

Kingdom of the Blind

THERE was once a very powerful king. He ruled over a large kingdom that stretched far and wide across the land.

One day, a messenger came to him and said, "O King, as I was visiting the marketplace, I heard it said that all the people of your kingdom are blind."

"There is no truth in that," said the king.

"How can you be sure?" asked the messenger.

"I do not know," replied the king, beginning to look quite worried, "but I know one man who can find out the truth."

The king then told the messenger to ask Birbal to come to the palace at once. Birbal was the king's most trusted advisor and the wisest person in the entire kingdom. The king never made an important decision without first seeking Birbal's advice.



Birbal hurried into the palace and stood before the king. "How can I be of service, O King?" he asked.

The king explained what the messenger had said. He then said to Birbal, "You must find out for me how many of the people are blind and how many are not. I must know the truth!"

"I shall do my best," said Birbal, "you will soon have your answer."

Birbal took leave of the king and walked deep into the forest. He took his sword and cut a large quantity of wild vines. He rolled the vines into a huge bundle. He placed the bundle upon his head and walked all the way back to the marketplace. When he arrived there, Birbal placed the bundle at the side of the road and sat next to it. He then started to weave the vines into baskets.

Now Birbal was well known throughout the kingdom. The marketplace was crowded with people. People were passing up and down the road. They were all surprised to see Birbal sitting there weaving baskets.

Some said to him, "Birbal, what are you doing there?"

Others said, "Birbal, I see you are making

baskets."

Birbal counted as blind all those who asked him what he was doing. Those who told him that he was making baskets he counted as not blind.

At the end of the day, Birbal went to the king and reported that indeed, most of the people in the kingdom were blind.

