

Chapter 6 of 'The Monkey King'

Adopted from the classic Chinese tale



Monkey becomes a student

A Breakfast Serials story

STORY SO FAR:

Seeking immortality, Monkey travels to Master Subhodi's cave. But when Monkey insists upon easy lessons, the master strikes him three times and goes away.

At three o'clock in the morning, deep in the cave, Monkey got out of his bed. Wearing his pajamas, he tiptoed to the back of the cave, where Master Subhodi slept. As Monkey expected, the door to the master's chamber was only half shut.

Monkey crept in and stood by the master's bed.

Master Subhodi sat up. "You wretched monkey! What are you doing here?"

"But you told me to come," Monkey said.

Master Subhodi frowned.

"Master," Monkey insisted, "When you hit me over the head three times, you were telling me to visit you at three o'clock in the morning. When you folded your hands behind your back, it was a sign I should find you at the back of the cave. So," finished Monkey with a grin, "Here I am."

Master Subhodi gazed shrewdly at Monkey. Ha, he thought, this monkey is truly the product of Heaven and Earth. He's the first one who has been able to read my secret signs. Perhaps he really can become an immortal.

"All right, little monkey," Master Subhodi said aloud,

"I accept you as a student. But you will need to study very hard."

Monkey did a somersault of delight.

Master Subhodi shook his head. "Monkey," he said, "is that the proper way to thank me?"

Hastily, Monkey made a deep, clumsy bow, making sure his paw hid his grin of joy.

From that day on, Monkey was Master Subhodi's favourite student. He studied during the day with the other students. But at night, secretly, he studied with the master alone.

Soon Monkey learned many things the other students did not know. He learned transformations that allowed him to turn himself into anything he wished. He learned magical spells that enabled him to stay young and thus increase the length of his life. Truly there was no end to the things he learned.

After studying for one whole year, Monkey King began to get bored. One morning Master Subhodi was giving a lecture. All the students were listening intently, all except Monkey. He kept pulling his ears, scratching his armpits, poking the stu-

dents sitting next to him.

Master Subhodi stopped his lecture. "Monkey? What are you doing?"

"Master," Monkey replied, "I... I was so excited by your lecture, I could no longer sit still."

"Monkey," the master sighed, "Do you think you're a good student?"

"Master, I study for hours. When I am not studying, I'm working. I sweep the floors, and hoe the community gardens?"

"That's not true, Master," said one of the students.

"Yesterday, while everybody else was hoeing, Monkey was in the peach tree eating the fruit."

"And when he was supposed to fetch water from the stream," said another student, "he just sat in the river and took a bath."

"And when he was supposed to be sweeping," said yet another, "he made piles of dust, climbed a tree, and dumped the dust on our heads."

"Monkey," asked Master Subhodi, "are these things true?"

"Master," Monkey replied, "there are reasons for everything. When I was in the peach tree, I was just testing the peaches, making sure you only had the best ones. The bathing in the stream... well, I was only trying to make my body as clean and

pure as my mind. As for dropping dust on the students..." Monkey paused, trying to think up a good excuse. "I was working on my cloud-soaring. The dust was just an accident."

"So, Monkey, you have been practicing your cloud-soaring. Please, be good enough to give us a demonstration."

Monkey was delighted to have the opportunity to show off. He put his feet together, breathed deeply, and spoke a magical charm. When a small cloud appeared, Monkey jumped on it and floated a few feet into the air. Next moment, however, he crashed to the ground in front of the master.

Master Subhodi laughed out loud. "Do you call that cloud-soaring?" he asked. "I think it's cloud-crawling."

Monkey did not know what to say.

"A true cloud-soarer," said the master, "can start at the Northern Sea, cross the Eastern, Western and Southern Seas, and land again at the Northern Sea. One hundred and eight thousand leagues. That's real cloud-soaring."

"A hundred and eight thousand leagues?" exclaimed Monkey.

"Exactly! And you? Who think you know everything? What about the Three Calamities?"

"Wh... What are they?"

"The Three Calamities are celestial wind, water and fire. They come from the Jade Emperor. If you don't know how to ward them off, you will perish."

"Perish!" cried Monkey. "But Master, you've taught me the secret of life."

"Nonsense," said Master Subhodi, "all you have learned is how to stay young, and a few magic tricks. Oh yes, and a few transformations. You're not even close to knowing the secret of life."

(To be continued next week...)

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CHAPTER 6

Activity Guide



Just the Facts

1. What time did Monkey get up on his first day of school?
2. How far did Monkey go when he demonstrated his cloud-soaring to Master Subhodi?
3. What are the Three Calamities?

Between the Lines

4. How did Monkey interpret Master Subhodi's message?
5. How did Master Subhodi know that Monkey really was the product of Heaven and Earth?
6. According to Master Subhodi, what school of wisdom taught you to be thoughtful and restrained?
7. Why did the other students say that Monkey was not a good worker?
8. According to Master Subhodi, how far could a good cloud-soarer travel on a cloud?

Let's Discuss

9. If you were one of Master Subhodi's students, how would you feel about Monkey?
10. How is Master Subhodi's school different from your school?
11. Make a prediction: What magical abilities will Monkey show next?

VOCABULARY

- Three **Calamities**, (noun) something that causes great loss and distress
- celestial**, (adjective) relating to the sky
- enabled**, (verb) allowed
- listening **intently**, (adverb) paying attention, concentrating
- perish**, (v) die
- gazed **shrewdly**, (adv) wisely
- transformations**, (n) changes in outward appearance
- wretched**, (adj) extremely bad



In the Real World

Find a news story or an ad that shows something you like to do when you take a break from your studies.

Explain how you fit study and recreation into your weekly schedule

Competition

Hey kids!!! Send in your answers to the Activity Guide for each chapter and win great prizes, with the compliments of Vijitha Yapa Bookshops. The best entry each week will be awarded a book voucher for Rs. 1,000.

These weekly entries will also be eligible for lots of exciting prizes at 'The Monkey King' Grand Competition at the end of the serial story. (See page 9 for details)

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