

Story for All Ages

“The Cracked Pot” – a folktale from India

- adapted by Dawn Daniels

Long ago there lived a man whose job it was to haul water from the stream uphill to his master’s house many times each day. To do this work, the water bearer had two large pots that hung from each end of a pole he carried across the back of his neck, balanced over the top of his shoulders. The two pots were identical, but only one of them was perfect – the other one had a small crack in it, so with every trip up the hill the cracked pot lost nearly half of its water while the perfect pot delivered a full portion.

The perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, and loved to brag about them. He also loved to point out to the cracked pot how flawed it was...that no matter how hard the water bearer worked, the cracked pot only ever managed to deliver a half portion of water to the master’s house. The cracked pot felt ashamed of his imperfection and was miserable that he could accomplish only half of what he had been made to do.

One day the cracked pot spoke to the water bearer when they had stopped by the stream. “I am ashamed of myself, and I must apologize to you for my flaw...for my inability to carry all the water you need me to carry. You work so hard and I fail to give you the full value for your effort.”

The water bearer listened and looked upon the pot with compassion and said, “As we return to the master’s house this time, I want you to pay attention to the beautiful flowers growing along the path.” And indeed, as they went back up the hill, the cracked pot did take notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and felt cheered...somewhat. But at the end of the trail, the pot again felt miserable and apologized once more for having lost half its water along the way.

The water bearer said to the pot, “I’m afraid you do not understand what I was trying to show you. Did you not notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, and not on the other pot’s side? That’s because I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you’ve watered them. I have known about your crack for some time and could have crafted a new pot. But because of your flaw, we have been able...together...to grow beautiful flowers and with them bless many tables. Without you being just the way you are, where would we have found such beauty?”