The Talkative Turtle

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Once upon a time, there was a large lake at the edge of a village. Small and large fish, crabs, frogs, water snakes, otters, turtles, herons, and white cranes all lived in it. One year there was no monsoon at all, only summer. Because of that drought, the lake's water dried up. People collected all the fish in baskets and ate them. The birds left that lake and migrated elsewhere. One turtle remained behind. When it poked its head out and looked around, it saw its friends, two white cranes. The turtle called out to them as they were pecking for worms in the mud, crying, "The time has come for me to die without even a drop of water to drink. Before that happens, even if a wild boar comes, digs me out, and pulls my head off to eat it, let it eat," lamented the turtle. Hearing its mournful cries, the cranes' hearts ached with pity. Thinking for a moment, the birds said, "A short distance from here, in

Neereduru, there is a large lake. We are going there. But it would take you months to get there. As you go crawling along, people on the way will see you, catch you, put you in a heavy pot, and cook and eat you the next day." Hearing this, the frightened turtle felt like a frog jumping onto someone who was already terrified Finally, one bird thought of a plan. "We will lift you up and carry you. You hold onto a stick tightly in your mouth. We will hold the two ends of that stick in our beaks and fly away. We will reach there in less than three-quarters of three hours (very quickly)," said one bird. As the saying goes, 'a drowning man clutches at a crocodile,' so the turtle prepared for this risky venture to save its life. The bird added, "But remember, do not open your mouth under any circumstances. You must keep your mouth shut until we land down at the lake." To this, the turtle nodded its head twice, agreeing, "Yes, yes." Two birds held both sides of a strong, one-cubit-long branch in their beaks, while the turtle held the middle tightly with its mouth. The birds flew up together. As they flew further ahead, the villagers noticed them and were astonished. The people gathered and began talking loudly, "What kind of age is this! Never heard of this, never seen this before! Oh, look over there!" Hearing all this talk, the turtle asked, "What's all the commotion about?" No sooner had it said that than the turtle fell from that great height, and its story ended in heaven (it died). Think first and then speak; do not think after speaking. Otherwise, we too might share the fate of this talkative turtle.
Based on: Panchatantra