

## The Rich Young Man

Once upon a time there lived a very rich family in a large town. The family consisted of a mother, father, and their son. The parents doted on their son, and treated him as though there never was anyone quite like him. It was quite amazing, the way they gave into his every whim! One day when this boy came back from school, with a lot of homework feeling very sad, his parents could not bear to see him. They told him not to do his homework! The boy was very happy, but when his teacher scolded him the next day, he decided that school wasn't nice anymore. His parents agreed, and he stopped going to school.

The rich boy soon grew up into a spoiled young man without any trade. He did not read well or do math well, so he couldn't help his father in his business, and as he was the son of a rich family, he couldn't work at a lowly job either. He did not mind this. He sat at home all day, wearing expensive clothes, smoking, and playing games with his friends. He soon got married to a very beautiful girl who learnt how to look after him in the same way as his mother did. He had no worries in the world.

After his marriage, his parents decided to go on a long pilgrimage. They were sure that their daughter-in-law would care for their son, and that nothing could really go wrong with the business. The father had recently hired a man to care for the business.

Now, with so much freedom, the son decided to act as the head of household. We probably should be happy that he had decided to be responsible, but he knew nothing about money. He called his friends for parties, and gave them expensive clothes and presents. He bought everything that he felt necessary, or just simply looked good to him. This way he spent all the money that his father had saved up. He spent it all very fast. Now, without knowing what to do, he decided to borrow money from moneylenders. In the beginning they gave him money, as they knew who his father was. But, after a while they started asking him to return their money. Seeing that he could not return money and still needed a lot, he decided to take the easy way out and end his life.

He walked towards the outskirts of the town where there was a big lake. He jumped in. But, as he was drowning, the urge to live made him scream for help. He did not know how to swim and panicked, knowing that he would surely die. A poor philosopher, who was walking that way, heard his screams of help and came to the young man's rescue. He took him to his small house in a village nearby and asked his wife to tend to him.

In a few days, the young man became strong enough to talk about himself. He told the philosopher about his hardships, and the fact that the bad moneylenders were not lending him any more money. In fact, he said, "They are harassing me, and asking me to return the money. How can I, when I spent it all, don't they

understand?" The philosopher listened to him and kept quiet. He understood that the young man did not understand life. He had been so spoilt by his parents, that he believed the entire world would treat him the same way. He told the young man to stay with his wife and him for a few more days.

The philosopher sent word to the man's wife and told her not to worry and invited her to their humble home. She was very happy to find her husband doing well and once she came to the philosopher's house, she started taking care of the young man in the same way as she used to before. Seeing this, the philosopher's wife gave her some advice. She explained to her the problem of money. The wise lady taught the young man's wife how to take care of a household and how to make healthy meals without spending too much. She was told that her husband was in debt and that she would have to sacrifice. The young lady, who was very wise, understood the trouble that her husband was in and went home. She sold all her jewelry (and she had a lot) and returned the money that her husband owed. She bought new things for her father-in-law's store and asked that it be reopened again. She did not tell her husband anything, though.

After a while, the philosopher asked the young man to leave. He did not want to, as he was afraid of the moneylenders. The philosopher said that he could stay provided he does as he was asked. He told the young man to join him in his daily work. He was also told not to. He took him to the nearby woods, and asked him to help him collect pieces of wood to use for boiling water. After this they went to the school where the philosopher taught. He asked the young man to sit at the back of the class and listen. This went on for a few months. Slowly, the young man started learning new things. He sat in the classroom behind kids who were half his age, and started enjoying the things they read and learnt. Whenever he saw a child who was not able to cope with something, he came forward to help. It felt good, when he helped.

In the philosopher's house, he started noticing things. In the beginning he used to feel disgusted that he did not have a comfortable bed to sleep on and that he was not allowed to smoke or just laze around. He could now see how the philosopher and his wise wife lived. He saw how humble they were, how intelligent, but yet simple. He saw how happy and content they were with the little that they had, and wondered why he could not be like that. After all, he had plenty in his house. He had never wanted for anything, but he never knew such happiness.

He decided that he would work somewhere and earn money enough to pay the moneylenders. He took up a job as a janitor in a school and worked hard at a job, which did not require any reading or math. It was after all the only job that he could do. He asked the philosopher to teach him math and then decided to leave. He decided to go home to his wife. He met the moneylenders, and told them that he had some money and that he would give them that, and that he would return the rest later. How surprised he was when they told him what his wife had done.

He thanked his wife profusely and bought her some nice jewelry. He then went to his father's store and started learning the business from the man who was helping.

In a few months, when his parents returned from their pilgrimage, they found that the Gods had given them a new son - A son who was responsible and caring, a son who was intelligent and capable, and a son who no longer smoked and just lazed around.