

## Kesari

King Vijayachandra was the ruler of Kamrup city. In the same city, there lived a merchant named Sanghdatta, who had a son called Kesari. The merchant was known for his honesty, but his son was not. He was a thief. The merchant tried hard to change him, but he could not succeed. He was so fed up with his son's habit, that he gave up on him. The merchant went to the king and brought this matter to his attention. He said, "I am ashamed that my son is like that. Please, you take care of him, because I do not want to have anything to do with him."

The king called the son and asked him to leave his kingdom. Kesari left the town. While crossing the forest, he saw a water tank. He drank some water and sat down to rest. All of a sudden, he saw a man descending from the sky. He noticed the man was wearing a pair of magic sandals. As the man came down, he took off his sandals and hid them under the tree and then came to the water tank to drink. Kesari thought the magic sandals helped this man to fly in the sky.

Kesari slowly moved out and picked up the sandals, put them on, and started to fly. He flew all day long and then he returned home that evening. He was mad at his father for reporting him to the king. So, he went to his house and beat up his father so hard that the old man died.

Kesari was already a veteran thief, and now he had a pair of sandals that could take him anywhere. He went everywhere he wanted to go. He stole all that he could during the night and he would hide in the forest during the day.

Soon, he was a terror to everyone. Everyone was afraid of him. The citizens went to the king to ask for his help. The guards told the king, "He is different than any other thief we have ever known. He flies away in the sky and he returns only at night. It will be almost impossible to catch him."

The king himself decided to try to catch him. The king's party searched everywhere, but could not find the thief. One morning in the forest, the king smelled some fragrance in the air. He followed the odor till he came to a temple that was dedicated to the goddess Ambika. When he entered the temple he noticed a man offering worship.

The king asked him who he was? The man replied, "I am the son of a merchant. I am very poor and miserable. I worship this goddess to gain wealth and happiness. Every morning when I come here I find precious gems and stones."

The king was almost sure that he was the thief but did not have any proof to catch him. He also thought the thief must be coming late at night to the temple and leaving in the morning after the prayer. So the king decided to return at night time and see what was going on. He returned to the city to wait until dark. After it was dark, the king returned to the temple. Later in the night Kesari came down from the sky. He took out his magic sandals and held them in his hand. After Kesari finished his worship he started to leave the temple. The king chased Kesari. This happened so quick that he dropped the sandals and started running to save his life. The king's men also started to chase him.

As Kesari was running, he was now thinking of his bad deeds and sins. Sometimes, timely reflections can change a person. After running for some time, he came across a monk in the forest. He stopped and talked to the monk. By then, his bad karmas were exhausted and his good karmas matured. He thought of accepting monkhood, and so he did. He became a monk before the king could arrest him. When the king saw him as a monk, he felt it was too late to catch him. The king felt better that the thief changed his lifestyle by becoming a monk and the king bowed to his monkhood.

The king went back to the city and the people lived without any more thefts. Kesari carried his life of a monk showing the path of liberation to the householders and went to heaven at the end.