taxila and this is Bimsara. We are partners with special skills and talents. I do the thinking and he carries out various tasks that require strength and courage. We have come to Kosambi to offer our services to Your Majesty.”

King Bandu was not impressed with pint-sized Nipunna, but he was highly taken up with Bimsara’s strong physical build. The King decided to employ him as a special palace guard. How-



The partners are granted a royal audience

ever, since Bimsara and Nipunna were partners, he had to recruit the two men as a team. As a result, both were employed by King Bandu as part of the palace staff. The partners were given a sizeable room, provided daily meals and paid a handsome monthly salary. Just as Nipunna had envisaged, he and Bimsara were able to enjoy a comfortable life in the royal palace.

A few days later, a group of farmers from a nearby village reported to King Bandu that they were being attacked by a ferocious man-eating tiger and had already lost a few lives. They sought the King's help to end their terrible plight.

The King assured the farmers that this would be done immediately as he had just the ideal person to capture the man-eating tiger. The villagers were greatly relieved and returned to their homes.

King Bandu at once summoned Bimsara to the Royal Court and ordered him to capture the ferocious tiger. Bimsara fretted on hearing the

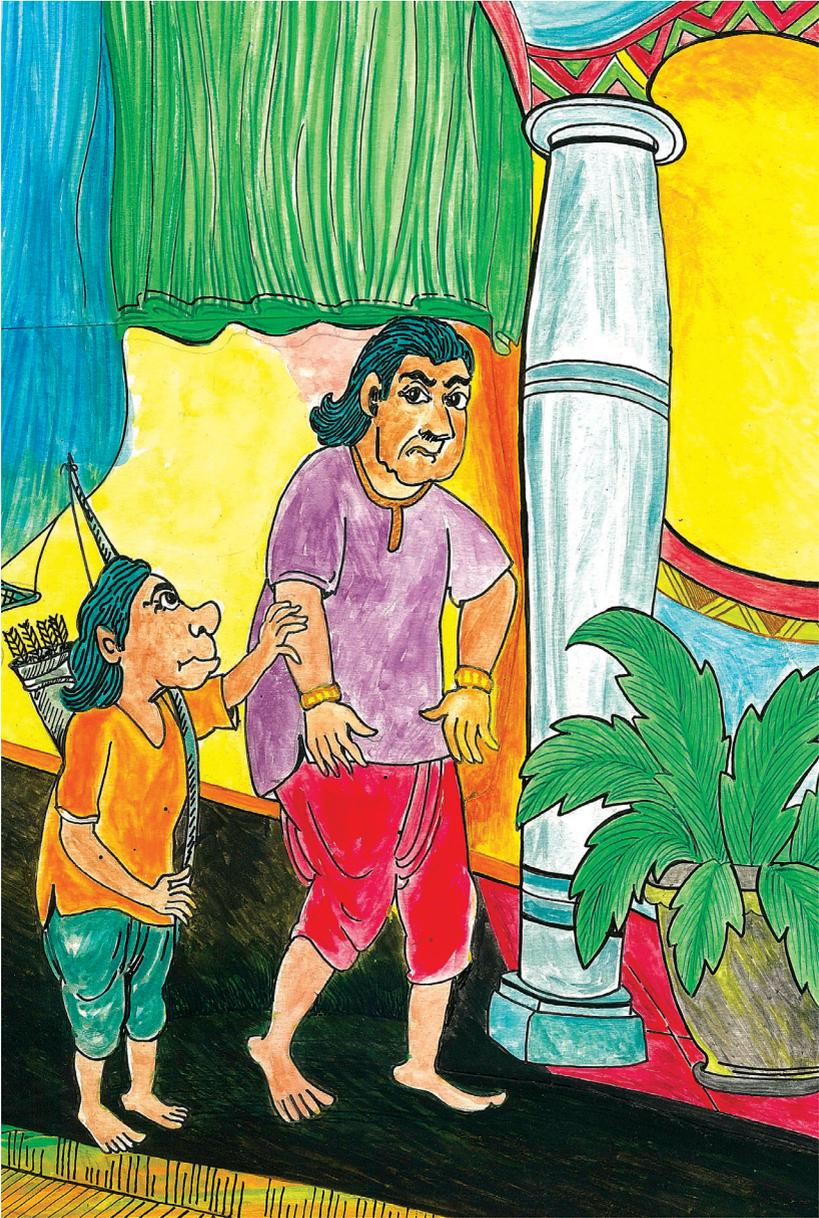


Nipunna and Bimsara enjoy palatial comforts

King's command for he had never carried out such a dangerous task. But before he could utter anything negative, Nipunna quickly whispered to him that there was no reason for him to feel afraid. He assured him that he had a brilliant plan for capturing the tiger that did not entail any danger to either of them.

The two partners then took leave of King Bannu after promising that they will put an end to the danger faced by the farmers. As soon as they were out of the Royal Court, Nipunna explained to Bimsara that all he had to do was to gather together the villagers where the tiger roamed. He was to encourage them to be brave and to attack the tiger while they both safely hid themselves in the nearby bushes and watched the villagers kill the animal.

When Bimsara arrived at the village, he pretended to be very brave. As coached by Nipunna, he began to inspire the villagers who had gathered to be fearless of the tiger. In a loud voice, Bim-

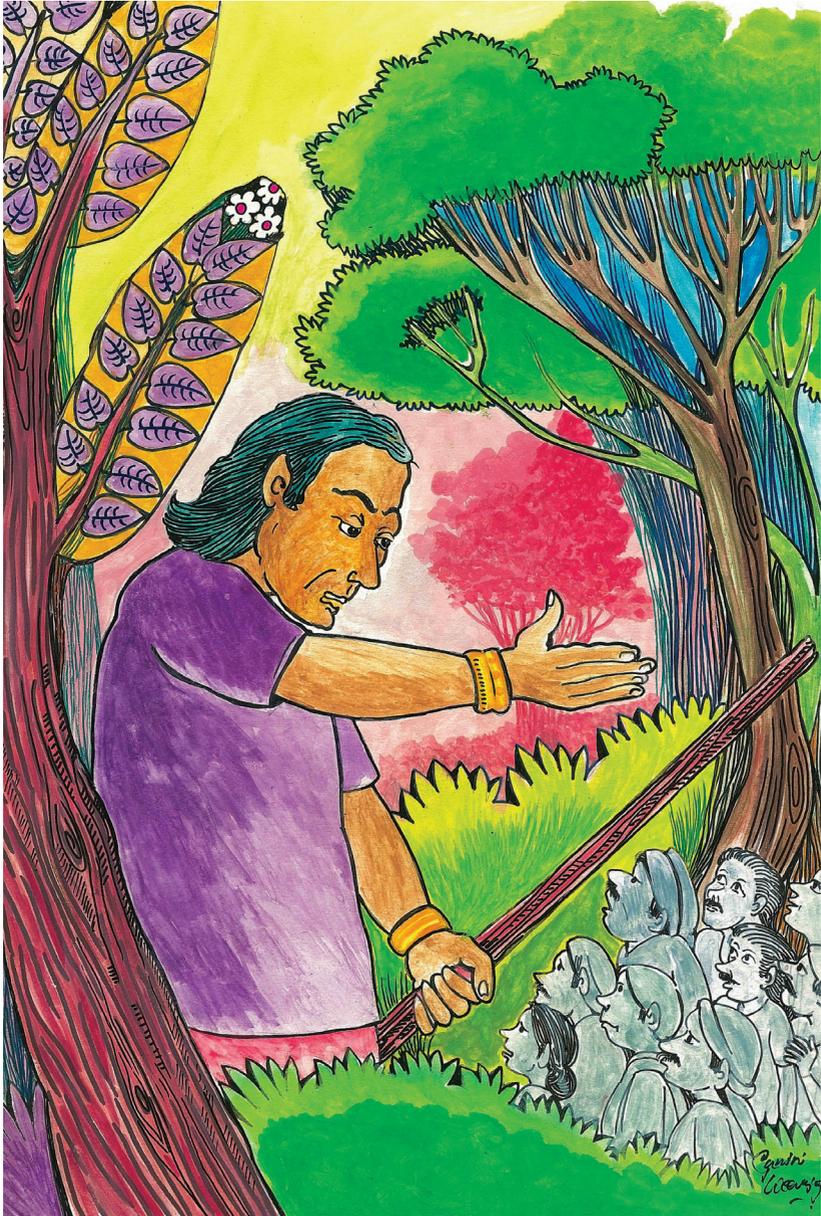


Nipunna advises Bimsara not to be afraid

sara told the innocent villages, “Fear not you brave men. Capturing a tiger is not as dangerous as you imagine. I have caught many tigers in my time.

Tigers are scared of brave men, especially when they are well armed and gathered in large numbers. All you have to do is just hold your clubs and poles firmly and hit the tiger with all your might when you see it. Nipunna and I will look out for the tiger in the jungle while you keep a watch for it when it enters the open grassy plane. At that moment all of you must attack the tiger. Should you encounter any problem do not worry, Nipunna and I will immediately come to your aid.” But in actual fact, all that Bimsara and Nipunna did was to hide behind the bushes and safely watch the villagers kill the tiger.

Upon hearing Bimsara’s rousing remarks, the villagers felt courageous and set out together to hunt the tiger. As soon as it emerged from the jungle fringe and prowled on to the open grassy



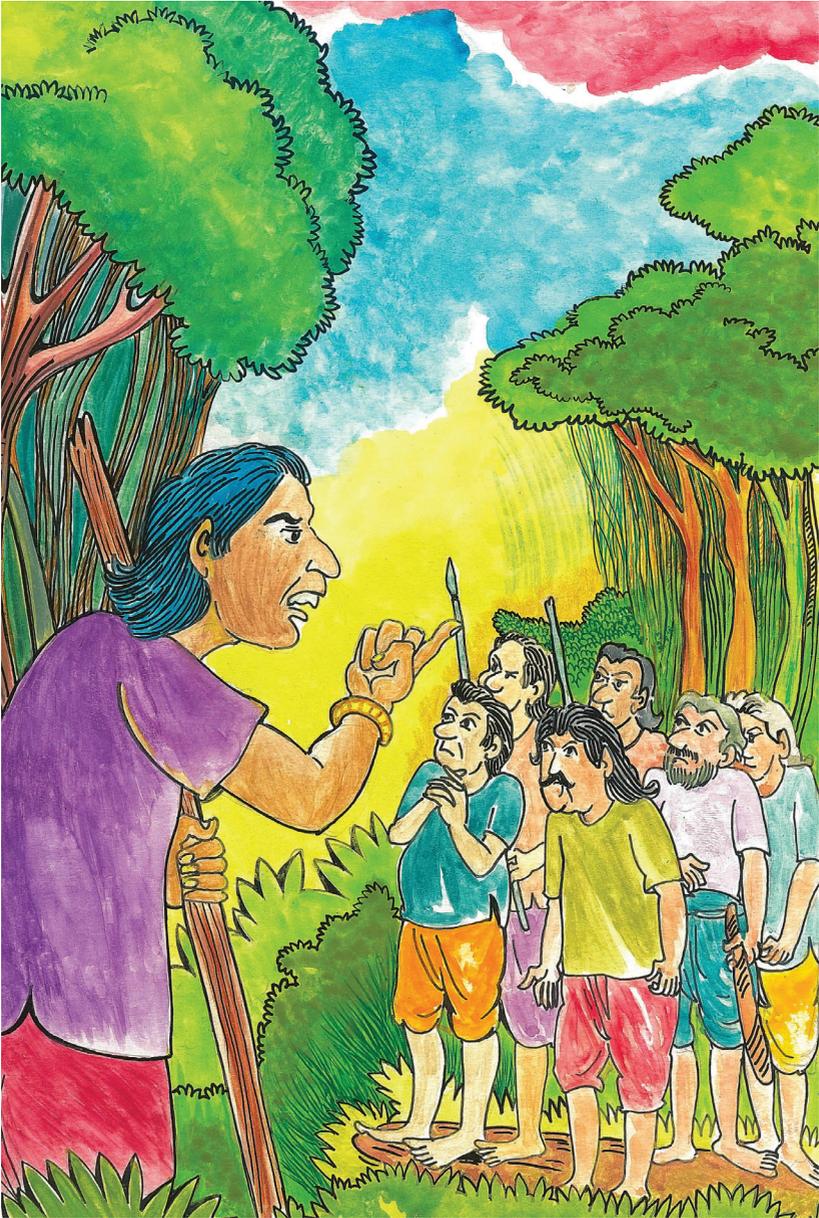
Bimsara inspires the villagers to be brave

plane, they pounced on it fearlessly. They hit the tiger so furiously with their poles and clubs that they killed it in a matter of a few minutes.

On seeing from their hiding place that the tiger was stone dead, Bimsara and Nipunna quickly appeared at the scene. As pre-planned by Nipunna, Bimsara burst out angrily at the villagers, “Why did you all kill the tiger? The King had specifically ordered me to capture the animal alive! Now all of you are in deep trouble for going against the King’s orders! You will all be severely punished for disobeying the King.”

The villagers feared that they were going to suffer the wrath of their monarch for killing the tiger instead of capturing it alive. They begged Bimsara to save them from their dilemma.

Bimsara understood clearly that Nipunna’s clever plan had worked out perfectly well for them. He pacified the villagers by promising them that he would take full responsibility for killing the tiger. In this way, they would be saved from be-



Bimsara threatens the villagers

ing severely punished by the King.

Nipunna joined in to warn the villagers that they should not tell anyone what actually had happened. For, if they did, the King would inflict a double punishment on them for lying as well. He advised the villagers to quietly return to their homes and not to breathe a word about the whole episode to anyone.

With the help of a few villagers, Bimsara and Nipunna tied the dead tiger to a pole and carried the corpse to the palace. King Bandu was greatly impressed with what he was given to believe to be a very brave feat by Bimsara. He gladly rewarded the two partners a purse of gold coins. In addition, he and Nipunna from thence onwards were accorded a special status and treatment in the palace.

The special royal attention caused Bimsara to become swollen-headed and proud. He began to think that he could manage his affairs without depending on Nipunna as adviser. He felt



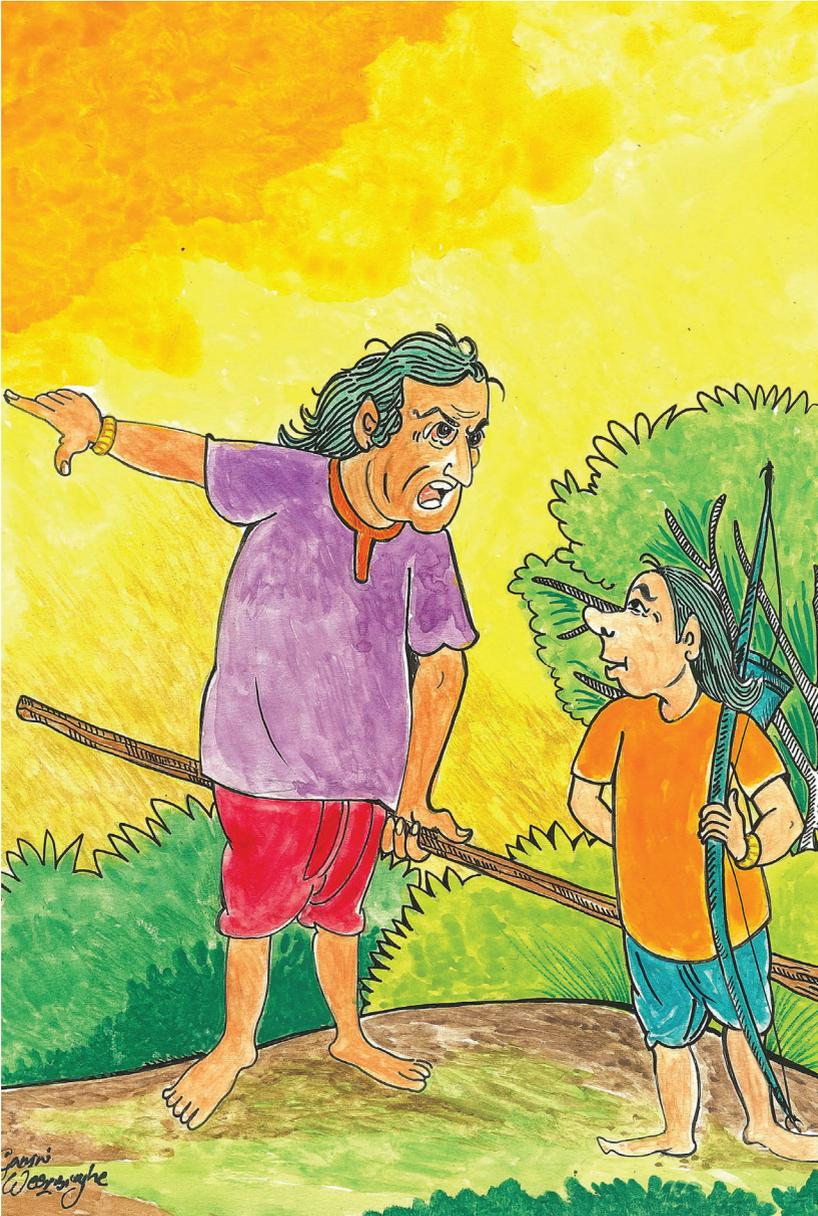
The villagers plead to Bimsara to save them

that this would mean he could keep future royal rewards all to himself without having to share them with Nipunna.

So one morning, Bimsara bluntly told his friend and partner, Nipunna, “You little dwarf, the King is highly impressed with my abilities and not yours. I can get along with my service to the King on my own. From now on, I will deal directly with His Majesty. I therefore no longer need your advice on anything.”

Nipunna was thoroughly disappointed with his partner’s selfish thinking and attitude. He advised him, “My dear friend, Bimsara, it is not wise to be arrogant. Neither is it good to be ungrateful. Always remember, pride comes before a fall. Also, do not forget the maxim: greed will ultimately ruin even a capable person.”

However, as days passed, Bimsara distanced himself further and further away from Nipunna. He simply refused to seek his partner’s advice and kept to himself most of the time.

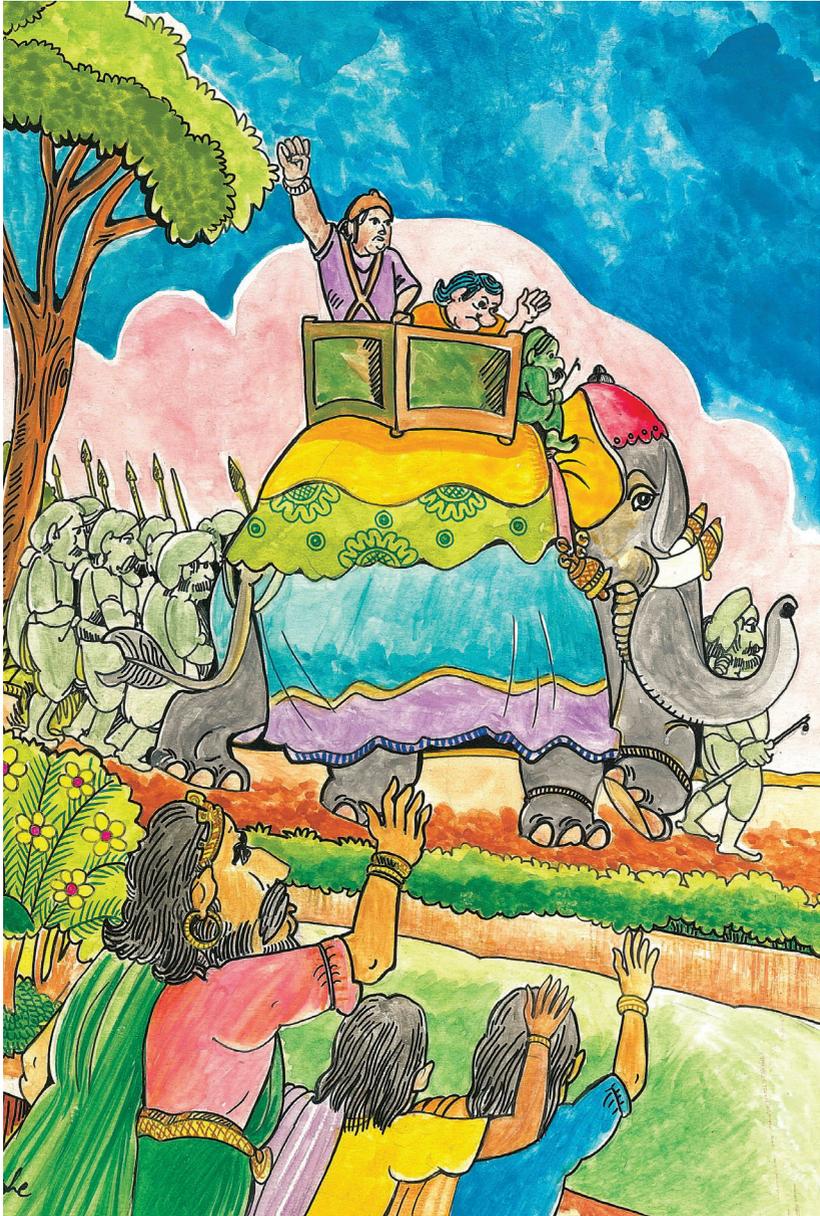


Swollen-headed Bimsara rejects Nipunna

Not long after the strain in the partnership, Kosambi was attacked by its neighbour, King Suriyasena of Avanti. King Bandu's frontier army was routed. The invading Avanti soldiers were about to attack the Royal Palace and take him prisoner. He was ordered to surrender to avoid further destruction of the city and the killing of innocent men, women and children.

In utter desperation, King Bandu commanded Bimsara to lead the palace guards and stop the invading Avanti army from entering Kosambi. Bimsara, who was now ever so hasty to impress assured the King without thinking of the real nature of the challenge asserted, "Fear not, Your Majesty! I will defeat the invading Avanti army and save Kosambi from danger. There is no greater warrior than me in Jambudipa (ancient name for India)! I will defeat the Avanti army!"

Boasting thus, Bimsara proceeded to the battlefield on the lead-elephant. Nipunna knew full well that Bimsara did not possess the necessary



The King commands Bimsara to defend Kosambi

warrior skills to counter the powerful invading Avanti army. Neither did he have knowledge of the tactics of warfare. Nor was he really a brave person. So Nipunna accompanied Bimsara knowing that he would require his guidance at the battlefield.

Just as Nipunna had anticipated, Bimsara began to tremble when he saw the size of the advancing Avanti army. Furthermore, the giant of a warrior leading Avanti's attack was far bigger than him. He knew for sure that his opponent was stronger, more courageous and skilled in warfare than him.

Sensing Bimsara's fear, Nipunna went up to him to calm his nerves and to inject some confidence to face the challenge. He cautioned him, "Bimsara, see the danger you have put yourself into because of your greed and arrogance. You can't back off now for you will be captured and killed by the Avanti soldiers. Even so, do not fear my friend. I have a plan that will ensure victory."



Nipunna advises Bimsara to be calm

Despite Nipunna's advice, Bimsara continued to tremble in fear. The very sight of the giant champion warrior of Avanti caused cold sweat to ooze from every pore of his body. Nipunna cautioned him sternly that if he failed to remain steady he could very well fall off the lead-elephant and end up being trampled to death even before putting up a fight.

The situation seemed really hopeless. Bimsara appeared as if he was just about to faint. He pleaded to Nipunna desperately, "My dear friend, please halt the lead-elephant. I want to alight and return to my native village where I can live peacefully without any fear of being brutally killed in the battle."

Nipunna took pity on Bimsara and helped him to dismount the lead-elephant. No sooner Bimsara touched the ground than he bolted from the battlefield for dear life. He did not even wait to say good-bye or thank his friend and partner.

Nipunna quickly focused his mind on how to

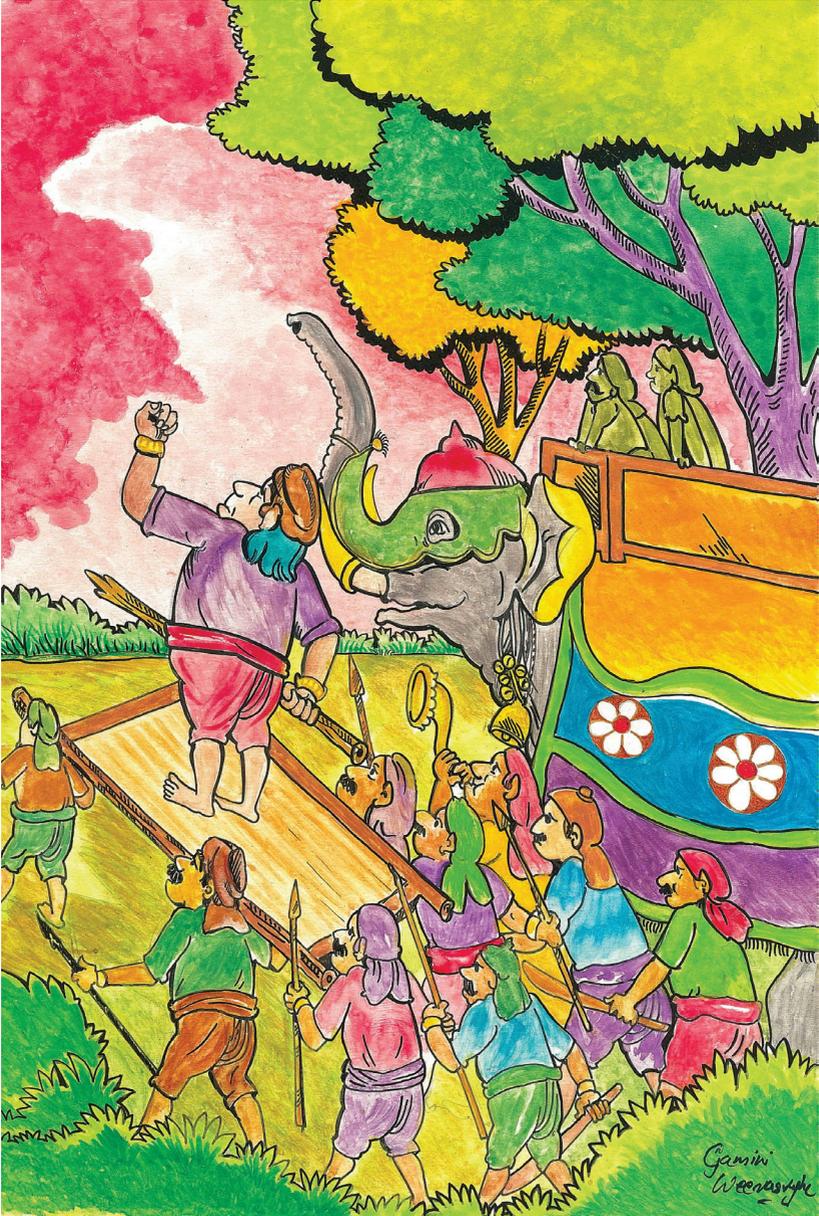


Bimsara bolts for dear life

defeat the advancing Avanti army. He swiftly took an arrow from his quiver and aimed at one of the four soldiers carrying the champion warrior of the Avanti army. It pierced right through his hand, causing him to collapse to the ground along with the large platform carrying the champion warrior.

Alas! Avanti's champion warrior came crashing to the ground and broke his back. He remained there moaning helplessly in unbearable pain. Nipunna then shot several arrows in quick succession aimed straight at the eyes of the frontline elephants of the Avanti army. The beasts turned around and bolted helter-skelter as they trumpeted in severe pain. Hundreds of Avanti soldiers were either trampled to death or severely injured.

Nipunna now knew that the timing was right for him to guide the lead-elephant straight towards King Suriyasena's royal mount. When he got close enough, he pulled out a rope and looped



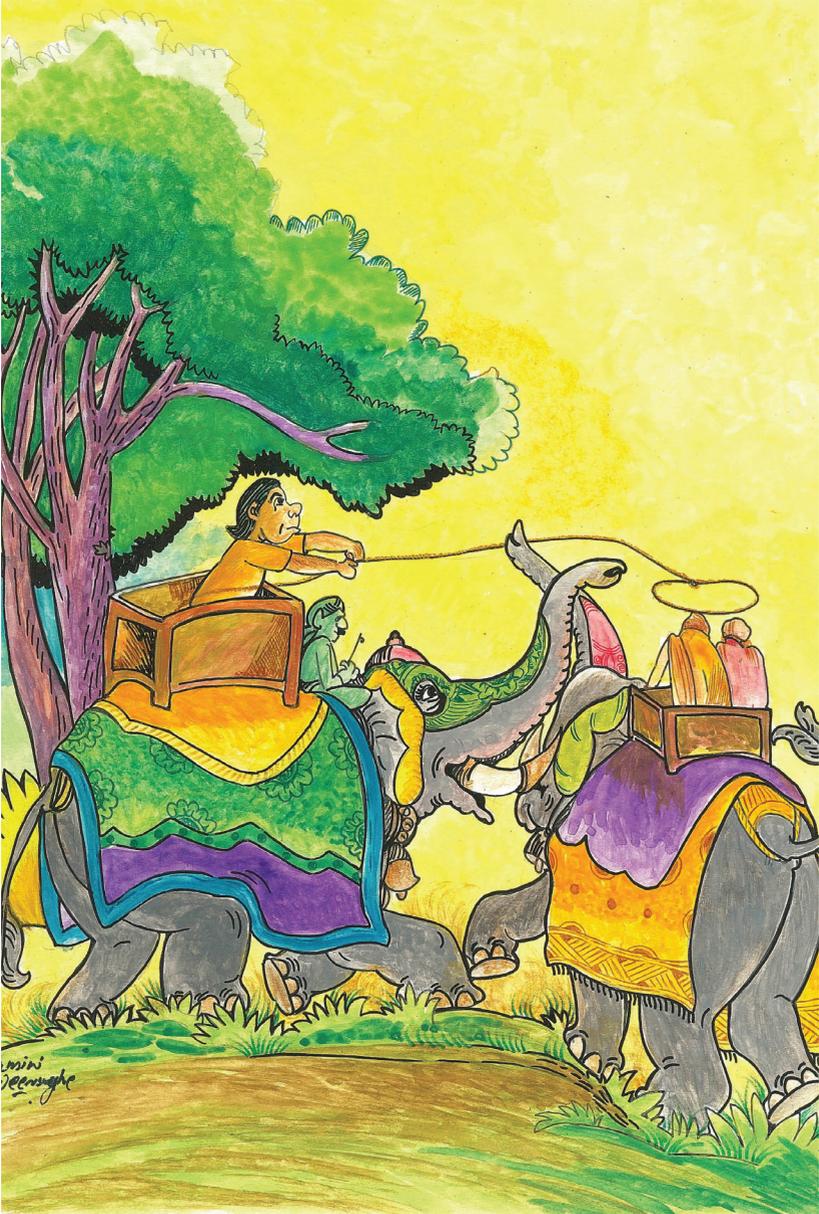
The advancing Avanti army

it around the King. He then ordered the mahout to heave the King out of his seat. After taking King Suriyasena prisoner, he directed the lead-elephant to leave the battle field. When the generals of the Avanti army saw their king captured, they accepted defeat and surrendered.

Little Nipunna was received with great honour by the people of Kosambi. King Bandu came out to the palace courtyard to personally congratulate him for the great victory. He thanked him profusely for his remarkable bravery, skills and quick thinking in the battle against the formidable Avanti army.

From that day onwards, Nipunna was treated with great respect and honour by King Bandu and all the people of Kosambi. His fame spread throughout the Kingdom of Vasta and across its borders to other lands.

Out of deep appreciation and gratitude, King Bandu built a statue of Nipunna in the city square. This was to remind the people, for generations to



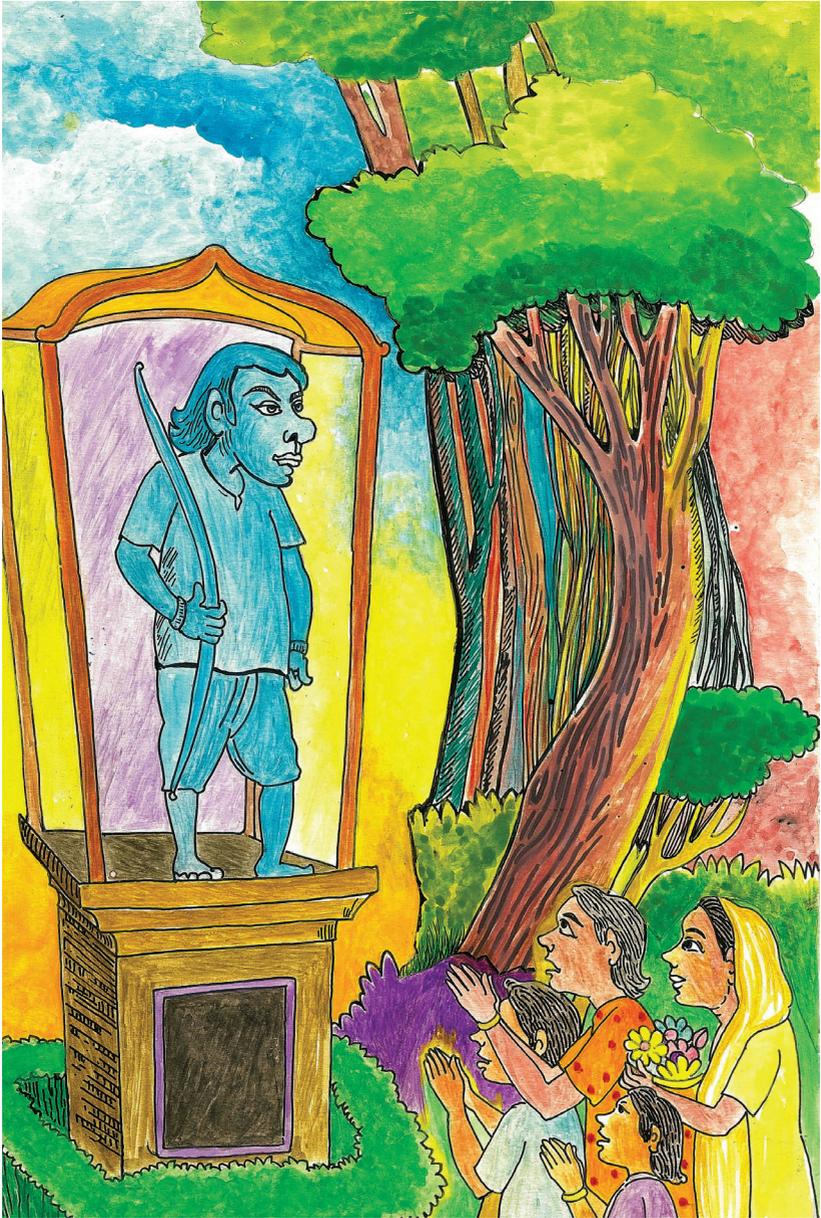
Nipunna captures King Suriyasena

come, about the wisdom and valour of Nipunna, the Expert Dwarf Archer of Taxila, who defeated the Avanti army single-handedly and saved Vasta from defeat and total ruin.

The King was also keen to remind his subjects the ancient wisdom for achieving success that Nipunna had learnt from the famous Acariya Maha Buddhi of Taxila. In particular, the monarch wanted his subjects to learn the ingredients of success such as the human qualities of *patthana*, *sraddha*, *vinaya* and *viraya* just like little Nipunna had brilliantly demonstrated despite his physical disadvantages.



King Bandu praises Nipunna



Statue honouring Nipunna's valour

## Understanding and Reflection Time

Parents, caregivers and teachers are to encourage the child to interact and improve communication skills, thinking understanding of the story and overall imagination. The onus is on them to be fully committed to develop the child's innate interest to inquire and learn. They are to make a deliberate effort to spend a little time with her or him to discuss the questions listed below:

- 1) What was the secret to Nipunna becoming an expert archer?
- 2) Why did little Nipunna leave Taxila?
- 3) What kind of a person was Bimsara?
- 4) How did Nipunna and Bimsara capture the tiger?
- 5) Why did Bimsara break off his partnership with Nipunna?
- 6) How did Nipunna defeat the powerful Avanti Army?
- 7) How did King Bandu show his appreciation and gratitude towards Nipunna?
- 8) What lessons have you learnt from this moral story?

## Glossary

<i>acariya</i>	tutor or teacher
opportunity	good chance
brilliant	very clever, shining, outstanding
<i>sraddha</i>	confidence, faith
disadvantages	handicaps
aspiration	strong desire or wish
<i>adhittana</i>	strong resolve, determination
life-goals	ambition in life
ingredients	qualities
<i>viraya</i>	positive effort or energy
<i>vinaya</i>	discipline
befriend	to become a friend
compliment	praise
all ears	attentive, eagerly listen
audience	meeting , hearing
pretend	to act
courageous	brave
wrath	anger
dilemma	plight, serious problem
pacified	calmed
breath a word	to tell or inform
episode	incident, event ,happening
impressed	highly taken up
desperation	urgent/pressing need
Jambudipa	ancient name for India
inject	provide, give
ooze	flow freely
succession	one after another
mahout	elephant trainer, rider, guide
congratulate	express thanks or appreciation
formidable	great
demonstrated	proved, shown