

Stars In Their Eyes
Children Stories From The Skies Of Thailand



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**Stories for children from the skies
of Thailand**

By Francis Chang

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Seven Little Chicks



We live on top of a mountain which is very high above the clouds. Sometimes at night we will take a blanket or a sleeping bag and go out into the jungle. We find a nice grassy place without any insects and place the blanket down. Then we all lie down and look at the sky. Many people say that the night sky is dark. Perhaps it is in some places of the world but here on top of the mountain, where the air is so clear, it is brilliantly light. Some evenings we can see the moon and we all try to find the face of the old man in the moon. At other time we can see 'The Milky Way' which looks as though someone spilt a bucket full of diamonds over some black velvet.



This evening we are going to look at a special group of stars. They are in a constellation called 'Pleiades'. We will not worry too much about that name as we call them the 'Seven Little Chicks', even though we can only see six of the stars. Would you like me to tell you a story about how the little Chicks went to live in the sky? Yes? Really? Well part of the story is very sad but it does have a lovely happy ending. Are you ready?

Many years ago there was a very old man and his wife who lived in the jungle in a very rickety old wooden house.



They had no electricity and only a well outside the house for their water. They were very poor. The man's name was Jop and his wife was called Gope. They hardly had enough food to eat and were often hungry. The old man tried to grow some wild rice close to their house but could only grow a little as always the weather seemed either too hot with very little water or too wet when the rainy season came and the little rice plants were washed away.

One evening Jop and Gope were sitting at the table in their house.

“Oh Jop.. whatever are we going to do? We are both so hungry and look at your poor thin arms!”

She held her hand out and put her fingers around Jop’s wrist.

“Gope – we have no choice. You will have to go to the market with what is left of our rice and see if you can get some food for us.”

The next day Gope walked a long way through the jungle to a road where the bus passed be on it’s way to a village and the market. On her back she carried all of the rice that they had grown throughout the growing season until the harvest.

Finally the bus, which was now faded and peeling, came and stopped where Gope was standing by the side of the road. All of the windows were open and the many passengers all looked down at Gope.



The driver pulled a long lever and the front door opened. Gope, slowly climbed up the steps as she had not been on a bus for many years. She held out a small bag of rice to the driver.

“I am so sorry but I do not have any money for the fare. Perhaps this rice will feed you and your family for a meal.”

The driver felt pity for Gope and said “Take a seat Old Mother. We will soon be at the village.”

Gope walked through the bus until she found an empty seat next to an old lady and sat down. The old lady said –

“Are you going to the market in the village?”

Gope nodded and said “Yes.”

“What are you selling?” asked the old lady.

Gope pointed to the bag of rice she had placed on the floor between her feet.

“Hmm.. I am not sure how much you will get for that!”

Gope said that she just only wanted to get some food for her husband.

‘I’ll tell you what.’ The old woman said. “You look like a kind hearted person – you come with me when we get to the market and I’ll see if I can help you.”

Gope **Waied** the old woman with gratitude. “Thank you.” Gope knew that she would have been be totally lost when she arrived at the market and now she could not believe her good luck.



The bus pulled up right at the market entrance and all of the passengers collected their bags and started to get off of the bus. The old women helped Gope to put the bag of rice on her shoulder and led her from the bus into the market.

“Don’t worry Nong..I know one of the stall owners who is the son of my sister.”

The old woman led Gope into the market and stopped in front of one of the stalls. The stall had many vegetables on display and lots of caged farm animals.

“Now wait here a minute Nong while I go talk to Nut – my nephew”

Gope stood outside the stall with wide eyes looking at all of the food.

The old lady went behind the stall and found Nut.

“Good Morning Yah” Nut said.

“Good morning to you also Nut. Now listen - there is an old lady outside, although younger than me, she is dirt poor and has come to trade some rice to take food home for her husband. Please be kind to her.”

Nut went outside and said hello to Gope.

“My auntie tells me that you have some rice that you wish to trade for some food.”

Gope showed him the bag of rice.

“What sort of food did you want?”

Gope thought for a moment. “Only some vegetables and perhaps an egg.”

Nut told Gope to wait for a minute and went inside the stall. When he returned he carried a hen in a cage and a bag with some carrots, green vegetables, garlic and chili inside.

“Here you are Old Mother. You won’t be hungry for a while.”

Gope waived Nut, mumbled her thanks and gave him the bag of rice.”

Feeling very giddy with gladness she returned to the front of the market and waited for the bus home.

Jop was waiting for her when she reached their house.

“Jop” – she cried out. “You won’t believe what I managed to get for the rice at market!” She proudly showed him the hen and the bag of vegetables.



Job was so excited that he ran out into the garden and found some bamboo. He took his old saw and hammer, hanging from a piece of twine outside of the house, and immediately started to make a chicken coop.

Jop and Gope put the hen inside the finished chicken coop, gave it some old rice, a bowl of water and some straw to lay down on. The hen seemed very happy.

The following morning they rushed outside to see their hen. To their surprise the hen was lying on seven eggs keeping them warm. The hen ‘clucked’ at them with contentment.

“Oh Jop” Gope said. “Now we are going to have a family of chickens and won’t be hungry again.”

Twenty-one days later all of the eggs cracked open and seven little chicks hatched out to meet their Mother and to see Gope and Job.



Every morning Job or Gope would open the chicken coop and the hen and all of the seven chicks would rush out onto the ground around the house looking for their breakfast.

At midday when the sun was high and hot the mother hen would take the chicks under the wooden house where it was much cooler.

Then in the evening when all of the chicks were tired the chicken coop would be opened again and the mother hen and the chicks would all go into their home to sleep on the straw.

One day a 'Walking Monk' came from the jungle and approached the house carrying his alms bowl, a shoulder bag and a long walking stick. Both Jop and Gope went out to meet the Monk, pay their respects and give the Monk some cool drinking water.



“**Pra Song** – have you walked a long way?” asked Jop. The Monk pointed to a direction through the jungle where the mountains were.

“I am very tired and want to ask your permission if I can sleep here tonight close to your house. There are many insects and snakes in the jungle and I have even seen a tiger.”

Both Jop and Gope nodded. “Certainly we will make a bed in the house for you!”

The Monk shook his head. “Thank you but no. I have become used to sleeping in the open and will be quite comfortable out here.”

Jop went to find some clean straw on which the Monk could place his paper thin travel mattress which all ‘Walking Monks’ keep in their shoulder bag.

As Jop helped the Monk arrange his sleeping mattress over the straw he said –

“Phra Song...it is very humble but we have a small ‘**Phra Puta Rub**’ image at the other side of the house if you wish to chant.”

The Monk nodded his thanks and laid down on his mattress.

Once Gope and Jop realized that the monk was asleep – they sat on the wooden steps by their house and discussed what to do.

As Monks cannot eat after noon - in a village or a city they would make their round of **Bintabhat** very early in the morning and many of the villagers would place food in the Monk’s Alms Bowl to make merit.

As there was only Gope and Jop – they wished to give the Monk the best food that they had to make merit for their future lives.

They both looked at the hen who was scratching the ground with her seven chicks all around her. Although they both loved the hen and the chicks they decided that, as they were so poor, they would have to cook the hen and present it to the Monk for his food.

The hen overheard their conversation and was very sad. She took her chicks into the jungle and told them that they must now look after themselves but to honour and respect the old couple who had been so kind to them.

The following morning while the Monk was chanting in front of their Phra Puta Rub - Gope caught the hen and prepared it for the cooking pot. All of the seven little chicks saw what was happening

and because they loved their mother so much and had so much grief they all ran into the fire to be with their Mum.



Both Gope and Jop were so sad that they could not stop crying. They gave the Monk some rice to put into his Alms Bowl and he packed his mattress into his shoulder bag and walked into the jungle.

That night both Jop and Gope were sitting on the steps to their house. It seemed to be very bright. Jop looked up to the sky.

“Gope look ... there are some new stars!

Gope looked up and saw the stars twinkling. How many were there? One..two.. three..four...there were seven new stars! The chicks had been reborn as stars in the sky and would now always be with their mother and looking down on Gope and Jop.

Since then these stars have always been known as **Dao Look Kai!**

The old people in the village say that what we learn from this story is:

Moral : As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.

Glossary

Wai - a form of greeting or respect where both hands are clasped together in front of the chest.

Phra Song – Monk

Phra Puta Rub – Buddha Image

Bintabhat – Early morning alms giving to the Monks.

Dao Look Kai – Little Chicken Stars



Wasn't that a happy ending? Would you like to hear another story about the Thai Skies? Yes.... Well...

The Crocodile

There are many stars in the sky and some of them form a group which we can make a picture from and give it a name. One group of stars is called 'The Big Dipper' by many people around the world.



But here in Thailand we think that it looks like a Crocodile and that is what we call it.



Sometimes we have to look towards the north and very low in the sky to see The Crocodile. How did

The Crocodile get up into the Sky? Well it all started with a very rich old man.

The Old man's name was Tong and he was very wealthy. In fact he had so much gold and money that he was afraid to keep it in his house and decided to bury the treasure and hide it, in the garden in front of his house.



Tong was married to his wife called Jena and loved her very much. He was able to give her everything that she needed and they were never hungry. Because he cared for Jena so much – he never told her where in the garden he had hidden the gold and money. Tong was always afraid that evil robbers would one day catch Jena, hurt her and force her to tell them where the wealth was hidden.

They had a very happy life but as is the way of the world – one night Tong went on to his next life. Jena was very worried as Tong had always provided for her and now that he was gone she did not know where the money and gold were hidden.

That night when Jena was sleeping and dreaming - Tong came to her.

“Tong – why have you come to visit me?”

“Jena **Ja** – I have come to tell you where the gold and money is.”

Tong revealed to her where he had hidden the money in the garden. He asked her that once she had found it and dug it up to make **Tamboon** with a big contribution to the Temple to give her merit in her future life and to help him find a new life.

The following morning Jena took Tong’s shovel from the **sala** where the tools were kept went into the garden. She very quickly made the correct number of paces from the house to the place in the garden that Tong had explained to Jena in her dream and started to dig.



Very soon her shovel was through the soil and she could see a large box. When it was uncovered – she carefully lifted it and took it into the house. When she opened it all of the gold and money was inside.

Later that afternoon, many of Jena’s neighbours were sitting in the coffee house – all talking excitedly.

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