



The Plan of the Cunning Fox
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 The Asia Foundation



Once upon a time, there lived a very cunning fox. He was always looking for ways to cheat others. Everyone called him Chattu, which means “cunning.” Chattu lived in the bushes on the banks of the Tengra River. There was a farm nearby. It belonged to an old man and his wife.



Early one morning, the old man went out to plow his field. After a while, his wife brought him lunch. The two sat down and shared the meal.

"Ah, how delicious this food is. There is magic in my wife's hands," the old man said. "Maybe that's because my husband has a good sense of taste?" The old woman said, blushing.



Chattu, who was hiding behind a nearby bush, heard the husband and wife talking. *"Yum! That lunch must be delicious,"* Chattu thought, drooling.

He then sang in a very soft voice:

"Huiyan, hay! Huiyan, hay!

*What game should I play,
to get that food without delay?"*



The next day, Chattu waited by the side of the road. He watched the old woman as she walked to the fields with the lunch box.

Chattu stopped the old woman and said, "Granny dear, where are you going?"

"Where else but to take lunch to my husband? The poor old man must be famished by now," the old woman replied.

"Poor thing! He must have become weak and miserable from all that plowing. Why don't

you hire someone to help plow the fields?”
Chattu asked in a very pleasing tone of voice.



"We are poor. It is very hard for us to make ends meet. Who would want to work for us?" asked the old woman.

"I would be happy to help you. But I do have one request," said Chattu, stroking his moustache mischievously.



"What's your request?" the old woman asked in surprise.

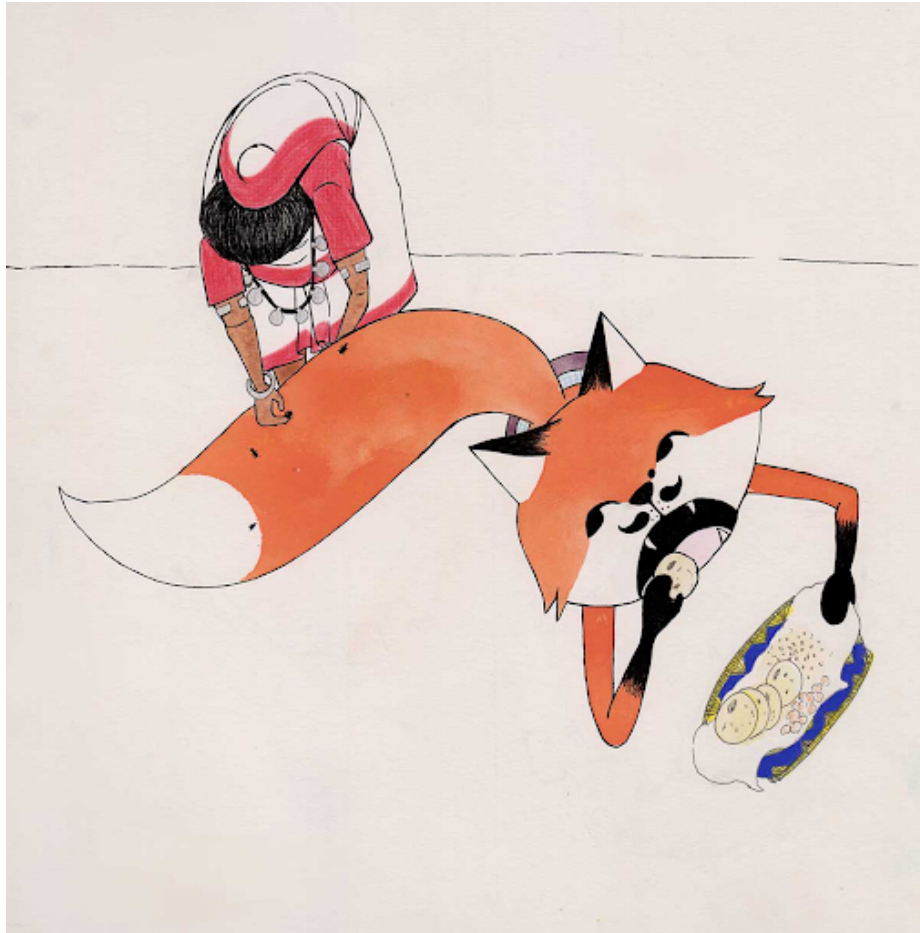
"You have to pick nits from my tail," said Chhattu.

"Oh, that's not a problem at all. I'll do it right away," the old woman said delightedly.



"Can you hold the lunch box for me, please?"
she asked.

"Sure! I'll take care of it," replied Chattu.



The old woman gave the lunch box to Chattu, and started to check his tail for nits. Chattu was waiting for this very opportunity. He quickly ate up all the food and scooted off.



The old woman looked at the lunch box.
There wasn't one single grain left.
The old woman went to her husband crying.
"Chattu tricked me," she told him. "He ate all
our food."
"Don't you cry, dear. Now it is our turn to play
a trick on him. I have a wonderful idea."
"What is the idea?" the old woman asked.
The old man looked around cautiously and
whispered something into the old woman's

ear. The old woman was very happy to hear the old man's plan.

She said, "Oh, that's a wonderful idea!"



The next day, the old woman dressed up in her husband's clothes and went to plow the fields. After a while, the old man came out of the house carrying their lunch box. He was dressed in the old woman's clothes.



Chattu was waiting by the side of the road for the old woman to come by. He mistook the old man for the old woman.

"Granny dear, could you please pick nits from my tail again today? I'll help your old man plow the fields," he said.

Chattu eyed the lunch box. He was very hungry.



"Of course!" said the old man in a very gentle voice.

The old man put the lunch box on the ground and pretended to be busy with Chattu's tail. As soon as he got a chance, he yanked a tuft of hair from Chattu's tail.

"Oh, my mother! Oh, my father!" Chattu screamed in pain.

Chattu turned to face the old man and sang, *"You better eat your food."*

You better protect your chicken coop and your roof.

Chattu has many plans up his sleeve.

Huiyan, Hay! Huiyan, Hay!"

Then he bolted away.



The old man knew Chattu's plan. He took a pair of tongs and entered his chicken coop. Just as the old man predicted, at midnight, Chattu sneaked into the coop. The old man quickly pinched Chattu's nose with the tongs.



“Oh, my mother! Oh, my father!” Chattu screamed in pain.

He turned to face the old man and sang:

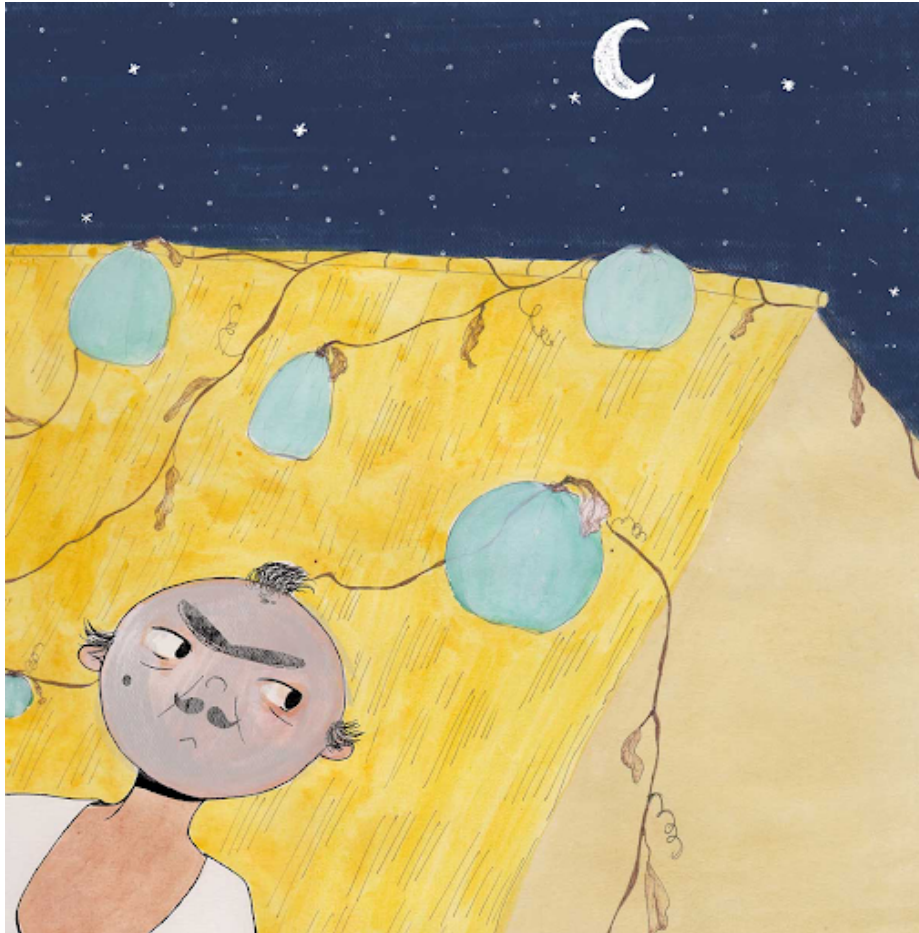
“You better eat your chicken and your mutton.

This Chattu has another plan up his sleeve.

You better protect your roof tomorrow.

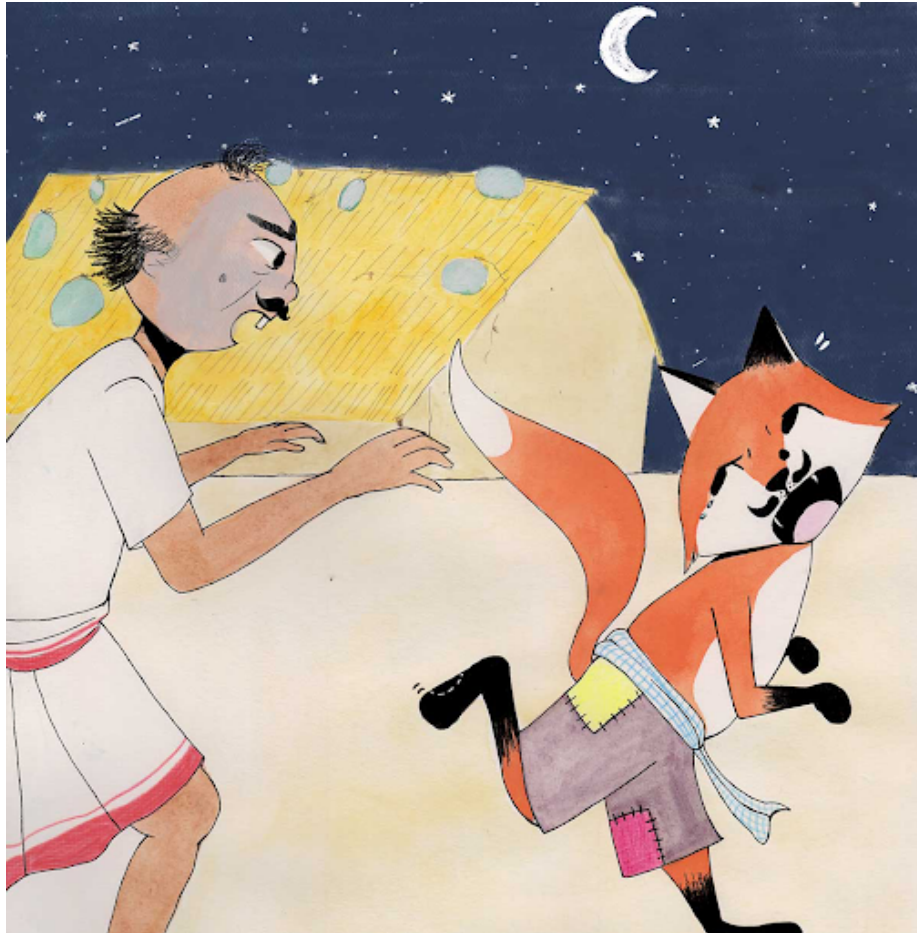
Huiyan, Hay! Huiya, Hay!”

Then he bolted away.



The next day, the old man looked up at the roof of his house. There were a large number of gourds there. Most of them were rotten and had turned white.

He smeared some ash on his face and head. Then climbed up on the roof. He lay there disguised as a gourd.



At midnight, Chattu returned. He climbed quietly onto the roof. Chattu mistook the old man's head for a gourd and tried to pick it up. The old man pounced on the fox. He tried to grab Chattu but he lost his grip. But he managed to grab hold of Chattu's leg. The old man bit Chattu near his ankle.

"Oh, my mother! Oh, my father!" the fox shouted in pain.

"Huiyan, Hay! Huiyan, Hay!" Chattu sang.

He jumped down from the roof to the yard and ran away, limping.



That night, the old man and the old woman planned to teach Chattu a lesson.

The next day, the old woman pretended to cry as she collected dung cakes.

"Why are you crying, Granny? And why are you collecting dung cakes?" Chattu asked.

"My husband passed away. I'm crying from grief. Now I have to throw a bereavement feast. That's why I'm clearing away the dung cakes," the old woman said.



As soon as Chattu heard about the feast, his mouth began to water.

"If you promise to invite me to the feast, I'll help you collect the dung cakes," Chattu said. "Of course, you are invited," said the old woman.

Chattu was very happy. He helped the old woman gather dung cakes.

The old woman took the dung cakes from him and left.



Chattu arrived on the day of the feast. He drooled at the very sight of the food. There was *bhuja*, *fulaura*, *sel roti*, fish, and meat dishes.

The old woman welcomed Chattu. "Before you eat," she said, "you must drink this juice. Otherwise, my husband's soul will not get salvation. He will come back in the form of a ghost and harass everyone who is feasting here," said the old woman.

She gave Chattu a cup of juice. It was mixed with very hot chilli powder.

Bhuja are puffed rice crackers.

Fulaura are doughnut holes made with fried lentils.

**Sel roti* are fried doughnuts made with rice flour.



Chattu gulped down the glass of juice. No sooner had he done that then he started breathing fast. Tears and mucus flowed from his eyes and nose.

"Please do not hesitate to go for a second helping," the old woman said to Chattu, pretending she had not noticed what he was going through.

Chattu was running about and jumping with his tongue sticking out of his mouth. But he

was too greedy for food to leave.

Meanwhile, the old man smeared soot all over his face and hid inside a huge drum filled with flour.

The old woman signalled to him and said, “Come out, dear!”



The old man jumped out of the drum, covered in white flour. He looked like a ghost!
“Ha! Ha! Ha! I got you today!” The old man shouted, grabbing Chattu by his tail.
Chattu cried out in surprise. Somehow he managed to slip his tail free and run.



There was a pile of dung lying in front of the door. Chattu stepped on it and slipped. He crashed to the ground. When he stood up, he had a big, nasty bump on his head.



Feeling the bump with his hand, Chattu ran towards the forest singing:

“Oh my mother! Oh my father!

You can have your feast to yourself.

I had better not make any more plans of stealing.

Huiyan, Hay! Huiyan, Hay!”

Since that day, Chattu never entered the village again.

The old man and the old woman lived happily

ever after.

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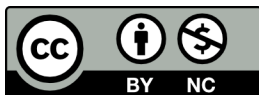
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