

# **THE FARMER, HIS WIFE, AND THE OPEN DOOR INDIAN FOLK-TALE**

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Once upon a time a poor farmer and his wife, having finished their day's labour and eaten their frugal supper, were sitting by the fire, when a dispute arose between them as to who should shut the door, which had been blown open by a gust of wind.

‘Wife, shut the door!’ said the man.

‘Husband, shut it yourself!’ said the woman.

‘I will not shut it, and you shall not shut it,’ said the husband; ‘but let the one who speaks the first word shut it.’

This proposal pleased the wife exceedingly, and so the old couple, well satisfied, retired in silence to bed.

In the middle of the night they heard a noise, and, peering out, they perceived that a wild dog had entered the room, and that he was busy devouring their little store of food. Not a word, however, would either of these silly people utter, and the dog, having sniffed at everything, and having eaten as much as he wanted, went out of the house.

The next morning the woman took some grain to the house of a neighbour in order to have it ground into flour.

In her absence the barber entered, and said to the husband: ‘How is it you are sitting here all alone?’

The farmer answered never a word. The barber then shaved his head, but still he did not speak; then he shaved off half his beard and half his moustache, but even then the man refrained from uttering a syllable. Then the barber covered him all over with a hideous coating of lamp-black, but the stolid farmer remained as dumb as a mute. ‘The man is bewitched!’ cried the barber, and he hastily quitted the house.

He had hardly gone when the wife returned from the mill. She, seeing her husband in such a ghastly plight, began to tremble, and exclaimed: ‘Ah! wretch, what have you been doing?’

‘You spoke the first word,’ said the farmer, ‘so begone, woman, and shut the door.’

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