

FOLKTALE OF TRIPURA

A Piece of Pumpkin:

There were two sisters married in the neighboring village. The younger of them was very rich-possessing immense wealth and gold. The elder sister was in the opposite state-very poor and earned her livelihood by begging from door to door. One day the elder sister visited the younger sister's house with a mind of getting some help from her. The younger sister offered her a piece of pumpkin and some rice at best to make a meal. She offered nothing more than that. The younger sister withstanding her wealthy position was never compassionate or sympathetic to her sister and being very selfish and crooked thought to get some services from her sister in return of the 'help' she had offered. The younger sister asked the elder sister to sit with her and requested to take out the lice from her head. She first looked into the elder sister's head. The elder sister being very poor, had not been able to oil and comb her hair and so the younger sister helped her in removing some lice from her hair. Now the younger sister lowered her head and asked her elder sister to remove the lice from her head but the elder sister could not find any. The younger sister started combing her hair and suddenly discovered lice fall from her hair. On seeing it she thought within herself that the elder sister had no mind to find the lice and thus had deceived her. She thought that her sister had just come to stay with her with no intend of offering service. She therefore planed to take revenge. She showed anger and took away the piece of pumpkin from her. She did not stop there, she pushed away her sister by the back door and told her to leave she even said that if she left from the front door, it would augur bad omen for her children. The elder sister thus insulted and humiliated left the house in silence anguished within. All the way she was weeping and thinking of her starving children awaiting eagerly her return with something to feed them. Hastily she collected the leaves and roots of some vegetation from the road side hedges to boil them for the children. Coming home she dressed the roots and leaves und put into a bowel-at least these will relieve them slightly from the pervading appetite. She felt very tired after the days walking and from hunger and could not help accusing her fate for all her

miseries and after a while fell into a slumber beside the boiling bowl. In her slumber she had a wonderful dream. God has appeared to console her saying, 'O my sweet child, I have been very much pained in seeing your wretched state from above. You get up and find I have converted all your vegetables into gold, what more I can do for you my child.' "Take the gold and sell them to live happily with your children. She was startled to get up and to her utter surprise found all roots in the bowl have really become gold -as per her dream. She immediately went out to sell out them and in no time became very rich. She had changed her whole state and made everything rich. But she could not forget the behavior her sister had done to her in driving out from her house. By the grace of god today she was no longer in her old state and now got a chance to retaliate the insult. She sent an invitation to her younger sister to visit her house. The younger sister had already learnt from people of her elder sister's changed state and on getting the invitation she came to the elder sister's house to see for herself whether she had become wealthier than herself. The younger sister was very happy and delighted to see the elder sister's gold and other wealth. The two sisters spent the whole day together conversing all throughout and ate together. Coming to her house the younger sister also sent an invitation to the elder sister to come to her house. The elder sister was awaiting this chance only. She came one day to her sister's house. She came adorned with all her golden ornaments in a horse cart. As she reached there, the younger sister came running out of her room to receive her. But the elder sister entered through the back door by which she was once driven away. When the lunch time came, she was offered variety of delicious foodstuff. The elder sister looked at them and did not pick up a single item to her mouth. She touched the utensils several times with her costly ornaments and came out from there by the back door. Seeing her leave that way the younger sister asked, "Why have you not taken anything-sister" The elder sister replied promptly from the gate "When I visited your house in my wretched state, I had no gold ornament and good clothes, that time you took away the piece of pumpkin you had offered as alms and to insult me drove me away through the back door saying that had I been allowed do

pass by the front door it would augur bad for your children. You did all these since I was poor. But now you are showing so much care and love not to me as I possess gold and wealth. It appears that you are showing love not to me but to my wealth. And for that I have taken nothing from the dish and came back touching the food stuff with my ornaments," saying so the elder sister got into conveyance and came back. The younger sister was thus payed back with the same coin.