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The Resting Hill



Have you ever come across a **rogue** animal like a giant elephant? You know a rogue elephant is very dangerous and impossible to tame. This story is about a very dangerous rogue elephant whom no one could control, not even the most skilled elephant-tamer. But surprisingly enough, his wife succeeded in tying the elephant. Read and learn how she did it.

An old man and his granddaughter came walking down the country road. “Let’s rest a minute here,” said the old man to his granddaughter as they approached a palmyra tree on a small hill. He sat down beside the road and took a mango from a basket and bit into it. The girl took a mango too.

He pointed to the palmyra tree up on the hill. “See that **palmyra** there?” he said. “And the way there’s a wide dip to the ground, as if a giant rock had fallen there?” he asked.

“Yes, that tree’s been there forever,” said the girl.

“No. There was another tree there—a long time ago. An elephant had to wait beside it a very long time, you know. Have you heard this one before?”

The man began his tale...

Once there was an old elephant-tamer who came to live here after his retirement. His name was Velappanikkar and his wife's name was Ariyaatthai. Velappanikkar was the best elephant-tamer in the kingdom. He could tame any elephant because he was very brave and patient. He built a house beside this road, a mile from here, and lived a peaceful life, gardening with his wife.



One morning, Velappanikkar and Ariyaatthai heard a terrible crash like thunder, people screaming and then another crash and more screaming. The sounds were coming from across the paddy field and Velappanikkar ran out to see what had happened.

It was a giant elephant on the far side of the field. It had knocked down a small house and chased away several farmers who ran splashing into the paddy fields. Their oxen were running too—**hauling** ploughs behind them.

In anger, the elephant turned towards a nearby tree and ran forward at full speed, smashing into it. The elephant stood there **motionless**, and started to push against the tree until the tree bent back suddenly and fell over, its roots torn out of the ground.

Velappanikkar watched all this. He'd never seen an elephant do that before. **Coming to his senses**, he turned and walked over to the tool shed and pulled out a rope and went out into the field. As he began to run, a thought came to him, a thought he had never had before— perhaps, this elephant is one I cannot tame. He stopped and turned back."

The grandfather **interrupted himself** and took a bite of his mango. He chewed for some time.

"An untamed elephant which attacks people **for no reason**, such as this one did, is a rogue elephant," he said slowly. "And as you know, a rogue elephant is very dangerous— impossible to tame. And in those days, an elephant-tamer who failed to **subdue** a rogue elephant in less than thirty days was killed."

Sure enough, a few days later, the king sent this message:

"Velappanikkar, catch this rogue elephant at once. You have one month."

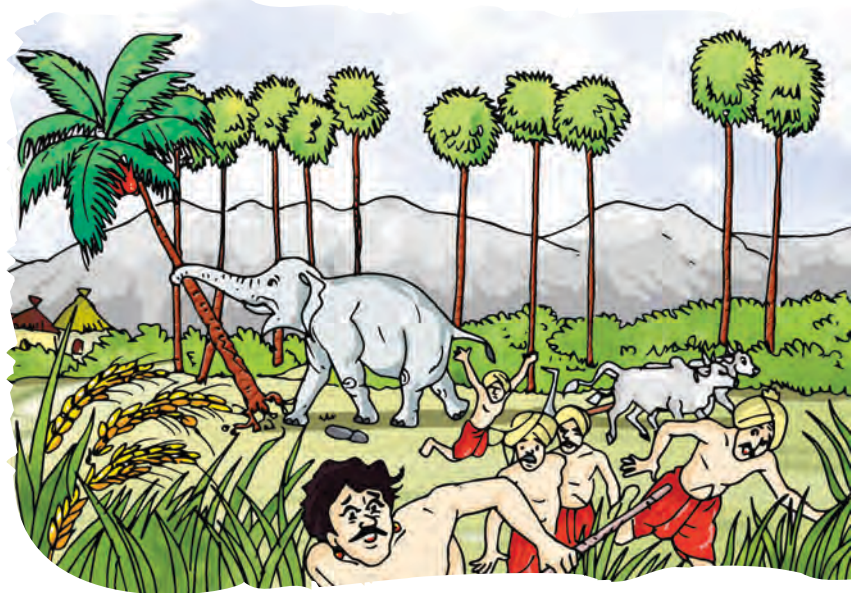
Velappanikkar remembered how the elephant had felled that tree and how **his confidence had fallen away from him** at the sight. He went into the bedroom and lay down. He felt weak.

Three weeks later, the king's messenger came again and asked if Velappanikkar had tamed the elephant. Ariyaatthai met him at the door.

"My husband's fallen ill," she said. "Please find someone else to catch this elephant." But the messenger wouldn't listen. He shook his head and repeated the king's orders.

Ariyaatthai went over to Velappanikkar who was lying sick in bed. She was worried that he might be dying. She realised something had to be done. "I'll try to catch this elephant," she thought. So, after dusk, she went to the shed and took the rope and put it over her shoulder, then she went quietly out the front gate..."

The grandfather stood up and stretched his legs and pointed down the road with the half-eaten mango in his hand. "It was here, on this very same road, that Ariyaatthai walked along..."



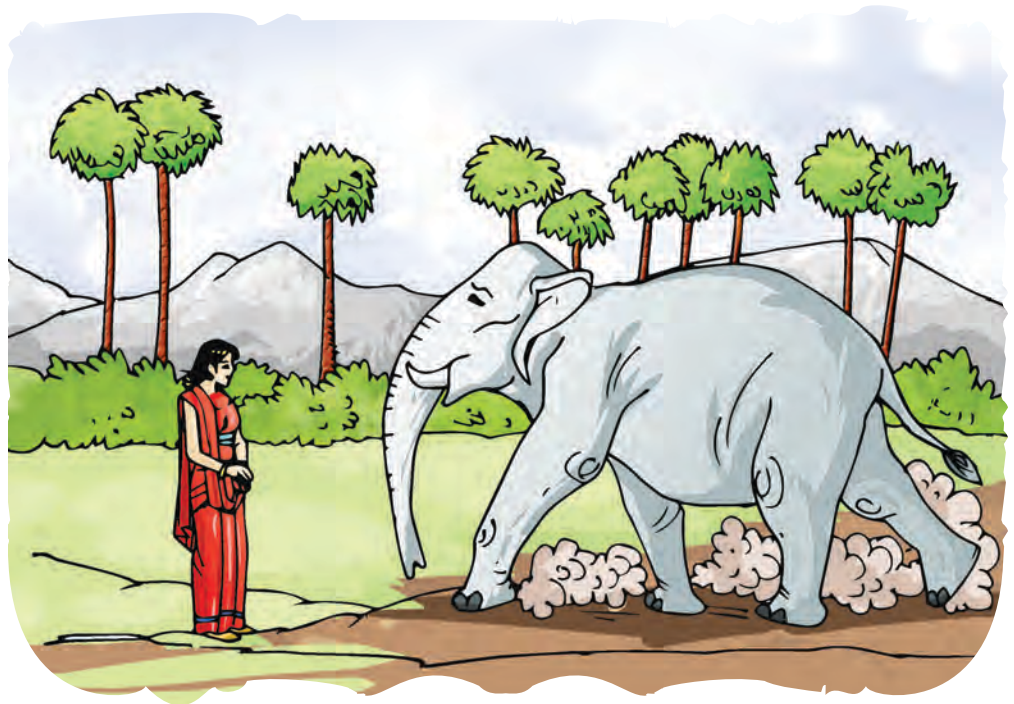
Ariyaatthai walked till she reached a small pond. There were hoof-prints of deer and water-buffalo near the pond, and among them were enormous round elephant footprints pressed deep into the muddy slope. She was sure the elephant would come back that night to drink water. She waited ... her heart beating fast.

Eventually dawn arrived. Ariyaatthai had stayed awake all night, and now stood up slowly and turned to go back home. The sand on the road was bright pink in the morning light, soft and cool under her feet, and she almost fell asleep as she walked.

But, a mile from home, the rogue elephant suddenly appeared. It was standing only a hundred yards away, its huge ears waving in the air like heavy carpets, its giant feet shifting, stirring up the dust. Before Ariyaatthai could move, it trumpeted and charged towards her.

The road began to shake under Ariyaatthai's feet. But she stood there, planted to the ground. She thought of Velappanikkar, and even though she was afraid for both their lives, she still couldn't move. She felt she had nowhere to run and she could only stare at the terrible image of this charging elephant.

The elephant was only fifty feet away, Ariyaatthai still didn't move. Her legs seemed to be fixed, like trees, to the earth. She began to remember all the things she loved and it felt as if her memories came rushing up to her through roots in the soil. She was about to cry out. But then, in the same moment, she made herself take a step forward.



With enormous effort, she lifted her arms and held open her hands and showed the rope to the elephant. She closed her eyes, hoping to communicate her sorrow somehow...

All of a sudden, the wild elephant stopped.

It came close to Ariyaatthai— its face only inches away from hers. She opened her eyes and the elephant was there, staring at her. They both stood still, not sure what would happen next. Ariyaatthai slowly raised her hand to touch the elephant's forehead. It turned away from her and walked up the road to a low hill where a palmyra tree stood. There it stopped and stood still, under the tree

It wasn't afraid when Ariyaatthai walked up and tied one end of her rope to the palmyra tree and the other end to its foot. If it had wanted to, the elephant could have broken the rope, but it was tired of running now."

The grandfather took a last bite of his mango and tossed it into the bushes. "What happened then?" asked the girl.

"Well...no one came back to untie the elephant. Ariyaatthai went home but it turned out that Velappanikkar had passed away during the night and then she herself died of grief.

So the elephant was left standing there on the hill—that's why there's a mark there, because it waited so patiently for Ariyaatthai to come back and untie it."

The girl was quiet. She watched as he lovingly selected another mango from the basket.

"All right then, let's go home," he said, and he tossed the mango over to the palmyra tree, as an offering.

—Griffin Ondaatje

Word-Web

- **rogue** : different and often causing damage
- **hauling** : pulling with a lot of effort
- **coming to his senses** : becoming normal and aware of his surroundings once again
- **interrupted himself** : stopped speaking
- **subdue** : gain control over, tame
- **his confidence had fallen away from him** : he had lost faith in his ability (to control the elephant).
- **eventually** : in the end
- **trumpeted** : made a loud sound, as an elephant does
- **charged** : rushed forward (to attack)
- **offering** : something given as a gift to a god or a spirit (to the spirit of the dead elephant)
- **palmyra** : a type of palm
- **motionless** : without any movement
- **for no reason** : without any cause for doing so
- **to communicate** : to make known



Comprehension

» Multi-Menu

Multiple Choice Questions

A. Tick the correct answers.

1. Velappanikkar could tame any _____ because he was very brave.
(a) camel (b) elephant (c) lion
2. The elephant had knocked down a small _____ and chased away several farmers.
(a) house (b) tree (c) child
3. The King sent _____ to Velappanikkar to catch the rogue elephant.
(a) a servant (b) a message (c) an order
4. Velappanikkar's wife Ariyaatthai was _____ that he might be dying.
(a) pleased (b) sure (c) worried

5. Ariyaatthai tied one end of the rope to the _____ and the other to its foot.

- (a) mango tree (b) palmyra tree (c) peepal tree

» Pick and Fill

B. Fill in the blanks of these sentences with correct words from the box.

elephant-tamer confidence passed away granddaughter communicate

1. The old man told this story to his _____.
2. In those days, an _____ if failed to control a rogue elephant in less than thirty days was killed.
3. Velappanikkar's _____ had fallen away from him at the sight.
4. Ariyaatthai closed her eyes, hoping to _____ her sorrow somehow.
5. When Ariyaatthai reached home, her husband had _____.

C. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements.

1. Velappanikkar was the best elephant-tamer in the kingdom.
2. The angry elephant turned towards a nearby tree and ate its leaves.
3. The rogue elephant attacked people only when they teased him.
4. Ariyaatthai could not see the elephant's footprints.
5. The elephant walked up a hill and stopped and stood still under a tree.

» Matching-Mania

D. Match the words in Column A with their opposites in Column B.

Column A

1. wide •
2. brave •
3. patient •
4. giant •
5. quietly •

Column B

- (a) small
- (b) loudly
- (c) narrow
- (d) coward
- (e) impatient



» Question-Queue (Short)

E. Answer each of the following questions in one or two sentences.

1. What did the old man point to?
2. Who was a great elephant-tamer?
3. Who attacked people for no reason?

4. What message did the king send for Velappanikkar?
5. Whom did the elephant wait patiently to come and untie it?

» **Question-Queue (Long)**

F. Answer each of the following questions in detail.

1. What happened when the giant elephant knocked down a small house?
2. What thought came to Velappanikkar's mind, when he came out of the tool shed?
3. Why did Ariyaatthai think to catch the elephant even when her husband, Velappanikkar, a great elephant-tamer, was there?
4. What did Ariyaatthai experience when the rogue elephant was just fifty feet away from her?
5. What did the elephant wait for on the hill? Why was that hill called the 'Resting Hill'?



Vocabulary

» **Words and Phrases**

▶ **Find single words from the text which mean nearly the same as given below. Look for the word in the text**

1. in village, not in a city _____
2. bring under control _____
3. moving from one place to another _____
4. thrown away without taking aim _____
5. gift to a god or spirit _____

▶ **Find two word phrases in the text with meanings close to the words given below.**

1. the other end _____
2. just as expected _____
3. suddenly become low _____
4. identical _____
5. so happened _____



Think-n-Thrive

- Why did the elephant turn away from Ariyaatthai, walked up a low hill and stood still under the palm tree? Was it afraid of her or did it want to take rest as it was tired of running?



Grammar-Grip

» Reflexive pronouns

▶ Read these sentences.

1. Velappanikkar told him to be brave.
2. Ariyaatthai told her to be brave.

If Velappanikkar was saying in his own mind, 'Be brave. You must be brave', we would say it this way:

3. Velappanikkar told **himself** to be brave.

Similarly, sentence 2 should be written this way:

Ariyaatthai told **herself** to be brave.

You see that, when the object of a clause refers to the subject of the same clause, it has to have a 'reflexive form', such as **himself, herself, myself, yourself**.

▶ Use the correct words from the box to complete the following sentences.

myself herself ourselves himself themselves yourself

1. My father stood in front of a mirror, looking at _____ .
2. I blame _____ for this mistake. Forgive me.
3. Suchi bought three tickets– for me, for her sister and for _____ .
4. You purchased a pair of shoes for _____ .
5. There were many mangoes in the tree. Ravi and his brother helped _____ to a bagful each.
6. We both felt nervous before the interview, but kept telling _____ there was nothing to fear.

▶ Now look at another use of reflexive pronouns. Read these sentences

1. I know she likes sweets; she told me so **herself**.
2. Did you **yourself** see it or did someone tell you?
3. Why does he not bring the parcel **himself**?

In these sentences, 'reflexive pronouns' are used, not because they are objects referring to subjects, but simply to emphasise that someone did something in person, not through someone else. They are placed either immediately after the noun or pronoun concerned (as in sentence 2) or at the end of the clause (as in sentences 1 and 3).

▶ Add correct reflexive pronouns to each of these sentences.

1. The Chief of Police talked to the media. The Chief _____ made the announcement of a breakthrough in the bank robbery case.
2. How could you have forgotten? You _____ told me you would buy the book on your way back, didn't you?

3. They educated eight children? Do you mean to say they paid for all the expenses _____ ?
4. Nobody was sure, we weren't sure _____ .
5. The mother was viewed seriously. The principal _____ wrote a letter to all the parents explaining her views on cheating.

» Reading Skills

▶ Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

The family life of the Ashanti tribe of Ghana requires special mention on account of its uniqueness. Firstly, it is a matrilineal tribe and unlike popular practice the rights to inherit in the Ashanti tribe lie with the mother's side of the family. Man has no right to claim land or property and not even children.

Now the birth ceremony in an Ashanti family is also quite interesting. When a baby is born, great rejoicing marks the clan. When few days pass by, the mother as part of a custom bears the baby on her back and walks throughout the village. The other villagers congratulate the mother by giving her gifts and money. They also bless the baby a long life.

1. Where does the Ashanti tribe belong to?
2. With whom do the rights to inherit in the Ashanti tribe lie?
3. Who has the right to claim the land or property in Ashanti tribe?
4. How do people of Ashanti tribe celebrate the birth of a child?
5. What does a mother do after few days of the birth of a child?

» Fun to Write

▶ You are Sachin a student of class VI-A. Recently, you visited a zoo with your parents. You were shocked to see the impatient and poor animals in the cages. You felt that they should have been free to wander in the wild forests. Write a short paragraph on the topic 'How wild Animals should be cared'.
