

The Demon Catcher

and Other Stories from the Indian Heartland

Retold & illustrated by
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The Way to A Dacoit's Heart

Years ago, Madhya Pradesh was full of dacoits. Ruthless bands of such men held the entire region in fear. Even the king's men and the police were scared of the robbers and could not protect the people. The most notorious of them was the dacoit chieftain, Billa.

Billa had a unique way of looting the villagers. He would send a messenger informing them of the time and place of the raid. Any effort to let the police know would mean instant death to the informers. The frightened folk had no choice but to allow themselves to be robbed.

One such time, Billa's messenger informed Dhanraj, a rich businessman, that he was going to be visited that night.

Dhanraj shook like a leaf in fear.

"Parvati," he cried to his wife, "what do we do? Our coffers are full and this wretched dacoit will steal us blind."

Dhanraj's brother said, "Let us take a band of men and attack the dacoits before they come into the village. That way, we can try and put an end to this menace forever!"

Now Parvati was a smart woman. She said, "I don't think we can fight the dacoit gang physically. We have to use our minds to get the better of them."

"How can you reason with a dacoit?" asked Dhanraj. "Let us all run away with whatever we can pack!"

Parvati said, "Don't be such a coward! If you men can't tackle this problem, leave it to me."

Dhanraj and his brother begged and pleaded with Parvati.

