

Reeds in Water

Once there was a king who often walked with scholars from the court. The scholars respected the king because he was the king but they deemed themselves to be intellectually superior to him.

One hot day the scholars were walking with the king and they passed a reedy swamp. The ground was wet and the reeds were standing in water.

The king observed the reeds and said, "These reeds need a bit of rain."

The scholars exchanged looks and smirks.

"Why would the reeds need rain when they are standing in water?" they asked.

The king did not answer.

That evening he served the scholars a fine meal. He ordered that big bowls of water be placed under the table. The scholars were told they must put their feet in the bowls of water. This they did because it wouldn't do to disobey the king when he gave an order. They were served beautiful food but the king served no drinks during the meal. He made sure the dishes were well salted. When the meal was finished the scholars were delighted with the feast. They congratulated the king. When no drinks seemed to be forthcoming they asked if they might have some water.

The king said, "What for? You said the reeds would not need extra water as their feet were therefor since your feet are in water you surely do not need more."

That was the first of many lessons the scholars learned from the king.

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I do cannot recall how I came by this story but I believe it is an old tale from India. If anyone has any further information please do email me.JB :-)