The Gentleman Farmer

In the late afternoon sun, Siyal the fox lay sleeping. Every now and then he would turn and snuggle deeper into his bed of soft grass. Sometimes he would let out a sharp yelp, very like a laugh. His dreams must have been very funny indeed! He must have been dreaming about the many times he outfoxed his neighbor Kachhap.

Why, just last season Kachhap the turtle had come up to him and had accused Siyal of growing potatoes on his land. The cheek of the fellow! Well, Siyal had soon taught him a lesson. He had shaken Kachhap’s hand and apologized for encroaching on the turtle’s land. ‘Why don’t we work as a team, Kachhap Bhai?” Siyal had asked innocently. Kachhap was surprised at Siyal’s quick apology and kind offer. He had been expecting a long drawn out argument. “Well!” he exclaimed. “Sounds like a good idea to me, Siyal Bhai. I am new to farming and have just moved to this area. Tell me, what grows well in these parts?”

“Arre Bhai, potatoes, of course!” said Siyal without a second’s thought.

“Umm…mm…actually my wife and I are not too keen on potatoes. How about brinjals?”

Now Siyal had had bad experience with a brinjal bush in the not too distant past. He had fallen into one and had spent painful days trying to get all the thorns out of his body!

“Brinjals, my dear friend, are only eaten by brainless hyenas. I am a gentleman farmer. Gentlemen only eat potatoes,” he told Kachhap. “And remember, potatoes sell well in the market too.”

This was good enough for the turtle who, though he was a bit simple-minded, had a great deal of love for money! “Done, then!”said Kachhap, declining he was very lucky to have found such a kind neighbour. “Right, Kachhap, my friend, we’ll share the work. That’s only fair, eh? And at harvest time, let’s see, you can harvest all the tops and I can harvest all the bottoms of the potato plants. Does that sound fair to you?”

“Sounds good to me,” said Kachhap and the two shook hands to close the deal. At harvest time Kachhap realized how badly he had been tricked. He had been left with the green leafy bits while Siyal had all the potatoes which grew underground!

“Never mind, dear,” Mrs. Kachhap consoled. “The greens are quite delicious you know. Here, try some.”But Kachhap sulked. He had no potatoes to sell, you see!

The next time he met Siyal, Kachhap had prepared himself well. “Siyal Bhai, my friend,” he said, “since our venture was such a success let’s do it again. Only this time let’s try another crop!”

Siyal had been licking his paw to count his money. He stopped and looked up in astonishment. This turtle was really a glutton for punishment! “Are you sure, Kachhap, old friend?” he asked. “Of course I’m sure. Let’s try rice. I’ve heard rice fetches a high price in the market. How about it then?” “Rice is good,” nodded Siyal. “There’s one condition though. Last time I took the bottom and you harvested the tops. This time, why don’t you harvest the bottom while I take the top? Only fair you know.” The turtle could not believe his ears. Why, the fox was saying just what he had been planning to say. “Okay,” said Kachhap, his heart pounding with excitement. This time he would come out the winner! Surely! After the harvest Kachhap took ill. He could not look his wife in the eye. He had been tricked yet again by that cunning beast. All the rice had been taken away by Siyal and all he had been left with was brown, muddy roots! “Never mind dear,” consoled Mrs. Kachhap. “He’s just too clever for us turtles. Don’t worry, we’ll get by. There’s a lettuce patch I saw just down the road and….”

But the Kachhap was not listening. He slid his neck into his shell and put his paws over his ears. “Why, look!” said Mrs. Kachhap. “There’s Siyal now, dancing down the road. He’s holding bagfuls of something …..wonder what it is …..looks like bits of newspaper to me….no, just a minute…….it’s money! Bags of money!”Siyal turned his head in her direction and waved merrily. She waved back. No one saw the tears roll down poor Kachhap’s face. Siyal let out one last yelp and awoke. The sun was setting and it was getting cooler. Time to go, he thought, and prepare for a good night’s hunting. He felt refreshed. Anybody would after such a good sleep and such an amusing dream!