

# **ASSORTED ORAL FOLKLORES OF OUR TEA-COMMUNITY FRIENDS**



**Collected and Translated in English by:**  
**Mrs. Parinita Hazarika, Lecturer,**  
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**District Institute of Education and Training,**  
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**Collection, Recording,  
Arrangement and Proof Reading:**

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Ms. Rinki Tanti  
Mr. Partha Pratim Das

(The oral folklores have been collected from the tea garden community residing in Joonktollee tea estate of Rajgarh in Dibrugarh district, Sonari Tea estate of Charaideo district, Dirok tea estate and Kachujan tea estate of Tinsukia district. The folklores have been recorded, collected and translated in English by Miss Rinki Tanti, Mr. Partha Pratim Das, D.El.Ed trainees and Mrs. Parinita Hazarika, lecturer under the supervision and guidance of Mrs. Parinita Hazarika, mentor and lecturer in English of DIET Sivasagar, Sonari.)

# **NOTE OF THE EDITOR**

‘Assorted Oral Folklores of Our Tea-Community Friends’ is an earnest effort to record the raw, unexplored oral folklores of the tea tribe community which have been passed down from generation to generation, verbally. As stated in Wikipedia, folklore is the body of expressive culture shared by a particular group of people, culture or subculture. This includes oral traditions such as: tales, myths, legends, proverbs, poems, jokes and other oral traditions. Folklore is primarily learned through oral stories, performance, or craft, and is not usually passed along in formal educational settings. Instead, it is passed down through group ceremonies, individual tutoring, and children’s play.

Accordingly, I, Mrs. Parinita Hazarika, Lecturer of the institute along with my student-trainees, Ms. Rinki Tanti and Mr. Partha Pratim Das, have made an attempt to learn about and record the varied folklores of the tea tribe community residing in the tea-estates of Joonktollee tea estate of Rajgarh in Dibrugarh district, Sonari Tea estate of Charaideo district, Dirok tea estate and Kachujan tea estate of Tinsukia district. I have guided and mentored my students to visit people of the tea estates materially, and to retain their unique oral stories, poems, short essays etc. I had also visited people in the tea estates, and paved the path for my students, so that they could get an idea on how to proceed with this massive task of collecting and recording the stories verbally. There was a bit of reluctance on the part of the community to share their folktales initially, but after knowing about our commendable purpose of recording their

stories in the form of a booklet, they gave us their whole-hearted support. We have translated their verbal stories and poems in English from their mother tongue, which is the Sadri language.

This initiative of collecting, transcribing and recording the oral folklores of the tea tribe community was done for the following purposes: to expose to the world and preserve the culture of the people from which the narratives originate; to understand why a particular belief or trend lingers in their culture and why it continues to be transmitted; to encourage children to develop robust reading skills which has been highlighted in N.E.P.-2020 and to make them study about different cultures to discover their interest in creative output; to garner a feeling of brotherhood and positivity through such expressions of ethnic identities. There are twenty-five numbers of short stories in the booklet passed on to us orally by a grandma, grandpa, uncle, aunt, brother or sister of the community during our visits. Some of the stories are quite didactic, some provide us reality checks, some portray their harmonious existence with nature, some of these are mesmerizing fairy tales whereas others might be delightful little rhymes for children. We had encountered fascinating inventive adventures through such beautiful anecdotes of the tea tribe folk.

This endeavour couldn't have been successful without the support and guidance of our tea community friends of the various tea-estates mentioned earlier. We bow our heads in reverence to our dear friends and thank them whole-heartedly for their aid and direction in the task.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the entire fraternity of District Institute of Education and Training (DIET),

Sivasagar, Sonari, Assam for inspiring us to take up such productive work to enlighten the society.

Last but not the least, I, Mrs. Parinita Hazarika, would like to express my regards and affection to my students, Ms. Rinki Tanti and Mr. Partha Pratim Das, without whom this colossal work wouldn't have been possible.

I would also like to express my acknowledgement to the printers for lending their helping hands in producing the booklet.

God be with us!

Mrs. Parinita Hazarika,  
Lecturer,  
DIET Sivasagar,  
Sonari, Assam.

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# Childhood Days

A tale from the lips of the tea folk in Bhojo tea estates :-

“During our childhood, the tea plantation areas were densely forested. The population was small, and the distance between houses was considerably far. People showed little interest in reading or listening to the news on the radio; their primary concern was plucking up tea leaves and living off on their earnings.

Many children had to walk several kilometres to the primary school near Bhojo Railway Station. Tigers often appeared on our route to school, even during the day. One day, while we were walking to school, a massive tiger suddenly appeared and crossed the railway tracks right in front of us. I heard that the same tiger had attacked a man from our village, who was walking down the road! The man was incredibly brave and fought the tiger head-on. But ultimately, the tiger bit him in the stomach and fled. He was taken to the nearby medical centre where he was saved somehow! Something frightening happened every day. Even now, we tremble when we recall such times.”





# Maa Manasa's Blessings

The tea tribe community of Bhojo, Sonari region, are rich in their dress, customs, festivals and religious traditions as well. A few years ago, they celebrated Manasa Puja, a festival dedicated to Maa Manasa, the goddess of snakes. The tea-loving people of Assam celebrate Maa Manasa Puja with great devotion around August-September.

During the puja, a woman leader is said to be possessed by Maa Manasa's spirit. She addresses the gathering, warning them about a pair of snakes living in the nearby tea plantation. According to her, these snakes have been protecting the people from harm, and therefore, they should not be afraid to work in the garden. However, if they harm the snakes, Maa Manasa will be displeased, putting the village and its people in danger.

After the puja, a manager of the tea estates, from Kolkata visited the tea plantation. When he saw the pair of snakes, he attempted to kill one of the snakes, but he was stopped by the warnings of the villagers. That night, a huge snake appeared in his bedroom, and he barely escaped being bitten. For a long time, the manager saw snakes everywhere he went. Eventually, he offered his prayers to Maa Manasa, admitted his guilt, and the snakes no longer bothered him.

This story showcases the exceptional religious traditions and beliefs of the tea tribe people, highlighting their deep-rooted faith in Maa Manasa and their harmonious coexistence with nature. ■■

# Messi Topno : A Cup of Triumph

In the rolling hills of Assam's tea gardens, a young boy named Messi Topno grew up with a dream. He was named Messi after the great footballer by his uncle and aunt. His mother, Rukmini, worked tirelessly as a tea leaf plucker, earning just enough to make ends meet. Despite the hardships, she encouraged Messi to pursue his education.

Messi's days began early, helping his mother in the tea gardens before heading to school.

He saw the struggles his mother faced, and it fuelled his determination to create a better life. He studied diligently, often sacrificing playtime and leisure activities.

As he grew older, Messi became fascinated with the Civil Services. He decided to prepare for the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) exams, a feat considered impossible for someone from his background. His friends and relatives doubted him, but Messi's mother remained his rock, supporting him every step of the way.

With limited resources, Messi relied on his own efforts, studying for hours every day. He faced numerous obstacles, including financial constraints and societal pressure to take up a traditional job in the tea gardens. However, his passion and perseverance kept him going.

Years of hard work paid off when Messi became the first APSC aspirant from his tea community. His achievement sent shockwaves of pride and inspiration throughout the region. Rukmini's tears of joy mingled with the misty Assam air as she saw her son's dream take shape.

Messi's success proved that even the most fragile tea leaf can weather life's storms and bloom into something extraordinary. His story became a beacon of hope for the youth in his community, showing them that they too can break free from the cycle of poverty and create a better future. ■■

# Ramu's Elephant

There was once a boy named Ramu who lived in the lush green tea states of Makum with his family. He had a pet elephant named Junuka, who was quite intelligent, playful and gentle. Ramu had taught him different tricks and his favourite food was banana plantation.

Ramu's mother, Sarbati, used to sell tea leaves from house to house in the town. So, Ramu, his younger sister Geeta, and Junuka used to stay at home. His father was a peon in the railway department and his job demanded long hours into the night. Little Geeta's trustworthy guardians were Ramu and Junuka.

One day, Ramu had to stay in the school for a longer time than usual, on the occasion of the upcoming Saraswati puja which was to be celebrated in the school. Preparations were going on in full swing, and Ramu decided to help in whatever way he could. He was a good child.

At home, Geeta was all alone with Junuka. Her mother had gone to a nearby place to sell her wares, warning Geeta to stay at home, and indicating Junuka to look after her. Geeta was a naughty and restless little girl, she decided to go near the pond which was full of banana plantations and decided to take Junuka with her. Junuka was however reluctant to go there as he had been forbidden by mother to go there with Geeta. But Geeta started wailing and pestered the huge elephant to go near the pond! Suddenly, Geeta broke away from Junuka and ran towards the steep pond which was also slippery. As expected, Geeta

lost her balance and fell into the pond! Junuka was aggrieved and he let out a loud trumpet! He glided into the slimy pond and used his trunk to wrap around Geeta's puny legs, without hurting her. Geeta was saved, but as the pond was too slippery, they couldn't get out. Geeta wailed in fear and Junuka snorted in confusion.

Hearing the commotion, their neighbours ran to the pond and were amazed to see the condition. They were pleased to see that Junuka had saved Geeta but, they were now perplexed as to how to save the duo. Ramu and his mother had returned by now, and Ramu's mother fainted at the sight! The neighbours took her inside, and Ramu thought patiently as to how to save his sister and his pet. Suddenly, he hit upon a plan and decided to call the forest officers. Accordingly, the officers came and were able to save Geeta and Junuka with ropes, chains and cranes after a long period of time! Geeta wept bitterly, and ran to her anxious mother and brother, who cried too taking her into their arms. Geeta's mother and Ramu hugged Junuka tenderly for saving the child and gave him delicious treats to eat. The neighbours witnessed the scene with tears in their eyes as Junuka was like their family member.

The only problem now, was, naughty Geeta and playful Junuka were covered in dirt and needed a good rinse. Ramu arranged a hosepipe and began to shower water on a giggling Geeta and a trumpeting Junuka, in full force to remove the mud. That night, Geeta received a good scolding from daddy and Junuka received treats of jaggery from daddy for his good deed! Ramu was proud of his heroic friend! ■■

## Terror of cats

Once upon a time, there was a massive farm in a tea-estate; it was full of big, sharp-toothed rats! The rats used to tear up strands of rice, wheat and lentil crops, and gobble them up. The farmers faced heavy loss due to these menacing rats and tried various methods to trap the rats, but to no avail!

Chandan, a clever lad, devised upon a plan. He consulted the Panchayat and planned to buy three ferocious Persian cats known for their terror: Teenu, Deenu and Seenu. Accordingly, they were brought, and the reign of terror for the rats started from then on. The rat population started to dwindle rapidly. This disturbed the elderly rats and their leader, Golu, especially. Soon Golu hit upon a plan!

He went to the forest to meet his close friend, Kaalu, the wise wolf. Golu told everything about his community's misery with a heavy heart! Kaalu listened to him patiently, and said, "Don't worry, my dear friend Golu. I will help you. Just wait till tonight. But you must promise me something. You will never disturb the farmers and move away to the forest peacefully. Only then, you will be safe".

Golu agreed to follow Kaalu's sound advice. That night, Kaalufrightened and chased away the cats: Deenu, Teenu and Seenu, with his ferocious snarls and growls! The cats ran away with their tails between their legs! The rat community had a great feast that day and thanked Kaalu profusely. As promised, they collected their basic items and went away to the forest to live there in harmony with nature for the rest of their lives. ■■

# The Angry king

There was a king in a country who was always angry. One day, he went hunting and saw a girl climbing up a tree and eating honey. The king went to the girl and asked her to give him some honey. The girl immediately replied, “O King, will you eat the hot one or the cold one?” The king was angry when he was asked this question. The king left in a rage.

On the second day, the king held a meeting, and invited the girl and her father, who was a shepherd, to the meeting. And then, the king asked the girl as to why she had asked him such a question! The girl replied to the king in the royal assembly, “O King, are you so stupid? I told you that cold one means honey lying on the floor, and hot one means honey sticking to a tree.” Everyone in the royal court started laughing at this.

The king was even more angry. The king then ordered the soldiers to imprison the girl. The girl was imprisoned with all the necessities. While the girl was imprisoned, a rat came to eat the food given to her. The girl saw the rat and thought of killing it. The rat said to the girl, “Don’t kill me, I will do whatever you ask me to do!” The girl then asked the rat to help her escape from there. The rat said, “I will help you escape from here”, and the rat started digging a hole in the corner of the wall.

After a few days, the excavation was completed. The girl finally escaped the prison. ■■



# The Arrogant King

Once upon a time, there was an arrogant king in a country. The king was very proud. He said to his Prime Minister one day, “Minister, if you spend the whole night in the water, I will reward you with half of my wealth”. The minister accepted the challenge.

It was a very cold winter day. The minister went into the water of the royal bath and stood with his head out. In the morning, the minister came out of the water and informed the king about his success. The king asked the minister, “Minister, how did you stay in such cold water?” The minister laughed, and said, “O King, I stayed by the heat of the lamp emerging from your room!” The king was quite angry at his cleverness and didn’t reward him as promised. The minister was angry too and thought of taking revenge at the suitable time.

After a few days, the king met the minister again, and asked him to accompany the king while hunting. The minister and the king went hunting together. The king was very tired after a while, and told the minister that he was tired and wanted a cup of tea. The minister immediately set out to collect firewood and lit the fire under a tree. He hung the tea kettle high in the tree where the fire couldn’t reach it!

The king complained to the minister that it was so late and the tea was not yet made. The minister told the king to wait a little longer as the tea leaves had not yet boiled. The king was frustrated, so he went to check and found that the fire was crackling below the tree, and the kettle was hung high up in the tree where the fire couldn't reach! The king was surprised and said to the minister, "The heat of the fire has not reached the tea kettle, as you have put it high up on the tree!" The minister smiled and said, "Your majesty, the kettle is just like your empty words. You promised me a reward but I never received it after working so hard." The king understood and was ashamed. They returned to the state shortly afterwards. Upon his return, the king rewarded the minister with half of his wealth. ■■

# **The Brave Widow: A Fight Against Tradition**

In a small village comprised of lush tea gardens and nestled in the hills of Assam, a cruel tradition had been practiced for generations. When a woman's husband passed away, she was forced to shave her head, wear a white saree, and live a life of solitude. The villagers believed that a widow's long hair was a symbol of her husband's life force, and cutting it off would release his spirit.

Kavita, a young and powerful girl, lost her husband in a tragic accident. As the villagers approached her with scissors to shave her head, she refused. Kavita had always questioned this superstition and saw it as a way to oppress women.

With a fierce determination, Kavita stood up against the tradition. She argued that her hair was a part of her identity and had nothing to do with her husband's life force. The villagers, led by the elderly women, tried to persuade her, but Kavita remained resolute.

As news of Kavita's defiance spread, other widows in the village began to question the tradition. They saw Kavita's courage as

a beacon of hope and started to resist the pressure to conform. Slowly but surely, the superstition began to fade away.

Kavita's fight against the tradition inspired a movement. She organized meetings, rallies, and awareness campaigns, educating the villagers about the importance of equality and individual freedom. The village elder, impressed by Kavita's determination, eventually abolished the tradition.

Years later, the village became a symbol of progress and women's empowerment. Kavita's bravery had sparked a revolution, freeing women from the shackles of superstition and oppression. ■■

# **The Cunning Fox and the Taro Farmers**

In a small village nestled in the rolling hills of the countryside, there lived an elderly couple, Kato and Anita. They were renowned for their lush taro fields, which they tended to, with love and care. One day, a cunning fox named Max appeared, offering to share his expertise on growing the perfect taro plants.

Max suggested that boiling the taro seeds before planting would enhance their growth. Kato and Anita, trusting the fox's advice, followed his instructions. Little did they know that Max had ulterior motives.

Under the cover of night, Max snuck into the fields and devoured all the boiled taro seeds. The next morning, Kato and Anita were left with nothing, but empty soil and a trail of fox tracks.

The elderly couple was heartbroken, realizing that they had been outsmarted by the cunning fox. However, they didn't let the setback discourage them. Instead, they laughed at their own gullibility and began anew, planting fresh seeds and vowing to outwit Max if he ever returned.

As the seasons passed, Kato and Anita's taro fields flourished once more. Max, the cunning fox, never forgot the taste of those succulent taro seeds and often visited the fields, but the elderly couple was always one step ahead, protecting their crop with clever traps and witty banter.

The story of Kato, Anita, and Max became a local legend, teaching villagers the importance of wisdom, perseverance, and a good sense of humour in the face of cunning foes. ■■

# The Enchanting Jhumoor Dancer

During the vibrant Karam festival of the tea tribe people, the air was electric with music and dance. The ground was abuzz with the energetic Jhumoor dance, performed by the community with great fervour. Amidst the swirling colours and rhythmic beats, a beautiful girl suddenly appeared, her movements mesmerizing, as she danced with the group.

One boy, taken by her grace and beauty, fell deeply in love. He tried to catch her eye, but she seemed oblivious to his gaze. As the dance reached its climax, the girl vanished into thin air, leaving the boy bewildered and heartbroken.

Perplexed, the boy approached the elderly members of the community, seeking answers. They smiled knowingly, sharing an ancient tale.

“The girl you saw is a magical being,” they began, “Her spirit has been bound to the Jhumoor dance for eternity. Long ago, she was a young girl who loved to dance during the Karam festival. Tragically, she was captured and killed by men with ill intentions. From then on, her soul was doomed to roam, seeking expression through dance.”

The old people continued, “Every year, during the Jhumoor dance, her spirit returns, drawn by the music and laughter. She

dances with abandon, reliving her passion, only to vanish at the end, leaving behind a trail of wonder and awe.”

The boy’s heart swelled with a mix of emotions – love, sadness, and reverence. He realized that he had fallen for a spirit, a fleeting glimpse of a beautiful soul, forever trapped in the realm of dance.

From that day on, the boy made it a point to attend every Jhumoor dance, hoping to catch a glimpse of the enchanting girl, and perhaps, understand the depths of her eternal passion.





# The Fireflies of Durga Puja

During the festive season of Durga Puja, the tea estate community would gather at night to watch cinema on the big screen provided by the estate manager. The children would sit mesmerized, watching their favourite films under the starry sky.

One evening, a curious child named Beenu decided to walk home alone after the movie. As he strolled through the deserted path, he noticed small sparks of fire flickering here and there. Terrified, Beenu thought it was the work of ghosts and ran home as fast as his legs could carry him.

Breathless and frightened, Beenu told his parents about the eerie sparkles. But instead of comforting him with tales of ghosts and spirits, his parents explained the science behind the phenomenon.

“The sparkles you saw are called ‘fireflies’ or ‘lightning bugs,’” his father said. “They have a special light-producing organ in their bodies, which helps them attract friends and scare away predators.”

Beenu’s fear turned to fascination as he learned about the tiny creatures. He realized that the sparkles were not ghostly apparitions but a natural wonder.

From that day on, Beenu felt more connected to the natural world. He would often venture out at night, observing the fireflies and appreciating the magic of science. ■■

# The Fortune of Durgi

Durgi was a beautiful, sprightly damsel who resided in Lankashi tea garden of the Makum region, many years ago. She was fondly named 'Durgi' by her parents, Mongla and Janki, as she was born during the festival of Durga Puja. She went to school daily and did excellent embroidery work with her mother. She could make flowers, mountains, hills, exquisite meadows, people through her craft, which felt quite real and full of life!

One day, a Prince of the nearby kingdom came to visit their place. Durgi's father, Mongla, was selling some commodities; he also had the lovely kerchiefs made by his daughter there. The prince noticed the kerchiefs and was fascinated by the adept embroidery. He asked Mongla, "My good man, these kerchiefs are quite attractive. Who made them?" Mongla folded his hands in reverence and said, "Your highness, my daughter, Durgi, has made them." The prince nodded, and said that he wanted to meet Durgi that evening.

Mongla was surprised, but somewhat happy as well because a Prince would visit their humble abode! He went home and started preparing for the prince's visit. Durgi's jet-black hairs were decked with Jasmine flowers, and she wore silver anklets too on her feet. The prince arrived as promised and he was struck by Durgi's beautiful presence, she looked like a goddess. Without further ado, he asked Mongla and Janki to offer Durgi's

hand in marriage to him. Durgi's parents were elated at the proposal and Janki wept tears of joy!

"I won't marry you so easily, Prince," suddenly these words rang into the evening air, and everyone looked at Durgi, perplexed. The prince apologized as he thought that he had hurt her feelings, and her parents tried to make her understand the value of the alliance. She would never have to face a poverty-ridden life again.

However, Durgi said, "No, father and mother, I won't marry the prince. If he wants to marry me, both of you must come with me too to stay in the palace. I cannot leave you alone in this poor state!" The prince was taken aback at her words, he was a kind-hearted man and smiled at Durgi, saying, "Is that so, Durgi? Your parents will stay in one of the palatial cottages in my kingdom. You don't have to worry about them from now on. They are my parents too from now on." Durgi was filled with reverence for the prince and agreed to the alliance. The prince and Durgi sought the blessings of her parents.

They were married shortly afterwards and lived a happy life with Mongla and Janki, by their side. ■■

# The Fox and The Old Partner

Once upon a time, in a forest near a village, there lived a cunning fox named Moti. Moti had a habit of sneaking into the village and stealing food from the men's lunch-boxes, which were brought by their wives. The men would often wonder as to who was stealing their food, but Moti was too quick and clever to be caught.

One day, an old man named Sham, who was known for his wisdom and patience, had enough of his lunch being stolen. He decided to set a trap for the thief. Sham's wife, who was aware of the fox's cunning ways, helped her husband come up with a plan.

The next day, when Moti came to steal Sham's lunch, he found a surprise waiting for him. Sham had placed a fake lunch in a trap, and when Moti tried to grab it, he was caught. Sham scolded Moti, saying, "You have been stealing from me and my fellow villagers for far too long. It's time you learned your lesson."

Moti, realizing he had been outsmarted, hung his head in shame. Sham, seeing the fox's remorse, decided to teach him a lesson instead of punishing him harshly. Sham said, "From now on, you will help me with my work, and I will share my lunch with you. But you must promise to never steal again."

Moti agreed and became Sham's unlikely partner. Together, they worked in the forest with Moti using his cunningness to help Sham in his tasks. Sham taught Moti the value of honesty and hard work, and Moti learned to appreciate the old man's wisdom.

From then on, Moti and Sham became inseparable friends, and the villagers would often see them working together, a testament to the power of forgiveness and second chances. ■■

# The Ghost of Bhojo Station

Many years ago, the Bhojo Railway station was not like it is today; and very few trains arrived and departed. People were hesitant to visit the station at night, fearing ghostly encounters. However, one evening, my uncle and his friend had to go to the station, at around 10 o'clock. Since there was no electricity, the station was pitch dark.

As they arrived, they suddenly heard footsteps behind them, but when my uncle turned around, there was no one there. His friend was terrified; thinking it was a ghost, he ran back home. But my uncle, being brave, hid behind a pillar of the station, to investigate.

After a while, he discovered that the “ghost” was actually a group of masked people taking advantage of the darkness to engage in illegal activities. When my uncle returned and shared the story with us, we believed him. However, the villagers were still frightened to go to the station at night, convinced, that ghosts lurked there.

This experience made us realize that our community is superstitious and in need of education to overcome such fears and misconceptions. ■■

# The Holy Pond

A long time ago, there was a big pond near a village. Every evening, people heard loud noises from the pond.

They thought of fishing in the pond. One day, they put their nets in the water, but they didn't catch any fish.

The fishermen were confused. They wanted to know why they couldn't catch any fish. So, they tried to strew the water from the pond. But no matter how hard they tried; the water level didn't go down. This happened for six months!

One night, a fisherman had a dream. In the dream, a massive fish said, "Don't drain the pond! If you do so, you'll be in danger." The fish also said, "If you worship at the pond, good things will happen to you."

The fisherman told his friends about the dream. They stopped trying to strew the water from the pond and started worshipping there instead. They said their prayers and showed respect to the special fish and the pond's magic. Eventually, the holy fish in the pond blessed them with peaceful and happy lives. ■■

# The Miraculous bird

Once upon a time, there lived a poor woodcutter near the edge of a forest named Lakhiram. He had a nagging wife at home and two lazy sons. Everyday, he would go to the forest, collect firewood and sell the same in the village-market. His earnings could hardly feed his family. Besides, his sons didn't work and lazed around the village, the whole day.

One day, Lakhiram went to the forest as usual and saw something shining in the groves, near the river. He went nearer and saw a majestic bird bathing in the river! It had lustrous gold and silver feathers and was singing a melodious song that could attract the gods in heaven! Lakhiram thought of catching the beautiful bird and selling it in the market for a good price. So, he caught the bird although it tried to escape unsuccessfully.

The bird pleaded with him, "Please, kind sir, let me go. I am the pet bird of Lord Indra. Let me go!" Lakhiram was surprised and said, "You can talk? If you are a heavenly bird, what are you doing here? I cannot let you go easily, you will fetch me a lot of money and I will be able to feed my family!"

The bird then wept and said, "O kind sir, please let me go. I came here to take a bath as the river's water is holy. If you do so, I will bless you and your family will have no want in life."



Lakhiram was a generous hearted person, although he was poor. So, he released the bird from the snare. The bird was pleased, and gave Lakhiram a golden feather, saying, “Lakhiram, you are a good man. Here, keep this gift carefully with you. Bow towards the east twice, and wave the feather once you wish for something. Your wish will be fulfilled in no time. All your problems will disappear!”

With this, the bird flew away, fluttering its gorgeous wings in the wind. Lakhiram decided to test the bird’s prophecy. He bowed to the east twice, and waved the feather saying, “Please give me a good house to stay with my family!” Immediately, a big, comfortable cottage appeared out of nowhere! Next, he wished for some money and his pockets were filled with gold coins! So, without further ado, Lakhiram brought his family to the new house and they didn’t have any problem from then on. His wife stopped nagging him, and his sons started working too.

Lakhiram always thanked the heavenly bird for his good fortune.



# The Old Man, His Wife, and the Duck

An elderly couple lived together in a cozy little house. One day, the old man brought home a plump duck, intending to surprise his wife with a delicious meal. He handed the duck over to his wife, who was thrilled to cook it for him.

As the wife cooked the duck, she couldn't resist the temptation of the savoury meat. She slowly began to eat the meat, pie by pie, glancing at her husband's chair, expecting him to arrive soon. However, the old man was delayed, and the wife continued to indulge in the meal.

As the hours passed, the wife finished eating the entire duck, leaving nothing for her husband. Overcome with guilt and fear of her husband's reaction, she frantically searched for a solution. In a desperate attempt to cover her tracks, she cut a piece of meat of a chicken kept in the pantry, and cooked it, pretending it was the duck.

When the old man finally arrived home, he was exhausted and hungry. His wife presented him with the fake duck meal, trying to hide her guilt. The old man ate the meal, unaware of the deception.

As the night fell, the wife grew anxious, fearing her husband's discovery. She fell asleep, her mind racing with worries. Little did she know that her husband had already discovered her secret, but he chose to keep quiet, amused by her clever yet mischievous ways. He thought it to be a good lesson for his wife so that she would repent at her gluttony. ■■

# The Princess and the Poor Boy

Once upon a time, a beautiful princess was imprisoned secretly inside the palace due to her stunning looks. She had exceptionally long lustrous hair, which she took great care of. One day, she secretly went to the pool with her friend and took a bath. While swimming, one of her hairs got tangled and fell off. Fearing it might harm someone, she wrapped it up in a leaf and set it afloat down the river.

A poor boy found the leaf and was immediately smitten by the princess's beauty. He decided to marry her and worked hard to find her. Eventually, he discovered her identity, but her father, the king, refused to let them marry due to the boy's poverty.

Determined to find a suitable husband for his daughter, the king invited all the neighbouring kings to compete for her hand in marriage. However, the princess had already fallen in love with the poor boy and chose him as her suitor.

The neighbouring kings mocked at the poor boy's poverty, hurting his pride. Determined to prove himself, the boy worked tirelessly and became the wealthiest man in the region.

In the end, the princess and the poor boy was married, and the king realized his mistake in under-estimating the boy's potential. ■■

# The River's Cruel Demand

As the sun rose over the horizon, a young couple, Rohan and Priya, set out on their journey to a new destination. With their little baby, Aarav, in tow, they boarded a ship to cross the vast river that lay before them. The vessel was crowded with fellow travellers, all eager to reach their respective destinations.

As the ship pushed off from the shore, Aarav began to wail loudly, sensing his mother's anxiety. In an attempt to calm him down, Priya jokingly said, "Stop crying, or I'll drop you into the river!" The baby, frightened by her words, fell silent.

But fate had other plans. As the ship reached the middle of the river, it suddenly came to a halt. The passengers exchanged worried glances, unsure of what was happening. One of the men on board, a grizzled old sailor, spoke up, "The river demands a sacrifice. The mother's words have awakened its wrath. We must offer the baby to the river, or we'll never reach our destination."

The passengers gasped in horror, but the old sailor's words struck fear into their hearts.

They believed that the river's curse had to be lifted, and the baby was the only way to do it. Despite Rohan's protests, the crowd turned on them, forcing Priya to make an impossible choice.

With a heavy heart, Priya handed Aarav over to the river, watching in despair as her baby was swept away by the currents. The ship, now freed from the curse, continued its journey, leaving Priya and Rohan shattered and childless.

The river, once a symbol of life and sustenance, had become a cruel and heartless force, demanding a terrible price in exchange for passage. The young couple's journey, once filled with hope and promise, was now forever marred by tragedy. ■■

# The Storm's Fury

As the floodwaters rose, a group of survivors fled their homes, seeking higher ground. Their journey took them through a dense jungle, where the trees seemed to close in around them. Night began to fall, and with it, a storm of unrelenting ferocity! Thunderstorm and lightning rent the air, sending the group running for cover.

They stumbled upon a small hut, its wooden walls creaking in the wind. The group huddled together, praying for the storm to pass. But the tempest seemed to have a mind of its own, striking the hut with renewed vigour!

In desperation, the group turned on each other, convinced that one of their own was unlucky, drawing the storm's wrath. They devised a cruel plan, forcing each person to venture outside, near a tree, to see if the storm would spare them.

One by one, they emerged from the hut, each hoping to be spared. But when a young girl, trembling with fear, refused to go, the group turned on her. They accused her of being the culprit, forcing her to face the storm alone.

Crying loudly, the girl stumbled towards the tree, expecting the worst. But instead of striking her, the storm unleashed its full fury on the hut, sending the group tumbling to the ground!

Miraculously, the girl was spared, and as she stumbled back to the hut, she realized that she was not the unlucky one. The storm had been attacking the group all along, and her bravery had inadvertently saved them.

As the storm finally began to subside, the group realized their grave mistake. They had turned on each other in fear, rather than standing together against the true enemy – the storm. The girl, once accused and ostracized, was now hailed as a hero, her courage in the face of danger saving them all. ■■

# The Story of Ramen Urang

Ramen Urang, a boy from Shingrijaan village, was poor but diligent. He balanced his school life with working in a tea estate. The villagers adored him for his kind heart and sincerity.

According to a story told by the villagers, the following folktale is presented:

One day, while returning from work at the Shingrijaan tea plantation, Ramen saw an old man dressed in white lying in the middle of the garden. The old man was in distress due to a bleeding and painful leg. As soon as he saw Ramen, he asked for some water. Ramen quenched the old man's thirst and carried him on his shoulders across the garden's road. Suddenly, the old man vanished into the thin air, leaving behind only his clothes. Ramen picked up the clothes and took them home, and kept the clothes nice and clean.

From that day onwards, Ramen's family experienced a remarkable improvement in their financial situation. When Ramen shared the story with the villagers, they believed that the old man was their God of Karma, rewarding Ramen's kindness and selflessness. ■■



# The Story of the Crow

In a forest, a crow was living happily ever after. But one day, while wandering around, he saw a swan, and from that day on, trouble began to nest in his mind. He always thought that he was so black, while the swan was completely white, that there was probably no happier bird in the world than the swan.

One day the crow met the swan and expressed his regret. Then the swan said, “You must think I am happy. I haven’t been happy since the day I saw a bat. Tell me how I can be happy with just one colour! I think the bat is probably the best creation of all the birds!”

The crow’s anxiety increased when he heard the swan’s words. He tried hard to find the bat; then, he found the bat and told him about his sorrow. The bat said, “How can you think I am happy? I was happy, but I didn’t feel happy at all from the day I saw a peacock. How can I be happy with just two colours! The peacock has not only one or two colours, but its feathers are covered in various colours!”

The crow searched and found a peacock in a zoo. The crow felt even more sorry for himself when he saw so many people surrounding him. He waited for the men to leave. After the people left, he told the peacock, “You are so beautiful in different vibrant colours, thousands of people come to see you

every day. People turn their heads the other way when they see me! There is probably no happier bird in the world than you!”

The peacock sighed and said, “I always thought I was the happiest and most beautiful bird. But because I was vibrant, people caught me and put me in a zoo. After many days of observing the zoo, I now think that the crow is probably the happiest bird because no one captures the crow. Now I think— if I were a crow, I could go wherever I wanted!”

So, the crow learnt that he should be happy with himself rather than following any other bird carelessly! ■■

# The Tragic Fate of Niru

This is an oral folklore that passes from person to person in the tea-estates. Niru, a young tea garden worker, was bitten by a venomous snake while plucking tea leaves. Panicked, other workers working in the garden immediately picked her up and took her to a local healer, instead of rushing her to the hospital. The local healer spent a lot of time to cure her using ancient incantations and herbal remedies. Despite his efforts, Niru's condition worsened. Eventually, the victim was taken to the hospital, but she died on the way.

Niru's death made the villagers very sad. A concerned teacher, who was aware of the situation, expressed his grief and constantly tried to make the local people aware of the dangers of relying solely on superstitions and traditional remedies in emergency situations. He was successful in many ways, and his efforts led to an increase in awareness among the people.

However, the teacher's death a few years ago led to a decline in awareness among the people, and there are still examples of many people dying as victims of such superstitions. Therefore, in these areas, education and its importance are very crucial among the people. ■■

# The Two Friends

Once upon a time there were two friends in a village. One was named Hari and the other's name was Mani. They lived in harmony. Both Hari and Mani were thieves by profession. Therefore, they talked and planned about stealing during the day, and at night, Mani and Hari stole from two houses in the village and ran away in the jungle.

However, Hari was quite greedy and when he saw so much money, he couldn't stop himself! Hari ran away with the package of money. Hari was running away with the package of money and just then, Mani saw him running away with the money.

Hari was caught by the villagers while trying to flee with the package of money and then, the villagers tied him up to a tree and punished him severely. Later on, the police took him away. Mani watched everything from a distance. He silently moved away from the place thinking about his friend's greediness that had ruined his whole family. Mani vowed never to steal from then on and he became the most hard-working farmer in the village. Later on, when Hari was released from prison, Mani helped him to lead a noble life as well. ■■

# Rhymes for children

**(a) Our Village**

Our village,  
Is wrapped with lush green tea-estates,  
And little hills at a distance,  
With crop fields in midst.  
We also have bamboo trees, sugarcane,  
And dry twigs in our garden.  
We have trains, buses and small cars,  
To travel to distant lands,  
And to have fun with friends!

**(b) A Funny Poem**

The aeroplane is in the sky,  
My aunt is buying wool,  
The hermit is under a tree,  
Who keeps chanting strange hymns!  
Little Soni is with my aunt,  
Glaring at the big bird in the sky!

**(c) Let's Go to Uncle's house**

Hey, hey, hey!  
Let's go to uncle's house,  
Uncle will give us ripe bananas to eat  
We shall eat them sitting on a stool!  
If the stool breaks, auntie will scold us!  
We won't cry,  
We shall bring her some salmon from the pond  
And together, we will eat some fish-fry!



(From left side, Mr. Partha Pratim Das, D. El. Ed trainee; centre, Mrs. Parinita Hazarika, Lecturer; right side, Ms. Rinki Tanti, D. El. Ed trainee of DIET Sivasagar, Sonari.)

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