

THE HUNTER AND THE QUAILS (Sammōdamāna Jataka)



There was once an old quail, a beautiful elderly bird with silver colored feathers and a plump chest.

He lived with his large family and his many friends, which all together made a huge flock of quails.



Some distance away lived a quail hunter. With his voice he could make a quail call, which is a sound of a quail that is afraid or in distress. When he made that sound, all the quails in the area rushed over to him because they thought that the sound was coming from a quail nearby that needed their help.

When a big group landed near him, he threw a big net over them to capture them, gathering the sides of the net to trap the birds inside. Then he crammed them into a big basket and took them to a market to sell them for people to eat.

The old quail saw from a distance what the hunter had done to other flocks of quails. And recently, he noticed that the hunter had been coming closer and closer to where the old quail lived. He was responsible for keeping his friends and family safe, and he thought to himself, “I must make a plan to save my flock.”

So, he called his family and friends to a meeting, and said,

“There is a hunter who is destroying other flocks of birds. He is a great danger to us. He wants to trap us in a net.”

All the quails were shocked and upset, and murmured among themselves. The old quail continued,

“I have a plan that we must follow so he won’t be able to catch us. From now on, the very moment the hunter throws the net over you, each of you must raise your neck under the net at the same time. Then all of you together must fly away with the net wherever you want, and drop the net on a thorn bush. If we do this, we all will escape from the nets.”

The old quail’s family and friends all enthusiastically agreed, “Very good!”

The next day, the hunter went out with his net, and made the sound of a quail in distress. The flock immediately flew over toward the hunter. They didn’t know the sound came from the hunter; when they heard it, their natural sympathetic reaction was to help a friend who is in distress.



The hunter threw the net, which landed on top of many of the quails. But they remembered the old quail’s plan, and they immediately stretched their

necks up toward the sky, so their heads rose up through the net and they lifted the net up a little, freeing their wings to fly.



They suddenly flew up with the net over them, and then, all at once they turned, dropping the net onto a thorn bush and escaping from underneath it. Their plan worked! They flew away to safety.

The hunter shook his head in disbelief, and worked on getting his net out of the thorn bush.

It was very tangled up in the thorn bush, so it took a long time to get it all out, and soon it was evening. He had to go home empty-handed, with no quails.

The next day, the hunter went out and made the sound of the quail's distress call, and the quails, worried that a friend was in distress, loyally flew over in the direction of the hunter. The hunter threw the net on them.

They raised up their heads and flew up with the net, dropping it on a thorn bush. The hunter again worked hard trying to get the tangled net out of the thorn bush, until evening came. And again he went home empty-handed, with no quails.

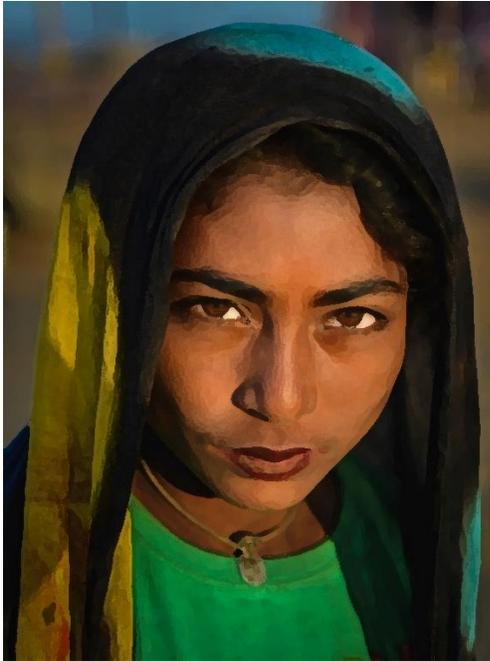
The hunter was patient, and every day he tried again. But he could not catch the quails.

His wife grew more and more annoyed when he came home without having caught even one bird. One evening when he walked in the door, his wife, seeing him arrive home without having caught any quails yet again, angrily said,

“Day after day you return home empty-handed. What's going on? What are you doing out there? How can you come home with no birds? You

must be running a secret business somewhere that you aren't telling me about!"

The hunter replied, "No, my dear. I'm not operating any secret business. The fact is, those quails have figured out how to cooperate, how to work together now. The moment my net is over them, off they fly with it and escape, leaving it on a thorn bush."



She shouted, "I don't believe that! And even if that's true, then how are you going to catch the birds?"

The hunter replied, "Please be patient. Don't be upset. They won't cooperate always. I know how family members are; they always have disagreements, arguing and quarreling. As soon as they start bickering among themselves, I will trap a whole bunch of them in my net, and that will bring a smile to your face. As long as they remain cooperative, the birds will fly off with the net. But when quarrels arise, they will be mine."

Not long after this, one of the quails, while landing in an area where the birds were eating, stepped by accident on the head of another quail, who angrily shouted,

"AOWW! Who stepped on my head?"

The guilty quail admitted, "I did, but I didn't mean to. Don't be angry."

But the quail was in an irritable mood, and felt very annoyed that someone would step on his head. He squawked louder, "You are always so clumsy! You don't look where you are going."

The guilty quail responded loudly, "I'm sorry, it was an accident."

The stepped-on quail wouldn't accept his apology and continued scolding,



“You bumped me yesterday too. You’re always trying to get the best food, shoving everyone else out of the way!”

The guilty quail argued, “Just get over it! You are so loud and obnoxious! I guess you think you’re special. Do

you think YOU single-handedly lifted up the net for everyone?”

The old quail heard the two birds squabbling and thought, “This quarreling is no good, it will lead to danger. We can’t be safe anymore when someone starts bickering. The time has come when the quails will no longer cooperate to lift up the net, so they will be destroyed. The hunter will get his opportunity to catch us. I can’t stay here any longer.”

So he along with some of the other more peaceful quails flew away, leaving the rest of the flock.

A few days later, the hunter came back again and made the quail distress call. As usual, the quails flew toward him, and the hunter threw his net over them.

Then one quail said to another, “They say that when you were working on lifting up the net last time, the feathers of your head fell off, so you didn’t lift it. So, now it’s YOUR turn to lift the net – go on, lift away!”

The other quail said, “One time when you were supposed to lift up the net with everyone, they say the feathers on both your wings fell off, so you didn’t lift it. So, now it’s YOUR turn. YOU lift up the net!”

The first quail said stubbornly, “I am not going to hold up the net for you!”

The other quail shouted, “Why should I help any of you when you didn’t help before?”

While they were quarreling over who should lift the net, the hunter grabbed the sides of the net, folding it over so the birds were trapped inside it. Then he crammed them in a pile into his basket and carried them home, looking forward to seeing his wife’s smiling face, happy that he finally got the birds.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did the hunter make the quails come to him? (he made a sound like a quail in distress)
2. What did the old quail tell them to do to escape the net? (Raise their necks up, fly away with the net, and drop it on a thorn bush)
3. Why was the hunter’s wife annoyed? (her husband didn’t catch any quails)
4. What did the hunter say that family members always do among themselves? (argue and bicker)
5. What did the old quail think would happen when someone starts bickering? (the birds won’t lift up the net and will be caught by the hunter)
6. What were the quails quarreling about when the net fell over them? (who should help lift the net)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Quarreling:

We heard a couple other words in the story that mean essentially the same thing as quarreling. Can you remember those words?
Bickering and squabbling.

Can you think of any other words with a similar meaning?

A row (an older word), fighting, arguing, disputing, debating, misunderstanding, disagreement.

Quarreling, bickering, squabbling, and having a row mean the same thing. How are they different from the other words?

Fighting can include physical fighting – pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking. The other words include situations in which people are speaking respectfully and listening to each other, without being overly emotional.

Quarreling, bickering and squabbling mean an angry disagreement, arguing loudly, usually over something that's not very important.

Someone says or does something that annoys another, who starts scolding, criticizing, blaming, or insulting them.

It can erupt into a loud, emotional fight, and can even become a big battle!

When the old quail saw the quails quarreling, he knew they were developing a habit of quarreling. And he worried that they would quarrel just at the wrong time - when they needed to cooperate to keep each other safe.

Sure enough, that's what happened.

They were so involved in their quarrel over who should help lift the net, that they didn't think about what was really important – that they all must work together to save their lives.

So, what happens to working together, teamwork, and cooperation when we quarrel? It fails. We can't cooperate when we are quarreling.

What other problems can result from quarreling?

It can lead to hitting, breaking or damaging something, or losing your friendship.

The person may not want to talk to you anymore, or may do something later in revenge.

And in any case, time is wasted that could have spent doing something better, something fun.

And, quarreling results in mental and physical stress – we feel upset, we don't feel good afterward.

And what about others who hear us bickering? They get annoyed hearing us; they won't want to make friends with us.

What happens if we quarrel often, or if we often see others quarreling, for example on television?

Quarreling can become a habit; it becomes a normal behavior for us.

If we just lash out at others whenever we are annoyed, and we don't learn to control our emotions, then every time someone upsets us, we just start bickering. Many adults have this problem!

Actually, almost all kids quarrel sometimes. And it's not all bad!

Have you ever quarreled with sisters, brothers, cousins, or friends?

Especially when we're young, it can be useful!

Can you think of how it can be useful - a good thing?

It can help us practice controlling our emotions and solving conflicts!

When we try to avoid making it worse, when we try to calm it down, we are practicing our skills in making peace.

We may even find a solution to a problem.

Sometimes, you may have to shout and even argue loudly to protect someone from danger or from doing something wrong.

What someone is quarreling with you, what do you do to calm it down?

Here are some ideas:

Apologize for whatever you did or said that may have annoyed them

Share or compromise, for example: "You can have it for half an hour, then it's my turn"

Forgive them

Ignore them

Let them have what they want

Agree with them, just "let it go"

Give them something that they would like

Listen patiently without responding, let them "vent"

Respond with a calm, quiet voice

Ask "how can I help make you feel better?"

Kindly ask questions to find out what they want, to help find a solution

Change the subject

Agree to disagree

Walk away, take a "time out"

Say "I still love you" or "I love you anyway"

Later, do something special for them

Think about things that make you happy, to calm yourself down

Don't remind them of the quarrel - don't bring it up later