



## The Princess and the Sunpati Flower

Each time a child is born to a king and queen, the queen's younger sister secretly gives the child away to a fisherman. In despair, the king falls ill. A bird tells the king that only the sunpati flower can save his life. How will the king get the flower? Can he find his children?



The Princess and the Sunpati Flower  
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# Let's Read



**The Asia Foundation**



Long ago, there was a king who had two queens. The queens were siblings. The younger queen was often jealous of her older sister.



One day, the king received news that the elder queen was pregnant. The king's joy knew no bounds. But the younger queen was worried that the elder queen's child would be the rightful heir to the throne instead of her own child.



"Dear King, when my sister gives birth, please let me take care of her and her baby," the younger queen begged. Her words pleased both the king and her sister. Soon afterward, the elder queen gave birth to a prince.





When the baby was born, the younger queen grabbed him. She took him to the river and tried to throw him into the water.

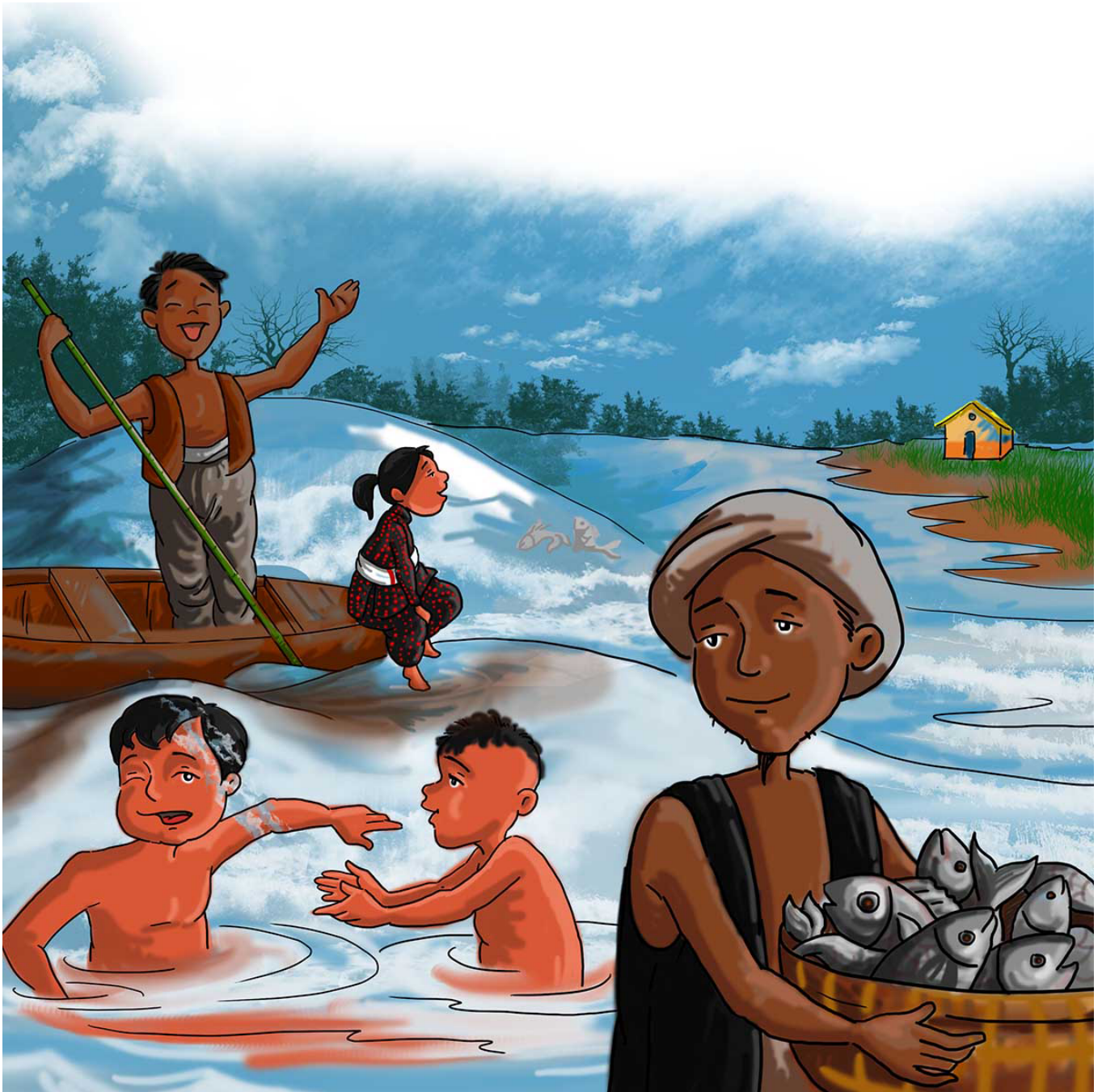




A fisherman saw her. He begged the queen, "I have no children. Please give this baby to me." The younger queen gave the baby to the fisherman. But she made the fisherman promise that he would not tell anyone what he had seen.



On returning to the palace, the young queen went to the king and said, "Oh King! My sister did not give birth to a baby. Instead, she gave birth to a sword!" A few years later, the elder queen gave birth to twins, a son and a daughter. The younger queen secretly went to the river and gave both babies to the fisherman. She then went to the king and said that the queen had given birth to a stick and a broom.



The fisherman and his wife raised the two princes and the princess as their own children. All three children grew up happily in the fisherman's house.



The king was very saddened by the misfortune that had befallen him. In sheer frustration, he ordered the elder queen kicked out of the palace. The elder queen left the palace in tears. After a while, the king fell ill.



One day, the king was looking out his bedroom window. He saw a nightingale in the garden. The bird could speak. It said to the king, "Oh King, you can be cured of your illness if you eat the petals of the sunpati flower. \*Sunpati is also known as rhododendron.



The king issued a proclamation: "Whoever brings the sunpati flower to the palace will be richly rewarded." The fisherman heard the king's message. He told his children about the announcement. The eldest prince left the house and went in search of the sunpati flower.



The prince climbed over hills and mountains. He battled powerful monsters. Every time, the prince emerged victorious.



But then, the prince encountered a ghost that was shaped like a skeleton. The ghost took a deep breath and blew in the prince's face. The prince immediately fainted.





Many days passed but the prince did not return. So, the younger prince got permission from his father and set out in search of his brother. He found his brother lying unconscious in the forest. The younger prince fought the demons that he met on his way and advanced further on his journey. In time, he came across a strange mountain that seemed to open and close at short intervals. What a huge mountain! How will I get across it? he thought. He tried to get in through a gap in the mountain, but he did not move fast enough. He was squeezed by the rocks and fainted.



When none of the princes returned, the princess told her parents, "My brothers have not yet returned. I'll go in search of them and bring them back. Please don't worry about me." The fisherman tried to stop his daughter. "No dear. Your brave brothers failed to come back. How can you expect to make the journey safely?" "Don't worry, father. You have always taught me to be brave and strong. Come what may, I will return with both my brothers," said the princess. The fisherman and his wife could not stop their daughter.



The princess crossed seven hills and finally reached a forest. She found her elder brother lying unconscious. Suddenly, demons attacked the princess. She grabbed her brother's sword and fought with the demons. With the demons defeated, the princess continued her journey through the forest.



Next, she reached the strange mountain. She found her twin brother lying unconscious at the foot of the mountain. She climbed the mountain with the help of her brother's stick.



She reached the place her father had told her about. There were many kinds of beautiful flowers and colorful butterflies and birds. Maybe the flower grows here, she thought to herself. But she had no idea what the sunpati flower looked like. Just then, she heard a nightingale singing. The bird was on a tree branch, by the side of a lake. She asked the bird, "Can you please help me find the sunpati flower? I would be very grateful." "The tree I'm sitting on is a sunpati tree," said the bird as it plucked a flower and gave it to the princess. Then, the bird told the princess the true story of her and her brothers' birth. The princess was surprised to hear that she and her brothers were actually the king's children. "Princess, you have passed the test," said the bird. "Please take the flower and the water from the lake with you. Your brothers will come back to life when you sprinkle the water on them."



The princess returned along the same route she had used earlier. When she reached the mountain, she sprinkled water on her twin brother. He woke up, and she told him everything that she had learned.



Together, they reached the forest where the eldest prince was lying unconscious. The princess sprinkled water on him, and he too came back to life. He was surprised to see his sister and his brother in front of him. The princess told him all about the past. All three of them went straight to the palace.



They were given a grand welcome at the palace. Everyone praised their courage. The royal physicians treated the king with the sunpati flower. After a few days, the king recovered.





The nightingale came back to the palace and said to the king, "Oh King! The three people who saved your life are your own children. A king should rely on his own wisdom and think for himself before making any decisions." Hearing the nightingale, the king realized his mistake.



The younger queen was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment for her crimes, and the elder queen was brought back to the palace.

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