

LESSON 2



THE DAUGHTER OF THE HUNDUNG CHIEF

Do you like folk tales ? Every culture and community has their own folk tales. This story is a Tangkhul folk-tale. It is about a young girl who married a serpent.

Once upon a time, there lived a very beautiful girl. She was the only child of the Chief of Hundung village. Every day, the girl went to the field with her parents. However, one day, she went to the field alone. All of a sudden, a butterfly came and sat on her navel. She desperately tried to remove it but failed. After some time, it flew away. From that day onwards, she became pregnant. She was extremely scared of her parents. She wept silently. She went to the field and spread her *Karouphi*. She cried loudly, “Spirit or human being, God or man, whosoever has made me so miserable, please come and sit here so that I can see you.” Hearing her cries, a god came in the form of a serpent and sat on the *Karouphi*. She was taken aback and frightened. The serpent spoke, “Don’t be scared. Come and sit beside me.” The girl was still afraid. Then, the serpent turned into a handsome young man. Her fears subsided on seeing the young man. She drew closer and sat beside him.



They met secretly in the field every day. She was still scared of her parents. As time passed, she could no longer hide the truth. She told the story to her mother. However, they could not tell the story to the Chief. They were afraid of him. One day, the Chief discovered his daughter's condition. He spoke angrily,

“Tell me who is responsible for this.” The daughter replied, “Father, he is not a human being. He is a god.” The Chief ordered his daughter to bring the god.

They went to the field. Then, she spread the *Karouphi* on the ground and prayed to the man to come. Nobody appeared. The Chief shouted angrily, “You are trying to fool me ! Bring the man to me quickly, otherwise you will be killed tomorrow.” Throughout the night, the girl wept. She slept without taking food. In her dream the god appeared and said, “I did not appear because I did not want any other human being to see me. If you stay here, your father will kill you. Leave the house and go to Huimei village. I will be waiting for you there.” The girl woke up and left the house.

Next morning, the Chief discovered that his daughter was missing. He became furious and started searching for her. The girl was frightened. She hid herself among *nongmangkha* plants. To prevent coughing, she ate *nongmangkha* leaves. She came to Huimei village where she met the man. They lived happily. She gave birth to two sons. But from that day onwards, the god never came back to the house again. She alone brought up her two sons in the same village.

One day, the younger son made a request, “Mother, I want to go and see the valley.” She replied, “Son, you are young and weak. How can you go to the valley alone ?” But he insisted on going. Finally, the mother gave her son a female *ok* (pig), a piece of *yaingang* and some paddy. With these things, the younger son started his journey. As night approached, he decided to take rest somewhere. There his female *ok* (pig) met a male *ok* (pig). The place where the *oks* (pigs) met came to be known as Ukhrlul.



Next morning, he continued his journey. After travelling for some time, the female *ok* (pig) gave birth to a piglet. This place came to be known as *Okpokpi*.

He then planted the piece of *yaingang*. Thus, the place came to be known as *Yaingangpokpi*. Later on, he reached the valley. There, he built a house and lived alone. One day, it rained heavily. A Kabui brother and sister approached him for shelter for the night. As they stayed in the house, he fell in love with the Kabui girl. They decided to get married. After they got married, the Kabui brother went back home alone.

The young couple worked hard in the valley. They tilled the land and grew various crops. The husband sowed the paddy given by his mother. Then the wife gave birth to a son. On that day, the husband's mother and elder brother came to the valley looking for him.

The Kabui brother had also come to the valley to meet his sister. All of them agreed that the newly born child belonged to the two communities. They decided to call the child *Meeteen*.

Legend has it that the Tangkhul man and the Kabui woman got married and started settling in the valley in this way.

— *A Tangkhul folk-tale retold*

Glossary

navel	– small depression on the belly left by detachment of the umbilical cord
serpent	– snake
<i>karouphi</i>	– a traditional cloth used by Tangkhuls
furious	– very angry
<i>nongmangkha</i>	– a plant with herbal qualities. Even today, the leaves are used for the treatment of cold and cough
<i>ok</i>	– a Manipuri word for pig
<i>Yaingang</i>	– a Manipuri word for turmeric
<i>meeteen</i>	– the term Meetei may have derived from this word
valley	– flat or plain area between hills
tilled	– prepared the land for growing crops

Comprehension

1. Answer the following questions :

- (i) What happened when the girl went to the field alone ?
- (ii) Who came on hearing her cries ?
- (iii) Why was the Chief angry with his daughter ?
- (iv) What did the god tell her in her dream ?

- (v) Where did the girl hide herself ?
- (vi) What did the mother give to her younger son at the time of his journey to the valley ?
- (vii) Write briefly how he married the Kabui girl.
- (viii) How was the place *Yaingangpokpi* named ?

2. EXERCISE IN LANGUAGE

The opposite of 'fasten' is 'unfasten' and of 'polite' is impolite'. Opposites are also called 'antonyms'. Give antonyms of the following words by using the prefixes :

in....., un....., dis....., mis....., im.....

Word	Antonyms	Word	Antonyms
do		judged	
decision		obedient	
decent		patient	
obey		perfect	
favourable		understood	

3. DISCUSSION

Make groups of 5 or 6 six students and let them discuss the following topic.

Any other folk-tale in which the human beings change forms into that of animals or birds. Share it with the whole class.