

FOLKTALE OF MANIPUR

The magic of Jackal

Once there lived a little Jackal in a jungle in the kingdom of Manipur. One day, he came out of his hiding and found a coin slipped from the hands of a traveller who passed through the jungles on his way to Burma.

The little one had hid the coin. He then jumped and danced merrily. He was in no mood to stop. "What is the matter, master jackal? It seems you have conquered a kingdom!" observed a Hoolock Gibbon whose arms were exceptionally long more than double the length of the legs. "I have not yet conquered any kingdom but I can conquer one any moment now. I have the secret by which I can conquer a kingdom, build a castle, eat anything I like, command men, horses and elephants!" the little jackal announced. Yongmu (Hoolock Gibbon), having black and white band across the eyebrows thought that it was strange but he could not dismiss the jackal's claim as nonsense. Of course, no jackal could jump like that unless he had really achieved something fantastic.

Immediately, Yongmu gave the news to a deer who later told about it to a boar. Several other animals and birds heard about it. At last they all came to meet the jackal in happy mood. The jackal was so proud that he greeted none. He said that he had a magic by which he could win a kingdom and could do everything. Elephant had told the jackal to tone down his shouting and said, "O little one, will you please prove what you say?" The bear also asked jackal could he command everything.

After laughing heartily, the jackal said, "I will show you what I can do! What a mere elephant before me?" The elephant, largest land animal got angry with the question. He came closer to the jackal who took position on a spot which would come on the elephant's way. Seeing the situation, the animals stood at some distance with bated breath. The birds perched on the tree tops. They wanted to see the miracle the little jackal promised to perform. The jackal sat on his hind legs and managed to lift the coin with his

forepaws. Then producing the coin he asked the elephant to pay attention and said, "Look at my money! Yes, this is genuine money.

Now I command you to stop!" The elephant did not pay attention to his command. Pacifying his anger, he strode on. The jackal shouted at the top of his voice but in vain. The elephant noticed him and took hold of him by his trunk and threw him aside. The jackal was hurt and limped as it tried to run away. In the very act, the coin had also been lost. The animals and birds took pity on the jackal. At the same time, they could not help laughing. The beautiful red flying squirrel living onto a branch of the tree said, "The cunning jackal must have got that shining stuff from some silly human beings."

The monkey sitting on a banana plant said there were fools among the men who believed that the thing called money could fetch them anything. He continued, "A kingdom can be lost. No money can save it. A castle built can be destroyed by men or earthquake, no money can save it. A man can suffer from a disease and lose his capacity for eating; no money can help him. He can command men and horses and elephants, but if they decide not to be commanded, no money can help him!" The cunning jackal came to know that he had been silly and remained silent. When he came to his common senses, all the animals and birds had dispersed from that place.