

BALPAKRAM

THE LAND OF SPIRITS

GARO MYTHOLOGY



JULIUS L.R. MARAK

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BALPAKRAM
THE LAND OF SPIRITS
MANGRU-MANGRAM—A SONG
(Garo Mythology)



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Balpakram: The Land of Spirits

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MANGRU-MANGRAM A-SONG.

"All of us will go to Balpakram,
If not in life, then in death".



Author

A'an	samsa	be:jokai	angnade,
Mikchi	chiwaringainok		nang'nade.
San	chite	gatako	ringgnok,
San	Mipal	dinako	cha:gnok?

Rong·ma rikek rikeko re·angbo,
Simu·brek brekko na·ara doangbo.
Ding·ol gramchiako chidimako miksue,
Bimang dim·ak nangako re·angbone aue.

Me·mang·ganna sikramo dikdik·ja·nengtakangbo,
Rama tong·sa sokango angko nipilangku·bo.
Rama chia ringangbo chidare bakrongretko,
Nang·na matchu den·ata na·a moe ra·angbo.

Boldak Matchu karamo rang·spitbo,
Matchu kae donemung·ja·nengtakangbo.
Nang·na misal song·ata rama tong·sa ong·ao,
Me·mang misal cha·ramo cha·angpabo soko.

Balpakramna sokode do·o gisiksogine,
Nang' jagringko niksoon Achak bao sing·gine.
Ripeng maina re·bara sing·ode,
Angko ripbrangataha aganebone.

Migiminna sanala ine aganaibojok,
Ku·sa cha·na bi·oba janggilate cha·aijok.
Salni rimpak su·dapo kancha A·sim ramatbo,
Mikgitalo nikjaoba jajumango grongbo.

BALPAKRAM

Ongata A·chik 'songna, an·sengriri 'patalo,
Nike gisik katchachina, salnaram bon·chotao.
Atchu·ambi bebe ra·a, me·mangrang songdongram,
Sian ja·man re·angtoka, dongkamna Balpakram',

Jilla ong·ja bangbang, an·senggipa Balpakram!
Pagitchamrang agananga, chasong ja·nengtakram!
Ambi·atchu songsarek, lekka·pora rektek;
Chanchigittangani kride, ong·jok kakket·makket!

Agannaba krakra, me·mang songdongsusu,
Chanchiarang nabara, grongdiksu diksu.
Cholmong ramaosengsoode, walo grongenma?
"Apan noka bachipaksai", ine saobao sing·na

Re·angode ja·achi nina, Balpakram A·dokko,
Neng·e ding·ol gramchie saigen an·tangtangko.
Soknasiachibarade dosimakjok a·chik,
Kas·po·rangs·po mitchetman·a, "Re·baja matchachik"

Malbatangon Bandin' jallang, ban ding·ol gramchi
U·sitangjok ka·singipa, balko balwachi.
Me·mang Anti badeango, Matchu Bokdak karam,
Saksan·ge·san bingbing·bangbang, da·a 'e·gelangram!

Gitok wele ka·dingsmit, okamrika Mebit,
"Chakakaket gadotokbo, angni janggil gimik."
Basakbade nina on·ja, Balpakram an·tangtangko,
Dongnurika pin·grue, ba·ra gipok ningo.

Pari gitcham a·kuangni, cbengo ong·baani
Donga golpo minggni, A·chik aro Hinduni.
A·chikranga agantoka, Sume-Dilmen' jakma,
Cho·okenba olangana, Simsangko dim·pengna.

Rabon raja Lakshman-ko pongsik-ponggojokna,
Makkren' raja Hanuman-sa samna rikangjokna.
Dik-e name ma·sijaesa a·bri pe·okangjok,
Ceylon-ona batna rama uchin a·gatangjok.

Mikil okring gingsik-gingting, name nigenode,
Kendingkendingchanchiman·gen, "Wa·alni'brisakonde"
Jaksi otna-miksamsana, bang·en donga sakki,
A·patalon rong·akam, silanggal aro silki.

Wa·alni a·bri Hanuman, aro Sume-dilme,
Minggittamkon na·a da·ode, chanchibo ra·dime.
Badia ong·chongmotna kraa, ukosa ra·bone
Mingantikon ra·bo bebe, chanchina gongjaode.¹

1. Rhymes on Balpakram by Shri Sengban momin, Rongram, west Garo Hills, 1998. (Edt)

PREFACE

There are many articles, pamphlets, poems etc. have been written and published on Balpakram and its scenic beauty but none have gone deep enough to study and see its realities with a view to preserve and conserve them for generations. Many have written and described what Balpakram is but failed to depict the traditional beliefs of the Garos on Balpakram as the land of the spirits of the dead. Their studies and writings have not been comprehensive. In this study, attempts have been made to give correct interpretation of its legends, customs, traditions and historical legendary spots of Balpakram.

The object of publishing is to give knowledge and information on Balpakram which is believed by the Garos as the land of the spirits of the dead and on the legendary spots connected with the Garo mythology. The antiquity and its historical link as well as its relationship with that of Valmiki's or Tulsi Das Ramayana have been traced. The book is mainly based on the field study. Besides field study, personal interview, listen to different versions of katta aganna, books both published and unpublished, journals, newspapers, articles, officials reports, gazetteers were consulted. The writer being Garo himself could understand the intricacies of the subject and its traditional beliefs.

My sincere thanks are due to all the Nokmas, traditional folk-lore tellers and general public who have responded with a spirit of preservation and conservation of the rich traditional mythology and beliefs by giving patient hearing and replies to the questions asked in spite of their pre-occupations with encouragements.

Finally, I also express my heart-felt gratitude to all my friends and well wishers who supplied me with relevant informations, encouraged and helped me to complete this book in all the possible ways.

Julius L.R. Marak, M.A; Ph.D.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

With regard to the history of Garo Hills and its people, practically nothing is known to the outside world. Garo Hills is still a virgin land in the field of research and study. Many research scholars from outside who attempted to write and study about the Garo land could not do justice due to communication, language, topographical area and peculiarity and different life styles of the people. Some of the research scholars even presented and interpreted the life and culture of the Garos in a different way. R. D. Choudhury, in his book, "cultural heritage of Assam" a survey, says that if we peep into the pre-historic culture of Garo Hills, the neolithic people were the earliest settlers of this part of the country. But, now, it is proved with the discovery of stone tools in Garo Hills that the palaeolithic people were the earliest settlers of Garo Hills. Scholars like T.C. Sharma who worked on the subject are also of the opinion that the palaeolithic culture found in Garo Hills have stylistic affinity with those found in South-East Asia.¹

Garo Hills as the name implies were a spacious, well-watered mountain-locked land, luring to conquest, haunted by devotees, a fine field for proselything priests, possessing rich natural resources, occupy between 25°57'-18" and 25°-9'-20" North Latitude and between 91°-0'-0" East Longitude. It contains an area of 9689 Sq.Km. out of which 7490 Sq.Km is hilly and the rest plains.²

The Garo Hills occupy a commanding position at the entrance of Assam. They round off a remarkable range which like an arm thrust forward to guard the Burmese frontier, separates the Assam

1. Cultural Heritage of Assam, a survey (North-East spectrum Vol.1 No.6 Dec/96) - R. D. Choudhury, P.25.
2. Statistical Account of Assam, Vol.II -W. W. Hunter (1872) Reprint 1975 Page-135.

valley from the plains of Mymensing and Sylhet districts of present Bangladesh. It will thus be seen that Garo Hills stand singularly exposed, though strongly protected, exposed because they face the broad sweep of the plains and the main entrance to the valley protected by the close curve of the river and the back hills of the range. Position of Garo Hills is that of a natural fortress with great rivers as its moat.³

Garo Hills is bounded on the North by the Goalpara district, on the South by Bangladesh, on the East by the District of Khasi Hills and Kamrup and on the West by the district of Goalpara and Bangladesh. The common international border of about 320 Kms. long separates the Garo Hills district from the Mymensing district of Bangladesh.⁴

William Robinson, in his "Descriptive Account of Assam (published in 1841) describes the Garo Hills as, "one confused assemblage of hills and narrow valleys watered by numerous small streams."⁵

The Garo Hills is transacted by two parallel ranges, the Tura range and the Arbela range - running East and West. Besides the Tura and Nokrek peaks, there are other peaks further to the South near Simsang river which have more special association with Garo life. Those hills are:

1. Chitmag Hills, known as Kailash to the people of the plains and
2. Balpakram, believed by the Garos to be the abode of the spirits of the dead.

AREA

After the attainment of the State of Meghalaya, Garo Hills were divided into three main districts, namely - East Garo Hills district, West Garo Hills District and the South Garo Hills district. Within these districts, there are three sub-divisions created for administrative convenience and to bring administration nearer to

3. The Garo Jungle Book - William Carry (1919) Page.3.

4. Garo Customary Laws and Practices (Sociological study) - Julius L.R. Marak (1985).

5. Robinson William, "Descriptive Account of Assam" (1841).

the people. They are - Resubelpara Sub-Division, Dadenggre Sub-Division and Ampati Sub-Division.

The total population of Meghalaya according to 1991 Government of India (Meghalaya) census is 17,74,778 out of which Garo Hills have the total population of - (1) East Garo Hills district is 1,88,830 and (2) West Garo Hills is 4,80,100. The total geographical area of East, West and South Garo Hills district is 8,167 Sq.Km. which comprises of East Garo Hills District 2,603 Sq.Km. West Garo Hills District 3,959 Sq.Km. and South Garo Hills District 1,605 Sq.Km.⁶

The Government Reserve Forest in the district covers an area of 208.95 Sq.Km. The National Park covers an area of 220 Sq.Km. While the Nokrek biosphere reserves 47.88 Sq.Km. These three together cover a total area of 476.43 Sq.Km. of Government Reserve Forest areas. During 1985-86 an area of 220 Sq.Km. has been acquired by the Government and declared as "Balpakram National Park" vide Govt. Notification No.RDA.73/80/83, dt.15.1.86. The Balpakram wild Life Sanctuary and National Park was inaugurated by Late Prime Minister of India, Shri Rajiv Gandhi on the 27th December, 1987.

PEOPLE

The Garos belong to the Bodo speaking family and are members of the great Tibeto-Burman race who is said to have cradled in the North-Eastern part of China between the upper water of Yang-Yse-Kiang and the Hwang-Ho. However, the present days, word, "Garo" is a subject of controversy because the fact remains that the Garos call themselves, "Achik" or "Mande" or "Mandeis". Many have attempted to trace the origin of the word, "Garo" but still remain a mystery till date. No scholar could really prove its etymological word and meaning.

The village administration and its organisation is democratic in character. Garos were originally ruled by the traditional chiefs known as "Nokmas". In ancient days, Garos settled all civil and criminal cases by the indigenous tribal chiefs like Nokmas and his council. Garos took pride in taking revenge and chopping off the

6. Census of India, 1991. Series - 16 (East, West and South Garo Hills) district census handbook.

heads. The person who collected the largest number of heads was considered to be the warrior. These Garo warriors were honoured and respected in their villages. Sometimes such Garo warriors ruled their village as the village heads.

Garo society is a matrilineal society and its descent is traced through the mother and the residence is also matrilineal. As such, the title is also taken from the side of the mother which is known as, "Ma·chong" and never from the father. The Garo society also divides themselves mainly into two clans (chatchi) - such as Marak and Sangma. The inheritance to the family property goes to the female line through the daughter and never to a son. But, now-a-days, we find other divisions of clans such as Momin, Shira, Areng added to the Garo clans.

Garo society or community is divided into 12 (twelve) sub-dialectical groups who inherit different locations of Garo Hills. These Sub-Dialectical groups are - the Chisak, The Matchi, the Matabeng or Matjangchi, the Ambeng, the Dual or Matchi-dual, the Atong, the Gara-Ganching, the Chibok, the Ruga, the Megam, the Awes or Akawes and the Koch or Kotchu or Kochus. Garos constitute, the major original inhabitants of the district. The other minority communities who migrated into Garo Hills and are now settling in Garo Hills are - Rabhas, Hajong, Koches, Rajbongsis, Meches and the Bodo-Kacharis.⁸

FLORA

Garo Hills especially in Balpakram, Flora is the treasure trove of precious floral composition including, canes, bamboos, reeds, etc. unparalleled in luxuriance and varieties. It is considered to be the original home of many species of plants such as, citrus, cereals and orchids. The pitcher plant (*Nepenthes khasiana*) and the sundew (*Drosera burmaii*) are found in many places of Garo Hills. The orchids like *Papilio pedelum venustum*, *Arundina graminifolia*, etc. are also found in many places of the areas. The Fern (*Cyathea gigantea*) is also available.⁹

Shri J. Dutta, D.F.O. Tura, says that the plant groups may be divided or classified into six types such as:

8. A playfair, "The Garos" (1975).

9. Meghalaya Forest Magazine.

- (a) Moist evergreen forests.
- (b) Moist sal forests.
- (c) Dry deciduous forests.
- (d) Bamboo forests.
- (e) Savannah grassland.
- (f) Degraded mixed forests.

He has compiled the following floral, etc. as the check list of flora of Balpakram. He maintained that the floral composition in the core area which are untouched, undisturbed virgin stand mixed forest which has a definite role as gene pool for the future generations. The area remained virgin, untouched and undisturbed because of the remoteness, unaccessibility and the beliefs in legends and mythologies. Some of the main floral composition of the core areas are:-

TOP CANOPY

<i>Elaeocarpus floribundus.</i>	<i>Horsefieldia amygoalina.</i>
	<i>Horsefieldia amygdalina.</i>
<i>Acrecarpus fraxinifolius.</i>	<i>Massua ferrea.</i>
<i>Aquilaria agalocha.</i>	<i>Quercus lanceafolia.</i>
<i>Bucklandia purpurea.</i>	<i>Quercus spicata.</i>
<i>Aphanamixis polystachya.</i>	<i>Schima wallichii.</i>
<i>Artocarpus chaplasi.</i>	<i>Shorea robusta.</i>
<i>Artocarpus gomaziana.</i>	<i>Sterculia villosa.</i>
<i>Bischofia javonica.</i>	<i>Starculia clorata.</i>
<i>Bridelia retusa.</i>	<i>Mansonia dipikae.</i>
<i>Cordia dichomotoma.</i>	<i>Sterculia versicolor.</i>
<i>Castanopsis hystrix.</i>	<i>Syzygium syzyzoides.</i>
<i>Duabanga grandiflora.</i>	<i>Castanopsis tribuloides.</i>
<i>Terminalia balerioa.</i>	<i>Terminalia arjuna.</i>
<i>Michelia chamapaea.</i>	<i>Michelia excelsa.</i>
<i>Evodia meliaefolia.</i>	<i>Toona ciliata.</i>
<i>Cinnamomum obtusifolium.</i>	<i>Tetramelus nudiflora.</i>
<i>Cinnamomum obtusifolium.</i>	<i>Parkia rexburghii.</i>
<i>Elaeocarpus lanceafolius.</i>	<i>Ficus bengalensis.</i>
<i>Ilex godajam.</i>	<i>Ficus religiosa.</i>
<i>Lagerstroemia grandiflora.</i>	<i>Ficus benjaminii.</i>
<i>Lagerstroemia parviflora.</i>	<i>Ficus infectoria.</i>
<i>Garuga pinnata.</i>	<i>Ficus cunia.</i>

Bomax ceiba.
Alstonia scholaris.
Anthocephalus cadamba.
Dillenia pentagyna.
Etc... etc...

Ficus retusa.
Erythrina suberosa.
Vitex peduncularis.
Eilenia scabrella.
etc...

MIDDLE CANOPY

Actinodaphua obovata.
Anacelosa ilicoides.
Brassaiopsis aculata.
Careya arborea.
Callicarpa arborea.
Elaecarpus ephaericus.
Emblica officinalis.
Premna latifolia.
Premna barbata.
Gmelina arborea.
Gynocordia odorata.
Lepionurus sylbestris.
Liasea chinensis.
Litsea cubaba.
Symplocus sps.
Rhus succedanea.
Spaium baccatum.
Etc.. etc... etc...

Saurania panduana.
Schoepfia fragrena.
Vetica lanceaefolia.
Eriobotrya bengalensis.
Bauhinia malabaricus.
Engelhardtia spicata.
Morus laevigata.
Trema oreantalis.
Ulmus lanceaefolia.
Grewia obtusifolia.
Grewia obtusifolia.
flacourtia catafracta.
Spondias mangifera.
Manfifera sylbetica.
Parssea villosa.
Aparosa rexburghii.
Zyziphus jujuba.
etc.... etc... etc....

LARGE WOODY SHRUBS

Abroma augusta.
Allophylus cobbe.
Antidesma diandrum.
Thespesia lampus.
Boemeria platyphylla.
Casearia vereca.
Clerodendron bracteatum.
Clerodendron serratum.
Clerodendron nutuns.
Clerodendrom viscosum.
Groten caudatus.

Holmakioldia sanguinea.
Hyptianthera stricta.
Adhatoda vasica.
Itea macrophylla.
Ixora subsessiles.
Ixora subeessiles.
Kirgenelia reticulata.
Leea edgeworthii.
Eupatorium odoratum.
Mussaenda macrophylla.
Mautia puya.

Ardisea humilis.
Ardisea paniculata.
Durya acuminata.
Glycosmis pentaphylla.
Etc... etc...

Malastoma normala.
Dalbergin stipulata.
Pevetta indica.
Goffea bengalensis.
etc... etc....

GROUND CANOPY

Alpinia malocensis.
Amemum aromaticum.
Costus specicoides.
Curcums pseudomontana.
Elastostama sesquifolium.
Globa multiflora.
Hadychium caronarium.
Neyraudia ranaudiana.
Chragmitis karka.
Phrynium capitalum.
Zingibar sps.
Aneilema acabberimum.
Coix lachryma.
Floscopa scandens.

Hypericum japonicum.
Juncus priamatocarpus.
Achyranthus aspera.
Amaranthus spinosus.
Celosia argentia.
Cyathuala prostrata.
Euplicubia hirta.
Gamphestama parviflora.
Phyllanthus debilis.
Kaempferia involucrata.
Aspicistera sps.
Ageratum canyzoides.
Maraya koengii.
Drosera crosera
(insectivorous

plant) (sundew plant).

GREGARIOUS GRASSES

Arundenella bengalensis.
Arundinella nepalensis.
Centothea lappacea.
Digitaria adscendens.
Echinochlea cruspavenis.
Ichananthus vicinus.
Oplismenus compositus.
Lophatherum gracele.
Penicum brevifolium.
Panicum paludosam.

Paspalidium flavidum.
Sotaria pallidefusca.
Cynoden dectylen.
Paspalum conjugatum.
Thysanolaena maximus.
Imperata cylincric.
Themeda sps.
Saccharum munja.
Cymbopogen sps.
Materopogen sps.

COMMON PALMS

Caryota urens.
 Phoenis humilis.
 Areca gracilis.
 Licula sps.
 Calamus tenuis.
 Calenus floribuncas.
 Aspicaferis elliptica.
 Datea parviflora.
 Derris elliptica.
 Entaca gygeha.
 Milleria ciperia.
 Musuna macrocarpa.
 Combretum punctatum.
 Dalhousia bracteata.
 Iodes hookeriana.

Natseatum herpeticum.

EPITHYTIC
ORCHIDS

Pendrebium Formosum.

D. Lindleii.
 D. Appyllum.
 D. Teriaeflorum.
 D. Litufflorum.
 D. Meschatum.
 D. Finbricatum.
 D. Notile.
 D. Densiflorum.
 D. Crebidatum.
 D. Cretaceum.
 Oberonia ensiformis.
 Oberonia iridifolia.

COMMON
BAMBOOS

Dendrobium hamiltonii.
 Arundanaria manii.
 Bambusa tulda.
 Bambusa bamboosoides.
 Melacone sps.
 Nataseatum herpeticum.
 Roydsia sauveolens.
 Uncaria pillosa.
 Uncaria seesilifractus.
 Smilax prolifera.
 Heterocmille indica.
 Raphilbophera decursiva.
 Gloriosa superba.
 Dioscorea bulbifera.
 Nepenthes khasiana
 (Pitcherplant)
 (Insectiverbus).

TERRESTRIAL
ORCHIDS

Pephiopedilum venustum
 (Lady Slip per).
 Pephiopedilum insigna (DD).
 Perstylus goodyroides.
 Hebenaria aculfern.
 Hebenaria dentata.
 Pectelea candida.
 Coodorum densiflorum.
 Thelasis pygmea.
 Celentha masuca.
 Arundina graminifolia.
 Liperis viridiflora.
 Malaxis latifolia.

Oberonia recurva. Etc... etc.
 Bulbophyllum sps.
 Philocota pallida.
 Coelogyne corymbosa.
 Aerides multiflora.
 Aerides odorata.
 Eria species.
 Rhynocostylis retusa.
 Vanda teres.
 Smitnandia nicrantha.
 Cymbidium species.
 Cleistema species.
 Etc... etc...¹⁰

The plant communities are distributed all over the area depending on the aspects, slopes and altitudes invariably due to the climatic changes and types of soil in various formations and bring about sudden changes of forest types in depression and steep cliffs.

According to Shri Killinson Sangma, and Shri Willendra Sangma, Rongara, South Garo Hills, the following rare medicinal plants are available at Balpakram. They are - Dikge Bongera, Dikge Muni, Dikge Jada, Dikge Samjanggi, Dikge Janera, Dikge Wanangkap. Dikge Ajok, Dikge Wakpatra, Dikge Koksi, Dikge Jonja Muni, Dikge Samtom, Dikge Samrokading, Dikge Samsimil, Dikge Jakriting, Dikge Kongkip, Dikge Matcha, Dikge Mongma, Dikge Bera, Dikge Anggal, Dikge Konduli, Dikge Kamal, Dikge Skal, Dikge Katchi, Dikge Meseng, Dikge Atchi, etc. etc.¹¹

Shri D.S Rongmuthu, in his book, "Jadoreng" (The psychophysical culture of the Garos), described all the rare medicinal herbs available in the areas describing at the same time its utility (Jadoreng-page 182). The practice of traditional Garo medicines is very rare. All the good and the best medicinal herbs are no longer available in the jungle due to the wanton destruction by fires, animals and other agents. Even the present medicinal practitioners are also finding difficult to find them as all these rare herbs are not available at any place and at any time.¹²

10. Shri J. Dutta, A.C.F., DFO, Social Forestry, Tura.
 Check list of Flora and Fauna of Balpakram, 20.12.96 (Tura).

11. Shri Willindra Sangma and Shri Killinson Sangma, Rongara, South Garo Hills.

The following are the common species available in the Biostratigraphy of the marine cretaceous shelf sediments of Meghalaya:-

1. **Ammonoidea**

- Anisoceras indicum, Forb.
- A. large-sulcatus, Forb.
- A. subcompressum, Forb.
- Eubaculites vagina, Forb.
- E. vagina var simplex, koss.
- Gaudryceras subtilineatum.
- Baculites anceps, Sam.
- Pachydiscus denosonianus, Stol.
- P. egertonianus, D'orb.
- P. gollevillensis, D'orb.
- P. gollevillensis var. meghalayensis nov.
- P. ootacodensis, Stol.
- P. tweenianus, Stol.
- Placenticeras tamulicus, Stol.
- Pseudophylites indra, Forb.
- Epigonoceras cala, Forb.
- E. eipgonus, koss.
- Nautioids.
- Cymatoceras kayeanus, Stol.
- Eutrephoceras subloevigatus, D'orb. var indica, Speng.
- Nautilus baluchisthanensis, Speng.
- N. pondicherrensis, Stol.
- Belemnnoidea.
- Belemnites fibula, Forb.

2. **Gastropeds**

- Actaeon curculio
- Alaria tegulata, Stol.
- Ampulina bubiformis, Sow.
- Aporrhais tegulata, Stol.
- A. haydeni, Spengl.
- A. rugosissima, Spengl.
- Bullinula obtusiuscula.
- Campanile territelloids.
- Cerithium arkotense.

12. Rongmuthu, D.S. "*Jadoreng*" (The psychophysical culture of the Garos).

- C. binodosum, Roem.
- var indica, Spengl.
- C. dectetum, Stol.
- C. intermixtum, Geinitz.
- C. vagans, Stol.
- Cinulia sculptilis
- Chrysodomus cancellatus, Spengl.
- C. granulatus, Stol.
- Cyprea ficulina, Stol.
- C. kayei, Forb.
- C. newbaldi, Forb.
- Cytherea cretacea, Stol.
- Erato veraghoorensis, Stol.
- Euptycha larvata.
- Euspira pagoda, Forb.
- Ficulopos pondicherrensis, Forb.
- Gibula aff. jardonia.
- Helicion corugatum.
- Leptomaria indica, Forb.
- Melo pyriformis, Forb.
- Mitreola citharina, Forb.
- Natica lyrata, Sow.
- Nerinea sp.
- Nerita d'Archai.
- Oniscia costallata.
- Pollia aff. pondicheriensis, Forb.
- Pugnellus uncatu, Forb.
- Pseudoliva ambigua, Quass.
- Pterodonta striata, Speng.
- Rapa nodifera, Stol.
- Rostellaria palliata, Forb.
- Scala shutanurensis, Stol.
- Semilusus secans, Stol.
- Solariella radiatula, Forb.
- Solarium karapaudiense.
- S. vylapaudiense, Stol.
- Tubulostium collosum, Stol.
- Turritella dispasa, Stol.
- Tmultistriata, Ruess.
- T. pondicheriensis, Forb.

- Tylostoma pironai, Boehm.
 Voluticorbis murocata, Forb.
3. **Lamellibranchs**
 Alectryonia unguolata, Schloth.
 A. pectinata, Lam.
 Axinea subplanata var nov.
 Cardium pullatum, Stol.
 C. exulans, Stol.
 C. setubilatam.
 Cytherea garudana, Stol.
 C. telugensis, Stol.
 Crassatella ziteliana, Stol.
 Exogyra suborbiculata.
 Exogyra ostracina, Lam.
 Grammatodon japeticum, Forb.
 Gyphaea vesicularis, Lam.
 G. arriyalooransis, Stol.
 Inoceramus balticus, Boehm.
 I. balticus var. meghalayensis nov.
 I. multiplicatus, Stol.
 I. tuberculatus, Wood.
 Lima tecra, Goldf.
 Lucina arkotina, Stol.
 L. fallax, Forb.
 Modiola flagelifera, Forb.
 Nucula tamulica, Stol.
 Opis repleta, Stol.
 Panopea orientalis, Forb.
 P orientalis var gurgitis.
 Pectan (Neithea) faujasi, Pict. Camp.
 P. sulcatellus, Stol.
 Pholadomya radiatulla, Stol.
 P. connectans, Forb.
 P. caudata, Roem.
 Pholadomya tigris, Vog.
 Pinna complanata, Stol.
 P. laticostata, Stol.
 Plicatulla multicostata.
 Protocardia hillanum, Sow.
 Protocardia delicatula.

- P pondicheriensis, D'orb.
 Spondylus calcaratus, Forb.
 S. sulcatellus.
 Tellina petrosa, Stol.
 T adpressa, Stol.
 Trigonoarca abrupta, Forb.
 T brahminica, Forbs.
 T. gamana
 T indica, Stol.
4. **Echinoidea**
 Cardiaster orientalis, Stol.
 Cassidulus oldhaminica, Stol.
 Cidarissp -
 Hemiaster frontacutus, Stol.
 H. insicus, Stol.
 H. cf H. pullus, Stol.
 H. vicinus, Stol.
 Stigmatopygus elatus, Forb.
 Stigmatopygus elatus, var nov.
5. **Brachiopoda**
 Concinnithysis acutiplicata, Sahni.
 C. Andurensis, Sahni.
 C. Obesa, Sow.
 Gibbithyris indica, Sahni.
 Neolothyrina arriyalurensis.
 Rectithyris subdepressa, Stol.
 Rhynchonella cf arriyalorensis, Stol.
 Terebratula arabillis, Forb.

FAUNA

Nature has bestowed generous abundance with an excellent wealth and unique beauty of the wilderness to Balpakram. The roar of tiger, trumpeting of playful elephants, barking deer, cooing of cuckoos and calls of hoolocks are the significant features of the National Park.

Among the Fauna, all kinds of cats right from the Royal Bengal Tiger, the clouded leopard, leopard cat, wild cat, elephants, deers, sambar, bison, etc.etc. are also to be found. Binturong (Arctictis Binturong) which is also one of the rare wildlife species

are also found. The hoolock (*Hylobates hoolock*) the only true Apes found in India, is also found in Garo Hills. Besides, wild animals varieties of birds are still to be found. Siju, the wild birds sanctuary comprises of 5.10 Sq.Kms. is also under preservation.

Shri J. Sutta, D.F.O. Tura, has given some check list of names of animals and birds that have been seen by him. The following are the main Fauna available in Garo Hills. They are:

MAMMALS

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Binturong | <i>Arctictis binturong</i> |
| 2. Capped langur | <i>Presbytis pileatus</i> . |
| 3. Clouded leopard | <i>Neofelis nebulosa</i> . |
| 4. Flying squirrels | <i>Petaurista Petaurista</i> . |
| 5. Coloon cat | <i>Felis temminicki</i> . |
| 6. Hispid hare | <i>Caprolagus hispidus</i> . |
| 7. Hoolock gibbon | <i>Hylobates hoolock</i> . |
| 8. Indian elephant | <i>Clephas maximus</i> . |
| 9. Indian wolf | <i>Canis lupus</i> . |
| 10. Leopard cat | <i>Panthera pardus</i> . |
| 11. Leopard cat | <i>Felis bengalensis</i> . |
| 12. Lesser or red panda | <i>Ailurus fulgens</i> . |
| 13. Malay or sun bear | <i>Holarctes molayanus</i> . |
| 14. Pangolin | <i>Munis crassicaudata</i> . |
| 15. Serow | <i>Capricornis sumetronis</i> . |
| 16. Slow loris | <i>Nycticebus caucong</i> . |
| 17. Wild buffalo | <i>Bubalua bubalia</i> . |
| 18. Assamese macaque | <i>Macaca assamoniis</i> . |
| 19. Indian bison or gaur | <i>Bor gaurus</i> . |
| 20. Black bear | <i>Salarnoctis tibetanus</i> . |
| 21. Ferret badger | <i>Melogale moschata</i> . |
| 22. Hog badger | <i>Arctonyx collaris</i> . |
| 23. Rhesus macaque | <i>Mecaca mulata</i> . |
| 24. Stump tailed macaque | <i>Macaca speciosa</i> . |
| 25. Tiger | <i>Panthera tigris</i> . |
| 26. Wild dog or dhole | <i>Cuon albinus</i> . |
| 27. Giant squirrel | <i>Retufa indica</i> . |
| 28. Otters | <i>Lutra lutra</i> . |
| 29. Barking deer | <i>Muntiacue mautjak</i> . |
| 30. Sambar | <i>Cervus unicolor</i> . |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 31. Wild pig | <i>Sus scrofa</i> . |
| 32. Civets | <i>Viverridae</i> . |
| 33. Common fox | <i>Vulpes species</i> . |
| 34. Five striped palm squirrel | <i>Funambulus pannanti</i> . |
| 35. Hares | <i>Hystrix indica</i> . |
| 36. Indian procpine | <i>Martes flavigula</i> . |
| 37. Martens | <i>Herpestes sps</i> . |
| 38. Mongooses | <i>Mustela species</i> . |
| 39. Weasels | |

REPTILES

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Agra Manitor Lizard | <i>Varanus grissus daudin</i> . |
| 2. Yellow Manitor Lizard | <i>Varanus flaveacuns</i> . |
| 3. Gengal Manitor Lizard | <i>Varanus bengalensis</i> . |
| 4. Pythans | <i>Python moluraus</i> . |
| 5. Water Lizard | <i>Varanus salvator</i> . |
| 6. King Cobra | <i>Ophiophagus hadna</i> . |
| 7. Indian cobra | <i>Naja naja</i> . |
| 8. Bandad Krait | <i>Bungarus fasciatus</i> . |
| 9. Common Krait | <i>Bungarus coeruleus</i> . |
| 10. Green vipora | <i>Trimorosurus gramineus</i> . |
| Etc.... etc | Etc.... etc.... |

Besides the above, there are many more mammals and reptiles which are not listed. Even there are chances of having some more rare and endangered species in the area which need immediate exploration. The area besides, harbouring many rare and threatened species may also be the last refuge of some of such species.

CHECK LIST OF BIRDS

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Little cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax niger</i> . |
| 2. Pond haron | <i>Ardecla grazil</i> . |
| 3. Little egret | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> . |
| 4. Chines pond haron | <i>Arodeola bechnus</i> . |
| 5. Chestnut bitters | <i>Ixobrychus cinnamomeus</i> . |
| 6. Cattle egret | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> . |
| 7. Large egret | <i>Ardea alba</i> . |
| 8. Common teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> . |



- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 9. Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> . | | |
| 10. Wigeon duck | <i>Anas pinnatifida</i> . | | |
| 11. Common sheldrake duck | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> . | | |
| 12. Bear's pechard | <i>Aythya nyropha</i> . | | |
| 13. Palla's fishing eagle | <i>Laliaetus leucorhynchus</i> . | | |
| 14. Peid harrier | <i>Circus melanoleucos</i> . | | |
| 15. Crested serpent eagle | <i>Spilornis holospilus</i> . | | |
| 16. Red breasted falconet | <i>Microhierax tenebrosus</i> . | | |
| 17. Common hill partridge | <i>Arborophila torquata</i> . | | |
| 18. Koli pheasant | <i>Polyplectron bicalcaratum</i> . | | |
| 19. Red jungle fowl | <i>Gallus gallus</i> . | | |
| 20. Peacock pheasant | <i>Polyplectron bicalcaratum</i> . | | |
| 21. White throated waterhen | <i>Amourea phoeniceus</i> . | | |
| 22. Grey headed lapwing | <i>Vanellus cinereus</i> . | | |
| 23. Imperial pigeon | <i>Ducula bedfordiana</i> . | | |
| 24. Blue rock pigeon | <i>Columba livia</i> . | | |
| 25. Purple wood pigeon | <i>Columba palumbus</i> . | | |
| 26. Wedgetailed green pigeon | <i>Teron sphenurus</i> . | | |
| 27. Orange breasted green pigeon | <i>Teron bicinctus</i> . | | |
| 28. Bristled cuckoo dove | <i>Macropygia tenuirostris</i> . | | |
| 29. Rufous turtle dove | <i>Streptopelia orientalis</i> . | | |
| 30. Indian dove | <i>Streptopelia chinensis</i> . | | |
| 31. Spotted dove | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> . | | |
| 32. Emerald or bronze winged dove | <i>Chalcophaps indica</i> . | | |
| 33. Indian lorikeet | <i>Loriculus varialis</i> . | | |
| 34. Large green bellied malkoha | <i>Rhopodytes trietis</i> . | | |
| 35. Crow pheasant or caucal | <i>Centropus sinensis</i> . | | |
| 36. Rose ringed parakeet | <i>Pseittacula krameri</i> . | | |
| 37. Eastern blossom headed parakeet | <i>Pseittacula roseata</i> . | | |
| 38. Common hawk cuckoo | <i>Cuculus varanus</i> . | | |
| 39. Banded bay cuckoo | <i>Cacomantis sibilatrix</i> . | | |
| 40. Forest eagle owl | <i>Bubo nepalensis</i> . | | |
| 41. Brown fish owl | <i>Bubo zeylanicus</i> . | | |
| 42. Barn owl | <i>Tyto alba</i> . | | |
| 43. Scops owl | <i>Otus scops</i> . | | |
| 44. Haden's frog mouth | <i>Batrachostomus hageni</i> . | | |
| | | 45. Indian jungle nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus indicus</i> . |
| | | 46. House swift | <i>Apus affinis</i> . |
| | | 47. Palm swift | <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i> . |
| | | 48. Red headed trogon | <i>Harpactes erythrocephalus</i> . |
| | | 49. Chestnut headed bee eater | <i>Merops leschanauti</i> . |
| | | 50. Blue tailed bee eater | <i>Merops philippinensis</i> . |
| | | 51. Green bee eater | <i>Merops orientalis</i> . |
| | | 52. Indian roller | <i>Coracias bengalensis</i> . |
| | | 53. Himalayan pied kingfisher | <i>Coryle lugubris</i> . |
| | | 54. Common kingfisher | <i>Alcedo atthis</i> . |
| | | 55. White breasted kingfisher | <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i> . |
| | | 56. Indian pied hornbill | <i>Buceros bicornis</i> . |
| | | 57. Great hill barbet | <i>Megascops virens</i> . |
| | | 58. Great pied hornbill | <i>Buceros bicornis</i> . |
| | | 59. Large green barbet | <i>Megascops zeylanica</i> . |
| | | 60. Crimson breasted or coppersmith barbet | <i>Megascops haemorrhoidalis</i> . |
| | | 61. Lesser golden woodpecker | <i>Dinopium bengalensis</i> . |
| | | 62. Himalayan golden back three toed woodpecker | <i>Dinopium sherti</i> . |
| | | 63. Indian golden back three woodpecker | |
| | | 64. Rufousbellied woodpecker | <i>Hypocypselus hyperythrus</i> . |
| | | 65. Grey pigmy woodpecker | <i>Picoides caniceps</i> . |
| | | 66. Rufous woodpecker | <i>Micropternus brachyurus</i> . |
| | | 67. Back naped green woodpecker | <i>Picus canus</i> . |
| | | 68. Black headed oriole | <i>Oriolus chinensis</i> . |
| | | 69. Black naped oriole | <i>Oriolus chinensis</i> . |
| | | 70. Large cuckoo shrike | <i>Coracina novaezelandiae</i> . |
| | | 71. Scarlet minivet | <i>Pericrocotus plumbeus</i> . |
| | | 72. Short bellied minivet | <i>Pericrocotus brevirostris</i> . |
| | | 73. Yellow throated minivet | <i>Pericrocotus solaris</i> . |
| | | 74. Orange bellied chicropsis | <i>Chloropsis hardwickii</i> . |
| | | 75. Goldfronted chicropsis | <i>Chloropsis avirifrons</i> . |
| | | 76. Gold mantled chicropsis | <i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i> . |
| | | 77. Red whistled bulbul | <i>Psychonotus jacomus</i> . |
| | | 78. White cheeked bulbul | <i>Psychonotus leucogenys</i> . |
| | | 79. Red vented bulbul | <i>Psychonotus cafer</i> . |
| | | 80. Black headed yellow bulbul | <i>Psychonotus malanasterus</i> . |

81. Brown cared bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes flavelus.</i>
82. Black bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes viridescens.</i>
83. Olive bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes viridescens.</i>
84. Black drongo	<i>Dicurus admimilis.</i>
85. Leaser racket tailed drongo	<i>Dicurus ramifer.</i>
86. Greater racket tailed drongo	<i>Dicurus paradiseus.</i>
87. Green magpie	<i>Cissa chinensis.</i>
88. Indian tree pie.	<i>Dendrocatta vagabunds.</i>
89. Jungle cros	<i>Corvus splendens.</i>
90. House cros	<i>Corvus macrorhynches.</i>
91. Black spotted yellow tit	<i>Perus spilanatus.</i>
92. Slender billed babbler	<i>Xiphirhyncus superciliaris.</i>
93. Small billed babbler	<i>Napothera opilepidota.</i>
94. Nacklaced laughing thrush	<i>Garrulex leucolophus.</i>
95. White crested laughing thrush	
96. Jungle babbler	<i>Turdoides stristus.</i>
97. Brown rock chat	<i>Cerocomela fusla.</i>
98. White capped red start or river chat	<i>Chaimerrernis leucocephalus.</i>
99. Little forktail	<i>Enicurus scouleri.</i>
100. Blue whistling thrush	<i>Mylophanus coeruleus.</i>
101. Bush chat	<i>Saxicola farrea.</i>
102. Blue rock thrush	<i>Namticola soliterius.</i>
103. Tickel's leaf warbler	<i>Phyllescopus affinis.</i>
104. Grey headed flucatcher	<i>Gulicieapa ceylonensis.</i>
105. Yellow bellied fantail flycatcher	<i>Rhipidusa elibcollis.</i>
106. Ground wareler	<i>Tesia elivia.</i>
107. Orange flycatcher	<i>MUSICICAPA STROPHINTA.</i>
108. Verditer flycatcher	<i>MUCICAPA THALASSINA.</i>
109. White throated fintailed flycatcher	<i>Rhipidusa elibcollis.</i>
110. Indian tree pipit	<i>Anthus hodgschii.</i>
111. Yellow gawtail	<i>Montacilla chitresola.</i>
112. Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba.</i>
113. White wagtail	<i>Motacilla chinerea.</i>
114. Pied myna	<i>Sturnuss contra.</i>
115. Common myna	<i>Acridothers tristis.</i>
116. Jungle myna	<i>Acridothers fuscus.</i>

117. Hill myna	<i>Gracula religiosa.</i>
118. White eye	<i>Zosterops selpebross.</i>
119. Spotted munia	<i>Lachura punctualata.</i>
120. Flower pecker	<i>Dicaoum ignipectus.</i>
Etc.,..... etc.....	etc.... etc.... ¹³

CAVES

1. **SIJU CAVE** : Siju cave is the natural formation in which thousands of bats used to live in. In this cave, one will find the water flowing right inside the cave. The entrance of this cave is gorgeous and beautiful. The length and depth of Siju Cave is unexplored. This cave is locally known as "Do·bakkol" (cave of bats). The name is given to this cave because there are thousands of bats live in this cave.

The interior of this cave is intersected by innumerable devious ways comprising of deep pools inside. The cave has been left unprotected as a result of which many petrified stones have been removed and taken away by visitors.

There are a number of beautifully formed stalagmites and stalacties of cylindrical and conical shapes available in the earlier days. Even the fossils of crabs, cells, cones, etc. were also available. But now all these fossils, etc. have been disappeared from the scene, due to non-protection of the area by the government.

2. **MATCHAKOL CAVE** : This cave is situated just near the Patalgittim village near Nongalbibra. It is a small cave with a depth of about 3 to 4 kilometres connecting Simsang river. The entrance of this cave is very narrow. Thousands of bats live here. The legend says that in ancient days when men fought with the tigers, hundreds of tigers escaped from being killed by taking refuge inside this cave.

3. **MONGMRANG CAVE** : This cave is situated at Dambo-Rongjeng. Its distance is about a kilometres from the Dambo village. The placé is plateau like formation with huge stones nearby, suitable for picnic. The entrance of the cave is quite big but its depth is only about 100 metres leading to different directions. Different kinds of animals such as mountain goats are found here.

13. Shri J.Dutta, ACF D.F.O. Tura, on 20.12.96

4. **RANGNI CAVE** : This cave is situated near the A-dinggitim village adjacent to papira hills. The top of this cave is a plateau formation and below the plateau, one will find the entrance of the cave. The depth of this cave is only about 200 metres. In this cave different kinds of birds used to make nests such as Do'a.

WATERFALLS

1. **RONG-BANG DARE** : This Rongbang waterfall is situated on the Williamnagar-Tura road. It is about 30 kilometres from Williamnagar. The stream in which this Rongbang Dare is situated is the tributary of Simsang river. It is famous for its scenic beauty surrounding the areas.

2. **MOKMA DARE** : This waterfall is situated near the Mejolgre village on the chichra river, the tributary of Manda river. The height of this waterfall is about 200 metres. The falling sound of which makes deafening sound. It has its scenic beauty all around the waterfall.

3. **CHIBOK DARE** : This waterfall is situated on the Chibok river, the tributary of Simsang river near the Nobokgre village. The fall of this waterfall is not that high but its water formation while falling form a beautiful sight to admire at.

4. **GONGJA DARE** : This waterfall is situated on the Gongja stream. It is famous for its scenic beauty. The fall is quite small during the dry season but is big in rainy season.

5. **IMILCHANG DARE** : This waterfall is situated on the Imilchang stream near the Eman Asakgre village which is just about 70 kilometres away from the Chokpot village in the South Garo Hills. The scenery surrounding this waterfall is also equally beautiful.

6. **RENANG DARE** : This waterfall is situated on the Renang river. This waterfall also falls from the very high hill and is beautiful to look at. Its height will be about 150 to 200 metres.

7. **SUUNDI DARE** : This waterfall is situated on the Chichra river near the Rongkil village in East Garo Hills. The legend says that mother god called, "Suundi-Jingjingki" lived here. The waterfall is formed by sudden falling from the height of about 200 metres. The area is very beautiful and formed rainbow while falling. It has the scenic beauty surrounded by wild trees and shrubs. (Photo No. 1)

LAKES

1. **TASEK LAKES** : It is the biggest lake in the East Garo Hills district. It is situated near the Napak village and Rongrey market. This lake was formed during the major earthquakes in 1897. Some stumps of sal trees could still be seen in the middle of the lake. (Photo No. 2)

2. **BORO-BILL** : This lake lies in the fringe of Garo Hills and Goalpara districts near Rajabala and Kalumalupara village. Local people call this lake Dangga chi. This is the largest lake in the Garo Hills district. One will find different kind of fishes in this lake.

3. **KATTA-BILL** : This lake is located between Mohendraganj and Nogolpara village. This tank was constructed by a Garo king known as Lengta Raja. Local people call this tank Chi-Mite (water god). This lake was constructed with bricks which are still to be seen. There are some ruins of brick building still to be found near the lake as well.

4. **REDINGSI WARI** : This deep pool is situated on the Kakija river near the Wagopgre village. This river or deep pool is known as Chi-Kal'aknabe, meaning don't fool with this water. This deep pool is formed by sudden falling, the depth of which is still unexplored. Some water serpents and eel fish are to be found in this deep pool.

5. **KANCHRUSUK WARI** : This deep pool is situated on the Simsang river. This is the deepest pool in the Garo Hills district. There are many kind of fishes to be found in this deep pool including the water serpent and eel fish. The depth of this pool also remained unexplored.

6. **DOMBE WARI** : This deep pool is located on the Imilchang stream. Here the legendary Dombe queen was kidnapped by the mermaid by sinking the entire hillock.

7. **ANANG WARI** : This deep pool is located in the Ildek river. It is the deepest pool in the area. Garos believed that god Anang lived here. There used to cast sands in the midst of the pool during the rainy season which is believed to be his house roof. However, this does not take place every year but Anang god would cast his sandy roof in the midst of the deep pool which is believed that the products of the jhum field in the area will be good.

8. **UDIT WARI** : It is situated at Ildek river. This deep pool is about 500 metres in length. The river flows under-ground right from the Udit wari for about 1 kilometre.

9. **TEMATCHI WARI** : This deep pool is also situated on the Ildek river. This deep pool is famous for its mythological belief that Gonga's dog called Matgrik, while drinking water from this pool saw the cotton tree blooming. The depth of this pool is also unknown.

10. **JOLDING WARI** : This lake is also formed during the major earthquake of 1897. It is located in the Kawak village near the Gajing and Dilma village. Different kind of fishes are also seen in this pool.

11. **NA-KA CHIKONG** : This pool is famous for availability of thousands of fish known as "Na'ka". This is a small pool. There used to come up thousands of Na'ka fish to this pool and upwards. If one catches without saying a word, it is said that thousands of Na'ka fish will be available but if one makes any sound then the entire fish will miraculously disappear.

12. **KODALDOWA** : This lake is situated near the Kattabill. It is said that this lake was constructed by the subject of the king residing in the area for washing the spades used for digging.

13. **CHENGA-BENGA** : This lake is situated on the South-West of Garobadha which is about 4 kilometres from Garobadha. Different kind of fishes are also available in this lake.

14. **TALPUKUR** : This lake is situated on the South-West of Garobadha. It is a tank constructed by the Zamindar, Mohendra-Narayan, some remains of which are still seen. This water tank is still to be found near the Balapara village. The tank is named after the Palm tree growing around it.

HILLS

1. **NOKREK HILL** : This hill is situated towards the East of Tura. It is the highest peak in Garo Hills. It is about 1586 metres above sea level. There is no human habitational sites in the area. But the legend says that in ancient days, there lived Abong-Noga and his wife Silme-Doka. It is said that while Abong-Noga and Silme-Doka were living in this Nokrek hills they cultivated and harvested huge products of rice from field. It is because Abong-Noga has stored huge quantity of rice in this place, this hill

is also known to the Garos as "Nokrek-Midan" (store house of paddy).

There is one water tank constructed by Abong-Noga which is still found. It is the Biosphere Reserve Forest. In this hill one will find citrus indica (memang narang) abundantly grown all over the place. There is a story to tell all about the growing of citrus indica or me-mang narang at Nokrek. Originally, me-mang narang was also abundantly available at Balpakram. One day, Maopa-Chongdopa died and left behind him his dear wife Khisi and one daughter Khimi at the time of his death. But, Maopa-Chongdopa, spirit, took permission from his king and set out for Nokrek peak his home, carrying basketful of oranges from Balpakram for his dear wife and a daughter. On reaching home, he found that his home was empty and returned with heavy heart disappointed leaving basketful of oranges at the threshold as a sign of his visit. From that time onwards, Nokrek regions abound in me-mang narang or citrus indica. Hence, Nokrek is now famous for its Gene Citrus Sanctuary. Government of India declared this area in 1986 as the National Reserve, for first the Gene Sanctuaray with a view of protecting the endangered orange.

2. **MEMINRAM HILL** : This hill lies on the Eastern side of Nokrek peak. The height of this Meminram Hill is 1091 metres. When one will look at the hill from a far, the entire hill portion looks like a ripen rice from the jhum fields, hence the name, "Meminram".

3. **NENGMINJOK HILL** : This hill lies on the Eastern side of Meminram peak. The height of this hill is 1049 metres. It is covered by beautiful natural trees and shrubs.

4. **CHITMANG HILL** : The Chitmang hill is the second highest peak in Garo Hills. Its height is 1150 metres. The Simsang river passes through the ridge of this mountain. This hill is the continuous hill range of Tura peak. There are numerous unknown medicinal herbs grown here. It is covered by the natural trees and thick forests.

5. **DURA-BANDA HILL** : This hill range is connected with Tura or Dura range. There exists heaps of stones as if it is the work of expert masonry. These heaps of stones are also known to the Garos as Goera Ronggata. Goera is the god of thunder and lightning. The legend says that these heaps of stones presence in this hill are the handiwork of god Goera.

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6. **TURA RANGE** : This hill is situated on the east Tura town. The height of this Tura Peak is 976 metres. One can go up to the Tura peak from Tura town which is about 5 kilometres in distance. There is also one inspection Bungalow constructed during British administration and a new building has come up recently. Dura hill is the abode of the goddess known to the Garos as "Durama Imbama" the second sister of Koasi Mindira who was sent away from Koasi. Hence, this hill is named after this goddess, "Durama-Imbama" who is believed to be the guardian of this place.

7. **ARBELLA HILL** : It is situated towards the East of Duragre village. The local name given to this hill is "Sonabal". There is one inspection bungalow constructed in this peak. The height of this peak is 1117 metres.

8. **MISI KOKDOK HILL** : This hill lies on the Western side of Songsak village. The height of this hill is 996 metres. There is one huge stone on top of this hill. The legend says that in ancient days Bonepa cultivated crops in the jhum field of this area and got six basketful of millets. Hence, the name Misikokdok (six basketful of millets).

9. **MONGRI HILL** : This hill is situated towards the South-East of Sokadam village and Misikokdok hill. The height of this peak is 992 metres. Agar trees were grown in this hill in days gone by. It is said that Abong-Noga lived here also. In time of drought in the country, if one sacrifices a pig or a cow at the courtyard of Abong-Noga, then abundant rainfall will occur. It is said that some structural remains of Abong-Noga could still be seen. This hill is also called by the Garos as "Mongri Bri Palwang A-ding".

10. **RANGGIRA HILL** : It is situated towards the East of Tura town terminating at Halidayganj. There exists one pond on top of this hill with full of fishes. It is believed that a goddess lived in this hill which Garos used to invoke for help saying, "Ranggirani Mitde chingko dukoniko chelchakbo" (goddess of Ranggira, come to our rescue in times of sorrow). When there is drought in the country the Garos used to sacrifice human beings and invoked to rain goddess to give them shower of rains.

11. **KOASI HILL** : This hill is situated on the North of papira hills. The height of this hill is 797 metres. In this hill one will find peaks connected with different legends surrounding the main hill.



No. (A) *Orchid*



No. (B) *Dikge*



No. (C) *Dikge (Curcuma Pseudomontana)*



No. (D) *Monkey*

The famous legendary hills are—

- (i) **KOASI-NOKMONG** : This is plateau with full of huge stones. In the midst of this hillock there lived a goddess Susime who is the protector of human lives and land. The Hindus used to come to this place and offer sacrifice by killing doves. The Garos also used to sacrifice pigs in this place known as “Salgrua” when there is drought in the country. This place is also known as “Matcha Melaram or the conference hall of the tigers” as hundred of tigers used to gather once in a year in this place for a meeting.
- (ii) **KOASI RONGGITCHAK or MATCHA MELARAM** : The height of this peak is 815 metres. The legend says that in ancient days Durama-Imbama brought as son-in-law for her daughter known as “Simera” the son of Songdu called “Singra” to this place. But Durama-Imbama illtreated her son-in-law and there broke out a feud between Songdu and this place. Now-a-days, Hindus used to release hundreds of doves during sacrifice in this place. The tip of Koasi stones has been broken during the major earthquake of 1897.
- (iii) **KOASI-NOKPANTE** : Legend says that there lived a man called “Niba-Jonja” and his wife “Aje-Gilje-Tira” in this place. Legend also says that there still exists “Muni” a medicinal plant in this hill which is being looked after by the huge serpent.

12. **A-SLONG HILL** : The height of this hill is 1025 metres. This hill is situated towards the West of A-slong village. Adjacent to this peak, there stands another peak called papira peak which is also about 1129 metres in height above sea level.

13. **BALPAKRAM HILL** : This hill is situated adjacent to the Chitmang hill. The height of this hill is 1965 metres. It is most famous and the most important hill for the Garos. The hill is with full of legendary places. It is the dwelling place of the spirits of the dead. Now, this legendary and sacred place of the Garos has been acquired by the Meghalaya Government for making the entire areas as a Wild Life Sanctuary. Besides the above mentioned most important hills and places, there are many more hills and hillocks connected with Garo legends and mythologies. The Garo hills can be regarded as a well blessed land but the

people could not live up to the level of preserving and protecting them to remain their old glory and importance.

RIVERS

(a) Major rivers flowing towards the North are—

1. **ILDEK RIVER** : The Ildek river originates from the Wa'ge Marang hill but not from the Papira hills as many of the authors have written in their books. This river then crosses to Goalpara district and then ultimately joining the Brahmaputra. The non-tribals call this river, "Deosilla" meaning "Water god". It is considered as holy river by the Hindus. There are many deep pools in this river. They are:

- (a) Udit Wari whose length is about 300 metres,
- (b) Tematchi Wari which is famous for its cotton tree discovery from the Asro hill by Gonga's dog while drinking water from this pool,
- (c) Anang Wari,
- (d) Na'ka Chikong and others. (Photo No. 3)

2. **MANDA RIVER** : This river originates from the Jamge hillock. It runs through Imbanggi and joins Chichra river. In this river there is one deep pool known as, "Urambi" wari, believed by the Garos that this pool was created by falling of an Axe of Gonga while felling the cotton tree. This river flows through Depa, Dainadubi and joins Brahmaputra in Goalpara district. Others call this river Dudhnoi.

3. **DAMRING RIVER** : This river originates from the Arbella peak which runs through Rongrong via Thapa village, Mendipathar and joins Brahmaputra in Goalpara district. Other people call this same river as Krishnai.

4. **DIDRAM RIVER** : This river originates from Dolongre village and flows through Rari, Gokolgre, Bajengdoba and finally enter Goalpara district.

5. **JINJIRAM RIVER** : This river originates from the Derek village in Goalpara district and flows towards the East through Phulbari and Hallidayganj and then finally enters Goalpara district again. It is the longest river in Garo hill.

(b) Major rivers flowing towards the West are—

6. **RINGGE RIVER** : This river originates from Arbella peak and flows through Ringgegre village adjoining the Jinjiram river. Others call this river Rongai river.

7. **GALWANG RIVER** : This river originates from the Ranggira range and flows through the Rajabala village and then enters the Goalpara district. Others call this river Kolongkini river.

8. **GANOL RIVER** : This river originates from the Tura peak and flows through Damalgre, Garobadha and Rangapani until it finally enters the Goalpara district. This river has two major tributaries, they are - Dilni river and Rongram river. Besides the above mentioned rivers there are small rivers that flows for a short distance and enters Goalpara district such as Daru river which originates from Boloni hill and the Rongkai river which originates from the Rongkaigre village.

(c) Major rivers flowing towards the South are—

9. **MOHESKHOLA RIVER** : This river originates from the Balpakram hill and flows through the border of Khasi hills district and then enters the Bangladesh.

10. **MAHADEO RIVER** : This river also originates from the Balpakram hill and then enters into the Mymensing district of Bangladesh.

11. **SIMSANG RIVER** : This river originates from the Nokrek mountain, runs through the East Garo Hills district towards the South Garo Hills district flowing through two districts headquarters of Williamnagar and Baghmara before entering Bangladesh. The upper source of the river is not navigable due to the numerous huge stones and cataracts. But the river is navigable upto Baghmara. The river has many deep pools and water-falls. They are:

- (i) Mrik Wari, (ii) Matma wari, (iii) Kanchrusruk wari,
- (iv) Jamiseng wari, (v) Warisik, (vi) Bobra wari and
- (vii) Goka wari.

Some of the major tributaries of Simsang river are Chibok river, Rongdik river, Rompa river and Ringdi river. Others call this Simsang river "Somesory river". (Photo No. 4)

12. **DARENG BA NITAI RIVER** : This river originates from the Nokrek hills. It flows towards the South through Silkigre

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and then it enters into Bangladesh. This river also has a number of famous deep pool, some of which are :

(i) Warima wari, (ii) Rongang wari and (iii) Bamon wari
Amongst the above mentioned pools, Bamon wari is the biggest and deepest.

This river also has a number of major tributaries. Some of the major tributaries are Kakija river, Daji river and Rompa river. From amongst the above mentioned tributaries, there is one deep pool which is known as 'Redingsi wari'.

13. BUGI RIVER : This river originates from the Nokrek hill and flows through Dalu before it finally enters into Mymensing district of Bangladesh. This river also has deep pools some of which are known as (i) Nosari-Bandari and (ii) Warima wari.

(d) There are many more minor river in these areas. They are:

(i) Tulong river which originates from Bolori hill and flows towards the west. (ii) Marsi river which originates from Bolori and Tura-Darenggre hills and (iii) Sorai and Rokai rivers which also originates from the Bolori hills and flow into the Bangladesh.

There are five river sources that originates from Balpakram Hills itself. They are: (i) Mahadeo River (ii) Moheskola River (iii) Goneswari or Rongdi River (iv) Nava or Kanai River and (v) Chi Mite or river god. The five river sources originating from the same mountain may not be found anywhere. Siva is said to have five heads and these five sacred river sources flowing from mountain (Balpakram) symbolises Siva.

The above proves that Garo Hills are full of natural hills, lakes and rivers and were rich in Flora and Fauna. However, with the passage of time and with modernisation proceses, such natural gifts have been disappearing year by year. It is therefore imperative that strong and immediate measures be adopted and awareness be created to restore Garo Hills to its original beauty and splendour.

'Balpakram', a place of scenic beauty is situated at National Wild Life Sanctuary in Meghalaya—as such a place of tourist attraction and study for natural scientists. But the Garos have special meaning and a strong belief that 'we shall all go to Balpakram (the land of the spirits)', after our death and spend some more years till one is reborn. Balpakram not only have many legendary spots but also is the home of different species of flora and fauna. We find also the legendary spots which has the link with the Valmiki and Tulsī *Ramayana* whom the local people call them Dikki, Bandi, Sore or Gitting and so on. Balpakram is also the dwelling place of the gods and goddesses as such a sacred place for pilgrimages and meditations for gods and men in yore days. Balpakram being the dwelling place of the spirits of the dead remains still a mystery. Attempts have been made to identify those mythological heroes as we find in 'Katta Aganna' and link them as we find also in ancient literature. Study made is more comprehensive although it may not give authentic, historical or material evidences to support the mythological narrations.

This book is a pioneering effort to portray the most important mythological spots supported by photographs, so that the readers of this book can just have a glimpse of Balpakram (the land of the spirits) and travel to these areas in spirits and dreams. In this study an attempt has made to convey correct interpretation of its legends, customs, practices, traditions and historical legendary spots that are located in and around Balpakram areas as depicted in A.chik 'Katta Aganna'. It will be of great interest to all those who are interested in knowing all about the mythological spots in and around Balpakram areas and traditional beliefs and practices of the Garos thereto.

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