



Khyaa: The Forest Spirit with the  
Pierced Tongue  
Shyamkrishna Khulimuli  
Prakash Ranjit

Let's  Read

 The Asia Foundation

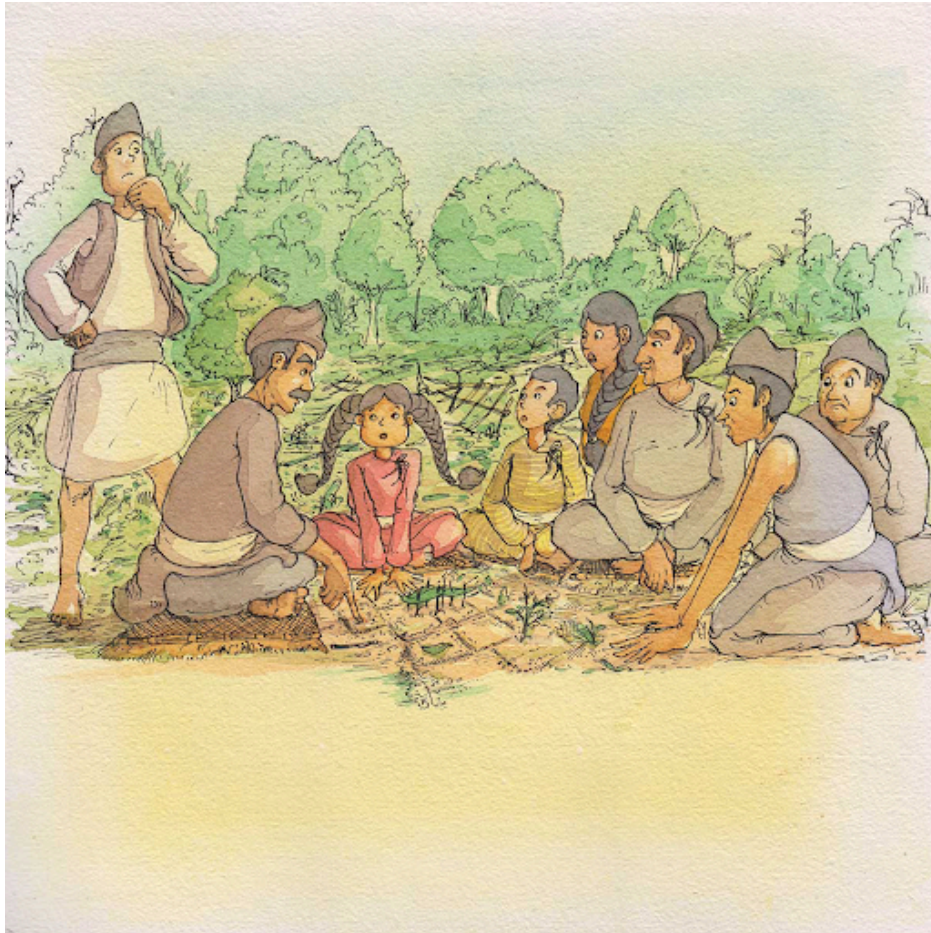


Taribhai looked out over his fields. All the vegetable plants had been destroyed.

“Who could have done this, father?” Taribhai’s daughter Lasata asked.

“The Nilbarahi Forest is close by. It must be the animals from the forest,” replied Taribhai. Not a single vegetable plant was left standing. Even the fence was demolished. The people were worried.





"The animals have given us a lot of problems. It is no use living here. Let's build our houses in the middle of our fields." Taribhai said to the villagers.

Everyone agreed.

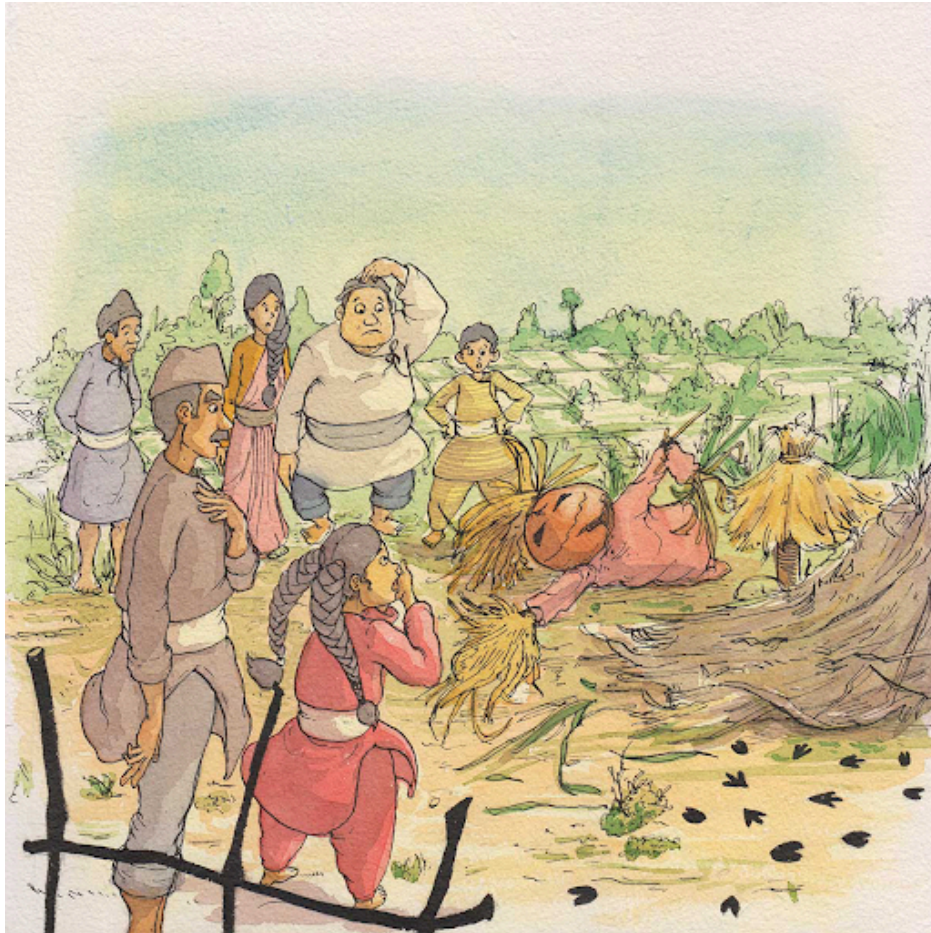


The villagers built houses in the middle of their fields. They named the new village Bunde because “Bun” means field and “De” means settlement in the Newari language. Eventually, the name of the village became Bode.

“Father, now that we’re living in the middle of our fields, the animals will not give us any problems, will they?” Lasata asked.

But the crops continued to be destroyed. The

people of Bode were unable to harvest their crops.



The villagers made a new plan. They placed scarecrows in the middle of their fields to scare away the animals. But that failed as well.

As time passed, chickens, sheep, and goats started to disappear from their houses.



"Father, our calf is missing," Lasata told her father. Taribhai went to the cowshed. He looked for the calf everywhere, but it was nowhere to be found.

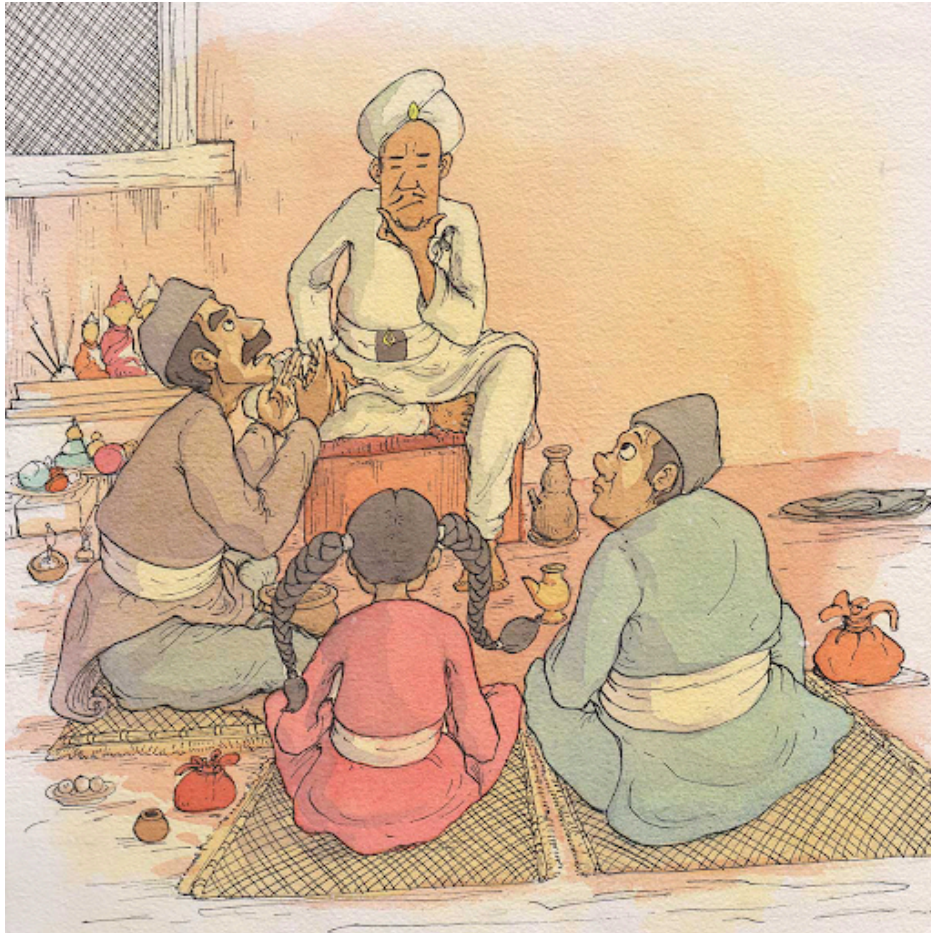
"Who is continuing to trouble us? We are not spared even in this new place. Could it be an evil spirit?" Lasata asked anxiously.





"I'll go around the neighborhood and talk to the others about it," said Lasata's father. Lasata followed him.

Everyone in the village agreed that their troubles must be the work of some kind of evil spirit.

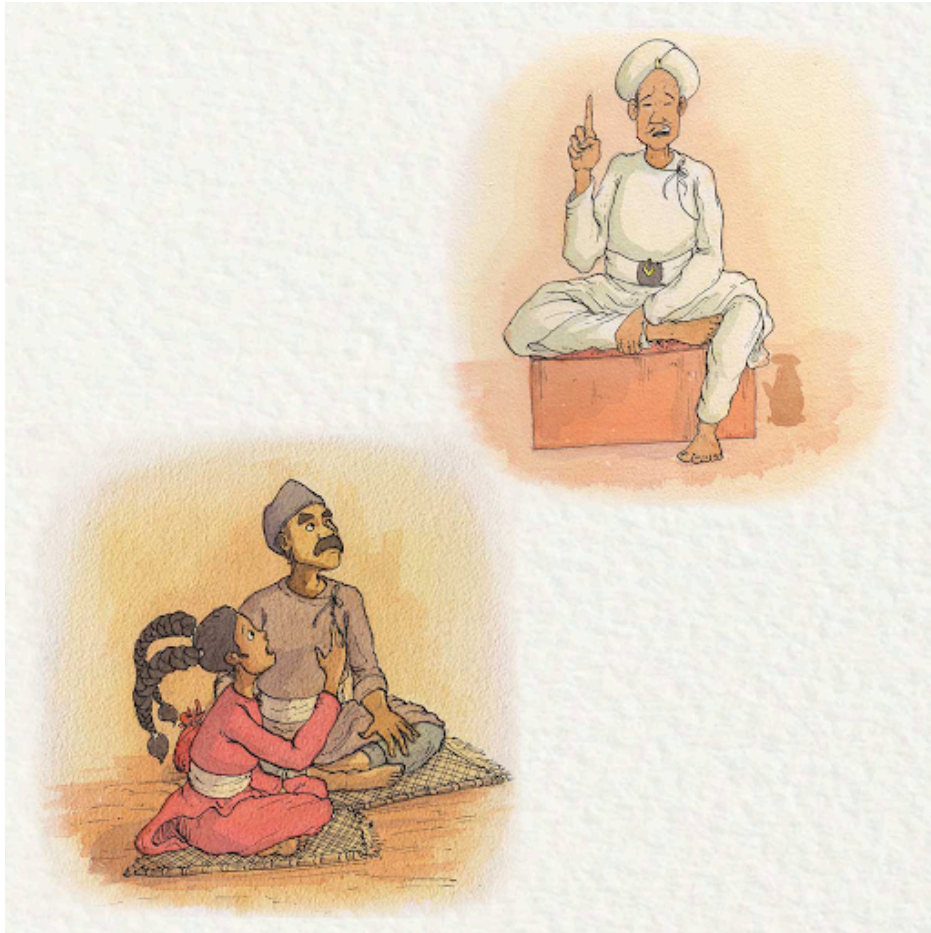


They decided to seek help from Bhim Dutt, a famous sorcerer who lived nearby.

"Guru Bhim Dutt, we do not know what else to do. Please help us find a solution," Taribhai pleaded.

"What's the matter?" Bhim Dutt asked.

Taribhai told him everything.



"Our calf was stolen. Could you please find out who stole it?" Lasata asked.

"Ok. Let me see." The sorcerer sat down with his eyes closed and meditated for a while.

When he opened his eyes, he said, "Do not go to your fields for a month."





"Father, no one is caught in the trap yet. What's wrong?" Latasa asked curiously.

"I have no idea. But the sorcerer knows what he is doing. Let's hope the trap will work soon," replied her father.

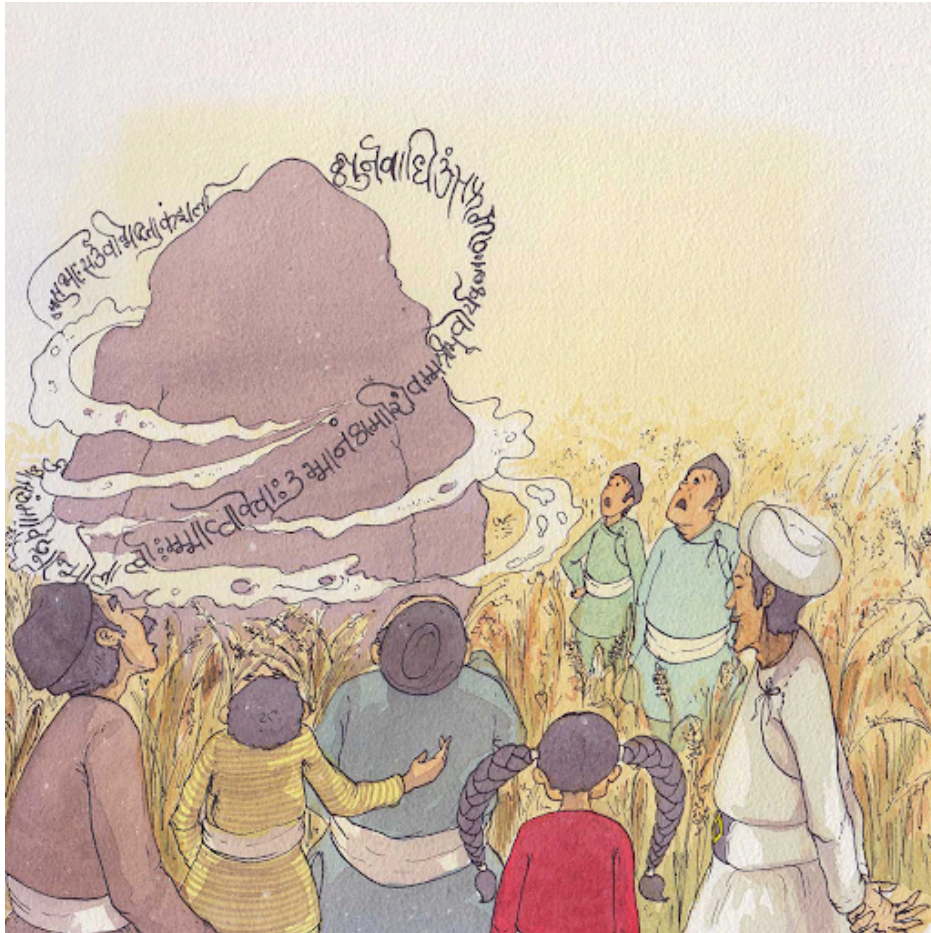


One morning, Lasata went to fetch water from the nearby stone-spout. She looked into the next field, and saw a strange creature struggling to escape from Bhim Dutt's trap. She ran home quickly.



"Father, something is caught in the trap. Let's tell the sorcerer!" Lasata shouted from the courtyard.

After informing the sorcerer, they went to the field along with some other villagers.



"Something is caught in the trap," chuckled Bhim Dutt.

The sorcerer and the villagers surrounded the trapped creature.

"Tell me who you are," Bhim Dutt demanded.

The creature was not scared at all. "You do not know me. I'm one of the evil spirits of Nilbarahi Forest. I am called Khyaa," he said.

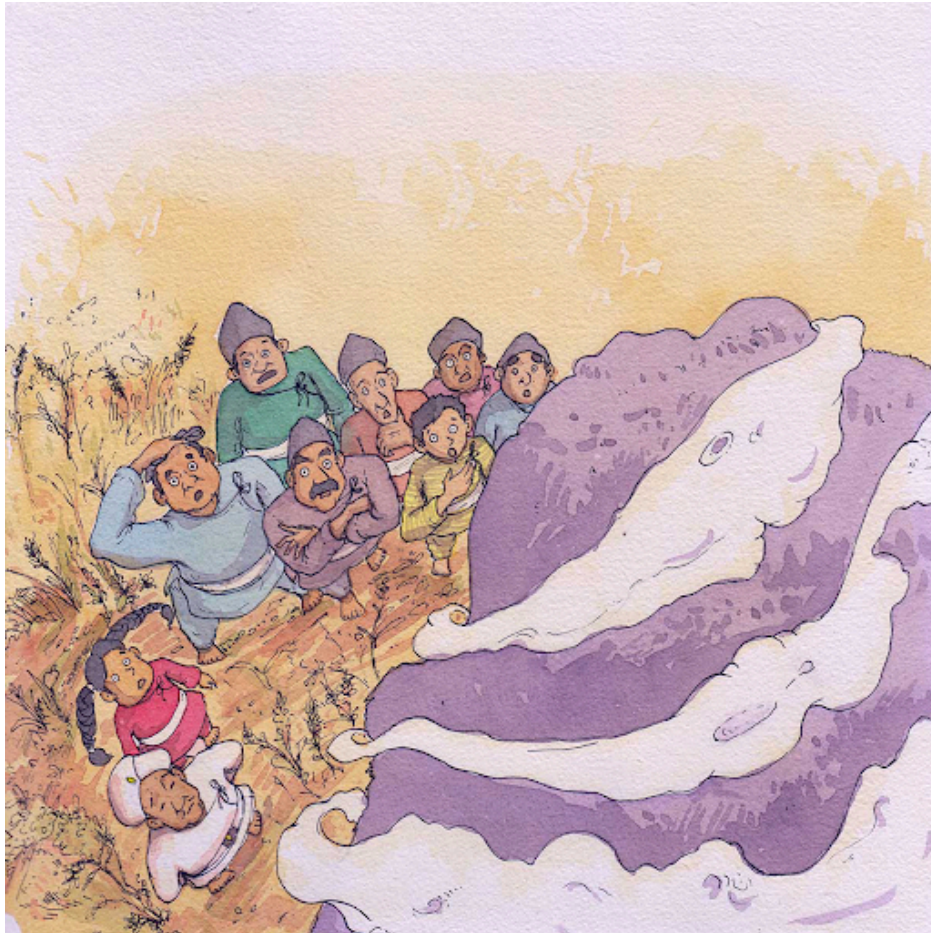




Then, Khyaa revealed his true form.

“Oh! How awfully matted and bristled his hair is! His tongue is so red, thick and long!” cried Lasata.

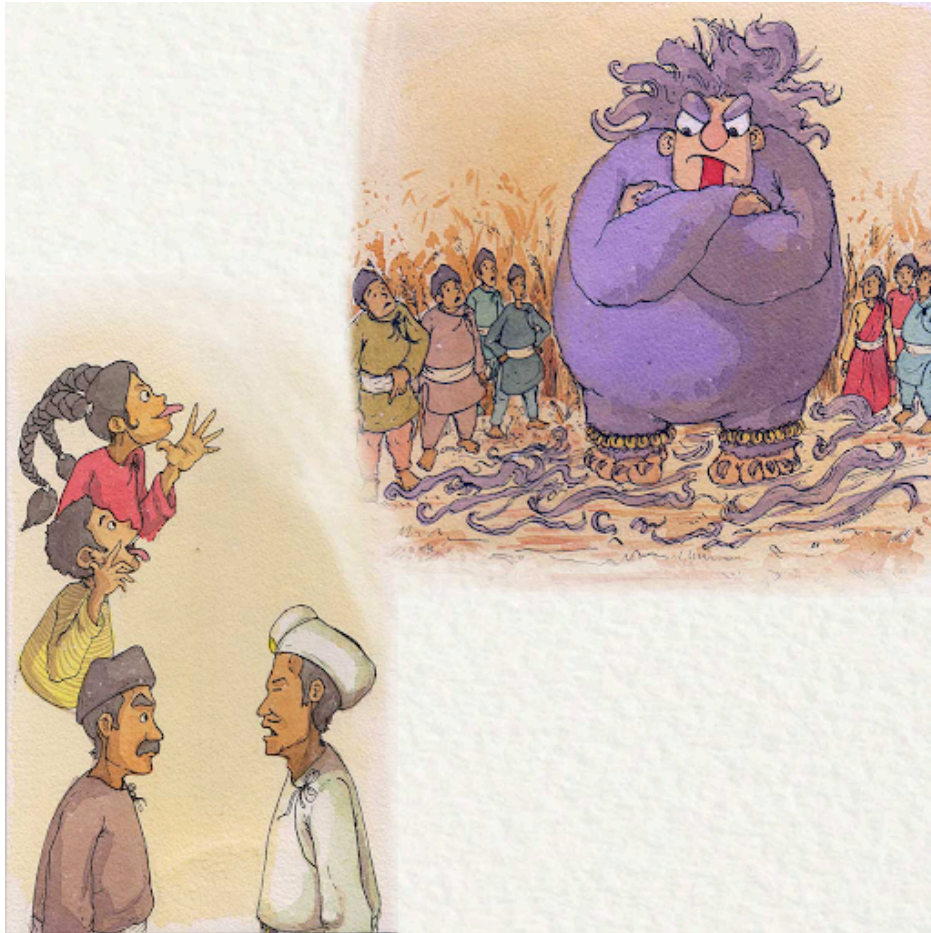
“And just look at how big those eyes are! He’s so scary,” Lasata’s friend Nhuchemaan added.



Everyone started discussing what to do with Khyaa.

“Holding an evil spirit of the forest captive could be dangerous,” Tiribhai said. He was very scared.

But the children disagreed. “It does not matter who he is. He must be punished,” they said.



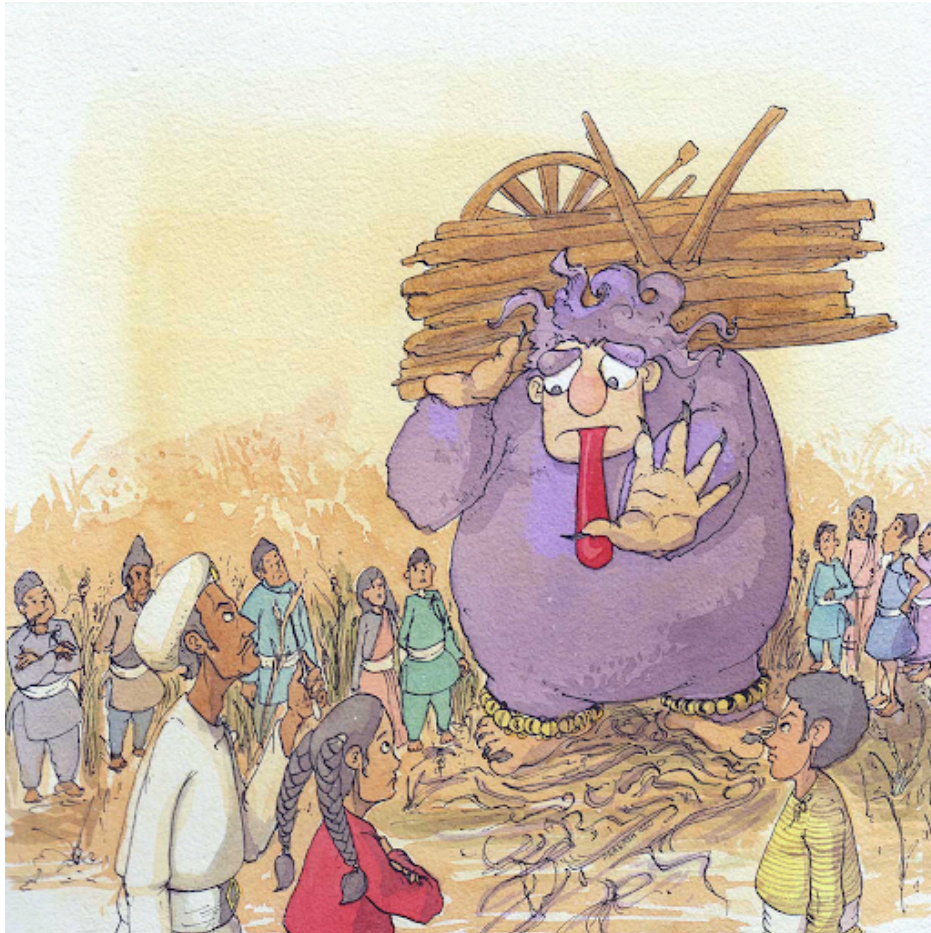
Lasata stuck out her tongue to tease Khyaa. Nhucheman did the same.

"You are right. We can't let him off just like that," said Bhim Dutt.

He cut Khyaa's hair short and tied ankle bells on his feet.

"No matter what you do to me, I'm not scared. Just wait until I get out of here and then you will see what I will do to you all," Khyaa said.



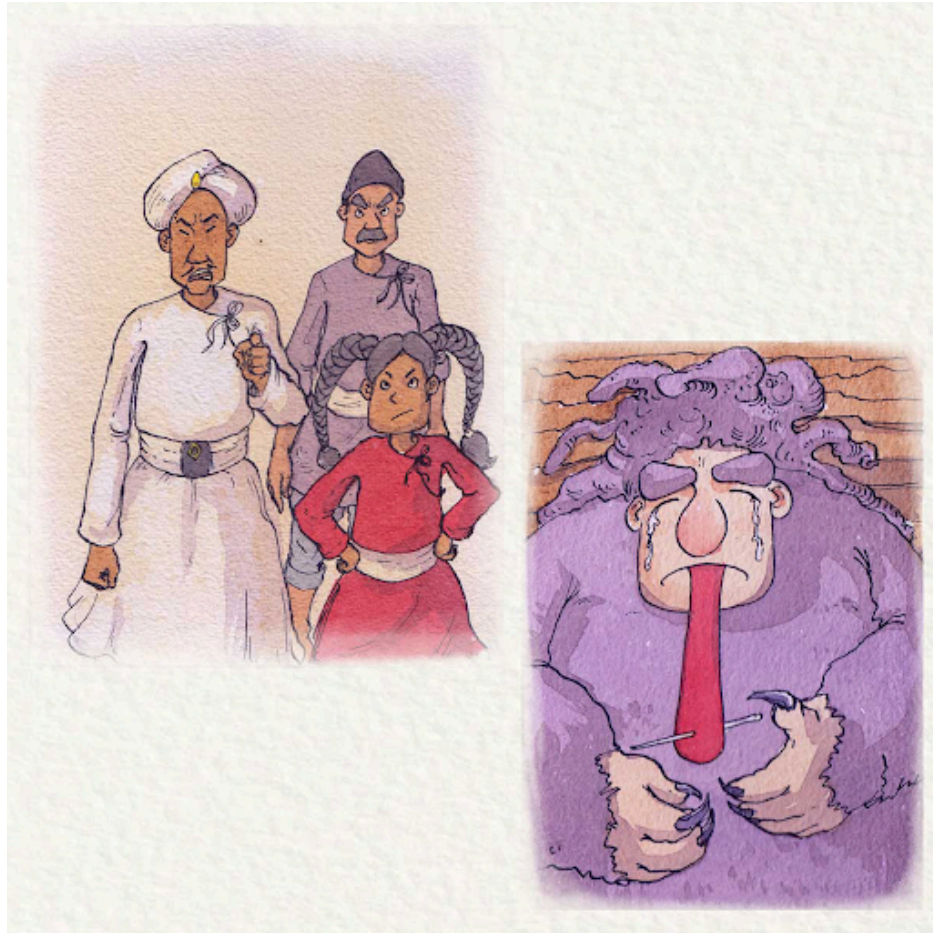


Bhim Dutt asked the villagers for a needle.  
Taribhai quickly fetched it for him.  
Bhim Dutt pierced Khyaa's tongue with the  
needle.

The villagers made Khyaa walk around the  
town with a heavy block of wood on his  
shoulder.

"Ouch! This hurts. Please forgive me. I won't  
trouble you anymore. Please set me free,"  
Khyaa cried in pain.





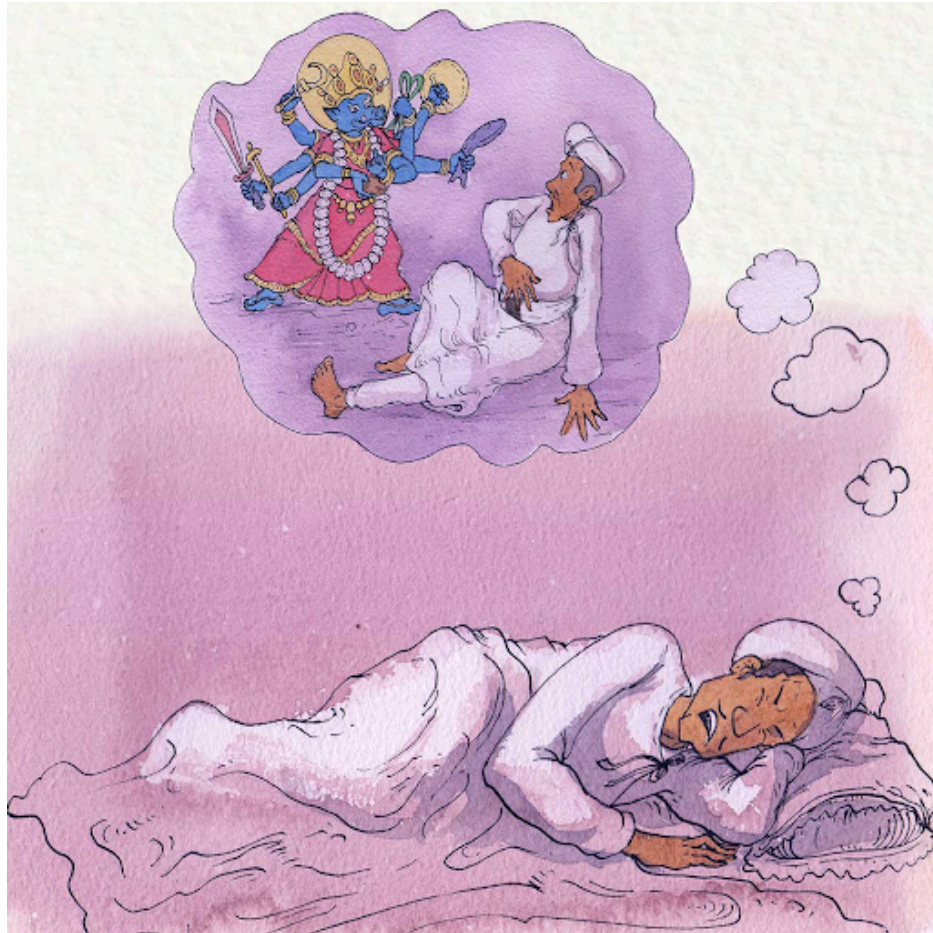
"Nilbarahi Forest has always protected us. And here you are, giving us trouble! We will not let you go easily," said Bhim Dutt angrily.

"I am sorry. I promise to protect you from all kinds of misfortunes. From now on, I will visit this village every year to get my tongue pierced," said Khyaa.

After hearing Khyaa's plea, the villagers set him free.







Having completed his mission, Bhim Dutt returned home and went to his bed to rest. He dreamt of Goddess Nilbarahi. She was angry.

"You have insulted one of my spirits. I will not forgive you."

Bhim Dutt was scared. He did not know what to do.

"Goddess, please forgive me," he pleaded.





But the Goddess vanished into the thin air.

As soon as Bhim Dutt woke up, he called all the villagers to his house. He told them about his dream.

They decided to perform an apology ritual to appease Goddess Nilbarahi every time Khyaa returned to the village.



The next year, on the same day, Khyaa arrived.

Bhim Dutt performed an apology ritual. Then he pierced Khyaa's tongue and made him walk around the town.

Khyaa enjoyed walking around the city, rejoicing with the children of Bode.

"It's so much fun to walk around the city with Khyaa, isn't it?" asked Nhucheman.

"Yes, I think we should make this into a

festival," Lasata replied.



Then one year, Khyaa did not appear.  
“Khyaa has grown old. He has sent words that he won’t be able to come to the village anymore,” Bhim Dutt told the villagers. Everyone felt sad for Khyaa. They were also upset that they could not have their festival.



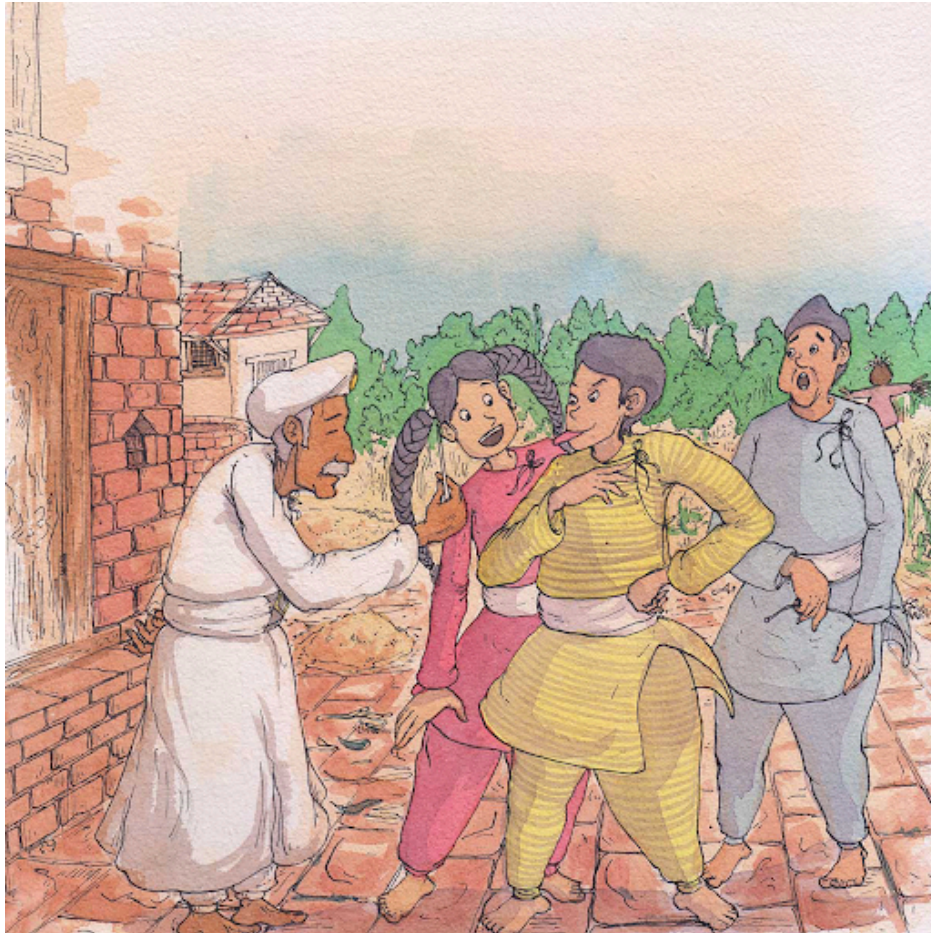
“What do we do now?” Lasata worried out loud..

“I will still perform the apology ritual if someone will volunteer to have their tongue pierced,” said Bhim Dutt.

Everyone was silent. No one stepped forward to volunteer. The children were sad. It seemed that the festival would no longer continue.







"I will pierce my tongue," a young man said, stepping out from among the crowd. Everyone's face lit up with happiness. "The festival will continue!" Lasata shouted happily. Ever since, the traditional festival of tongue-piercing continues in Bode village.





Brought to you by



**The Asia Foundation**

Let's Read is an initiative of The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program that fosters young readers in Asia and the Pacific.

[booksforasia.org](http://booksforasia.org)

To read more books like this and get further information about this book, visit [letsreadasia.org](http://letsreadasia.org)

### **Original Story**

*जिब्रो छेड्ने ख्याक (Khyaa: The Forest Spirit with the Pierced Tongue),*

Author: Shyamkrishna Khulimuli. Illustrator: Prakash Ranjit.

Published by The Asia Foundation - Let's Read, © The Asia Foundation - Let's Read. Released under CC-BY-NC-4.0.

This work is a modified version of the original story. © The Asia Foundation, 2021. Some rights reserved. Released under CC-BY-NC-4.0.

Contributing translators: