Once upon a time there was an old man whose name was ‘Kharia Borai.’ He had two sons, the elder was Dhansingh and the younger was Mansingh. One day, early in the morning he started for the paddy field for ploughing. He suddenly heard a cock of his house crowing with a human voice. While crowing the cock told that anybody who would take his head, he would become a king. The cock crowed three times in the same manner. The old man, “Kharia Borai” became surprised, though he did not believe the prediction to be true. He killed the cock and cut it into pieces. He decided to take the head of the cock after returning from the field. So he told the old woman, his wife, to keep the head, two legs, and two wings of the cock very carefully at a secret place. Then he went to the field for his work.

Dhansingh and Mansingh, the two sons of the old man came back home from their play feeling very hungry indeed. They searched all over the house for something to eat. Their mother had gone to the nearby stream to fetch some water and was not aware of her two sons having returned back home. Meanwhile, Dhansingh and Mansingh discovered the head, two legs and two wings of the cock, which were already burnt and ready to be eaten. Dhansingh took the head and Mansingh took the wings and the two legs. As the two brothers set about to consume everything, their mother came back home and asked what they were eating. Learning that they had eaten the head, legs and wings of the cock, she became pale with fright and uttered with grief that their heads as well as her would be cut off by their father. The old man was hot tempered by nature. Their mother advised Dhansingh and Mansingh to leave the house without delay. The two brothers following their mother’s advice ran away from the house.

The old man returned from the field and had his bath at the stream. After bath he came to the house and asked his wife about the head, legs, and wings of the cock. When the old woman described the actual matter, he became very angry and searched for the two boys, Dhansingh and Mansingh, holding a sharp dao (Sikha Phathanga, a sword-like weapon) as he romped in and out of the house. He even searched for his two sons outside the boundary of the village with the aim of cutting off their heads. But he could not trace them out. His sons had entered a thick forest and were running through it.
Broken-hearted, the old man came back home and out of sheer anger dragged the old woman by her hair and cut off her head with his sharp dao.

Dhansingh and Mansingh passed seven days and nights in the forest without any food. The younger brother Mansingh could not walk any further as he was too hungry, thirsty and exhausted. He asked his elder brother Dhansingh for water. But it was not possible to get water there in the forest. So Mansingh asked his elder brother to climb up a big tree and from the top to look to the distance so that he could locate some water source. At the request of his younger brother Dhansingh climbed up a big tree with great difficulty and looked all around. At a distance, he could see some herons flying up and down. With the hope of finding a river, a stream or a lake, he advised his younger brother to wait for him for some time and allow him to fetch water. The elder brother Dhansingh went forward leaving his younger brother in the forest.

Dhansingh reached a lake which was known as ‘bilo budang’ after a long journey through the thick forest which was full of thorns and where the ferocious animals roamed about. Reaching the lake, Dhansingh saw that a very big heron (daoba) having three heads, was spreading his three heads with long necks towards three lakes situated at three different places. At the middle of those three lakes, there was a very big elephant sleeping just like a hillock. Dhansingh saluted the kind of the herons (Daoba Raja) and told him: “O’ King of the herons, my younger brother is lying half dead out of thirst, hunger and tiredness in the thick forest full of ferocious animals. If I delay much he will die soon and I will not be able to see him alive. So, father, allow me to take a little water for him from this lake.” Then the three-headed king of the herons withdrew one of his heads from a lake and allowed Dhansingh to take some water. But suddenly the elephant that was lying in between the lakes prevented Dhansingh from taking water and told Dhansingh that he must ride on his back before taking water, otherwise he would not be allowed to take water. Having no alternative, Dhansingh got up on the back of the elephant and from there tried to take some water from the lake. However, then and there the elephant got up and walked away from the lake.

After two days and nights, the elephant reached the palace of a king known as “Maikhun Raja,” with Dhansingh on its back. Just the previous night the king of the land had died. The subjects of the country chose Dhansingh to be their new king. Dhansingh became the king. Thus the prediction of the cock was fulfilled. Dhansingh, however, forgot all about his younger brother who was lying half-dead in the deep forest.

Meanwhile, Mansingh tired of waiting for his brother fell asleep. He was lying in the forest as if he was dead. After a long time, he woke up and searched for his elder brother, crying loudly, “O my elder brother, where have you gone leaving me alone in the forest?”
Mansingh remembered about the big tree where his elder brother Dhansingh had climbed up. He also climbed up the tree with great difficulty. From the top of the tree he looked towards the lake where Dhansingh had gone to fetch water. He also espied some herons flying up and down at some distance and felt that there was surely some lake or river over there. After descending from the tree, he started to walk towards that site. When he reached there, he also saw the three-headed heron who was spreading his three heads towards the three adjacent lakes. Seeing the gigantic heron, Mansingh felt afraid at first, but out of thirst he summoned up courage and saluted the king of the herons and prayed for water. The king of the herons (Daoba Raja) allowed him to take as much water as he could. Mansingh then took rest and slept there. While Mansingh was asleep, he dreamt that his elder brother Dhansingh had become the king of a land. He woke up and after saluting the king of the herons asked him whether he knew his elder brother, Dhansingh. In reply, the king of the herons (Daoba Raja) told Mansingh that his brother had been taken away by an elephant on his back to a certain land. He also informed Mansingh that his elder brother had left pieces of his clothes on the way so that his younger brother Mansingh could follow him and reach the land of the ‘Haphaw Raja.’ According to the advice of the king of the herons, Mansingh followed the pieces of the clothes left by his elder brother.

After walking for three months, Mansingh reached the land of the Haphaw Raja where he heard that his elder brother was the king of that land. He also met an elephant with the name of his elder brother on its forehead. Mansingh was glad to find the name of his elder brother on the forehead of the elephant. This made him confirmed that his elder brother had become the king of the land. He desired to ride on the elephant and to go to the palace of his elder brother who was the king of the land. But the keeper of the elephant (Mahut) got angry and berated Mansingh using harsh words. Mansingh was pronounced guilty of touching the body of the elephant and the king’s sentries took Mansingh to the king. He was produced before the king for the trial.

After a brief trial, the king ordered the guards to give Mansingh a shelter along with the cattle at the cattleshed (Masaugoli). The king further ordered that Mansingh was to look after the cattle every day from morning till night. The order of the king was carried out to the letter. The new king (Dhansingh), who was known as the Haphaw Raja could not remember that he had a younger brother who was left by him in the forest without food and water. Dhansingh had forgotten everything of his past. He had become a changed person after he was made the king of the land and became known as the Haphaw Raja.

Mansingh led his life as a cowherd and always spent the night with the cattle. At night he shed tears remembering his early life. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, Mansingh prayed to the ‘Abong Gosai’ (God) that
He (God) had tortured him much and He should not torture him more, rather He should rescue him from the state of torture which he could not bear any more.

At the grazing field also, sometimes Mansingh sang the following song and shed tears out of grief addressing his elder brother, Dhansingh, the king 'Haphaw Raja.'

“Adaloi ada, Dhansingh ada,
Mano baokha nangni phangbai khaulai
Railaina sanbabo jatharlia,
Manabidi jatharkha naglai!
Mana gasa khanga, sinaidia,
Gaoni anjai godai khauna
Bidaguru angni garbani bida,
Gasakhang phinda Dhansingh ada
Thuinasoi ang masau gumoi gumoi,
Jallayaw gagloinano,
Bese sahaina habawana ang
Samphrama ase jallakhaulai.”

The substance of the above song is that Mansingh was very much grieved that his elder brother Dhansingh could not realize the fact that he had a younger brother. He (Mansingh) was about to die as he had been treated in an inhuman way.

At the grazing field there was a big ‘Sijau’ (Euphorbia splenden) tree. Mansingh used to rest under the shed of a tree near the ‘Sijau’ tree, along with the herds of the cattle. One day, at noon, while he was resting, he suddenly fell asleep and started dreaming. In the dream he heard that the ‘Sijau tree’ advised him that he should cut down the ‘Sijau tree’ and out of it he should make an instrument of four strings; then with the help of the instrument he should sing a song narrating his life history before others, so that he could be relieved of grief. He dreamt the same dream for three times on three days.

So one fine day, Mansingh took the cattle to the grazing field and posting his stick in the middle of the field, he asked the cattle to eat the grass around the stick only. Mansingh went near the ‘Sijau’ tree with an axe. He first saluted the tree and then saluted to the north, south, east and west, and sang the following song, crying:

“He swarjigiri, phiphaguru,
Ajaigiri bijaigiri,
Annainigiri,
Dinai phoibai ang, sijau bongphangkhou
Danno thakhai,
Nang phiphaya anda angkhou,
Dan hada, serjakhau banaihada,
Ankhau nanga thinhardangbia,
Banaina ‘serja-khau’, biphanga
“O Creator, I have come down to cut down the ‘Sijau’ tree; You, Father, will have mercy on me; please allow me to cut the tree and make a ‘serja’ (a four-stringed musical instrument); now that you have advised me to cut the tree, if the tree would fall down with only three cuts of the axe, my grief will come to an end.”

Just after the song was over, Mansingh cut the ‘Sijau’ tree three times only and the tree fell down with a terrible sound which the people thought to be an earthquake. Mansingh again cut the log into pieces with the same measurement as directed by the Creator in his dream. He designed the log with a ‘dao’ and axe, and later it took the shape of an instrument which the Bodos call ‘serja.’ The ‘serja’ was decorated with different designs on its body. In the evening, Mansingh took the newly made instrument to the house where he lived. At night he dreamt another dream in which he was advised to collect the parts of the instrument made from the ‘Sijau’ tree. The lower portion of the instrument was to be covered with the upper stomach of the stork (Hadioglani thoithla), the handle to be made of the hair of the flying horse (Urangkhi goraini songphai), and a small part of the instrument, known as ‘gorai’ should be made of the ‘Odla tree.’ Thus he prepared all the parts of the instrument according to the advice of the creator, except the handle. He was advised again in the night in his dream about the means by which he could get the hair of the tail of the flying horse. He was told by the ‘Abang Gosai’ in his dream that the ‘nymphs’ (Swargani sikhlaphar) came down from the heaven riding their flying horses and bathe in the illusive lake (maya bilo). At the time that they start to go back to heaven, he must come out of a bush and catch hold on the tail of a flying horse and pull off some hairs of the tail. He was also warned that he must not look back if he was called by the ‘nymphs’ and if he looked back, then he would be transformed into a stem. Mansingh obeyed the dream instructions faithfully and got the hairs of the flying horse’s tail with great labour and risk. All the parts thus completed, a full fledged musical instrument which the Bodos call ‘Serja’ was thus created.

Mansingh played on the instrument ‘Serja’ and sang his sorrowful song. He sang the song of his life starting from childhood, and the people were overcome with sorrow hearing the melodious tune while he sang his sorrowful song.

In the meanwhile, his elder brother Dhansingh, the king ‘Haphaw Raja’ had married as many as ten queens. Among those ten queens, dispute took place regularly and there was no peace at all. The king also lost his peace of mind. The country was beset with crisis from many quarters.
was not able to solve the problems which cropped up at any time in the country.

The adviser of the king advised him to ascertain the reason of unhappiness of the king with the help of the fortune tellers or the astrologers. Hence, many famous astrologers were engaged to find out the reason. One astrologer ascertained the reason and advised the king to call a famous story teller who will with the help of a musical instrument known as ‘Serja’ bring rain and stop the rain as he sang his story. But nowhere was such a person to be found. Then some wise persons of his court advised the king to call the cowherd of the king as the cowherd was believed to be a good player of the instrument, ‘Serja’. Mansingh was accordingly asked to come to the court along with his musical instrument ‘Serja’. He was asked to play on his instrument and tell the stories relating to the Bodo legends. Mansingh started his song with the musical instrument and narrated the stories one after another. The narration continued for a period of one month. Mansingh narrated their own life story last of all. He started telling about their life history from the early period and shed tears in the midst of his song. His elder brother Dhansingh listened to the recital very attentively from the very beginning. As Mansingh narrated their life history, Dhansingh could realize that it was the life history of their own. He embraced his younger brother Mansingh alias ‘Maoriashran’ (orphan) and wept for a long time. Then the king Dhansingh declared that half of the State was given to his younger brother, Mansingh along with other royal property.

Thus it is believed that the four-stringed musical instrument which is called ‘Serja’ by the Bodos, was created by ‘Maoriashran’ or Mansingh.


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**Ten Things God Won’t Ask on that Day:**

1. …God won’t ask what kind of car you drove. He’ll ask how many people you drove who didn’t have transportation.

2. …God won’t ask the square footage of your house. He’ll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

3. …God won’t ask about the clothes you had in your closet. He’ll ask how many you helped to clothe.

4. …God won’t ask what your highest salary was. He’ll ask if you compromised your character to obtain it.
5. ...God won’t ask what your job title was. He’ll ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.

6. ...God won’t ask how many friends you had. He’ll ask how many people to whom you were a friend.

7. ...God won’t ask in what neighbourhood you lived. He’ll ask how you treated your neighbours.

8. ...God won’t ask about the colour of your skin. He’ll ask about the content of your character.

9. ...God won’t ask why it took you so long to seek Salvation. He’ll lovingly take you to your mansion in heaven, and not to the gates of hell.

10. ... God won’t have to ask how many people you forwarded this to. He already knows your decision.

I received this from someone who thinks I am a ‘keeper’, so I’ve sent it to the people I think of in the same way... Now it’s your turn to send it to those people that are “keepers” in your life. Good friends are like stars ... You don’t always see them, but you know they are always there. Keep them close!

— Courtesy Shri Vipul Khagram. Received by e-mail on 15.9.09.

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