



23. The Two Merchants of Seri

Once upon a time, in a place called Seri, there lived a merchant. He went from town to town selling pots and pans and other things made of brass and tin. He travelled every day with another merchant who also sold brass and tinware. But this other man was greedy. When he sold something, he sold it at a very high price. But when he bought something, he tried to give as little as possible.

When the two merchants went into a town, they divided the streets between them. Each one went up and down the streets he had chosen, calling, ‘Tinware for sale. Brass for sale.’ People came out to their doorsteps, and bought, or traded, with them. Only after one merchant had finished his business on that street did the other one made his rounds there.

In those days, people did not always use money to buy things. Sometimes, they exchanged things of the same value.

In one house, there lived a poor old woman and her granddaughter. The family had once been rich, but now the only thing they had left of all their riches was a dish made of gold. However, the grandmother did not know it was a golden dish. The dish stood on a shelf among the other pots and pans, and was not often used.



Now, the greedy merchant passed this house, calling, “Buy my water-jars! Buy my pans! Buy my tinware!” The granddaughter said, “Oh, Grandmother, do buy something for me!”

“My dear,” said the old woman, “we are too poor to buy anything. I have not anything to trade, even.”

“Grandmother, see I have found this old dish among other pots and pans on the shelf. We don’t ever use it. Can we trade this? Perhaps the merchant will take it and give us something nice for it.”

The old woman called the merchant and showed him the dish, saying, “Will you take this, Sir, and give the little girl here something for it?”

The greedy man took the dish and scratched its side with a needle. He came to know immediately that it was a golden dish. But he wanted to get it for nothing from the old woman. So he said, “What is this worth? Not even a copper coin.” He threw the dish on the ground, and went away. The crafty merchant was planning to come back after some time and buy the dish for a few copper coins as if doing a great favour to the old lady.



After a while, the honest merchant finished the rounds of his streets and entered the street where the old lady lived. He passed her house, calling, “Buy my water-jars! Buy my tinware! Buy my brass!”

The little girl heard him, and begged her grandmother to see what this merchant would give for the dish.

“My child,” said the grandmother, “the merchant who was just here threw the dish on the ground and went away. I have nothing else to offer in trade.”

“But, Grandmother,” said the girl, “This one looks pleasant. Ask him. Perhaps he’ll give us something for it.”

“Call him, then, and show it to him,” said the old woman.

As soon as the merchant took the dish in his hands, he knew it was of gold. Immediately, he said, “This is a golden dish. It is

worth more than all my money and all my wares. I'll bring enough money tomorrow and then buy it from you."



The old woman was greatly surprised. She was impressed by the honesty and goodness of the merchant. "Take this dish, and give me the money tomorrow," she said.

The honest merchant kept all his wares and money with the old woman and took the dish. He left himself only enough money for the boat-ride that he had to take on his way back.

After some time, the greedy merchant went back to the house where he had seen the golden dish and said, "Bring that dish to me, and I will give you something for it."

"No," said the grandmother. "You said the dish was worthless, but another honest merchant has paid a great price for it, so I gave it to him. You should not try to take advantage of the poor and needy people." What could the greedy merchant say! He paid the price for his dishonesty and greed.

- **brass** : bright yellow metal made by combining copper and zinc.
- **tinware** : things of tin, a metal. • **riches** : wealth, valuable things.
- **crafty** : cunning, clever but dishonest. • **begged** : requested.
- **wares** : articles or things for sale.

Things to do :

1. Copy the following words carefully :
* exchanged * granddaughter * immediately * enough * dishonesty
2. Write the opposites of the following words.
* honest * high * buy * poor
* everything * ever * pleasant * worthless
3. Find the names of the following metals from the lesson.
* b..... * t..... * g..... * c.....
Now, write the names of three more metals.
4. Read aloud the conversations in the story. Enact the story.
5. What do we learn from this story ?