

HAMLET BAREH



KHASI FABLES AND FOLK-TALES



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FIRMA K. L. MUKHOPADHYAY  
CALCUTTA : : 1971

- (1) THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE  
KHASI PEOPLE
- (2) A SHORT HISTORY OF KHASI LITERATURE
- (3) KHASI DEMOCRACY
- (4) KOHIMA DISTRICT GAZETTEER IN HIS  
PRESENT ASSIGNMENT AS EDITOR, NAGA-  
LAND DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

OPINIONS

ON THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE  
KHASI PEOPLE

"If I had any criticism to make it would be that it covered too wide a field . . . in a volume so full of information as you have provided. Chapters III, IV and V give information very difficult to come by except in your history."

Late Prof. J. H. Hutton  
Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills District.  
New Radnor, Presteigne Wales.

"It is indeed a most valuable contribution to both historical and anthropological studies".

Prof. C. Von Furer-Haimendorf  
School of Oriental and African Studies,  
University of London.

"I must congratulate you for this valuable work".

Late B. P. Chaliha,  
Chief Minister, Assam

"I found it most fascinating . . . I must congratulate you on the great labour you have put in to produce the book. I am sure that it will hold the field for many many years. I found your account of Tirot's struggle against the British exceedingly interesting. You have done a great service to the cause of the Khasis and of India by giving such a detailed version of the whole struggle".

Jairamdas Daulatram, M. P.  
and Ex-Governor of Assam.

**DATA ENTERED**



# KHASI FABLES AND FOLK-TALES

HAMLET BAREH



**FIRMA K. L. MUKHOPADHYAY**  
**CALCUTTA                   : :                   1971**

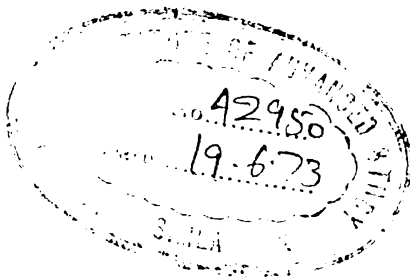
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TO  
MY SISTER  
ZELINDA



## P R E F A C E

The folk-tales treasured and handed down from one generation to another add to the cultural heritage of the race and survive as the time-honoured episodes of the ancient adventures, beliefs, usage and experience. Love and wonder imprint grandeur, beauty and nobility, told in different narrations, in the folk-tales.

The folk-tales produced in this small volume belong to the Khasi tribe. Care has been taken to compile here only those folk-tales not yet published before in books such as *The Khasis* by P. R. T. Gurdon (1907), *Folk-tales of the Khasis* by Mrs. Rafy (1920) and *Khasi and Jaintia tales and beliefs* by I. M. Simon (published by the Department of Tribal Culture and Folk-lore Research of the University of Gauhati, 1966) besides other publications in Khasi language.

Although not exhaustive, my purpose in compiling this little book was only to utilise some rudimentary materials left by the late U Mondon Bareh long ago. On my part, therefore, I have done the editing after encountering many difficulties caused by the illegible hand-writing and missing links as the materials were collected in haste. Other folk-tales and traditions can also be found in *The History and Culture of the Khasi People* published in 1967 besides other popular folk-tales, already published. In this book, attempts to adapt the tales to the original Khasi mode of thinking, sentiment and usage have been made, except the miscellaneous section although the classification in the contents has been made difficult in identifying the class or category to which each of the folk-tales should belong. Many persons, from among the Khasi-Jaintia People are aware, I am sure, that a mass of traditions and folk-tales are still lying about uncared in the hearths and huts of

our country. Therefore vigorous attempts should follow to perpetuate them in writing lest they would fade to oblivion very soon not forgetting the fact too that many folk-tales have lost much vitality and significance, owing to the weakness of human mind to comprehend, assert and represent them in their right perspective and originality. There are cases also when one folk-tale is recounted in two or three versions.

In conclusion my fervent wish is that the folk-tales represented in this series will be of educational value and point out a moral.

I am most grateful to the Assam Board of Publication for some financial assistance rendered in producing this book.

My thanks are also due to Mr. R. Dkhar and Ellerene Cunville for the sketches and line drawings which have been utilised in this publication.

Camp : New Delhi,  
February 27, 1971.

HAMLET BAREH

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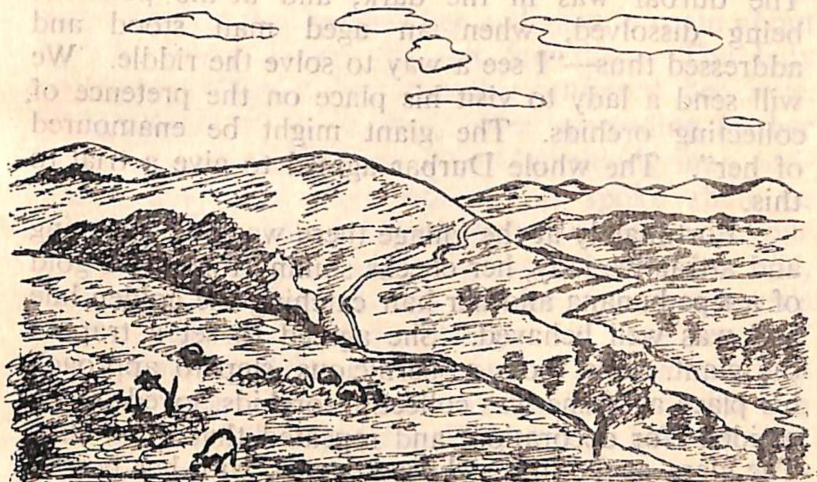
# CORRIGENDUM

Page	Line	For	Read
3, First Para,	13,	countenance	countenance
10, Third Para,	last,	thence	then
14, Third Para,	12,	appropriated	and appropriated
17, Foot note, 1,	2,	amongst	in
17, Foot note, 1,	2,	in	on
26, Third Para,	last,	woe	woo
27, First Para,	last,	bows	bow
30, First Para,	last,	the more poor	poorer
34, Fifth Para,	4,	herds	herd
36, Second Para,	2,	men's	man's
36, Second Para,	4,	for	far
38, Last Para	9,	nets	nets
39, Last Para,	3,	masters	master
39, First Para,	14,	her	have
41, Second Para,	2,	now	how
41, Third, Para,	7,	Beli	Beli
43, Last Para,	2,	impassible	impassable

## AN EARTHQUAKE IN THE STONE INSCRIPTION

The village of Syndai is about one day's journey on foot from Jowai. Built over the spur of the hill, the village was walled on the south by a rising precipitous slope, at the bottom of which, there is a stone inscription of an earthquake.

The old folk believe that in the past the earthquakes passed through it, the Khasi hills being much exposed to the earthquakes, causing an enormous loss



View of the Khasi scenery.

A shepherd tending his sheep in the fore-ground.

of lives and damage.<sup>1</sup> And so at this village many persons, cattle and goats were killed. The cottages were rocked down. The terraces and orchards were upturned. The village people were at a loss. Prayers

1. The earthquake in 1897 had its epicentre in the Khasi Hills which caused ravage even to distant places.

were offered, sacrifices were performed, divination was conducted—but no solution came.

Yet later on they knew that there was a giant who lived there. He was a strange being because when he was in peaceful mood, he just sat reclined, quietly folding his hands, but when he got puzzled, he used to rock and swing, that was why the hills shrunked, the precipices were torn, the vegetation was upturned, the people and livestock also perished.

A durbar was, therefore, held to consider as how they could deal with the giant. By waging a war, they knew they would be at loss and would bring more trouble, and it would be as useless to reason with him. The durbar was in the dark, and at the point of being dissolved, when an aged man stood and addressed thus—"I see a way to solve the riddle. We will send a lady to visit his place on the pretence of collecting orchids. The giant might be enamoured of her". The whole Durbar agreed to give a trial to this.

Fortunately at the village there was one charming and attractive lady, her cheeks shining forth as a gold of a ripe banana and her hair catching the golden hue and was well behaved. She agreed to set a trap to the giant. She took a pernicious step to approach his place as if she was collecting orchids, loved of the maidens for decoration, and repeated that every day. The giant at the first sight was struck with her beauty that he was at once completely captured. But he would not dare to speak lest she would become scare and run away. So he just watched her everyday. Finally she went to the village to report the matter to the elders. She told them now, she saw the giant everyday who was gently behaved but never spoke to her. He was dormant as oftenly as she saw him. The elders, therefore, selected a batch of warriors to accompany her on the appointed joy to the place, the intention being to stripe off his power. On the date

fixed the lady with the warriors came. It was when he saw the latter that the giant was provoked. He then thundered—"what business have you got to do here in my dominion?" Just then he was about to stretch his arms; but one of the warriors interrupted saying, "uncle this lady likes the place and she has brought us to see it". The lady immediately came forward and said, "why do you interrupt me? Every day you saw me here, yet you were dumb. But when you saw me in the company of my own brothers, you have thundered like a roaring lion. Beware, I will die first before you dare touch them". The giant changed his countenance as if he were a perfect gentleman. Then he divulged the secrets of his love to the lady, the fact that he gave her a chance to roam about his dominion during the last few days. The lady seeing him fallen to her trap also confessed her love. They agreed to marry. But before proceeding further with the arrangement, an avuncular elderly man addressed the giant, "all which you spoke shall be fulfilled. But tell us first what is a mark of your pledge?" The giant so greatly enamoured of her said, 'whatever you demand I'll do for my sweetheart's sake'. The men replied, 'enough we have heard of you, of your might and strength. But because you are too strong, you may at anytime beat us with one slab and we will all perish. How can we become your good in-laws if we are just exploited by you. Will you just allow yourself to be tied into that big stone so that some of your power is removed and that we would become more affable to you". 'Yes', said the giant "for her sake". They bounded him hands and feet on the stone and asked him where on his body his power resided; the giant innocently told them that it resided in his fingers. The men took their knives and hastened to cut his fingers one by one. The giant, fingerless, weakened and worn out, the

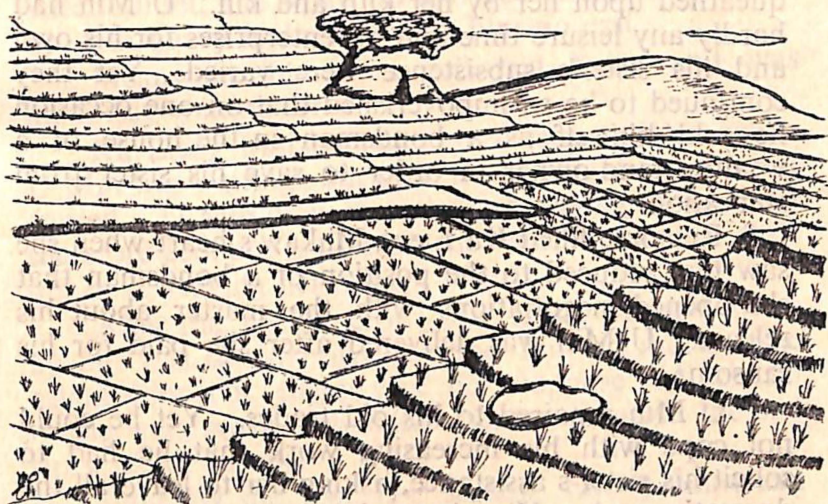
blood spilling out in a great magnitude, prayed to keep the only remaining left thumb but the men did not spare it even. The foolish giant, tied with a creeper plant, soon succumbed to the injuries, but before he died, the perjured lady was seen going back with the male escort, thus playing trecherous tricks upon his innocence, but the village of Syndai has since been free of the tremours.

The stone inscription the shape of a frog still remains to be seen there.

## KA LIENG MAKAW

Having lost her kith and kin who had all died of plague, Ka Lieng Makaw, the only survivor came to settle in one village. She had been looking for a husband to maintain a progeny and thereby preserve her clan.

Her close neighbours were U Mih Pynsum and his sister. U Mih was very indecent, shabbily dressed and raggedly, thereby incurring Ka Lieng Makaw's displeasure. Ka Lieng Makaw used to play tricks so



Khasi terracing grounds in the valley on the middle and slopes.

that whenever he drew water, she would tease him by polluting the water up-stream; whenever he collected fire-wood, she would hide his strap used for carrying or scatter his load. He was at the bloom of his youth engendering the qualities of simplicity, honesty and truthfulness, and though shabby, he was charming and

active so that in course of time, she was enamoured of him and began to love him.

A gifted piper, U Mih used to play his pipe at the dead of the night, breaking its dead silence, the wild lands echoing with the strains of his music. Ka Lieng Makaw, his only silent listener was elated in her heart on hearing the music overflowing with its myriad tunes, pouring out with the noblest sentiments.

U Mih and his sister were very poor in spite of earnest efforts to improve their lot. He was so hard working but the true blessedness and bounty never visited him. Ka Lieng Makaw, on the contrary, had amassed a great fortune out of the property bequeathed upon her by her kith and kin. U Mih had hardly any leisure time and his enterprises for his own and his sister's subsistence were varied. Yet they continued to be so impoverished that on one occasion he sold himself as a bondsman in the house of a wealthy land-owner in order to save his sister from starvation.

Remorse filled Ka Lieng Makaw's heart when she saw him reduced to the position of a bondsman that she opened negotiations with the master about his release. U Mih was delivered after she paid for his ransom.

U Mih repaired to his old trades. Yet he could not cope with his increasing work that he had to solicit his sister's assistance, asking her to leave all the domestic work. His sister showed herself useful in performing manifold jobs such as sowing the seeds and plucking the vegetables, constructing the weirs in the stream, collecting fuel and gathering wild herbs and other undertakings. Ka Lieng Makaw showed special favours by keeping their house during their absence and taking off his sister's weaving work.

Later on Ka Lieng Makaw came out to the field with them and considerably assisted in their terraced

cultivation. U Mih still could not guess that he was so much enamoured although he was grateful for her assistance and her kind thoughts on him.

One morning, Ka Lieng accompanied them to the field. She was smart and active and performed a good deal of work. But at midday she stretched herself on the ground and complained of drudgery and ailing. She sent for him. U Mih responded and gave her the necessary help. Later on, on her request, he bore her home, leaving his sister alone.

U Mih laid her on the bed. His thought was on the ripening grain; having kept her, he asked for her permission to leave. But she pressed him to stay on. He, therefore, had to remain with her for many hours. After sunset, she woke up and got all the doors shut up with heavy locks to ensure him no exit.

Meanwhile his sister returned home and was anxiously waiting for him.

Ka Lieng Makaw fell into a deep slumber while U Mih was waiting; but upto the midnight she was not roused. U Mih grew impatient of staying further and therefore scooped a hole on the wall, and at last stole out of it, leaving her asleep.

After the cock's crow, Ka Lieng Makaw woke up but was so surprised to see him no more. She called him but there was no response. A chasm in the wall, when she came across, revealed the sad story of his escape.

Suddenly she lost her senses. She became sad and forlorn. The flames of hope for building a communion of love became extinguished. Finally she laid down dead of a broken heart.

The doors of her house remained shut and her dwelling looked deserted. After a couple of days, the neighbours enquired of her. In her porch they called out for her, but no response came. They therefore broke the door open and at last found only her

corpse. Surprised by her mysterious death, they fixed the day for her funeral. The lady being clanless, the task to cremate her, therefore, devolved, according to the customs, on the chief (*Syiem*) who ordered the village crier to call upon each adult to come out and help cremating the corpse. All the people attended but U Mih stayed back, sobbing for her loss silently.

As all the villagers had to join, it became a big funeral party. Although clanless, Ka Lieng Makaw was renowned. But none had ever suspected her secrets of love, even U Mih Pynsum in his innocence, never guessed her intention.

It was decided at the village Durbar to dispose of the corpse with full colours and ceremonies, the catafalque and the bier were to be immersed with the best decorations.

Yet everyone was astonished that the bier could not take its shape although persistent efforts were made. The craftsmen put several formulas to affix it but in vain. The omens being consulted, they found the mysterious doom befalling her was due to her love failure; moreover the auguries clearly indicated that the rites would not be complete unless her lover joined. U Mih was sent for. It was a wonder that as soon as he came, it fitted exceedingly well. They dressed the corpse in the best fineries of costume, ornaments and a coronet, for none could inherit her property, although her house and land remained merged up into a state possession. But the bier remained unmoved when they were about to bear it to the funeral ground. Therefore, another divination was conducted by means of eggs' breaking when it was shown that unless her lover played his pipe, it would not move, for U Mih was a piper, and the originator of *Ka Sharati*, a flute (well compared to U Manik Raitong, the Khasi Orpheus) who with his soft sweet strains, had melted, on so many occasions, the

heart of his solitary listener in the different transitions of arts, in the perfect rhythm and accent. His flute was sent for. He was commanded to play when it was brought. He played lamentations which stirred the hearts of many present in the funeral. As soon as he blew, the bier, borne by a party of bearers, moved on, and yet, as soon as he stopped, the bier stopped, the procession was retarded and his continued playing was therefore necessitated until the bier reached its destination.

Wonder again, for as long as he tarried to play, the funerary flames remained put out, and the corpse was not therefore to be burned. He had to play his tunes near the pyre for a stretch of ten hours until it was entirely consumed.

But U Mih after the long acts of sibilance, coupled with the thought of the dreary fate which consumed him after this woman whose intentions he was not aware of, admixed with the guilty feelings which haunted him, became exhausted. He could hold his breath no longer and fell down. The funerary party had next to attend his obsequies. Their charred bones were collected and placed together in a common sepulchre.

The Khasi *Sharati* became an instrument for expressing dirges and lamentations during any auspicious obsequies. But Ka Lieng Makaw's love beyond compare recounts itself as an eternal power.

Till to-day you will hear Khasi piper still lamenting with their *Sharati* during the funeral ceremony till the corpse is completely devoured in the funerary flames. And how noble and sweet are those tunes.

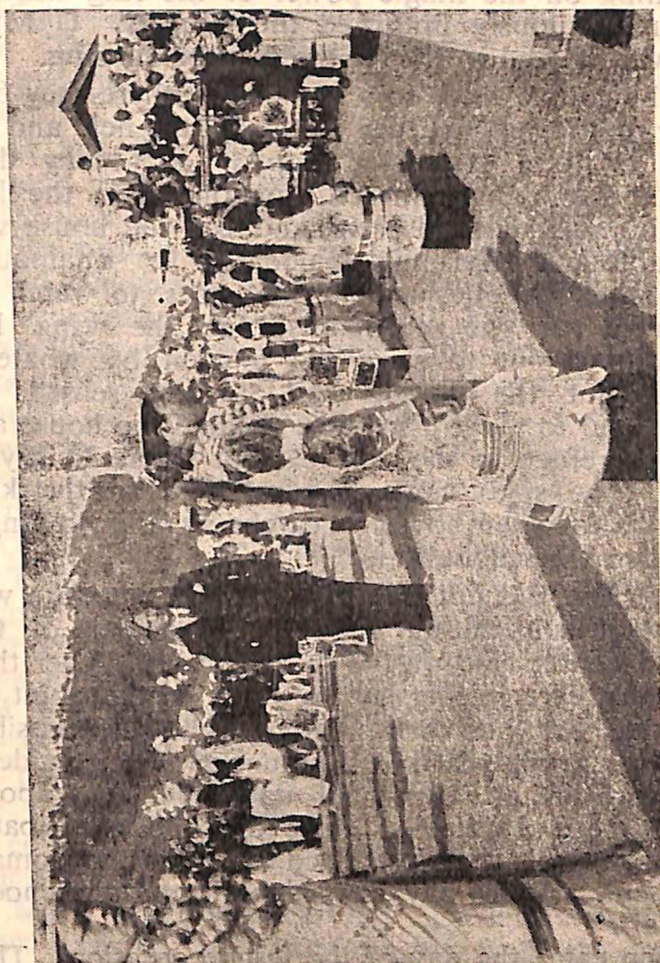
## WHY A VIRGIN DANCE AMONGST KHASIS

A certain boy, an orphan, very impoverished and desolate, cultivating chillies in a field, was so elated in his spirits by the advent of a promising harvest season. But finding the crop devoured everyday, he was compelled to set a trap one day. The next morning, he found a *niuh-rei*, a kind of a bird, caught in. He took and brought it home, but forgot to kill and eat it everyday. One night, after an interval, he dreamt a dream whence she appeared and asked him to set her free for which he would in return get his daughter. In order to find an outreach to her, she advised him to tie some mustard seeds wrapped in a piece of cloth to her tail and to drill a hole, through which the seeds would fall off as the bird flew. The boy named U Myndi followed suit the portent. The bird was released and the seeds poured out. He succeeded in finding a trace.

The bird reached home. On arrival, she dressed up all her servants with the best robes while her only daughter was kept in rags. On the way, U Myndi came upon an old woman who counselled him to take a raggedly lady and leave others.

U Myndi came upon the bird's chamber. She asked him to choose one of them. The ragged lady was out in the field acting as a servant. He refused the well-fashioned ladies and pointed the servant. The mother was sad to part her off but the pledge was not to be broken. Therefore she had her daughter parted away. But before they set out, she gave a ring and advised her to call on its name in the event of meeting any forthcoming dangers. The couple thence left.

The husband's home was never reached at one journey because they were confronted with dangers and



Tirot Singh memorial dance. Girls dancing are all virgin (1954).

difficulties. First they met the gangsters who attacked them. They killed U Myndi, cast his corpse on the way-side and seduced her. But she averted the danger by calling on the magic power of the ring which at once miraculously upturned the culprits. U Myndi next was revived to life by the help of the ring.

The couple came to a woodland where they fixed up for their dwelling; they cultivated the field and had plenty of food and lived happily for many days. But another danger lurked, for one day, the king while hunting with an escort, noticed the house with an affable and charming maiden in it. Enamoured of her, the king despatched his spies to watch the movement of the occupants, for the king had contrived a plot to seize the maiden by whatever means. But the couple had already sensed the danger, and to avert it in time, vacated the house and went for refuge in the village from where U Myndi hailed. The spies came and reported to the king about the forsaken house. Searchers could no longer trace their whereabouts.

The king did not love his wife and therefore was bent upon substituting her by the maiden of the deserted house. He was so much enticed of her that he did not care seizing her by force at the point of murdering her husband. Failing with all possible means to intercept, the king summoned all the maidens to a dance on an appointed date. Maidens above eighteen were required to come out and participate. The village chiefs were instructed to see that no woman was absent. As the day drew nigh, drumbeats echoed in the air.

Then came the day of the festive occasion. The groups of the dancers from near and far villages came in their dancing apparels, looped with the fineries of golden bracelets and bangles, necklaces, coral beads and silver coronets accompanied by male drummers, pipers and gun-men in their exquisite dancing dress

of silk-embroidered turbans, waist-coats and dhotis resplendent with necklaces and silver chains looping over the body. They shouted and yelled as they came interrupted by the firing of guns and loud drum-beats. They gathered at an open-air dancing courtyard awaiting the coming of the king to open the dance.

At last the king came in a royal retinue, his approach being announced by criers against the sounds of drum. The king opened the dance.

The women danced in groups of between three and ten maidens at the sea of the dazzling apparels and ornaments. But the most elegant was that solitary dancer, Myndi's wife with the very appropriate gesticulation and movement against the rhythms of music, she impressed the audience so much so and she was the fairest of them all. The king noticed the lady of the deserted home. He quickly hatched a conspiracy with his bosom friends to fetch her to the palace and to kill her husband in that night.

Towards sunset, the dance came to its close. The solitary dancer was brought to the king's abode, while U Myndi was kidnapped and killed by the king's men. His corpse was buried. She was confined in a locked-up chamber for several days. The king wooed her every morning and evening.

The king expressed annoyance of his own legal wife, and dismissed her but in fact she was given to the court barber, with whom a deliberate plan was made.

Many days had passed by. The lady was anxious of her husband, and therefore, one night she escaped through a crack in the wall and crawled in the cover of the darkness outside the headquarters. She took out her ring and called upon its power to bring back Myndi to life but although the process was repeated, it was all in vain as it had been beyond the power of the ring to wring a greater miracle. Thereupon she

fled home and narrated to her mother the grim story of what befell her begging her further help. The *niuh-rei* gave her a larger ring which was more powerful and sure to revive Myndi. The ring obtained, she beseeched it to give her the help, for which Myndi was roused up and revived to life once again.

Myndi, once again alive, in haste went to see the king, the latter deserved the severest punishment and Myndi threatened to turn the palace to an ash-heap. The king struck with terror asked his apology accusing the barber for being responsible. Myndi being magnanimous forgot the crime and pardoned him. The barber was executed and the king's wife was restored.

The king's misdeeds, thus become exposed to the public, as his true colours, his cunning and deceitfulness, came into glare, while the people could no longer tolerate the evil wrought upon the dominion. The full State durbar was convened, whence delegates from all over the dominion came and reached a decision to dethroning and exiling him and excluding his progeny from the throne. Myndi's wife was invited to take the throne and her husband was made the regent. It is said that this mother of the hills originated the new arts and patterns of women dances appropriated the sacrifices to different spirits. This is a story of the first Khasi queen, from whose progeny had emerged some Syiem lineage groups into the interior areas of the Khasi hills.

And since that time no more married women were taken for dances but only virgins were invited to dance to make it true to its cause.

## GIANT RAMHAH AND THE GODDESS SYNSHAR

Once upon a time there lived a woman who owned several plots of paddy fields; so blessed was she with abundant crops every year and had numerous cattle and goats, fine, sturdy and strong. Yet with all the blessings that she had received, she was so selfish upon the poor, for when her neighbours, pressed with poverty came to her for paddy loan, it was delivered in small baskets; but when it was returned, it was taken in bigger baskets. And for several years this avaricious habit was practised. The goddess Synshar watching saw this and became angry with this wretched woman. Finally the goddess made up her mind to withdraw her gifts from her and reduce her to poverty.

In course of time, therefore, this woman became extremely poor and had to subsist by serving as a daily labourer to one of her neighbours. But more punishment followed for, afterwards she gave birth to a male child of an extra-ordinary strength and size. Strange events occurred during the delivery for the earth shook, the lightning flashed and the thunder precipitated and terrific storm uprooted the trees and uncovered the houses. In the face of these forboding signs of nature, the people's hearts were filled with fear and their minds with grave misgivings in regard to the future of this child.

As the boy began to grow up, he displayed super-human prowess and energy. His appetite for food was so great that his poor mother found her small wages to be hardly enough to feed him; finally she was therefore compelled to sell him as a slave to one of her well-to-do female neighbours.

When the boy came of age, his mistress began to think of employing him in field work. He was given a dao and a hoe for jhum work. Yet the sooner he held and began to shake them, they were broken to pieces. For a herculean figure like him, the ordinary daos and hoes would not do. His mistress therefore conceived a plan to collect all the rusted or broken daos and hoes and called on the blacksmiths' combined service in the nearest confines to forge the tools of gigantic size and weight for his purpose.

The orders were beyond the blacksmiths' capacity to cope with, but after extra-labours were given and after much time was spent, they succeeded in forging a hoe, a dao and an axe, each weighing twenty-five maunds and a sickle which was twelve maunds and a half in weight. Their work finished, the young giant was sent for to remove the heavy implements from their smithy. When the giant accordingly came, he grasped all the implements and put the dao on one of his shoulders and the hoe on the other. He next took the axe and hanged it on his elbow joint while the sickle he suspended from his armpit. Then he proceeded to his mistress' place and when he threw these on the ground within her compound, their fall made such a sonorous sound that her whole house seemed to shake from its very foundation.

Before the giant started on his day's work, he took his morning meal which consisted of boiled rice, served and piled on twelve big shields and boiled herbs put in another shield.

On his way to the field the giant came across a big boulder near a stream where on it he grinded his tools to sharpen them, the boulder being almost completely consumed.

Let us now follow our young giant to his work. The first thing to be done in jhum cultivation is to clear the jungle of wood and grass by cutting them; the second thing is to burn them with fire when they

are dried ; the next work is to dig the earth and break it with the hoe, and the last thing is to sow the seed on the prepared soil.<sup>1</sup>

Before the giant began his work, he sang a sonorous tune, warning all the beasts to leave the forests lest they should meet bloodshed or untimely death at his hands. He foretold them that by one stroke with his dao all the trees and bamboos would be cut down on an entire hill ; so let them fly for their life at once. True to his word, Ramhah made one stroke with his ponderous dao and all the trees and grasses which covered one of the hills lay prone on the ground. He made twelve strokes and finished his day's work. And, behold, on twelve hills, all the wood and grass were cut down.

In a few weeks, the leaves of the fallen trees and grasses assumed a red and seared appearance, which was an indication that they were quite dry and fit for burning. The giant then went to the hills and burnt the withered stuff lying on them. The fire lasted on the hills for several weeks and the cracking sounds produced by the bamboos and grasses at the touch of fire was like the awful sounds of the doomsday. The dry wood, and even the earth, was burnt to ashes. And the twelve hills, once green and beautiful, now put on the appearance of so many scalds and bald heads, but not for ever, for soon the magic touch of spring was going to put a new life and a new beauty on them through the help of human labour.

The giant's next work was to turn the turf and dig the soil for sowing. It was a tedious work to upturn the turf on twelve hills and a person of ordinary strength of body would not be able to cope with such

- i. Cultivation by slash and burn is very much restricted ; it occurs amongst Bhoi area in the north adjoining Mikir Hills and Lynggam area which adjoins Garo Hills. The people have more of permanent fruit, vegetable and terraced cultivation.

work in twelve months. Ramhah upturned the turf with only twelve strokes of his formidable hoe finishing each hill with one stroke, and broke the soil with the same number of strokes. The hills now assumed the red appearance of the under-soil instead of the black one of charcoal.

Ramhah now sowed the paddy seed on the prepared soil; and it was said that he scattered only a handful of seed on each hill, sowing twelve handfuls on the twelve hills, which again speaks of the enormous capacity of the sizable palms of the giant's hand.

When the rice seeds began to grow and the hills assumed their greenness, the next work of the giant was to erect twelve big barns or storehouses in which to keep the paddy after harvest. In course of time the paddy field became fit for harvest and the giant sharpened his sickle, cut the paddy and separated the corn from the stalk in one day and carried it to the barns the next day. All the barns were now filled with corn, and his mistress became so delighted with the result of her young slave's work that at once she released him from slavery and allowed him to return to his mother to render his service to her for the rest of the days. Thanking his mistress for her kindness and considerate spirit, Ramhah returned to his mother with his tools and informed her on his freedom from slavery.

And when the time for jhum cultivation came, Ramhah performed the same feat of cultivation for his mother as he had done for his mistress the previous year giving the same amount of labour and sowing the paddy seed on twelve new hills. But to his great surprise and disappointment, when the seeds burst from the earth, only twelve stalks of paddy were seen to grow on the twelve hills, one stalk on each hill. And when the paddy was ripe for harvest,

all that he got from his labour was only twelve hand-fuls of rice from each stalk, twelve handfuls in all.

This poor harvest made Ramhah very angry. He was angry with everybody who came across his way, but he expressed to greatest fury against the goddess Synshar who controlled and disposed of the gifts of nature to mankind. He thought that she had dealt unfairly with himself and his mother and that it was his duty to make her repent for her injustice. In his great ire and rashness, he picked up an old broomstick, besmeared it with dung and refuses of every kind, and started to seek and find her place with all haste and fury, with the intention to beat her on her face with the broomstick, as a suitable revenge for her misdeeds.

The goddess Synshar, from whose eye no secrets connected with human affairs could be hidden, saw all these and laughed. But she thought of a plan to allay his fury by putting obstacles on his way. And the way to her palace was long and tedious; it would take twelve years for a person moving on ordinary steps to reach it.

The first obstacle that the goddess sent to obstruct the giant took the form of a tiger, which stood unmoved on his way and threatened to devour him with a roar which made the forests tremble. The giant ordered the tiger to move from the place and allow him to pass. On the tiger proving obstinate, the giant took him from his tail and hurled him to the air in which he flew for twelve days and twelve nights and then fell down with a thud on the compound of the goddess.

His next obstacles were the bear and the elephant who, in turn, were disposed of by the giant in the same way as he had done with the tiger.

His fourth and most formidable obstacle was a *rakshasa*. The tremendous monster lay on his way,

opening her mouth to swallow him, with her lower lip on the ground and the upper one distended so high that it seemed to touch the blue sky.

"Move from my path", said Ramhah.

"To be sure indeed", said the rakshasa, "I am not here to obey thy orders but to swallow thee and put an end to all thy nuisance, I am not light-bodied as those thou hast found my three servants which thou hast hurled in the sky to be. Turn back or thy days will come to a miserable end in my entrails".

"If so, you will feel the strength of a descendant of the gods", said Ramhah. So saying, he took hold of both her lips in his hands and with only one effort, he tore off the unwieldy rakshasa in twain, and, kicking off her remains from his path resumed his journey.

His remaining adventures were not of a dangerous nature; but, as they contain beautiful moral lessons it cannot be considered out of place if they are narrated.

He first met a person whose eyes were so completely covered with lime that he had become totally blind for several years; and the worst part for him was that no help to remove the lime from his skin could be of any avail in as much as the lime had stuck so completely to his body that it was becoming part and parcel of his own flesh and blood. On the giant accosting him and enquiring about his conditions, the poor fellow could only beg one favour, namely, that he would not forget to speak on his behalf if he could ever have the pleasure of meeting the goddess Synshar.

He next came to a river with steep and precipitous banks on both sides, and to his great surprise, he saw a person stretching his whole length from one side to the other side of the river, and making his body serve the purpose of a bridge. Every man and beast who came by that way walked on his body across the river.

To the enquiries of Ramhah into his conditions, the poor man gave no reply but hoped that the goddess Synshar would explain to him the circumstances which drove him to that degradation and that he would not fail to speak to her in his favour.

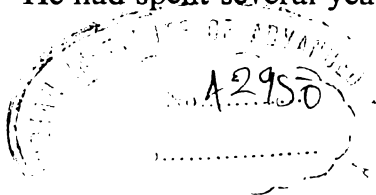
Ramhah next came across another person who carried a bundle of grass which stuck to his body and however much he strove to rid himself of the burden, he simply could not throw it out of his person. On seeing Ramhah, he informed the giant that he had been in that miserable condition for a number of years, and requested him in case of his having the good luck to meet the goddess Synshar, to speak to her on his behalf.

The last person that Ramhah met on his way proved to be the most miserable and pitiable of the whole lot of those who had happened to come across his path. His body was covered with rupees from head to foot, so much so, that even his ears, eyes, nose and mouth had assumed the appearance of rupees. The very hair of his head was transformed to so many rupees. The rupees were joined together in such complete adhesion that his limbs were rendered absolutely stiff and incapable of motion, the cold effects of silver having entered into his very life-blood and nerves.

"My rupee-covered friend", said Ramhah, accosting him, "how fares it with you there? Could you come over here and have a little talk with me?"

"That is impossible", said he of the rupee-covered frame. "My limbs and joints have been rendered stiff by the cold effects of rupees, and I have to be here until kind death takes away my breath. I see you are bound for the abode of Synshar, would you kindly speak to her on my behalf?"

Ramhah, having promised to acquaint the goddess with the condition of this fellow, proceeded on his journey. He had spent several years of sleepless nights



and days in quest of the Goddess and he knew that by this time her abode was not far. But before reaching his destination, he met another strange sight on his way. He saw a single bamboo standing on the way with its top pointing towards the sky as if threatening to pierce the heavens. Every man or beast that walked by her showed their scorns to her by kicking and spitting at it. Ramhah was surprised at this bad treatment of the poor bamboo. On his demanding the reason for her conditions, all that the bamboo had got to say to him was to speak on her behalf to the goddess.

Ramhah resumed his journey and in a few days reached his destination. The goddess Synshar had already gathered from the reports of the tiger, the bear and the elephant about their mishaps, about the time of arrival of the giant, and had therefore directed her servants to close all her doors to any possible new comer and to inform him that she could not meet him as she was ill.

The giant arrived at the palace of the goddess and found that to reach her court he had to enter through twelve doors. When her servants reported to him about her illness, he understood that it was her mere bluff to get rid of him. This made him very angry and he kicked the doors so violently one after another that they were all shattered to pieces and made way for him to approach the goddess. As soon as he saw her in her room, he spoke to her in a very harsh kind of language and was about to beat her with the filthy broomstick. The goddess showed no signs of anger or passion, but, retaining all her calmness and dignity, told him that it was sheer madness on his part to approach a goddess with threats, in as much as the gods never cared for threats or violence, but were guided only by reason and justice. Then she said to him:—

“You see, my lad, all this misfortune has happened through fault of your mother. As a goddess,

I have supplied her with abundance of rice and paddy, for her own comfort and maintenance, and as a means for her to help the poor and needy. After she was so much blessed with my gifts, her heart was conquered by selfishness and avarice and became an oppressor of her fellow men. When the poor came to her for paddy she measured her loan in small baskets; but when they returned the loan, she received it in big baskets. Is this kind of behaviour reasonable or fair? The gods having appointed me to administer their gifts to mankind, I would like to see the enjoyment of an equal share of happiness and comfort by every human being, as they all live on the same earth, breathe the same air, are warmed by the same sun and have an equal share of the rain and dew of heaven. Go, therefore, to your mother, and tell her to drive away avarice from her soul."

The goddess Synshar further asked him to remove the wrath of the gods from his house by sacrificing a red hen as soon as he returned to his home.

Ramhah expressed his deep sense of remorse for all his rash deeds, and after he had admitted that reason and justice are preferable to force or violence, he threw himself at the feet of the goddess and asked her forgiveness. The goddess then said that young people were always rash and wanting in consideration and that it was never a policy of the gods to be too hard upon them; they were rather easily forgiven if they repented.

"Return, then," she said, "to your mother and inform her of these things; and the next season, when you sow your seeds on the soil, I will come and bless your work with the warmth of the sun from on high and the supply of rain and dew from the sky."

But before Ramhah took leave of the goddess, he said to her:—

"Great and dear goddess, I want another boon from you. What about that bamboo which tries to

pierce the heaven and those persons of evil luck whom I have met on my way. They wanted me to get your enlightenment in regard to their lots."

"All those you will understand", replied the goddess, "have received what they deserve for having broken the great law of nature which is the sole guide of human affairs. As regards that bamboo, you can put it right if when you next meet it you will take hold of it and pull it down until its top touch and worship the earth. The reason why it is treated with scorn lies in its unresourcefulness and it will become resourceful only when it learns the lesson of humility." As regards that rupee-covered, know that he sank to that plight through his love of money, and a most miserable miser indeed the fellow was. His avarice had reduced his spirit to matter, so much so, that at last he became a mere lump of flesh and bones. Then his thoughts became so completely identified with rupee that his entire body, with its organs of sense, became covered with rupees, that he now sees rupees, hears rupees, smells rupees, eats rupees, feels rupees. His case is now absolutely hopeless. Speak not to him again, but just look and pass him by.

The man with the load of grass had his punishment because when he discovered a place where grass grew for thatching houses, he kept it secret from his neighbours with a view to exclude them from sharing in the benefit of his discovery. As regards the person whose body was utilised as a bridge over the river, he belongs to the lazy and selfish type of men who would not co-operate with their fellow villagers when they constructed roads or bridges for common use; he should remain there as an object lesson and warning to everybody. Again the man whose eyes were closed with lime is typical of those selfish kinds of men who, when their friends want lime for using with betel-nuts, would not give them, an insignificant material even when they had it in abundance.

After the goddess had warned him against selfishness and unkindness to his fellowmen, Ramhah took leave of her and returned to his home. As soon as he arrived home, he reported to his mother all his adventures and especially his interview with the goddess Synshar. He next removed the wrath of the gods by offering the sacrifice of a red hen. Then he prepared the ground for sowing, and when his work was completed, there waved and flourished on the twelve hills the green paddy stalks of the mighty giant, promising a rich reward for all his labour and hardships. And through his life, he never forgot his duties towards the poor and the down-fallen and the goddess never failed to bless his cultivation with fertility.

## HOW THE GIANT'S BONE BECAME LIME

Once upon a time, there was one *rakot* (giant) with an only daughter. She was quite beautiful, the colour of her skin as brownish as *U Tiewlasubon* (a kind of a highly valued orchid). They lived near a forest. One young man was so much enamoured of her. One day, therefore, he told his parents to go out to purchase goats and pigs. But in his heart of hearts he was intending to woo her. When he reached the rakot's parlour, he asked whether they had any goats and pigs to sell. The rakot's daughter on seeing him, fell in love and said, "goats and pigs I do not have, but is it not good to come in, chat and have a taste of areca-nuts and betel vines". The man first pretended to hurry off but because he was implored, again and again, he at last entered in. Love's climax was soon reached by both. She asked him to stay that night and hid him in an empty rice oval mat container.

The giant returned home after dusk, tired and bore, having not found any human victims for his prey. But when he came to the porch, he exclaimed: 'what a smell of the human being. What a favour done to me by the coming of a man into my home when after a day's laborious search, I could not get any'.

The man was so much afraid. He muttered to himself, 'here comes my end.' The rakot was thundering up and down in a loud voice as if the entire building would crack. But afterwards, his temper calmed down and when he proceeded to sit down, his daughter all of a sudden said: 'Father, when you thunder like this to devour any visitor, does it not mean that you just like to keep me spinster forever? Who would dare to woo me when you are of such temper? I would have to be single forever'.

The rakot immediately changed his countenance and told her gently, 'I do not know that he is my son-in-law. If you were in love with him, I should not hinder you. Produce him to me so that I will call him son'. Upon seeing him, the rakot made himself affable. He then conducted the marriage celebration according to the rakots' system of marriage. Before midnight, the rakot told his son-in-law, 'tomorrow we will go to hunt a stag. I will myself go to bait but you keep in on position, and whenever the game is passed by, you just hit it with the bows and arrows'.

On the morrow before the day-break, they set out. The young man's position was shown while the rakot set out to circumvent the game. The man was waiting for many hours. However it was not until noon-tide that the rakot's voice 'Shoot, shoot' was heard, the hill sides echoing out at his dreary shrieks. He also saw a group of men running at an unbelievable speed to escape the rakot. He was running after them with a big club, held in his arm.

The man came to realise in their language the game meant no one else that the human victim. He left so scare at the act of cannibalism. At once he sped home to his wife and told her that he could not pull on together and would better have parted away with her than see the rakot's dreary act. She also told that she better left him alone as she was fatigued with seeing heaps of human flesh and spills of blood nearly every day in their house.

It was a desperate plight. Running with a great speed, the couple came upon an oak which asked them why they hurried so fast. They told it was because they wanted to be liberated from the rakot. They asked if the tree could help them. 'What kind of help can I render', the oak asked. 'Will you allow us to put a dao's stroke on your bark but let its mark immediately look as if it were on old cut so as to confound him' they said: 'Why not?' the oak told. So

they put one stroke and behold in a moment, the mark appeared to be on old cut.

The couple hurried away and came across the plantain. They also asked its help by allowing a leaf to be cut but it should immediately sprout to its old size. The plantain agreed, the leaf cut by a dao sprouted in a moment.

Meanwhile the rakot reached home. Although he knocked the door as if it would crack, none came to open. He, therefore, broke the door open and went in. But to his surprise, the couple were not found although he searched all nooks and corners. At last he searched the ceiling but the cane comb and the needle folded in the cane strips of the wall exclaimed, "O giant, your children have left your home for ever and we alone remain to keep the house".

Hearing this news, the rakot at once tried to over-post after them and overreach. But as he was quite old and because he was drunk he could not run so fast. He came to the oak which told him that they came but it was many days ago because the dao's mark left on its bark by them had now become old. The rakot looked at the mark and found it quite darkened and old. When he came upon the plantain, he was told that they passed by but many days back, as the leaf which was cut by them had sprouted. The rakot examined the leaf and found that the narration was true.

In a great despair, the rakot found it was impossible to proceed further. He therefore shrieked and thundered as if to upturn the entire precipice. He grobed here and there at the neighbourhood and finally came to the bottom of a banyan tree where on the branch, there was a monkey burning the limestone.

"Uncle", said the rakot, "I am so hungry".

"Open your mouth", replied the monkey.

The rakot opened his mouth while the monkey was casting down the heaps of lime from the cone.

"Enough?" asked the monkey.

"Give me some more", the giant replied.

The monkey dropped the lime on and on until his mouth was burnt completely. Yet finding the giant's stomach not being filled up, the monkey followed by casting limestones upon the rakot's mouth. The rakot could not stand any more because the lime burnt his intestines and very soon he died there.

The traditional belief upholds that the banyan tree is the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, while the limestone scattered along the southern borders is formed of the giant's remains.

## SAIDANG LAKE

Near the village of Diwon on the north of the Khasi hills, there is a small lake named Saidang. Once in that village there lived two orphan sisters named Ka Kedang and her younger sister, named Ka Saika. As none was there to look after them, the two girls had to work so hard to earn their livelihood by serving in the house of one rich woman for a daily wage. Yet the more they worked hard, the more poor they became.

One night they dreamt a strange dream when they saw one woman who counselled them to visit the lake at midnight with two sheets of cloth if they wanted to be no more impoverished. The two girls, poor as they were, were determined at all cost to go and seek relief from the woman, although the lake was known to be a haunted place, wailings, shrieks, moans being often heard during the autumn nights. Yet the two girls became so enboldened.

They followed the fairy's counsel and took the two sheets of cloth. Reaching the lake, they waited on its sandy banks but it was not until after the midnight that she came with a safe. She asked them to be ready. The girls hurried to spread out their cloths. The woman then poured out the coins. But the cloths not yet filled up, she stopped suddenly and she asked them to go. The avaricious girls, now glamoured by the sight of money, wanted to seize the whole lot. Kedang while attempting to catch hold of the safe, happened to mishold and fell in the lake where she was drowned; Saika's right hand was also in the safe, but it became stuck in its lid that she could no longer pull it out again. She remained in that wretched condition, weeping aloud, while an old woman had disappeared.

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SAIDANG LAKE



Waterfall

On the next morning, the news spread of the two sisters' missing. The Durbar was convened and as per its directions, the searchers went out to various directions. One of their groups came to the pool but were so bewildered to find Saika and her hand stuck in the lid of the safe. They tried to remove it but failed, while the safe was unbreakable, nor her hand dislodged. Finally they cut her hand, but that done, the girl died.

The pool was called Saidang after Kadeng fell a wretched victim to the fairy's wrath. And the moral is that avarice is retributable with terrible disasters.

One fisherman named U Chang constructed a weir where he set a fish-trap across the stream. But no fish was caught although he repeated it everyday. He was disappointed with the disgratifying results. This made him to suspect that somebody had played tricks by stealing the catch during the night; he therefore contrived a device to make the night watch. One night he went and waited at the pool where the weir was.

After the midnight past, the mystery came into a glare. He saw a fairy with a baby carried on her back silently stealing to the weir. After a while she laid the baby on the bank, while she approached the weir addressing the baby thus: '*Dit tyndong, dit tyndong*. wait a while darling, do not cry: *dit tyndong, dit tyndong*, let me pull out darling'.

When the fairy had gone away, U Chang quickly pulled out the baby and hid it in a *Khaseng*, a kind of fern. Soon the fairy returned with the fishes but to her great surprise, she found the baby no more. She called on '*Dit tyndong, dit tyndong*'. 'Searching out in the dark she happened to touch the *Khaseng* but immediately she was taken panic-stricken as the fern was prohibited to the fairies. The fairy darted and ran away.

The Bhoi people use to plant *Khaseng* near bridges and weirs to keep away the water demons.

Once upon a time, there were three orphan brothers whose house was near a forest. As they lived far from the village, they had no friends. But the two elder brothers were very oppressive upon the youngest. They made him to cook their food, to cut the wood and collect the fuel, to draw water, in a word all the domestic responsibilities devolved on him. And whenever there was any disagreement, the poor boy was beaten, slabbed and even kicked off. He got insufficient food. The boy was happy to be alone in the field.

One day while cutting wood in the nearby grove, he came all of a sudden across an old tiger, his mouth opened out and his tongue about five inches long tossed outside, while the mucus stuck along his beard and moustache.

"I will bite you", the tiger said. "How you will bite me uncle without hearing my pleading"? The boy replied "you have come a slender being to confound my dominion. You have cut the trees, striped off the vegetation and all the animals have gone astray. You have made the land barren so that not a single hare and deer remains to be seen. I have become deprived of the meat. Should you expect me to eat a dried clay—I will eat you".

"Whatever you demand I will do only that my life is saved", the orphan replied.

"Alright", the tiger said, "if you do one thing I will save you and the work is easy to accomplish. You bring to me salt wrapped in a piece of cloth and you will find your herds of cattle and goats following you".

The boy agreed to do so. On the morrow, the boy soaked the salt packed in a piece of cloth and

proceeded to rub the grass along the way, so as to moist it, whilst the goats liked to lick up the salty taste on the grass while following him until the tiger's lair was reached.

"Uncle, I have done what you have advised me. Find out these goats", the boy addressed.

"Good ; repeat this tomorrow and I shall give you a gift", the tiger said.

That done in the next day, more goats came. The tiger was so pleased and more he was happy with the word of honour fulfilled by the son of the *hynniew trep* (seven huts, ancestors of Khasi race) who descended from heaven to inhibit the earth.

The tiger, so much pleased so, plucked out a pearl from his moustache and exhorted the boy to take it but he should dispose of it with none except a merchant who could pile up over it with rupees so as to dim its brilliant colour. He asked him to sell out to the *Syiems* (Kings) as they were supposed to be more wealthy.

The orphan went back home but did not disclose the secrets to his brother. On the morrow he went to the king's palace. But the syiems could not find sufficient money to cover that glittering pearl. However the orphan agreed to dispose of it with whatever money they had. Next he called on his brothers to come and carry the money home.

But the two brothers after some days became jealous in spite of the wealth that he had bestowed on them. So they hatched a conspiracy to avoid him by pushing him into a deep hole and leave him to die there. The brother was taken out and pushed and he remained in that abyss for one night and could not find out any means to crawl up from the hole. He had lost hope, but just then the old tiger, his never failing companion appeared, the tiger descended his tail to the hole and asked the boy to climb through it.

Rescued, the tiger asked him to ride over his body and resumed the three months' journey. At last they came to the river which commanded a very great width which when the arrow was shot from one bank, it could hardly reach the opposite bank. In the middle of the river they saw a wonderful castle. There lived a damsel called Sotti Koina. The tiger towed the boy to the bottom of the castle where they found the damsel's hair looping down and touching the water. The tiger asked the boy to hold it and the lady when knowing that it was a man's hand which touched it would then be glad to pull up to her chamber.

The boy did as was advised, the damsel vibrating with the men's touch upon its hair floating in the water, asked who was doing so: then the boy narrated that he happened to come that for as he was carried by the water. The lady pulled him up and came to learn of his plight.

The lady immediately dressed him up and asked him to stay on. Afterwards they were married.

So the time came that Sotti Koina, assented to follow him to his village. They passed through many dangers and fought many battles on the way with one cruel king who had even dared to seek her hand. But the king was hated by his people for his oppressive measures, and when he was vanquished, Sotti Koina and her husband were invited to reign over them.

Near the village of Borato there is one terraced field named Latuba. There are twin stones near the field which look like the buffaloes on plough. The stones are connected with the following story—

Once there was a queen called Latympang. She hailed originally from Rymbai but had come to inhabit Manar with her followers situated near Borato. She was sagacious. Her village situated on a hill was well-sheltered by the fortresses all around, the approach to the village being a bridge suspended over the river in a narrow glen and the outreach being by climbing up the rising precipice again from the bridge. Latympang herself was a great warrior and inflicted numerous defeats upon the village of Shangpung after the latter had become envious of and challenged that great queen.

Finally the warriors of Shangpung embarked on a trick to exterminate Manar. One Shangpung man named U Khyrdein went to offer himself as a bondsman to one family in Manar. He was intelligent, smart and active and very soon won his master's confidence. But the villain, cherishing evil intention, had made a thorough study of this impregnable stronghold. He had even made a bamboo bridge on the river across a very devious fold, out of the sight of the village while occasionally he met the Shangpung spies where he divulged all the secrets.

The vigilant Shangpung warriors were just watching the developments. Later on they offered peace to the queen and invited her village to one field midway between Shangpung and Manar. The queen agreed.

The queen was trapped and came with her followers on the appointed day. The Shangpung craftsmen, to entice the people of Manar had woven

many baskets as if they were cages, where goats and pigs were shut in. But in fact men yelling like pigs and goats were kept inside each borne by groups men, against the rowdy drum-beats in a procession of the warrior dancers. The queen had come to believe that Shangpung were making peace ovations and so she came out with all her people armless, to the field. And lo, only U Khyrdein alone was left in the village.

As the Manar party approached, U Khyrdein quickly set all the houses to fire, and as soon as the Shangpung warriors saw the columns of smoke ascending up the sky from the village, they rushed at the queen's people and cut them all. The communications with the village were destroyed after U Khyrdein had cut the bridge hanging over the glen.

However the queen with her servants managed to flee to Tiniang Peak. Reaching the peak she took a silver arrow and before releasing it from her bow, she spoke thus—"Anywhere this would fall down whether the stone or the tree is hit I shall choose there to be my place of worship". She released the arrow for an unknown target northward and later on found a rock hit by the arrow broken into three pieces. "Here is my place to live and die", she said and so with the remainder she started to colonise Barato area.

A man named U Miatrynsut everyday passed by her dwelling when attending his terrace field. The queen fell in love with that charming and attractive man. But she could not find out any means to meet him. One day she sent for him through her maid servant. But he replied: "My hands are tied up as my field is so large, so I cannot spare my time". One day the queen proposed to her servant to go for fish catching. They took their nets and started from the terraced chanel nearest to Miat's field. As they were approaching him, the queen complained of ailments. And when they were about to reach him, the queen fainted and cried for help. Her servant called in Miat

to help. Miat immediately left the buffaloes with their ploughs and hurried to the queen. The queen asked him to take her home. U Miat took out the bamboo mug and the bettle vine container and filled them with water and splashed it on her brow. So enchanted was he when he noticed her brownish hair as if it sparkled of gold, while his heart was melted with the mishap which occurred of her. The queen asked him to take her quickly to her place. U Miat with reluctance left his buffaloes, bore her on his body and hastened, thinking to come back as soon as possible. But reaching home the queen would not allow him to visit her home and asked him to forget his field, his crops, and his two buffaloes forever as he would her enough of food, drinks and other possessions with her.

The exciting story here ends.

The two buffaloes could not leave the field when the night time came but just remained at the field awaiting their masters to come back and pet them. But he never came again, the buffaloes thus upset, shed tears incessantly until they fell down and transformed to twin stones which still remain to be seen even until to-day.

## THE WATER GODDESS' JUDGEMENT

Once one man went for a night-watch, before the harvest season came to one terraced field on the bank of Myntang river. That river basin remained very contiguous to Dhongjhep river. Every day that man and his friends were busy in the field but at night, they retired to the farm-shed for cooking, eating and sleeping. One day this man told them to go for a fishing at Dhongjhep. They pressed him not to go there because Dhongjhep was worshipped and if she would find him, she would kill him. He told them that the gods and goddesses were never enraged if the man, simply knew how to speak at the time when a hook was being cast down, and so he went.

When he reached the pool, he had his hook wrapped with a big mouse for a bait, but before he would drop it down he muttered thus: 'Lest you say that I have come here as your foe, I have nothing to lie. Remember inside this mouse there is a rod and beware, if you are clever, don't grasp it but if you are foolish enough, grasp it'.

Soon this was finished, one gigantic masheer, the height of a man, appeared and at ease gripped the hook trying to carry it away. The man held it with his great strength; so the tussle went on, the man at first appeared unable to hold himself as if he would be pulled down to the river. But finally he won. He drew the fish and carried it to the farm house. After his meal, he broiled the fish thoroughly and then went to sleep.

That man fell into a lethargy for the whole night. Next morning he would not be waken up; his friends aroused him but he would not wake up as if he was dead. His body was as cold as ice except for a mild warmth at the chest. His relatives from his village

were sent for ; and so when he was not awoke for one full day and night, they thought that he was dead and got themselves ready for his cremation. But while raising his body into a bier, he was awoke and asked the reason of the assemblage and the happening.

They told that they thought him to be dead and were ready to cremate. When they asked now he became alive when they were lifting him into the bier, the man told them thus: "When I just fell asleep the other night, the Dhongjhep goddess appeared ; She was shabby, her hair looping down till her feet is reached. Her teeth were as big as axe-heads. 'Thou hast slain my first son', she said, 'I would carry thee as my adopted child'. When she finished muttering like that, without hearing me pleading, she carried me beneath the river and took me before the Dunlein priest to judge me. The Dunlein priest investigated the case but pronounced that he could not proceed on with, owing to the paucity of the evidence, and especially he remarked ; 'how can one accuse the man when he did not tell a lie but spoke the truth with the logistical bias before he performed the job'.

This priest sent a police escort to take me before the two judge priests whose court was situated at Sdat Myntang-Kupli (confluence). There was an appellate court, the largest one of the water deities. But when the two priests understood that it was extremely a difficult matter to dispose of and as it was beyond their powers, *U Beli Iale* (the greatest God in the *Khadar doloiship*) was sent for.

The messenger who went to convey the message came back telling the two Lyngdohs that U Blei Iale was over-posting and would soon be in. The guards went outside the gates to wait for him. The drum-beats were sounded when he was seen approaching.

"The great deified water spirit, U Iale has a striking personality, covered throughout his body from fore-head to toe with coloured hairs which look like the

cock's feathers. He wears a crown on his head which looks like a turban which loops fore and off more lengthy in the front. His glittering ring is as large as a star. In his hands he holds a diadem. His height comes over to nine feet. He is never talkative but speaks very little."

As soon as he reached, he addressed the Lyngdohs, 'do not delay. Be quick'. They summed up the incident in brief words.

When U Iale, had heard the reply of both the parties he pronounced the following verdict, : "Release the man at once ; he was not guilty on Ka Dhongjhep." Then he commanded her to bring him to the farm house. And when she had disappeared, the man awoke to see a congregation waiting to hear from his lips the report about his adventures into the dominion of the water deities.

Once upon a time, there were two brothers named U Sing Tanat the elder, and U Don Tanat the younger. Their mother was still alive. But their father had died long ago. As they grew up, their mother told them the marvellous feats wrought by their father in the defence of their land. She thus instilled in them the passions for adventure. Both were minstrels and sang on their *duitaras* (harps) songs of wars, love and other noble themes. U Don Tanat was cleverer, more industrious, stronger and braver.

There was a king in that village with an only daughter, but he was annoyed with her mode of behaviour as she never came out to any public reception but always stayed in with her maiden attendants. The queen had died long ago.

One day the princess went out to the parlour to bask paddy over a mat raised on a platform. But while arranging it, she was all of a sudden, carried off by a big eagle, in consequence of which occurred a great consternation. The durbar was convened to select the searchers who could brave to finding out the eagle's sanctuary. U Don reported that he saw the eagle carrying off a teen ager flown in an eastward direction. The two brothers accepted the challenge to find out the princess.

They traversed through the rugged hills and sometimes impassible jungle. During the trail, U Sing fainted along the way so that U Don's help and care was as oftenly called for. They had spent many weeks during the journey, but at length they came to a banyan tree, where the princess remained confined to its top inside a nest, where she was laid down.

The eagle provided for the princess' needs. Everyday she managed to bring fruits, plantains, areca-nuts and pan leaves, meat and vegetables to feed her.

The two brothers came to its base and noticed the princess enfolded under the eagle's wings. Sing Tanat curious of getting her first, climbed up the tree but it was not easy to climb up the sap-wood. Failing that, U Don took off from his brother. The clever boy climbed with less difficulty by making staircase marks with the help of his dao as he laboured up. At length he was nearing the princess but the eagle hurled him with her wings. U Don sustained himself by holding the branch with one hand while he had his other hand in which the dao was handled, thrusting at the eagle which was finally slain whereupon she fell down. The princess was rescued and safely brought to the bottom of the tree.

The lady was rescued. But Sing Tanat had cultivated evil intentions on U Don for the feat. He demanded the princess; U Don without a slight murmur, handed her over saying, "I have taken the trouble but the princess is yours". U Sing Tanat seized the princess and hurried up leaving his brother behind.

With great rejoicings, the princess and her false deliverer were received in the palace. U Sing was honoured and the king had accepted him to be his son-in-law.

U Don came home by another route. On the way he exchanged his dress with one traveller and in disguise came for shelter at his own mother's house. He was given shelter; sitting late at night, the mother told him about her two sons, the elder who had won the princess after delivering her from the eagle, and the younger who when accompanying him during the adventure was believed to have been killed on the way. The elder, was awarded the princess, and their

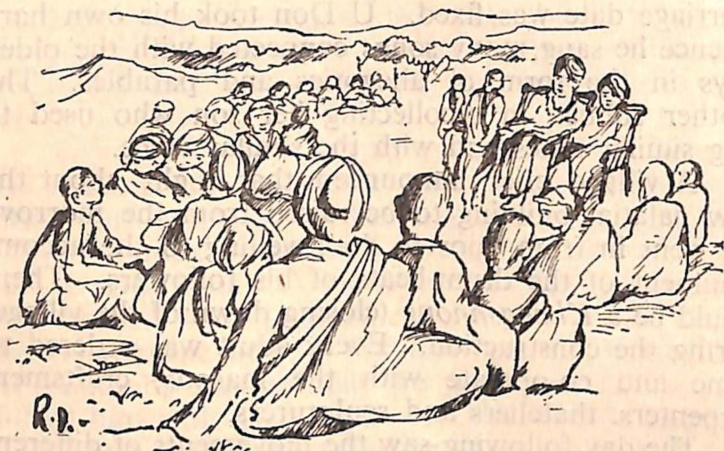
marriage date was fixed. U Don took his own harp whence he sang many songs connected with the olden days in the form of allegories and parables. The mother sobbed in recollecting her son who used to sing similar tunes and with the similar voice.

A village crier announced that night about the new palatial building to be raised from the morrow. He went in from door to door yelling to the accompaniment of the drum-beats of his followers. There would be a *Khangshnong* (closing down of the village) during the construction. Every adult was ordered to come and co-operate with the masons, craftsmen, carpenters, thatchers and sculpturers.

The day following saw the movements of different batches of people; some brought straw and palm leaves, some carried pillars, posts, cross-beams, rafters hewn of the trunk and its branches, others came to measure the wall-plates for according to customs, the dwelling of the *syiem* (king) was a state property, and different groups of people had a part in building and renovating the house. Women in the party were cooking rice and curry, cutting areca-nuts and preparing betel-vines with lime to entertain the people on work.

One *rijied* (post) could not be dragged by the group who had laboured to move it for many hours. Sing Tanat an applauded hero was sent for. He came and exerted his strength, but in vain, the post remained unmoved. Don Tanat who was in the crowd offered himself to the task. He was allowed. Laying his hand, he raised an incantation, 'does gold reside in my brother?' vigorously, he thrust the *rijied* out and it moved. Sing Tanat was ashamed.

Next morning the pillow could not be carried to the wedding bed. Don Tanat offered his service again. He chanted thus, 'was my brother truly worthy of a bride?', the pillow was taken and carried to that chamber.



At the Durbar

A syiem and his deputy sitting on the chairs and conducting the Durbar

Again on the morrow one wall-plate could not be laid against its designed position. Don Tanat in response to the call, came and exclaimed, 'was not the world false, but who was more false?' he laid hold on it and carried it on his head and fitted it to the position.

The princess became completely enamoured of this youth. He was attractive, noble and had wrought these acts of feat. She began to believe that he was her deliverer forsaken in the forest. U Sing Tanat had recognised him to be his brother. U Don Tanat appealed to the king to postpone the wedding. The King summoned a durbar to ascertain the situation and find out his daughter's genuine deliverer. The princess and the two brothers appeared. When asked of her as who was her deliverer among the two, the princess pointed Don Tanat. U Sing Tanat's engagement was cancelled.

Enraged at his turn, U Sing Tanat offered a duel to his brother. U Don tarried to accept but U Sing provoked by calling him coward. During the duel, U

Don pressed again` and again, smiting his attires and coral beads but tarried to kill him. Yet finally he streaked his finger to draw his brother's submission in the style of the old Khasi swordsmen in combat by causing light injury than slaying the opponent. The durbar confirmed U Don Tanat's wedding and the princess came out to embrace him. U Sing ashamed of his defeat went exiling to another country. The nuptials were colourful. His mother was happy that he was alive for he was much more loved ; she was gratified with the honours conferred on him.

Not long after the Syiem passed away. The State durbar delegated the kingly powers to Don Tanat. Prudent and sagacious, sober and magnanimous he ruled the kingdom for many years and the descent was maintained in his progeny.

## HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES

### WHY MATRILINEAL LAWS OF SUCCESSION IN KHASI SOCIETY

The Khasis once dwelt in modern Kamrup district with their principal centre located at the Kamakhya hillock where from successive waves of migration came to inhabit the Bhoi area in the northern Khasi District. Both the Garos and the Khasis lived together at the Kamakhya spur (called 'U Lum Ka Meikha') near Gauhati where there is a sacred Hindu shrine now. The earliest Garo immigrants came to Assam from Tibet *via* Koch Bihar whence they sojourned at Amingaon. But as they were pursued by an enemy from behind, they escaped by crossing the Brahmaputra on the rafts of plantain trunks singing 'tow onward, tow onward across the impending and boisterous currents; behold your destination within reach', the folk-tune which is still hummed among the Garos living in the Goalpara and Kamrup plains. Coming to Kamakhya, the Khasis and Garos together fought against the enemy probably the Koches.

The Khasis preceded the Garos, they came from Nowgong, their previous settlement being the bank of Kolong (Kalanga) river, where there was a headquarters of Hidimba (*Hadem*) Kingdom. It was from Hadem that one legendary king named U Chai sent an emissary message to China. Hadem comprised the great portion of modern Nowgong and North Cachar.

Yet the time came when the Khasis had to forsake Kamakhya, their ancient Kingdom, when it was invaded. Kamakhya was lost but the Khasis established themselves at the plains and the adjoining

hills south of Kamakhya. The hinduised Koches substituted the reverence of Ka Meikha, (the grand mother) by Kamakhya Devi, originally a mother elevated to the status of the goddess.

One Syiem having fell in the battle, the elders met and offered the commandership to his son, the legitimate heir, but the latter not being worthy to the task rejected ; thereafter an offer was made to the deceased King's maternal nephew who accepted and proved his worth by leading his troops repelling the enemy.

That was why from this time, the matrilineal laws of succession were adopted in all cases of election and appointment of all grades of chiefs—Syiems, Dalois, Lyngdohs, Basans, Myntris and village elders and nobles, when a nephew succeeded to his deceased maternal uncle.

## HOW JAINTIAPUR BECAME THE CAPITAL OF THE SUTNGA SYIEMSHIP

The old Sutnga Syiems (known as Jaintia Kings to outside world) are believed to have a fabulous origin in the strange fish incarnation. The earliest Syiems of the old Sutnga clan wielded their influence over the whole of Jaintia Hills and became the masters of a large tract with their headquarters at Sutnga, the place of their origin, from where they continued to administer their kingdom for five generations. In course of time, their kingdom extended far and wide including North Cachar and the outlying territories in Sylhet and Nowgong.

One Syiem at one time, found Sutnga unsuitable to continue as the headquarters so that a search went on for a new site. The Syiem with a survey party went out to explore the eastern region but for its foul smell it was rejected. Therefore the southerly route was selected. At Borkhat on the way the Syiem halted and set up an outpost where a Viceroy (*Laskor*)



Khasi megaliths at Neli in Nowgong

was placed. They went athwart many villages where they opened new markets. Still proceeding southward, they came at last to the plains. It was autumn time, the ripening ears of paddy waving in the breeze

were seen and how longing were they to possess the broad terraced farms of Jaintiapur at the foot of the hills (now included in East Pakistan).

At the plains the Syiem met a female land-owner. It would not take long time for this clever Syiem to devise certain means to bargain landed property by playing tricks upon a simple woman. He offered to purchase land from her at the price of *Ar stieh tyngka* or two silver shields with heaps of coins on their concave side, the plot of land being as large as a deer's skin. The woman agreed and was paid. But the Syiem rendered the skin into tiny slips, scattering them over various directions and thus came to acquire a great expanse of territory at Jaintiapur. He ordered at once the shifting of the headquarters to Jaintiapur. That is why until the British annexation, the Syiem was like a Zamindar in Jaintiapur while in the hills, he had no authority over lands, the large portion being classed as the state property placed under the control of the people or their specially constituted or delegated authority.

Later on the Syiem acquired the twenty-four Jaintia parganahs integrated into the kingdom.

Many builders and sculpturers from the hills were sent for by the Syiem to erect Khasi stone monuments of various styles which still remain to be seen. There are traces of sepulchres where the bones of the dead (Syiems) were kept even at Jaintiapur.

The Jaintia—Kachari enmity which occurred about 600 years ago centered round U Sajar Nangli, a fugitive who fled from Raliang in the Jaintia Hills to the North Cachar Hills. The reigning Syiem who had grown jealous of U Sajar for his skill in architecture hatched a conspiracy to kill him, U Sajar came to know of the conspiracy and so he embarked on a plan to flee from his homeland. Sajar, during the flight, was accompanied by a multitude of his followers who would not let him go alone as they loved him. Sajar, leaving his home-land, addressed his followers who had assembled, from thirty *elakas* (units) of the middle uplands to go back home and mind their own business. But his followers in an uproar responded thus—‘We cannot part from you. We would adhere to you until we breathe our last’. Thus a multitude, numberless and uncountable, men and women led by Sajar, embarked on a journey for the unknown home. They went eastward, crossed the Kupli river and proceeded to the Cachar hills from where they split into two batches, one proceeding to the Patkoi and another to Southern Nagaland. In the Chakhesang hills, east of Angami, the pine trees said to have been sowed since that time are still to be seen.

Time could not forever erase Sajar’s name as the adept sculpturer. It was he, the people of Nongkhlieh village told me, who laid down a carved stone rhinoceros at Mo-te-shroi knoll in the Nongkhlieh daloiship, on the occasion of his journey with a host of his faithful adherents to the land beyond the Kupil river. Traditions also ascribe a foot-print on stone near Wahiajer to be his own which perpetuates the memory of this historic occasion of his forsaking the Jaintia Hills. According to this story, many villages

became depeopled by the flight and march of Sajar and his multitude to the Cachar and Naga Hills.

Yet another tradition upholds that Sajar on learning that the Syiem was still after him, fled for shelter to Dimapur, then the Kachari headquarters. The Sutnga (Jaintia) King's wrath knew no bounds when he learnt that Sajar had been sheltered by his own enemy. He gave chase but learnt from his spies that Sajar had left Dimapur for the Naga Hills, and therefore postponed his plan to retrieve his subject in an unknown world. This led to many Jaintia-Kachari conflicts which filled up the pages of post-mediaeval history, for which Sajar was accounted in a tradition as traitor to the cause of his country.

At Khorungma in North Cachar, there are the remains of fortresses encircled by a deep ditch and according to a local story, they formed the abode of Sajar who maintained his position as the King before the Jaintia Syiem made a move to recover him.

U Kongka of Bengalee origin was installed as the Syiem of Shella area after he was purchased for *shi stieh tyngka* (cowries heaped in a shield) from Sylhet area about 200 years ago. He was offered the Syiem's throne because no one from among the indigenous inhabitants liked to be the Syiem. So U Kongka was made Syiem. Even the present Syiems of Mawiang are fabled to have a Muslim lineage being the descendants of Muslim fugitives who happened to reach the southern hills and who finally became fortunate enough to be first crowned as the Syiems, as none of the original families would dare to handle the task of Syiemship as it had become so much, the stories tell us, contaminated.



A Khasi market — sellers at the fore-ground for fruits :  
Stalls at the background dealing with vegetables.

At that time, the warriors of Shella along with those of Mawsmat overran many areas in Sylhet and confiscated some Zamindaris. Products from the hills comprising oranges, pine-apples, limes and lemons, papaya, jack fruits, teapat, areca-nut and betel-vines, smelted iron and steel and multifarious iron goods, cotton, pepper, honey and other volumes of merchandise passed through Ka Wah Rupa-tylli or Bokra, the Shella river to the plains. The Shella people were wealthy as they monopolised a considerable portion of southern trade and were themselves adept orange, pan, teapat, areca-nut and fruit growers. They were also brave people.

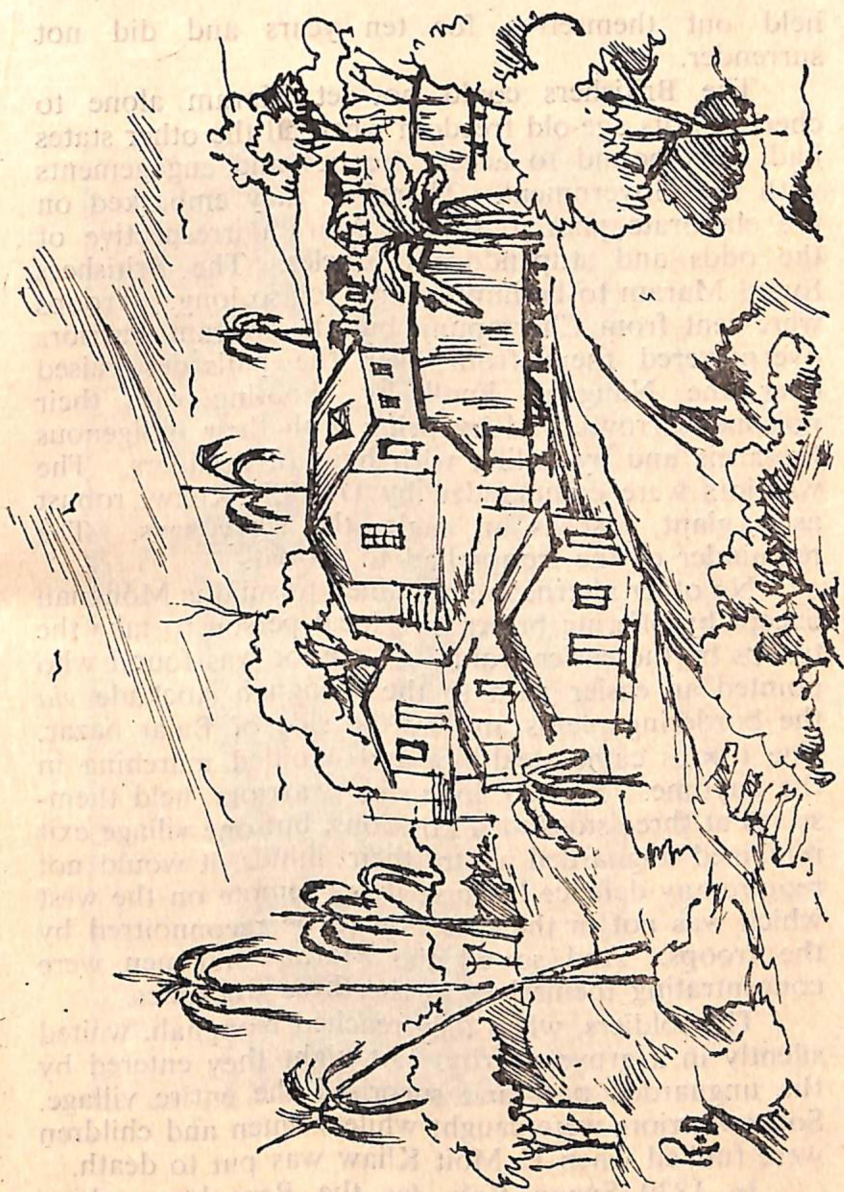
U Kongka reigned only for five years. He was expelled by the State Council later on because he insinuated one Ropmai man, the Shella chief, who was Kongka's own counsellor. Kongka had to go empty-handed, while another tradition states that he was executed.

And from that time, Shella Syiemship was abolished and replaced by four Wahdadars elected from amongst the original inhabitants on adult franchise principle.

The Wahdadars hold limited powers and are absolutely under the control of the State Durbar representing the entire male adult population of the State.

Nongnah which furnishes itself as one of the loveliest sites in the enchanting Khasi land, is situated in the heart of Maram Syiemship, in the midst of the exquisite scenes and charms—the profuse vegetation clothing its neighbourhood, the fringe of the Sylhet plains on the south rolling before the eyes, the chirpings of mynas and parrots filling the air on the nearby woodlands while on the oblong precipices, the base of which abruptly merging with the plains, the fruit plantations lay scattered. Nongnah is also famous for its creeper and flowering plants of a wide range.

The local people still preserve the story of the storming of the village during the last stage of the British annexation of these hills. It was the Maram warriors who put a final desperate resistance to the entry of the Britishers during the Anglo-Khasi wars. The contemporary Maram Syiem, U Sngap was one of the faithful and ablest allies of Tirot Singh of Nongkhlaw who headed the Khasis during their wars of independence. It had taken a long time for the East India Company to quell U Tirot Singh and his confederacy, the Khasis putting a vigorous guerilla warfare which protracted the war to many years. Yet time came when the British with their extensive resources and well trained troops could follow up the movements of the valiant bowmen and archers and musketeers, who with lightning speed used to ambuscade the British camps and surprised the soldiers. The Britishers closed down the markets, burned the belligerent villages and destroyed the granaries. The Khasi position became weakened when the East India Company gradually at the cost of heavy expenditure, and loss of men, were able to inflict defeats upon the chiefs, one after another. But the Maram warriors



Sight of the village in war area bordering on E. Pakistan

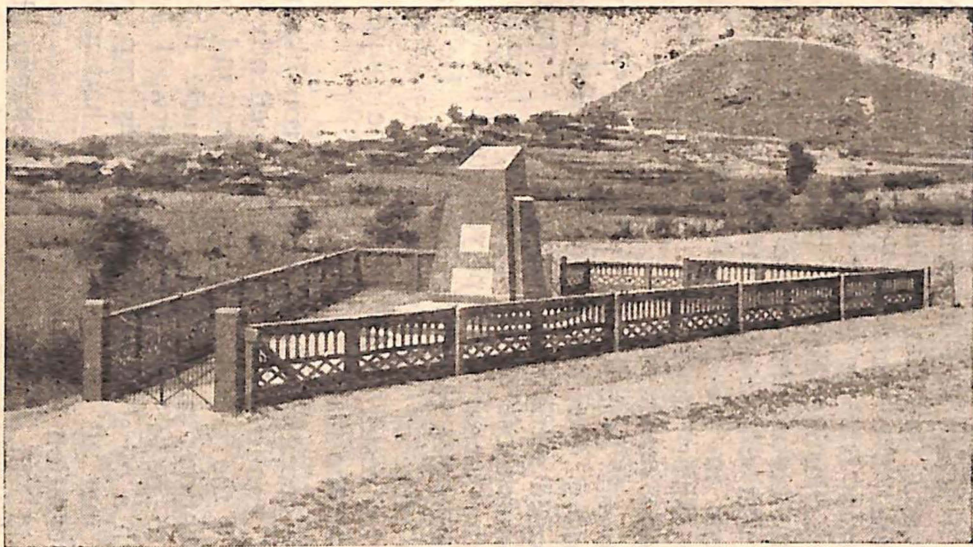
held out themselves for ten years and did not surrender.

The Britishers could not let Maram alone to cherish in its age-old freedom when all the other states had been bound to accept treaties and engagements with the Government. Therefore they embarked on the elaborate plan to subdue Maram irrespective of the odds and stupendous obstacles. The Britishers found Maram to be impregnable for so long. Troops were sent from Cherrapunji but the Maram warriors overpowered them from over the palisades raised over the Nangnah knoll by shooting with their poisoned arrows, and by firing with their indigenous fire-arms and by felling with hails of boulders. The warriors were commanded by U Moit Kliaw, robust as a giant, fast as an eagle, the story says. The remainder of the troops had to retreat.

No other alternative remained to subdue Mongnah except by offering bribes to a local person to take the troops by the easier wolds. A traitor was found who pointed an easier path to the Nongnah stockade *via* the bordering plains and by the side of Balat bazar. The troops came stealthily and avoided marching in the daytime. For so long the warriors held themselves at three stockaded positions, but one village exit remained unguarded as to their minds, it would not require any defence because it lay remote on the west which was not in the direction to be reconnoitred by the troops. And so all the Maram war-men were concentrating themselves in the three stockades.

The soldiers, when they reached Nongnah, waited silently in a grove nearby. At night they entered by the unguarded post and surprised the entire village. Some warriors were caught while women and children were funkled when U Moit Kliaw was put to death.

In 1839 Sngap Raja (as the Bengalee-speaking people called him) was compelled to accept the treaty with the Government.



Tirot Singh Memorial in the heart of Mairang, Headquarters of the powerful Nongkhlaw State.

*(By courtesy of Arthur G. Warren)*

## MIR AND THE JACKAL

One day a jackal saw his friend named U Mir preparing the soil for yam (*arum*) cultivation in a field. The jackal after watching for a while, approached and advised U Mir as to the best method of sowing yam, exhorting him to have the yam seeds well boiled first before they were put to the ground and covered with earth. He further asked him to wrapp the seeds in the plantain leaves before they were buried. Their spots were to be marked by planting a stick over them.

Mir followed exactly the jackal's advice, but after a few days, with much disappointment found that all the boiled seeds were removed, the footmarks at the spot being those of the jackal. He became so furious with the jackal who played such tricks, but immediately devised a plan to answer him. He made a trap with a piece of meat for a bait and when he went to see the result next morning, he found the jackal caught in the trap.

'Hello my deceitful friend, how do you like this kind of thing?' enquired Mir: 'I like it excellently well indeed', replied the jackal. I quite understand your revengeful intention; but I do not mind uncle, if your trap proves to be a passport to eternity. I have passed through a blissful experience in this trap; you know I have met all my ancestors and had a very pleasant conversation with them.'

'If so', said Mir, 'I would like to exchange place with you and enjoy the blissful experience'.

Mir released the jackal from the trap and put himself to it. 'Yes', said the jackal, 'you stay there till you die'. I am going to find some of your fine fowls and enjoy them.'

Long time ago, a crow (*ka tyngab*) and a dove (*ka paro*) were bosom friends; so much they loved that a time came when they pledged to live together. They fixed up a dwelling. But they could not start the household in right earnest as they could not make fire. The crow, therefore, approached U Sulong Luhoit, a man in their neighbourhood begging of fire from him. But she was refused and turned out.

Next day the crow again repaired to U Sulong Luhoit. Yet he remained adamant as of yesterday and drove her away. So, for the third time, she was driven away. The crow had failed, so the dove took in her chance to be favoured of man.

The dove knocked at the door and as he came to open, he was struck and amazed by her elegance, charms and excellent manners, that he forgot of business and wooed her instead. He would not let her go but made over sets of a beautiful dress and a ring to her. The dove, enamoured of him, forgot her companion. Sulong married the dove.

The crow learnt her mate's fortune and became jealous of her. In his absence, one day she visited the dove. Baffled by her apparels, the crow begged them for trial. Too magnanimous, the dove took off and gave them to her friend. The crow made of them a trial. That over, she suddenly hurled the dove and dashed her into the hole. The husband came back very soon but was perplexed to see his wife altered in appearance and manners beyond words. He was wondering of the circumstances which so drastically changed her all of a sudden. The crow in the dove's guise complained of ailments.

Next day, U Sulong went out to cut bamboo near a hole where the helpless dove had stuck in.

From inside that hole, the dove groaned of a fainted voice, *Kong Suloit wawiaa salit i khmat mi* meaning 'my master, your eyes have been misguided.' The man came to his senses that he was cheated, the secrecy being unfurled, he recognised the crow in the guise of his own wife. He took the crow and killed it and the corpse was cast out in a jungle. Next he pulled the dove, brought her home and nursed her, until she recovered.

And for the rest of the story true happiness visited the couple when with no more interruption, their love grew deeper and deeper day by day. The dove gave out many issues which brightened their dwelling.

## THE JACKAL AND THE GONG

One day, a jackal while searching for a prey in a village boundary, saw a hen scratching for food, at the bottom of the tree. There was a gong over its branch tied by somebody which rustled in the air. The jackal was about to catch the hen but was interrupted by the gong which howled by the wind's gushing. The jackal forgot the hen, raised his eyes upward and muttered: 'I will find out an easy prey, perhaps a piece of meat and enjoy it to the brink.'

The jackal climbed up the tree labouring to reach the gong while the hen had run away. The jackal severed the drum by his tusk, but to his mortification there were inside only a band of feathers and blood-stained sticks. 'What a foolish creature', he cried: 'I have lost a prize of the tasty fowl for bargaining with an empty drum which echoes in the air.'

## MAN AND THE MONKEY

A time came when the thick expanse of vegetation had become stripped off; the ground was made fit for cultivation. All the animals knew how to speak with man; like the human beings, they also cultivated their crops in the soil.

God gave man an option to choose any of the crops he liked best to be his main cereal; man called the different crops with a view to find out the most convenient which might serve his purpose. First came the maize but it was rejected as it was not nutritious enough. Next came the millet but it was also disqualified for the same reason. Even yam came but as it took much time to ripen, it was dismissed. Paddy still remained but it was already monopolised by the monkey so that there was no more chance to get it by any means. So allured was man by the sight of the green ears of paddy waving in the autumn breeze over the distant terraces. He wanted to covet this crop from the monkey's stock and was awaiting for the chance to do so.

But man was disposed of with the highest creative instincts; he soon saw a way to it. He contrived a plan by enticing the monkey to his trap. One day he passed off the monkey's abode, and seeing him, addressed thus: 'Hello my son, how do you fare now?' 'You mean son-in-law?' cried the monkey, 'I would have been wedded to your daughter long ago'. Man then drifted the monkey to other subject-matter of conversation. The monkey told him about the rich harvest he was expecting. On leaving as if man had had to hasten on, asked the monkey where were his relatives upon which he learnt about the monkey's plight that he was alone without relatives and without a wife. The man promised him a beautiful damsel to

be his wife in exchange for a basketful of paddy seeds. The money was jubilant, he consented to the proposal; they fixed the next day for the handing over of a bride.

On the next day man came. The monkey dressed in the best attires had kept on waiting for the bride. The bride, the man was carrying, was hidden in an embroidered bag, and only her eyes and hairs were kept visible. As he approached, the monkey was so elated with joy. But as he drew nearer, the monkey saw the man alone, with a bag suspended from his armpit.

‘Where is she?’, demanded the monkey. Man pointed to the bag, ‘she is shy; you please keep her in your room. You do not open it till the evening time. Be prudent enough to make the bride comfortable and happy and at home. Being shy, it will take some time on her part to love and learn life with you’, man told the monkey.

‘Yes’, cried the monkey, ‘I have my partner; what more do I care. Leave us alone. You take the seeds whatever you need and go.’

Man hurried to fill up his basket in a great bounty. He bade farewell to the monkey and went away.

The monkey was curious to see his bride. As soon as the man had gone, he flung the bag open. But it was a bitch, the monkey immediately knew he was cheated. It barked and hurled the monkey, who leapt away and skirted over to the other boughs to escape its fury, while very soon, the bitch smelled its trace and went back home.

The monkey got his lesson well. He lost his well-deserved bride, and more he lost his traditions of cultivation.

The long drought occurred at one village; the land had become barren and the trees had withered.

One old woman in that village, with her grand-children decided to shift their cattle to a jungle in quest of a pastoral ground. Next morning they moved to that jungle and reached at midday. Her grand children were busy collecting thatched grass and timber for the construction of a farm shed which was to shelter them and a cow-shed for the cattle which they finished at dusk. They took their meal which the old woman cooked and were ready for sleep.

One tiger who roamed about for a prey, got into the shed; he laid down himself with the cows and was waiting for an opportune time to carry off a cow. The herd of the cattle, seeing a tiger in their midst, were scare and held their breath in awe.

It was a dark night, the sky was heavily overcast. The boys sensing the possible danger before sleeping, exclaimed their fear of tigers and elephants which haunted that place. But the woman cheered them up thus: 'I never care the elephants, leopards and tigers but I am more scare of *U Dorpai* (meaning the down-pours).' The tiger, overhearing the woman's reply, became dismayed, trembling in the illusive thought of *U Dorpai* which he meant to be a monster.

At the dead of the night, one cattle-lifter crawled to that same shed intending to catch the biggest cow. Crawling in the dark, he compared the cows for finding out a biggest. By chance he laid his hand over a tiger and thinking it to be the biggest, bound his neck by the rope and dragged it away. The tiger had fallen to the *Dorpai's* grip, not knowing he was another cattle-lifter. Slowly he was being dragged

away from the shed. They came into some distance to a field where the cattle-lifter halted; then he climbed up a tree to sleep along the branch after the tiger was tied down to its bottom. There he slept and fell into deep slumber; he was not roused until the day-break while the tiger remained where it was trembling in fear.

The cattle-lifter afterwards waken up, cast his eyes below and to a great surprise, saw the tiger; he gasped his breath and could no longer help passing out excretion in many rounds which fell over the tiger. The tiger became more and more scare; he thought that the one who tied his neck was a soldier, but the great hail on his body was the real dorpai. Immediately he freaked and leaped over the ground with such exertions that the rope was severed. From the tree, the tiger with a coil of rope round the neck, immediately rushed to its home where he found his mates and reported the matter.

Immediately a *durbar* (meeting) was convened. All the tigers immediately were assembled. The report was heard, a coil of rope hanging upon his neck was taken to be an evidence. The tigers decided to proceed immediately to a scene where the event occurred off and to avenge the Dorpai if he was there. In a frenzy they moved led by rope-coiled tiger.

The panick-stricken cattle lifter still remained up the tree and was afraid to come down in the fear of being avenged on the way. He decided to stay on. He was not wrong in his calculation for soon the silence of the landscape was broken by the tigers' roars, he knew that he was to die and soon the tigers in a procession were seen coming nearer.

The tiger which led pointed out the dorpai. Approaching the tree's base, the tigers decided to mount up the tree's height by standing one over the body of the other, they were afraid to climb up the tree to deal a crushing defect upon the dorpai. Their

veteran mate gave the innermost support sustaining the weight of the other tigers mounting up.

It was a dreary sight of the tigers mounting up a siege. The top-most tiger had lifted up close to dorpai. Gasping his breath, the Dorpai unconsciously exclaimed: 'You are many, but he at the bottom is my sworn enemy upon whom I would inflict the severest penalty'. Like a bolt from the blue, the awe-seized innermost tiger, overhearing these words, suddenly broke the line and ran with utmost speed while all his friends were thrown down, the whole lot perishing only because of his deceitfulness.

The Dorpai thus won his day.

## WHY THE LEECH HAS NO EYES

There was once an idle young man who like a parasite wanted to live at the cost of others. With such intention he approached one rich widow and got her consent to marry her only daughter. The man was to be lucky enough for when she died, all her possessions would pass to him. They were soon married. At first the clever fellow was so successful into behaving as if he were smart and intelligent. But it was a sheer pretence. Within a few days after they were married, he made such impression that the old widow placed all her wealth at his disposal.

Then came the time for wood clearing as the family persisted in a jhum cultivation. The first stage in this system is wood clearing; then burning of all the fallen vegetation, dried by exposing to the winter skies would follow with which the ashes were to be utilised as fertilizers before the seed was sown. The man accepted to cope with the gigantic work single-handed. But the notorious man just pretended, for every morning in the presence of his mother-in-law, sharpened his dao on a grinding stone before he would go to the field, while his young wife would send him out with a big quantity of rice, smoked meat and fried vegetables for his midday meal wrapped in a leaf and lots of betel nuts and lime smeared pan leaves well cut and folded for his refreshment.

But he was deceitful for as soon as he reached the field, he laid down and passed his entire day in sleep close to the foot of a large banyan tree which grew there.

Every morning, as he arrived, he pulled out his eyes from their sockets and hang them on one of the branches. This was followed by the following conversation—

"Well my beloved eyes, enjoy your freedom in the meantime. You are elevated in the air where from you shall be free to survey the environs. Be feel proud of your position as the sentinels of the skies. As for me, I am going to stretch myself at my ease at the foot of this tree to enjoy sound rest and sleep. But mind, it is your duty to keep yourselves on the alert and watch the place carefully, so as not to allow anybody approaching me or else you should rouse me at once from my sleep, so that I might get up, take my dao and appear to be very hard-working. Do you understand my meaning?"

"Yes, we cannot do otherwise than keep watch", replied the eyes.

"Good" said the blind man. "And when noon-tide approaches you should not fail to rouse me for my midday meal. You see, my good wife has prepared such a big quantity of rice for me every day".

"We shall certainly do so", replied the eyes.

"After over-loading my stomach with rice, I shall most likely fall into a profound sleep again. But you should see that I am aroused again before sunset so as to enable me to reach my house before dusk".

"That also we are sure to see to", replied the eyes.

The young man passed two or three days in that way. With much rice and betel nuts, he started early in the morning. As soon as he reached the foot of the banyan tree, he pulled out his two eyes, hanged them on the tree, and after giving them proper directions, stretched himself at full length and became fast asleep. At noon, roused by the eyes, he got up, ate his rice and then again resumed his sleep till sunset where he was again roused. Then he summoned the eyes from the tree, had them fixed in their holes and returned home.

A fool alone would have his days thus passed, doing nothing but eat, drink and sleep. But that condition would not continue for long.

It was the crows which so attracted by the smell of rice, found their way to the spot. They noticed the man had no eyes and were not afraid to come down from the banyan tree and pick up the pieces of rice which had fallen on the ground after his meal.

One day one of the crows, happening to perch on the same branch where the two eyes were hung, saw them, and with one big jump at them, swallowed them.

The lazy fellow, after hanging his two eyes in the morning, had, as usual, his full dose of sleep; and did not wake till late in the afternoon when he was roused by hunger. Rubbing his face he demanded of his eyes—

“Eyes, what time of day is it now?”

Yet there was no reply but dead silence in the wood.

He demanded a second time:—

“Eyes why are you silent? Why did you not wake me up for midday meal?”

An ugly reply came from the old crow.—

“Caw, caw, You lazy fellow, you deceitful young rascal. I have swallowed your eyes and put an end to all your tricks. From this time you have to go without eyes”.

Deprived of his eyes, the young fool found it impossible to find his way back to his house. He roamed about in the forest without food or rest until he became reduced in size and finally transformed to the size and shape of a leech.

Without eyes to guide him, he groped after every living object and sucked its blood for his food.

## U SAROKJAM

U Sarokjam rose to eminence from a humble beginning. He knew how to solve certain puzzles by using tricks. Sarokjam was so much blessed by having a wife who loved asking him riddles almost everyday. One day during his absence, she made three cakes and hid them in a basket. Then she went to draw water from the nearby well. U Sarokjam had come back home and in her absence, saw a basket carefully hidden. On opening the lid, he found there were three cakes in it. The man kept that basket as it were. Meanwhile his wife came and immediately raised a question as what was there inside a basket. The man was at first puzzled. But after looking into his palms, he said there were "three cakes".

Next day while travelling outside the village, he noticed a sow giving birth to six pigglings. There the sow remained for several days and did not return to its pigsty. The owner was upset a great deal. U Sarokjam who had already been known to be a palmist was approached by a female owner in quest of her pregnant sow. Venturing to help her, he again studied his palms and said she would find the sow with the six new-born pigglings near the village boundary giving her the exact location.

After a few days, a princess playing with her mates lost her golden necklace. Sarokjam who came across the fallen necklace buried it inside the ground. The King's servants made diligent search of it in the playground but in vain. The adept palmist was sent for. Upon the king's enquiry, Sarokjam studied his palms and surprised the royal audience that the precious ornament had not been taken away as it was thought so, but was laid inside the earth, pointing the

location. The King's men went over to dig the ground where it was found and brought home. Everyone was amazed. U Sarokjam was appointed to the highest office and became the King's counsellor.

Yet a more difficult trial awaited him. A drought had occurred in the neighbouring kingdom. All the efforts to conserve water by means of the channels brought from a distance had failed and many streams had become dried up. Sarokjam was sent for.

It was with great reluctance that Sarokjam came. As he reached, he was asked by the King that he would have first to revive a dried fish to life after three days. It was difficult to accomplish it, and he had failed by any means to devise any formula. He was despaired of and felt humiliated. Sarokjam had preferred to commit suicide by jumping at a nearby pool and had better done it in the night; so in the cover of the night, he stole out to jump in it but the pool swarmed with frogs, once deep had now become shallow owing to the drought. And so as he jumped, his feet were stuck in the mud. The frogs, frightened by the thud, leapt over the various directions; they were panicstricken and resented at their loss of liberty, with his presence in the company. The king of the frogs was asked to let the man go at the point of paying him the compensation. The latter came to meet man upon which he asked for a formula infuse life into a dried fish. The frog disappeared and soon came back handing over fern and addressed the man thus, 'touch with this the dried fish and it shall jerk. It had power to rock any fish bone. Take it and go'.

On the third day he appeared before the audience. The dried fish laid in a basin was produced. He was asked to revive it. Sarokjam set carefully the plant upon the dried fish; this done the latter rocked to and fro. This finished Sarokjam,

offered sacrifices with rice, eggs, beers and fowls. On the morrow heavy rains set in. He was given great honours, titles and awards.

## A MAGIC LIME-POT (DABI KYNDA)

Once upon a time there lived two orphan brothers in one village. Great pains were taken by the elder to train and bring up the younger in a right way. In the course of time, the elder married, but not wishing to sever the family links, he brought his younger brother in the family.

But his wife, a deceitful and selfish lady, grew envious of the younger brother for the special love borne to him by her husband. She contrived to put him into difficulties, and treat him cruelly. His brother being out to the field the day round, the younger, therefore, remained at her mercy. He was rebuked and ill-fed, yet he remained silent and bore quietly the misdeeds of his sister-in-law.

One day he brought midday meals with smoked meat and vegetable herbs wrapped in a plantain leaf to his brother at the field. Opening the bundle and spreading its contents, he said in loud whispers thus: "Had I this kind of food, I would have become fat. But I have been misfed and oppressed". His brother overhearing could grasp what it meant and understood how badly he was treated by his wife.

The elder brother stayed home one day when he slew a fat pig and made special preparation of the dainties to entertain his brother. So enraged was his wife at this special favour bestowed upon the lad especially when moreover during these days he had been quite indifferent to her. Before the feast was served, she tactfully poisoned the lad's share whereupon eating it, he died. The bereaved elder brother filled with remorse over his passing away performed the funeral.

But surprisingly his spirit came back in the form of a dog to the old abode, sprawling upon the elder brother's feet and accompanying him wherever he went. To his wife's prejudice, the elder brother had come to like the dog. But the malicious woman could bear no longer to see his love diverted so that one day she killed the dog with a dao. Very soon after her husband died.

But the younger brother's spirit still roved which next took the cat form at day-time whilst it kept itself invisible in the human form at night in the princess' chamber. The princess, the only child of the king, was a great chewer of areca-nuts; betel-vines with lime and even kept them ready by her bed to take whenever she was roused from sleep at night. One night the cat-man mislaid these to confound her. The next night he roused her from sleep and with great majestic gesticulations addressed her with the noble words. He was handsome, the princess came to love him. Every night they kept their contact.

Eversince the princess was enticed, she changed her countenance as to impress her mother. She ate barely and refused to attend the court entertainment. But none could ever guess the love malady which entered her. Notwithstanding the consolation of her mother and of her maid attendants, she looked morose and melancholic. Therefore they proposed to marry her but the princess remained sullen to this proposal. Yet when pressed to propose, she at length took off her golden necklace girding it round the cat's neck. The cat emerging in human form demanded his prize.

The event which came to occur stirred surprise and astonishment to everyone. The king was bewildered and chagrined with shame over the happening. To vindicate his honour, he banished both the princess and catman from the kingdom.

The couple wondered about to a far-off place, where they raised a hut for their shelter. The husband set himself to the cultivation of different cereals, vegetables, and fruits. Meat was obtained by hunting.

The princess gave birth to a male issue. He had grown up in a different environment, he had tested all sorts of adventure with his father. Growing up, he used to ask them about their parentage and the circumstances which brought them to a lonesome wilderness. To him they divulged the story of their past.

When he became quite matured for a real adventure, he set out on a journey to his grand father. Before starting, his father gave him a *dabi Kynda*, a lime vessel which had certain magic power to protect him from the forth-coming dangers. He had got it from a benevolent spirit during his journey to the land of the dead who foretold that his son would one day become king.

The lad met strange experiences.

During his journey, he first met a Hindu traveller who held a magic rope. Befriending each other, a Hindu traveller saw his *dabi Kynda* and learnt, on enquiring, that it had magic powers. He proposed to exchange it with his magic rope, to which proposal the lad agreed. Interchanges followed and the Hindu man went away rejoicing with the bargain. But the clever and quick-witted lad, as soon as the man absconded, commanded the magic rope to bring back the *Dabi Kynda*. At once at his behest, the rope did the work, and switching itself away to the traveller, snarled him and snatched the *dabi* bringing it back to its old master.

Proceeding a little further, he met a Brahmin (*U Bamon*) who carried a magic pouch (*muna*). They conversed with each other and *U Bamon* would not tarry further to agree for an interchange of his *muna* for the *dabi*. This done, *Bamon* went away. But our slender adventurer would not have it lost forever, for,

as soon as the Bamon departed, the pouch at his calling, whisked itself to the Bamon's basket where the dabi was laid, the latter sneezed and brought.

Lastly he met a Marwari peddler who carried a magic club, from whom he had it exchanged with the dabi, but no sooner the peddler disappeared, the power of the stick was utilised to recover and restore the dabi. The stick performed its power and brought back the dabi.

Thus by playing cunning tricks, the lad had his magic powers so enhanced at the cost of the three unfortunate victims.

It was a long trail but at last he came near his grand father's headquarters. He sojourned one night at the house of an old woman to whom he divulged the story of his ill-fated mother. The latter exclaimed a great joy on learning that the princess was still alive and was glad to see her son grown up so much, the old woman knew her very well as she was her close companion weaving a great portion of her apparels previously.

On leaving her, the king's grandson hired a messenger to the king announcing his grandson's return and demanding the stalely reception. But the king's reply was full of offence and contempt. The grandson despatched another messenger but the reply being more contemptuous, the solitary vagabond declared war upon the kingdom. He had no weapons other than the dabi, the rope, the pouch and the club.

The king ordered his troops to charge the foe and inflict them a severe defeat and if possible to catch alive and throw them in a pit accumulating with heaps of house refuses to die thereby a slow process. The day was fixed for the battle, the court being impressed that the fictitious grandson brought his troops. But peals of laughter roared amongst the king's ranks and

files when they noticed the solitary vagabond coming out to fight and without weapons. The commandant came out challenging a duel but the solitary lad without use of his magic tools, fought so tactfully and dealt a fatal blow upon him at the end. The fall of the commandant caused a stir in the camp. The king called ten archers to shoot at him, but the solitary adventurer called upon the magic power of his pouch and dabi which shielded and made him arrow-proof. He then shouted upon the whole army camp to fight. The troops in groups of archers, spearmen and swordsmen came to charge him, but the rope and club called now to service performed their task, the club flinging and smiting them while the rope coiled the soldiers' necks from one line to another. The entire army became confounded.

The king called a halt to the battle and came out to surrender. He recognised his own grandson, and tendered apology for his own misdeeds committed to his only fair daughter. Both the princess and catman were sent for. There were rejoicings and ovations when the princess with her family, after a lapse of so many years came back. The king advanced in age, renounced the throne in favour of his grandson, the legitimate and rightful heir. Thus the line of the royal progeny was maintained.

## A MAGIC RING

There was once a rich merchant at one village with an only son. But his son was extravagant. One day the father called him and gave a capital of one thousand rupees for starting business. But in fact his father wanted to avoid an extravagant son, and at the same time to put his son to difficulties and experience hardships.

The young man set out his journey; he had not gone a long way when he came into one village and got into a tavern. But as soon as he reached there, he saw a group of men teasing one mouse inside a cage. He felt pity for the luckless creature and told them thus, "why friends are you troubling the fellow creature? If you would only release her, I would be willing to pay for her ransom a sum of rupees one hundred". The other persons thought him to be a fool to part off such an amount for a mouse. But finding him true to his word, they delivered her to him. The men rejoiced over the big bargain. The mouse thus delivered was so grateful to him pledging to follow and serve him forever. She told that a time might come when she would also pay off for his kind deeds.

On the morrow, the man resumed the journey with his new companion; they had not gone far when they came to a river bank, where another group of the fishermen was gathering to unlose the straps around the nest where an otter was caught. His clemency knew no bounds when he saw the poor otter almost killed. He also approached and asked them for his release, but the fishermen refused, except on the point of being paid a compensation of Rs. 100/-. The young man paid for it. The otter thus delivered promised to serve his deliverer as long as he lived.



At the Dance

Another village was reached when they came upon a jubilant group of persons, men, women and children teasing a kite newly caught in a trap. Here again the young man found an opportune occasion to liberate the same, after paying the compensation. In return he obtained the kite's pledge to serve him for ever.

At the next village, he came across a batch of men armed with clubs chasing a big snake. He even saved the snake and paid a compensation of another hundred rupees. The snake, on the verge of death, being thus saved miraculously, expressed his gratitude to his liberator. Likewise he promised to be his slave for ever.

The snake invited him and his comrades to his parents' house. He told them his parents would be so grateful when they would learn how he had saved and relieved him from the jaw of death. The young man was very afraid but the snake assured him every safety. The snake told further that he was the only son of their parents, dearly loved of them. They may have been an enemy to mankind but they would never

be so to their son's deliverer. The man at last obeyed, but before they set out in their journey, the snake gave his last advice, that in the event of being offered any gift by his mother, the man should ask the ring which was worn on her tail. On their way, they passed the craggy shrills and approached the snake parents' abode. The young man was so afraid and trembled with fear when hearing the loud hissings when nearing the lair. But the son, followed by the man and his loved ones, told them how his life was saved. The couple changed their tone when they heard how their son was liberated off the grasp of death and welcomed their honoured guest to their house.

The party led by the couple went down into the cave, but towards its bottom, they found themselves at a threshold of a house glittering with diamonds and pearls. The house was full of precious things. The man and his companions were beckoned to the tables filled in with rare dainties. Entertaining the couple expressed their deep sense of gratitude to the young man and before they left, the couple offered them any gifts in their possession.

Following the young snake's advice the man asked for the ring suspended from her tail. It was now difficult for her to comply with such exorbitant demand, yet finally the mother parted it away saying: 'This is our wedding ring. But since you have saved our beloved son from death, you deserve it; from today, let this be worn in one of your fingers, and remember that when you face any adversary, just call on its power and your trouble will be removed. Do not part away with it or you would fall into a great disaster'. Having worn it, the party bid good-bye to the couple and set off.

They came to a hill which overlooked a majestic and superb scenery, the flowers animating and blossoming for the whole year, the birds and fowls

filling the place with their sweet chirpings. On a hill top, the man took his ring out and exclaimed "by the power of this ring, let a castle stand over here". His demand was complied with for, within a moment, a very beautiful castle appeared; next he beseeched its power to bring a beautiful damsel to be his wife. That also was done.

They settled there peacefully away from the dint of the town and village life. But the man soon was overtired with the dull and drowsy life. So after one month of their stay, he proposed to go hunting with his four companions although his wife again and again pressed to stay in. Before they left, the man pulled out the ring and gave her exhorting to take an utmost care and not to part away with it as it was a magic ring by which power, they would for ever be protected from any forth-coming danger. The party then set out.

Opposite the hill across a stream below that hill, there was a certain magician who lived in a hut. Being a magician, he could grasp the magic power with which that palatial building was caused to be. Moreover by the help of a magical formula, he knew that there was one wonderful ring but it was not in the possession of the human beings as it was given to the charge of snakes and fairies. The magician had noticed the master of the house more than once, wearing a glittering ring in one of his fingers and could read that it was a magic ring. He also noticed his wife. He was waiting for an opportunity to snatch the ring and to exploit such situation.

When they had gone for hunting, he noticed that only his wife was left. One day in disguise of a fakir he went to the house and met the lady. The ring on her finger so much enchanted his wistful eyes. He gently asked for a look. The woman being kind-hearted gave, but no sooner it was passed to him, that

he sped out. The woman cried out after the unknown stranger to return it but he ran away and soon disappeared. The magician crossed the river and reaching his hut, he commanded the ring to shift the house thereto. In the moment, as much swift as the storm, the house moved on to that spot.

The woman at the magician's mercy, pressed him to give back a ring but it was never returned, whilst he demanded her to forget her husband and join him as his wife. So greatly was she changed in her appearance. She tore her hair, cursed the magician and burst out in tears. But the magician just told her that she would never be free from him.

A few days after, the magician by the power of the ring, caused the magic house to be removed to a very distant land.

The party on return from hunting were so surprised to find the house no more there, and only a verdant knoll was left alone. In times of distress, the man was to draw his comrades' consolation. And indeed, they would be exceedingly glad to return him for his good deeds. It was the kite first which offered to find out the deported house and the maiden's whereabouts.

She flew and traversed a great distance, first northward but seeing no trace whatsoever, she turned westward and at last came upon the spot where stood the house. With great joy she came back to tell her master and though she left at day-break it was not until after the sunset that she came back. The four companions then sat down together and thought to launching the combined efforts to retrieve the maiden and get back the ring.

The animals proposed to visit the new site where the house was removed. So they got out together. It was a long distance but at last they came into their destination after many days' journey. They noticed the man with the ring in his finger.

Now it was the mouse's turn to use her possible means to snatch the ring. Thereupon she scratched on the wall to form a hole where she got into the glare of the man's doing. It was night time and he was preparing to sleep and so, before sleeping she saw him taking out the ring from his finger, and laying it inside his mouth. Soon he fell into dead slumber. Whilst asleep, the mouse stealthily crawled to his pillow, sat near his mouth and at once tossed her tail into his nostrils, when the man immediately sneezed and the ring ejected from his mouth to the floor. The mouse at once jumped in, and with great speed picked it up and brought it outside the wall to her friends who were awaiting then.

So happy were they to see that complete success attended the mouse work. Next day it was the kite's turn to carry the ring to their master. The kite bit the ring upon her teeth and traversed a long distance. But over the river, she was flying across, her mouth by chance became distended, owing to the strenuous and tiresome flight, the ring falling into the pool. At once a big fish, enticed by its glittering colour, swallowed the ring.

Back to her friends, the kite came to report about the mishap that occurred her. This called them to put their united efforts to find it out. After careful planning, they decided that the snake would toss his tail inside all the nooks and corners of the bed beneath the pool so as to bring them out, the otter to kill the fish and bring them on to the water's surface, the kite to remove them over bank and the mouse to open their bowels. Next day reaching the river, the four companions repeated the process from one fish to another but none was found with the ring. They laboured till the evening time; yet one *rohi* remained. The otter tussled with that fish for long but at last he killed it and brought it over the bank.

When the bowels were opened, they found out the ring sticking in them.

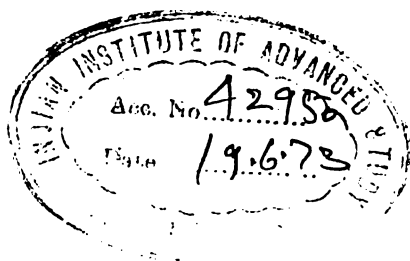
The mouse then took the ring in her mouth and was careful not to open it, while the kite carried the mouse on her claws when she flew, the mouse adhering to do so, and the kite carefully holding the mouse, until they reached the master. The man reached, the kite landed whilst the mouse leaped out and laid down the ring before him.

Now the man, by the ring's powers, caused that house to be brought back. It was a great joy when he met his wife once more after they were severed for one month despairing of one another.

The deceitful magician was meted out the punishment he truly deserved, he was put to the iron and later on, at the behest made on the ring, the water demon was sent for to take up the magician to that pool where the ring had fallen to drown and thus the couple, removed of that adversity, started their happy life once again. They had many children. And the four grateful companions were with them for many years.



SOME MODERN ASPECTS  
At Ward's Lake in the heart of Shillong.







"Although the narrative is in the accepted mode, it merits of the unique Khasi People, its matrilineal institutions, its ancient democracy, its rich folk heritage and its struggle throughout the ages to preserve and develop a colourful personality of its own . . . Inhibitive fears about industrialisation on the traditional line have been expressed in the Wordsworthian manner . . . This is the only book available on the subject written from a people's point of view". (*The Assam Tribune*, 21. 1. '68.)

Dr. Bareh also contributed papers from time to time to the various seminars such as —

(1) *Christian conversion and transformation in the Hill Areas of Assam* — Religion and Society, Vol. IX, No. 4, Bangalore, 1962.

(2) *Patterns of economic enterprises in the Hill Areas of N. E. India and Khasi Literature* — A Common Perspective of North-East India, Calcutta 1967.

(3) *Education and Social Change in Nagaland* contributed to the First Summer School held at Shillong, October 1968.

(4) *U Tirot Singh* translated into Assamese and printed in Jibani Sangrah, 1969.

Besides, numerous other articles in various subject matter have been printed in other journals and dailies.

## OPINIONS ON

### A SHORT HISTORY OF KHASI LITERATURE

Hamlet Bareh's little book on Khasi Literature will be an eye-opener even to professional sociologists and certainly to people in general . . . The Khasis, who are one of the most progressive of all India's tribes, enjoyed a cultural renaissance during the early years of this century which has not still exhausted itself. Mr. Bareh goes on to describe not only studies of the language and religious works but also poetry, nursery rhymes and stories . . . Mr. Bareh speaks of the unwritten epics, novels, dramas which remain to be collected and treasured in books.

(*The Statesman*, Calcutta, February 3, 1963)



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