
A HEN FOR A HORSE

Rnam rgyal རྣམ་རྒྱལ།

Long ago in the southeastern part of Tibet on the banks of a very large, fast-flowing river, there was a village where local farmers gathered to trade field produce, goods such as meat and dairy products from pastoral areas, silver and gold items, livestock, and weapons. A young man and his father lived together in this village. The young man had a business selling eggs. He was very content with his business because he had been doing the same thing every day for many years and it had become quite successful.

One fine sunny day, as he returned home from the market with great satisfaction in his heart and a beautiful melody on his lips, his father, upon hearing his son's whistle, said, "My son, your whistling tells me you have done very well in business today."

"Father, for sure, and anyone who had exchanged a couple of eggs for a hen would be overjoyed, like me."

"You did well, my son. Your business is truly good, but let's see if we can do better tomorrow," the father said to the son.

Bright and early the next morning, the old man got up just as the sun's golden rays filled the town. He climbed carefully down from his sleeping area by ladder to the yard and, with his son as a witness, chose a hen from the perch and took it into town.

Once in town, he exchanged this hen for a couple of young chickens. Then, in a different part of town, he exchanged the young chickens for two bigger birds. And later, in the upper part of town, he exchanged them once more for chickens that were even bigger.

Towards the middle of the day he exchanged the two biggest chickens for a sheep and later still, gave away the sheep for a couple of younger sheep in the town center.

Just as the sun was going down behind the mountains to the west, the old man arrived at the far end of town, and exchanged his young sheep for a horse and set off homewards with deep satisfaction in his heart.

As he approached the yard, the son heard the neigh of a strong, healthy young horse in its prime.

"And whose horse is that, may I ask?" the son inquired.

"A few moments ago, it belonged to someone else, but now, my son, it's ours," the father answered.

"You mean you have exchanged the hen for this horse?" exclaimed the boy in disbelief.

"Yes, my son. This is the result of my trading for today, and how I managed it is very interesting indeed. I call it the 'hen for a horse trading method' and I hope you will learn from it for the future."

The boy was so struck with the wisdom of his aging father that, for the briefest of moments, there appeared in his eyes a tear of admiration and pride.

NON-ENGLISH TERM

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