

FOLKTALE OF SIKKIM

JYAMPHI MOONG BY ANANYA SUSARLA

Once upon a time, there used to live a ranch owner on the foothills of the Himalayas. He had recently employed a fellow tribesman named Atek to look after his ranch cattle. The ranch owner then left for his hometown to spend the entire winter with his parents. Alone and bored, Atek took out his four-holed bamboo flute. He was a skillful flute player and he swiftly moved his fingers on the flute as it produced a bewitchingly melancholic yet pleasant tune. Days passed by as he watched over the animals in the morning and played flute at night.

A peculiar incident occurred on the third night of his fifth week alone on the ranch. That night, a female yeti known as Jyamphi Moong appeared behind him as he played his flute. She was tall, hairy, and looked aggressive. She was reverse footed and had two long breasts hanging from her chest. Although terrified, Atek continued to play his flute. He kept doing so until dusk, after which the yeti suddenly left. This went on for several days, keeping Atek awake every night. He was not even allowed to take a break in between as Jyamphi Moong would forcefully thrust the flute to his lips.

Scared for his life, Atek had no choice but to obey the yeti's order. Frustrated and exhausted, Atek devised a plan to get rid of Jyamphi Moong once and for all. That dawn, as the dreaded yeti returned to the ranch, she saw Atek applying butter all over his body. Trying to imitate him, she did the same too. Atek then took a log kept beside the bonfire in such a way that it appeared as if he had taken it from the bonfire itself. The yeti followed suit. However, as soon as she drew the log close to her body, her greased mane went up in flames. Jyamphi Moong fled into the snow-covered mountains as the fire burned away her tangled locks. Since then, it is believed that the yeti lives in the high mountains, away from all kinds of settlements and is attracted to whistling and the sound of flute.