

A TRIP TO THE MARKET

H. S. RADHA • ILLUSTRATED BY UMA KRISHNASWAMY



Govind lived in a little village with his father and mother. His father was a hardworking farmer, who grew groundnuts.

It had been a good harvest, that year! Once Father sold the groundnuts, there would be

enough money to buy Govind new clothes for Sankranti, the harvest festival. His pants had become way too short for his legs!

They also needed jaggery to make sweets for the festival, and seeds for the next planting.

But Father had fallen ill! Mother was worried. How would they sell the groundnuts?

“I’m a big boy now,” said Govind. “Father, let me go and sell the groundnuts in the market.”

Father nodded feebly. And Govind set off for the market, taking their donkey with him to carry the sack of groundnuts.

On the way, he saw an old woman sitting under the Big Tree. She

looked so tired and hungry that Govind felt sorry for her. So he opened his sack and gave her some groundnuts.

“What a kind and generous boy you are,” she said. “Thank you!”

“You’re welcome!” said Govind, and went his way.

When he reached the market, Govind was horrified to see that his sack was empty! It was open and all the groundnuts had fallen





out. “Oh no, how could I have been so careless!” he cried, and went back to see if he could find the groundnuts on the way.

But they were all gone. He felt so miserable that he sat down and burst into tears.

“STOP! You’re turning my house into a swimming pool, and I don’t know how to swim!”

Govind looked around and saw Little-Ant-with-Big-Eyes, holding an umbrella.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

Govind told her what had happened to his groundnuts.

“Oh, we found a trail of groundnuts, and took some home. And the squirrels collected the rest of them.”

“Can I have them back, please, PLEASE...” sobbed Govind.

“Sorry, that won’t be easy! The groundnuts have been taken away to many different ant homes,” said

Little-Ant-with-Big-Eyes. “But, tell me, what did you want to buy at the market?”

“Jaggery and some seeds.”

“Jaggery... we could give you some in exchange for the groundnuts,” exclaimed Little-Ant-with-Big-Eyes. “We have lots.”

Soon, Govind was walking back with a small sack of jaggery on his donkey’s back.

Further down the road, Govind saw a family of squirrels playing catch.

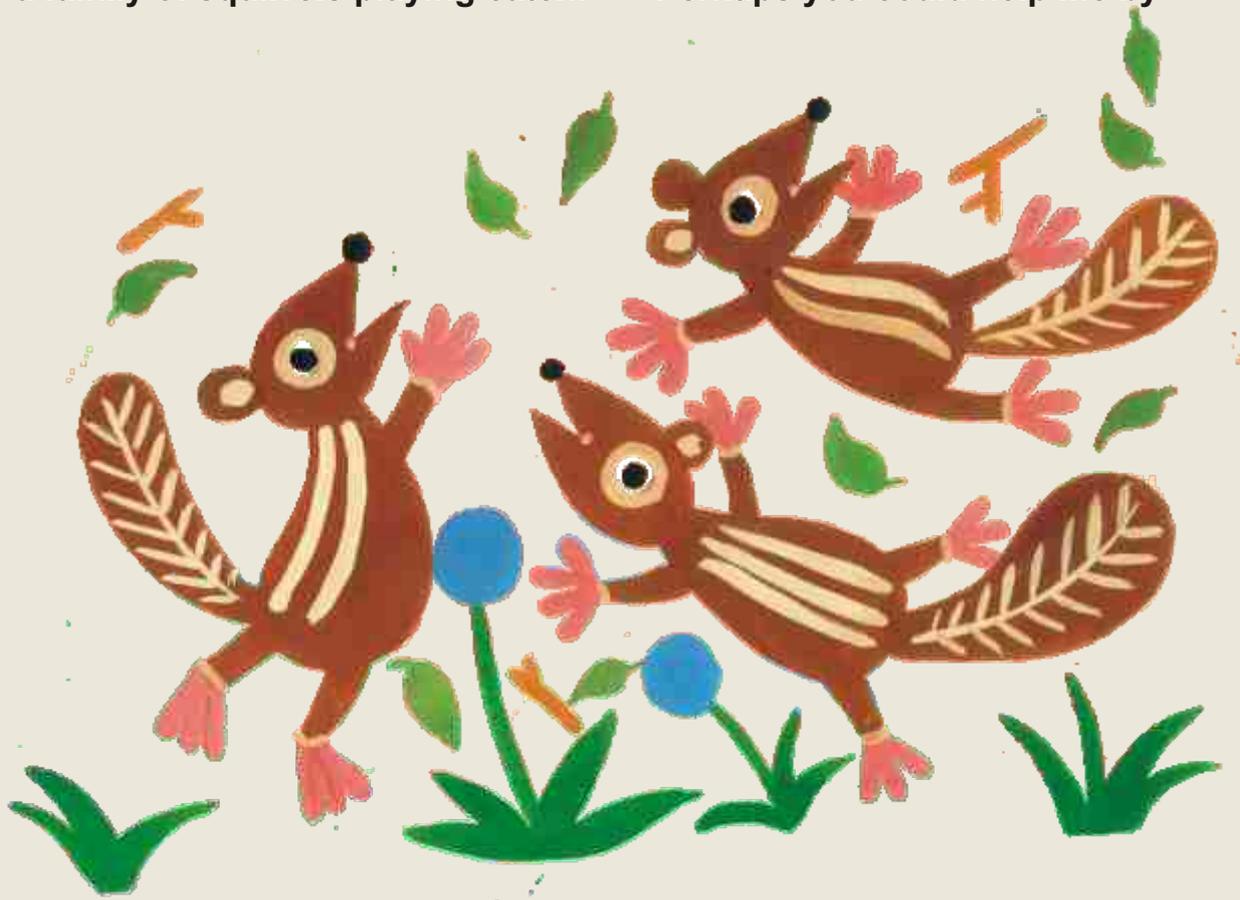
“Hello! The ants said you might know something about my lost groundnuts,” said Govind, when they took a break from their game.

“Groundnuts? Ohhh, are they yours? Yeah, we collected some,” said Squirrel-with-Bushy-Tail.

“May I have them back, please?” asked Govind.

“Uh... huh... you can’t. They’ve gone to many homes.”

This time Govind knew what to say. “Perhaps you could help me by



giving me something in exchange for my groundnuts?”

The squirrels put their heads together, and in a while, Squirrel-with-Bushy-Tail returned with some seeds.

Govind was delighted! Seeds were just what he needed. He thanked the squirrels and began to hurry back home.

He saw the old woman still sitting under the Big Tree, and smiled at her cheerfully.

“Come here, dear boy,” she called out to him. And when he went closer, she waved her walking-stick like a magic wand. “How do

you like your new pants?” she asked suddenly, with a twinkle in her eye.

Govind looked down in surprise. New black pants... now, where did they come from?

“That’s for sharing your groundnuts with me,” said the old woman with a smile. “These are magic pants, and they’ll keep growing with your legs!” she added, patting Govind’s head.

So it was that Govind returned home with seeds for their next planting, jaggery, brand-new pants for Sankranti... and a wonderful tale to tell!

