A Sparrow's Advice

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There was once a big beautiful garden with various kinds of trees and flowers attracting birds who built their nests on top of the trees. The owner of the garden was a greedy man and so thought of putting a trap for the birds, saying to himself: "There are so many lovely birds in my garden and I can catch and put in a cage one of them so it will sing for me and I can also roast and eat some of the fat ones." So, he went into the middle of the garden, put a trap, sowed some seeds around it and hid himself behind a tree. The birds which were sitting on the branches of the trees saw the seeds and flew down to eat them. Among them, there was a little sparrow who got caught in the trap. And the man immediately appeared from behind the tree and said: "What a nice sparrow." And took the little sparrow into his big hands. The sparrow was very afraid and said to the man: "O the Gardner! Please set me free. I'm only a little bird and cannot become a good food for you, because there is little meat in my body. I cannot sing beautifully either, so I will be of no use for you."

The man thought for a while and first agreed with the sparrow, but then he had an idea telling himself: "Maybe this little bird will be interesting as a plaything for my child, so why should I let it go?"

The sparrow noticed that the man did not want to free it, so continued: "O the kind gardener! You have a big garden and lots of sheep and cows and so do not need me. But if you free me, I will in return give you three pieces of advice which will be more valuable for you than thousands of doves and even peacocks." The man laughed and answered: "What advice can a little bird like you give me?"

The sparrow said: "My being a little one does not mean that I have no knowledge. You just listen to what I say and if you find the advice I give you useful, then let me go and if not keep me."

The man agreed and said to the sparrow; "Well, now give me the advice."

The sparrow said:"Firstly, never accept any words which seem impossible."

The man thought that the sparrow was saying a right thing and so told it to give him the second piece of advice. But the sparrow told him that for receiving that, the man should let it go and sit on the branch of a tree, promising not to be lying to him. The man agreed, but told the sparrow not to lie to him, because he would then get angry and the sparrow assured him that it was not lying and that sparrows never tell lies. So, the man let the sparrow free and it flew away and sat on a branch of a tall tree and then said to the man: "My second piece of advice is this, never regret what you have lost."

The man said that it was also right and asked the sparrow to give him the third piece of advice as it had promised him. But the sparrow said: "O the poor gardener! You are in fact a loser because in my belly there is a very big precious gem and so you have lost it."

Hearing this, the gardener became very sad and tried to catch the sparrow but failed. The sparrow laughed and said to him: "O poor man! You forgot the two pieces of advice I gave you too early. I told you not to believe the impossible, but you believed when I told you that in my belly there is a gem. And I told you not to regret what you have lost, but you became very unhappy for losing a gem which also could not be found in the small belly of a little bird like me. You already knew how

light I am, because you held me in your hands. So, why did you believe me when I told you that a big gem was in my belly?"

The man thought for a minute and said: "You are right. Now give me your third piece of advice."

But the sparrow answered: "What is the use of that when you forget about advice easily! You have already forgotten the two pieces of advice I gave. So, I think you will also forget the third if I give you that." And then the sparrow flew away and the man stood for a while just there thinking about the sparrow and what it had said.

A story from Mathnavi written by Mowlana, Iranian well-known poet