

"THE KING AND THE MOON"

The film opens with a view of forested mountain slopes and a valley lush with paddy. An elderly gentleman carrying his belongings on his back climbs the path towards a village. A child spots him and shouts his name - "Apa!" The cry is taken up by other children who rush to meet him. A little girl flies into his arms. He throws her playfully and hugs her, for he has not seen her in a long time. The children crowd around excitedly. The group moves away towards a house in the village.

Apa sits on the ground, his back against a tree. Around him are the children, talking excitedly. Tashi, the little girl sits on his lap.

One of the children calls out - "Apa, what story will you tell us today?"

Apa says: "I have a special story to tell you...", but is interrupted by a burst of excited comment from the children.

Apa smiles and raises his hand, ..."Shoo, children - how can I talk with so much noise? As you know, I've been away for a long time. I've travelled the length

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and breadth of Bhutan and have seen many new things. The face of Bhutan is changing. So I have thought of a story to explain these changes to you ..."

Some villagers, young and old, join the group. Apa now has a large audience.

Silence falls on the group. A dog barks in the distance we hear the gurgling of the stream nearby, and a bird call overhead.

Tashi looks into Apa's face as Apa speaks: "Once upon a time, long ago, there was a wise and noble King. His kingdom was one of high mountains, vast forests, green fields and tinkling streams. Called the Land of the Peaceful Dragon, it was like a little Heaven on Earth where men, birds and beasts lived in peace and harmony..."

LULLED BY APA'S VOICE, TASHI'S IMAGINATION SOARS.

SHE SEES THE MOUNTAINS, THE FORESTS AND THE TEEMING LIFE WITHIN THEM, SHE SEES THE FIELDS AND HEARS THE STRAIN OF THE HARVEST SONG. SHE SEES THE MONKS AND HEARS THEIR PRAYERS. IN HER MIND'S EYE SHE SEES THE KING'S PALACE COMMANDING THE VALLEY, AND THE WISE KING INSIDE. AS SHE GAZES AT APA'S FACE, IN HER

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IMAGINATION IT SWIMS AND DISSOLVES INTO THE FACE OF THE KING - NOBLE, SERENE, AND SOMEWHAT SAD. APA CONTINUES HIS STORY.

"... The King loved his people dearly and had only their good at heart. He did all he could to keep his people happy. He built monasteries, houses and parks. He was a very busy man and yet he found time to listen to the troubles of his people, however small they might seem. But in his wisdom he knew that there was so much more that remained to be done for his people and his country."

TASHI SEES THE MONASTERIES, THE FORESTS, THE HOUSES AND PARKS. SHE IMAGINES THE KING'S FACE AS HE LISTENS AND GIVES COUNSEL TO THE COMMON PEOPLE WHO COME TO HIM EVERY DAY. SHE IMAGINES HIM AT HIS WINDOW, ALONE AND DEEP IN THOUGHT, GAZING AT THE PANORAMA OF THE MOUNTAINS ABOVE AND THE SWEEP OF THE VALLEY BELOW.

"...one day the King was looking out at the mountains, and feeling very sad. He was growing old, and the troubles of his people weighed heavy on his shoulders. So much

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remained to be done for them, but where was the time to complete the work he had set out to do? The people knew his concern, but what were they to do?

As he looked out at the beauty around him it started to grow dark, and he saw a very strange thing. The Moon began to move. Could it be true? Yes! The moon was dancing! This way and that it swayed. It flew high, then disappeared behind a mountain, then came Whoosh down again. The King rubbed his eyes in wonder, but the Moon continued its dance. The King watched, fascinated. Suddenly, the Moon flew towards him, came hurtling downwards and lay at the King's feet. The King stood transfixed till he heard the Moon speak in a soft, melodious voice."

LITTLE TASHI SEES THE MOON AND THE STARS CAPERING  
ACROSS THE SKY AND HER HEAD FILLS WITH THE MUSIC  
OF THEIR DANCE. THE STRAINS OF THE BHUTANESE LIM,  
THE DANGEY AND THE YANCHEN HARMONISE WITH THE NOTES OF  
THE HARMONIUM, THE THRUM OF THE GUITAR AND THE GENTLE  
THROB OF THE TABLA OF SOUTHERN BHUTAN. THE INSTRUMENTS  
BLEND INTO THE SWELLING MELODY OF THE MOONS DANCE  
WITH THE STARS.

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"...You are the ruler of Bhutan" said the Moon at the King's feet. 'You have a beautiful kingdom and a wonderful people. Then why are you so sad?'

'Oh Moon' replied the King, sitting down to speak. 'I am worried for I am growing old, and time is short. How will I accomplish all that I have set out to do for my people?'

'But you have done so much already' cried the Moon, 'See how happy your people are! What more could you wish for?'

'It is not enough, dear Moon' replied the King, shaking his head sadly. 'Much remains to be done. We need doctors with medicines to tend to the sick in the villages. We need pure, clean drinking water to protect the health of the children. Better food for my children to grow up stronger, and then to work harder and live longer. We need roads and bridges so that people from distant places can visit each other more easily, and so improve trade. We need schools, and teachers, so that the children everywhere will learn the arts and the sciences and the crafts, and the history of their country and of the world outside.

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'But, most of all, dear Moon, I wish my people to remain unchanged in their hearts and souls so that the great culture and tradition of my country is preserved.'

'Oh, wise and noble King, if I were to help you to achieve these things, what would you give me in return?' asked the Moon.

The King's face lit up with joy. 'Oh Moon' he cried, 'I would give you all!'

'All?' asked the Moon.

'Yes, all, whatever you desire!'

'Then I will make an agreement with you' said the Moon.

'For every wish granted, I will take a part of you away with me, for without sacrifice the things you ask cannot be achieved in a lifetime!'

The King was filled with wonder and could only nod his head. 'It is agreed, then' said the Moon, and with that he moved away, up, up, up into the sky, and was soon out of sight.

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AS THE KING SPEAKS, TASHI REMEMBERS HOW, RECENTLY, ONE OF THE CHILDREN BECAME SICK AND WAS TAKEN AWAY BY HIS PARENTS TO A DISTANT PLACE WHERE, THEY SAID, HE WOULD BE MADE WELL AGAIN. SHE THINKS OF HER MOTHER AND BROTHER AND HOW EVERY MORNING THEY CLIMB TO THE TOP OF THE HILL TO FETCH WATER FROM THE SPRING THERE. SHE REMEMBERS HOW SHE AND HER PARENTS AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS WALKED FOR THREE DAYS ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS TO VISIT AN UNCLE ON THE OTHER SIDE, AND HOW SHE HAD TO CARRY HER LITTLE BROTHER ON HER BACK WHEN HE COULDN'T CLIMB ANY FURTHER. SHE REMEMBERS HOW, IN HER UNCLE'S VILLAGE, SHE HAD LONGED TO GO WITH HER NEW FRIENDS AND HER NEPHEWS AND NIECES TO THEIR SCHOOL, AND THE EXCITING STORIES OF THEIR DAY AT SCHOOL WHICH SHE WOULD HEAR IN THE EVENINGS. THE STORY CONTINUES....

"...A few weeks later, a man from a far away place beyond the mountains and the sea, came to see the King. He brought with him all kinds of strange looking tools, implements and materials. He said 'Your Majesty, I have travelled far and wide in search of peace and tranquility, for the world has become greedy and violent. I seek permission to make your kingdom my home, for I believe I have found paradise at last'. The stranger

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continued talking.. 'In return, I will share my knowledge of the distant continents with you, and with those of your people who wish to learn and apply that knowledge'.

'What is this knowledge, young man?' asked the King.

'I have knowledge of water devices, of machines and of new materials of great strength and durability. I have knowledge of road building, of great bridges, of electricity, and of engines that can do the work of many men. I have learned how to recognise many illnesses, and how to use medicines to cure terrible sicknesses and to heal festering wounds. Give me men and women who are willing to learn these things and to work hard, and soon this knowledge will spread and grow throughout the length and breadth of your land.'

The King could not contain his excitement - his wish was coming true! In a matter of days, camps and meetings were organised and people from all over the land began to learn many new things. The Stranger's tools were studied, copied and improved upon, and new implements were made. Pipelines were laid on the hillsides to bring fresh, clean water from

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high up in the mountains into the villages and hamlets on the slopes and in the valleys below. Roads were carved out of the rocky mountainsides and new bridges were thrown across the rivers. People learned about diseases, their causes and their cures. Those who learned these things taught others, and in this way a wave of new knowledge spread across the land."

AS APA'S STORY UNFOLDS, TASHI IMAGINES THE TALL STRANGER ON HIS HORSE AS HE CLIMBS THE STEEP PATHWAY TOWARDS THE KING'S PALACE. BEHIND HIM IS A CONVOY OF MULES, EACH HEAVILY LADEN WITH BOXES GEOMETRICALLY SHAPED PIECES OF METAL, TOOLS AND PIPES. APA'S VOICE CONJURES VISIONS OF WATER PIPELINES CLIMBING STEEPLY UPWARDS, AND OF SWEET WATER GUSHING FROM THE TAP. SHE SEES PEOPLE LEARNING ABOUT MEDICINES, AND CARRYING THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO DISTANT VILLAGES. SHE HEARS THE HUM OF POWERFUL MACHINES AND THE WHISTLING OF THE WIND IN THE OVERHEAD POWER LINES. SHE IS DEAFENED BY THE CLATTERING OF AIR DRILLS AS ROADS ARE CARVED OUT OF THE ROCK, AND BY THE HAMMERING OF FORGES AND THE CRACKLE OF WELDING AS MACHINES ARE FASHIONED OUT OF STEEL AND IRON. SHE

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WATCHES AS PEOPLE DISCUSS PLANS AND DRAWINGS AND ENGINEERS  
MAP OUT THE LAND FOR NEW ROADS AND FACTORIES. SHE SEES  
YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN LEARNING HOW TO USE THE NEW MACHINES  
AND HOW TO FASHION A HOST OF NEW THINGS OUT OF STRANGE  
AND UNFAMILIAR MATERIALS.

THE STORY CONTINUES. ALL EYES ARE ON APA AS HE SPEAKS.

"...When this work was well on its way, the people came  
in the hundreds to thank their King. As he stood watching them,  
the King tried to raise his arm in a gesture of blessing, but  
found that his arm was missing! He then remembered his agreement  
with the moon. The Moon had taken his arm away! The King's  
first sacrifice was made. But the King knew only happiness  
in his heart.

The next task was to grow more food. The King knew that  
his people were ready to learn and to apply all new knowledge  
that would benefit them. So he began by getting small groups  
of farmers together. He explained how; to grow the kinds of  
food that would make them and their families stronger and  
healthier. Better ways of farming were discussed, and soon  
the old methods gave way to newer ones. Good seeds became

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available to all and new crops were introduced. The diet of the people improved and the children looked healthier and stronger, and were always full of energy. The country began to prosper as never before."

TASHI HEARS THE PLANTING SONG DRIFTING OVER THE HILLS,  
AND THE THROB OF THE POWER TILLER AS IT TRAVERSES THE  
FIELD. SHE FEELS THE EXCITEMENT OF THE PEOPLE ERECTING  
A HOT-HOUSE, CONSTRUCTING A NEW WATER CHANNEL, INSTALLING  
A PUMPSET. SHE IMAGINES THE NEAT ROWS OF CAULIFLOWER,  
CARROT, BEANS, CHILLIES AND OTHER VEGETABLES, AND THE  
NEW PLANTATIONS OF ORANGE, APPLE AND PEACH. SHE SEES  
SACKS AND CRATES BEING LOADED ON TRUCKS, AND WAREHOUSES  
FILLING WITH PRODUCE. SHE IMAGINES THE HOMESTEADS ALL  
OVER THE LAND, IN WHICH HEARTY MEALS ARE SHARED. SHE  
FEELS THE CONTENTMENT INDUCED BY THE SOUND OF POTS  
BUBBLING OVER THE HEARTH. SHE SEES BABIES BEING WEIGHED  
ON SCALES WITH SHINY ROUND DIALS, AND SOMEONE WRITING  
THE WEIGHT INSIDE AN UPWARD CURVE ON A CHART.

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I sell. My children and my neighbours' children are growing healthy and strong. My village and the people of the district have sent me to tell you these things, and to express our gratitude to you, O wise and benevolent Majesty.'

Overcome with joy at what he had heard, the King wanted to go to pray and to give thanks to the Lord. But as he made to rise, he staggered and fell upon the floor, for his right leg was no longer there. The Moon had taken away his leg! The King's other sacrifice was made - but the King knew only happiness in his heart.

That night the King lay awake, deep in thought. His third wish remained to be fulfilled - schools for the children. But who would build them? Suddenly, he had an idea! In the morning he spread a message far and wide. He proclaimed a reward of five prized yaks to everyone who built a school. The people, excited by the prospect, began to discuss ways and means of building schools by themselves.

Soon, task forces were formed in the villages. Men, women and children pooled their resources, skills and labour. Schools, big and small, were built. Children flocked to

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them, but where were the teachers? The Elders in the villages the Monks in the monasteries and the educated people in the city began to train young people how to teach. Teachers training centres were established and soon young teachers went out to the schools to teach the children all they had learned."

TASHI VIVIDLY RECALLS HOW, NOT LONG AGO, THERE HAD BEEN MUCH DISCUSSION IN THE VILLAGE ABOUT CONSTRUCTING A SCHOOL NEARBY. SHE RECALLS HOW LAND FOR THE SCHOOL WAS SELECTED, AND HOW HER PARENTS HELPED TO BUILD THE MUD WALLS OF THE SCHOOL. THE SINGING OF THE VILLAGERS AT WORK AND THE SOUND OF THE CARPENTERS MAKING THE WINDOWS AND DOORS, FILLS HER EARS. SHE SEES THE HALF COMPLETED SCHOOL AND IMAGINES WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE WHEN IT IS FINISHED. SHE IMAGINES OTHER SCHOOLS AS WELL, BIG AND SMALL, AND REMEMBERS HER COUSINS' DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CLASSROOMS, THE TEACHERS AND OF THE MANY ACTIVITIES THEY SHARED WITH THE OTHER STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL. THE SOUND OF SCHOOL BELLS RINGS IN HER EARS AND BLENDS WITH THE VOICES OF CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOMS.

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"... As he lay on his bed that morning listening to the sound of school bells all over the land, the King heard a familiar soft and melodious voice in his ear. 'Your Majesty' it said, 'I am your friend, the Moon. Your third wish - for schools and teachers - has come true.'

The King opened his eyes but could see nothing.

'No, you cannot see me' said the Moon's voice 'for I have taken your eyes. With them, I see more clearly the good you have done, at great sacrifice to yourself.'

The King smiled gently, for he knew only happiness in his heart. 'There is one last thing I desire, O Moon' he said, 'and that is for my people to remain as they always have been, with honesty and happiness always in their hearts. O Moon, how can I ensure this, with no arm, no leg, and no eyes?'

'Noble King' said the Moon, 'have no fear, for your people value happiness and will themselves ensure that they keep it always. Rest in peace, Majesty, for every month I shall smile with your eyes upon your people. You are a kind, generous and humble man and because of these qualities in you, your kingdom has prospered. When you pass on from

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this life, I shall take your heart which is filled with happiness, and concern, and will divide your heart among the leaders and all the people; and from them it will be passed from generation to generation, so that they will be as wise, generous and noble as you are.'

The King was overjoyed. He shut his blind eyes and smiled. He stretched out his left arm as if to touch the Moon. With a heart full of happiness, he said 'Moon my golden Moon.....' and his voice was carried gently by the breeze to the four corners of the land...."

APA STOPS SPEAKING. THE ONLY SOUND IS THE CRACKLING OF A WOOD FIRE. TASHI OPENS HER EYES. APA'S FACE IS LIT BY THE FIRE BURNING NEARBY. IT IS DARK. THE FACES OF THE CHILDREN REFLECT THE FIRELIGHT. SILENTLY, THEY GET UP. TASHI SMILES AT APA, GETS UP, AND WALKS HOME.

THE VILLAGE SCENE, LIT BY THE FIRE, FADES AWAY IN THE DISTANCE. THE VALLEY IS BATHED IN MOONLIGHT. TITLES AND CREDITS APPEAR ON THE SCREEN.

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