The wise minister

There once lived a king who had a wise and clever minister called Chatura. The king once quarreled with Chatura over a silly matter- he believed that Chatura could read minds. However much Chatura protested the king would not believe him. “Everyone says you are a mind reader. But you won’t even show me how you do it,” the king said, his voice chill with displeasure.

“Maharaj, I truly cannot read minds,” Chatura said quietly. ‘I don’t believe a word he says. I’ll trick him into proving that he can,’ thought the king craftily. “Let’s go riding,” he said aloud. Chatura and the king mounted their horses and rode off into the nearby forest. They hadn’t gone very far when they saw a man.

“Chatura, do you see that man there?” asked the king. “Yes, Maharaj.” “What do you think he does for a living?” the king asked with a sly look.

“He is a carpenter, Maharaj,” replied Chatura. “And what is his name?” “The same as mine, Chatura,” said the minister promptly. The king eyed his minister knowingly. “Hmm. Well, give him some money. Perhaps he is hungry and wants some food,” the king ordered. “There’s no real need, Maharaj. He’s not hungry. I think he has just eaten some sweets,” replied Chatura.

“You seem to know many facts about this stranger. Let’s ask the man and see if you are right,” the king said, riding off towards the man. When they reached the man, Chatura and the king reined in their horses.

“Are you a carpenter named Chatura, and have you just eaten some sweets?” asked the king

“Yes, my lords, I am indeed a carpenter named Chatura,” said the man, bowing with folded hands. “And you are right about the sweets. I just ate some puran poli which my wife packed for me.” The king glared at Chatura and rode back to the palace. He strode into the court and sat down on his throne. Chatura stood with the other ministers. The king told the whole court how Chatura knew all about a strange man in the forest. Then he turned to Chatura. “And you still dare to say you cannot read minds?” he thundered.

Chatura stepped forward and bowed. “Maharaj, I cannot read minds. All I did was understand what my eyes were seeing. I knew that man’s name because he was looking at the trees and checking the woods to see if it was god. And I knew he had eaten some sweets because there were some flies buzzing around his mouth. There was no mind-reading involved.”

The king, who by then had started smiling, gave a bellow of laughter. “Chatura, not only have you proved that you don’t read minds, you have also proved that I do not understand what my eyes see. For both of us saw the same things.” But the king didn’t sound angry, just amused. And Chatura sighed with relief, for one never really knows what an angry king will do.