

## **The Fox and the Crocodile- a folk story from Bangladesh**

A long time ago, near a small village by a shimmering lake, in the shadow of the green mountains, there lived a clever fox and his faithful friend, the crocodile.

Every day the two friends would meet in the shade of a great oak tree by the lake to discuss how they could find enough food for another day. They had been friends for many years, through thick and thin, and food had been scarce many times.

In winter, food was often hard to find, so the fox was forced to scavenge amongst the rubbish left by the villagers outside their houses. The villagers were afraid that the fox would eat their chickens, so they threw stones and shouted to drive him away. The fox would go back to his den at the end of the day feeling bruised and hungry and the crocodile would come to comfort him.

After some time the fox was near to starvation when he suddenly had an idea. That evening he met his friend, the crocodile, who spent most of his time in the water and therefore did not know much about the way of life on the land.

“I have had a brilliant idea. Let’s grow our own food” said the fox  
“We could grow some really delicious crops.”

“That sounds good to me” replied the crocodile who loved eating things.  
“What crops shall we grow?”

“We could grow some rice” replied the fox “Rice grows very well near to water so we could plant it close to your lake.”

“That’s a good idea. What does rice taste like?” asked the crocodile.

“It’s tasty, soft and easier to swallow than that tough old meat you eat” replied the fox.

“Mmmm that sounds delicious,” said the crocodile dreamily. “I can’t wait”

So the crocodile helped the fox to plant the grains of rice. He looked after the plants very carefully until they were tall and ripe.

Now it was time to harvest the crop and the crocodile licked his lips hungrily.

“Wait, old friend,” soothed the fox. “How shall we share this rice?” And he pretended to think for a few moments. “I know what we can do,” he said “You’ve worked so hard all these months, **you** can have all the parts that are growing under the ground and I’ll just take the top part.

“Thank you,” said the crocodile gratefully, “you’re so very kind to me”

But as they pulled up the rice plants the crocodile saw that only thin little roots grew under the ground. The bunches of ripe rice seeds had been growing above the ground.

The cunning fox began to laugh to himself, but the crocodile felt silly and annoyed with the fox.

“This rice is fine,” he said, “but shall we grow something different now?”

The fox agreed eagerly. “Why don’t we grow some potatoes?” he suggested.

So the crocodile helped the fox to plant the potatoes. He looked after the plants very carefully until they were tall and bushy.

Now it was time to harvest the crop and the crocodile licked his lips hungrily.

“Wait, old friend,” soothed the fox. “How shall we share these potatoes?” And he pretended to think for a few moments. “I know what we can do,” he said. “You’ve worked so hard all these months, **you** can have .....

“Oh this time **I’ll** take the top part, if you don’t mind, fox,” interrupted the crocodile, who remembered all the lovely rice that had been on the top of the plant.

“Oh, I suppose that would be fair” drawled the fox, grinning to himself. “After all I did take the part that grew above the ground last time.”

They dug up the potatoes with a pointed shovel and the crocodile was astonished to see all the muddy, white potatoes which lay beneath the

ground. He took a mouthful of the leaves but they tasted so disgustingly bitter that he spat them out at once.

This time the fox could hardly contain his laughter. The crocodile felt stupid and cross.

“This time we’ll grow coconuts. I know they grow above the ground because I’ve seen the village children climb up to the top of the tall palm trees to pick them” he said grumpily.

So they grew the coconuts and when they were ready to be harvested the fox said “My dear friend, I can see that I have not been fair to you. I won’t trick you with thin little roots, nor with bitter leaves. This is the coconut, tasty and smooth, so you decide which part of it would you like to have - the outside or the inside. It makes no difference to me,” he added recklessly.

The crocodile looked at the shiny smooth green surface of the coconut and said, “Do you think I’m stupid. It will have nasty hard pips on the inside, I might break one of my beautiful teeth.”

They picked all the coconuts but when they started to cut through the shiny smooth green skin and the rough hairy brown shell, the crocodile saw that on the inside there was refreshing, milky coconut water and snow-white coconut flesh.

Now the crocodile was furious. “Fox, stop tricking me! If we grow anything else on trees, remember that I want to have the inside”

Well, the next crop that the fox and the crocodile grew was mangoes and you know what they have inside, don’t you?

By this time, the crocodile was absolutely beside himself with fury and frustration. He took a few unsteady steps towards the fox and lunged forward with his powerful jaws wide open, exposing his razor-sharp teeth. He was just about to snap off the tail of his false and heartless friend, when he paused and a faraway glint came into his eyes.

The fox, meanwhile, was so absorbed in hatching a new plan which might have proved even more humiliating to the crocodile than any of the previous schemes, that he had had his back to his ‘friend’ and was, therefore, unaware of the narrow escape he had had.

Minutes passed, and at last the fox suggested his new venture, which was to grow sugar cane. He was just about to promise the crocodile **both** the roots **and** the leaves, when he caught a glimpse of the expression on that toothy face.

“What is it?” asked the fox, somewhat nervously.

The broadest of smiles spread slowly across the face of the crocodile, who was a kind-hearted animal and very relieved that he had not acted hastily. “I’ve got it,” he shouted excitedly. “I’ve got a much better idea than any of the ideas we’ve had so far. There’s a much fairer way of sharing you know, Fox. And we will both have plenty to eat. ”

I wonder if you can guess what his idea was. If you were the crocodile, what would your suggestion be?

And so that is what they did. From that day on, the fox and the crocodile learned to share fairly. They always had plenty of food to eat and they were very happy together.