

# THE DARLONGS OF TRIPURA

**Lethuama Darlong**



Tribal Research & Cultural Institute  
Govt. of Tripura

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**LETTUAMA DARLONG**

**Tribal Research & Cultural Institute  
Govt. of Tripura. Agartala.**



## CONTENTS

CHAPTERS	TOPICS	PAGES
ONE	: Origin and History.....	13
TWO	: Present Habitation.....	46
THREE	: Language.....	59
FOUR	: Economic Activities.....	79
FIVE	: Customary Life.....	105
SIX	: Religions and Beliefs.....	119
SEVEN	: Social Life.....	141
EIGHT	: Cultural Life.....	164
NINE	: Folklore.....	183
TEN	: Christianity and Its Impacts.....	229
ELEVEN	: Concluding Remarks.....	246

# **The Darlongs of Tripura**

**By: Letthuama Darlong**

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## FOREWORD

Darlong is one of numerous communities under the so-called Kuki-Chin group. As far as our knowledge goes, the Darlong population is to be found only in Tripura at least for the present. Though their distant past history is still in obscurity, their long stay in Tripura is an established fact. Historically and culturally, they are very close to the Halams, Mizos and other Kuki communities. No worthwhile studies were done earlier on the Darlongs following which our knowledge on this community is very limited and also inaccurate.

Shri Letthuama Darlong has done a commendable work for bringing out a detailed account on the Darlongs in this monograph. As he has consulted a number of available written materials and interviewed almost all the knowledgeable persons in the community, there is little room for inaccuracy or doubt on his findings.

I am sure the monograph will give indepth knowledge to the readers on the history, tradition and cultural life of the Darlongs. The monograph will be indispensable for the students studying Kuki history and culture in Tripura and more so for the research scholars venturing on this subject.

Agartala  
the 25th March, 1995.



(SAILIANA SAILO)  
Director,  
Tribal Research Institute  
Govt. of Tripura.

## INTRODUCTION

Tripura, a cashewnut-shape state is the second smallest state of the Indian Union. It is situated in the north-eastern corner of the country, flanked by Assam on the north, Mizoram on the east and bounded on three sides by Bangladesh territory. Its boundary with Assam and Mizoram is 53 and 109 kilometres respectively and it shares a 839 kilometres international boundary with Bangladesh. The state embraces an area of 10,485 square kilometres accounting for 0.32 per cent of the total land area of India.

Tripura is situated between 22 degree 51' to 24 degree 32' North Latitude and 90 degree 10' to 92 degree 21' East Longitude. Agartala, the state capital is situated on the bank of the Haora river and is 12.80 metres above sea level. The extreme length and breadth of Tripura measure 183.5 kilometres and 112.7 kilometres respectively.

Tripura is predominantly a hilly state. About 70 per cent of the area constitute hills and small hillocks, and the rest of the area is situated in the river basins broken by the hills and hillocks. In general the ground rises from west to east. There are six principal hill ranges running from north to south parallel to each other. Beginning from the east, the hill ranges run through the state in the following order: The Jampui, the Sakhan Tlang, the Longtarai, the Athara Mura, the Baramura and the Deota Mura.

From these hills flow tortuous streams with innumerable small tributaries into the Bangladesh where they mingle and merge with the waters of Padma and Ganges. Some of the important rivers of Tripura are the Juri, the



Manu, the Deo, the Dhalai, the Khowai, the Gumti, the Haora, the Muhuri. The Manu, 167 kilometres in length is the longest river of Tripura having a catchment area of 2278.14 square kilometres.

Tripura enjoys a tropical monsoon climate. It receives most of the rainfall from the south-west monsoon which arrives in June and lasts till about the last part of September. The average annual rainfall over the past 50 years has been over 250 centimetres. The maximum temperature recorded in summer is 35.6 degree C and the minimum temperature recorded in winter is 4 degree C. Under this climatic condition and physiography, the state has two main types of forest viz., the evergreen forest with intermediate characteristics and moist deciduous forests.

It is believed that Tripura got its name from king Tripura who was the 46th descendant of Chandra dynasty. From time immemorial the state of Tripura was inhabited by the tribals who mainly settled in the hill terrain where they practiced their traditional shifting cultivation. This native state ruled by the Royal family of Tripura tribe was merged with the Indian union 15th October 1949, and an administrator was appointed to take over the administration of the state as chief commissioner. The state attained the status of Union Territory 1st November 1956 and became fullfledged state on 21st January 1972. Tripura is the home of the Darlongs who, in April 1994 numbered 5890, constituting 0.2% of the total population and 0.69% of the total population of tribal population of tripura. The Darlongs live in the north district of Tripura in 22 villages.

The Darlongs have close traditional, cultural and linguistic affinities with the Mizos, the Hmars and the Halam-Kuki communities.

## PREFACE

This book is the first of its kind. Hence much had to be depended on the theories orally transmitted in absence of sufficient fabric to weave the history of the Darlongs. However, contradictory theories have been avoided to the extent possible unless otherwise substantiated by some other evidences.

By the time the Darlongs came to settle at and near the present Cachar district they came to be known only as 'Kukis'. Hence from the accounts available on the Kukis it often becomes difficult to distinguish the Darlongs from the other Kukis without knowledge on the genealogy of atleast the Chief clans as the term Kuki had been employed to cover all the so-called Kuki-Chin tribes. The available documentary evidences prove that the Darlong chiefs occupied a very important place in the history of the present Tripura and its adjacent areas particularly in the early part of the 18th century.

The Darlongs lived independently. They controlled their own affairs and they still do so. They had a rich cultural heritage which requires reviving because much of the culture has not been practised due to various reasons, for the past 50 years or so. Today, the new generation is gradually realising the need of salvaging, reviving and preserving the otherwise lost culture, and actions are being taken by way of weaving the cloths, making costumes, preserving the crafts, collecting ornaments, learning the songs and dances and by recording



all these in writing.

While studying about the Darlongs, I have gathered immense inspirations to write more on the various aspects of their life and socio-cultural activities. This is my first attempt to writing. Hence it is far from my own satisfaction. However, I would think that this has been atleast partially successful if any materials which appear in this book prove to be of some use to the research scholars who will conduct further research on the Darlongs.

I would feel terribly guilty if I do not acknowledge the invaluable help and encouragement I received during preparation of this piece of work from the following persons;

1. Dr. G.S.G. Ayyangar, IAS, Mr. Sailiana Sailo, Director, T.R.I., Mr. Tinkhuma Darlong, St. Paul's School, Dr. P.N. Bhattacharjee, R.O. and Mr. Lalhmingthanga, T.C.S. for their unfailing encouragement and inspiration;

2. M/s Thanga, Khawma, Kunga of Muruai, Zadinga of Sertlang, Lalsiama and Roisualiana of Deora, (L) Thuamliana of Betsora and Dingliana of Kanchan for telling me tales of the yester-years and for singing those old melodies, and V. Ngula of Muruai for his informative letters;

3. Mr. Siamkunga of Darchawi, who proved to be a faithful helpmate throughout and Mr. Khawlawma for lending me some of his valuable books;

4. All those who helped me typing the scripts in all stages;

5. My beloved wife Lalhmunmawii for her unfailing support in prayers, for her encouragement and for typing the final scripts;

6. My affectionate son Jesse Lalzahawma who was old

enough to snatch away my pen and, tear those important pages and, who was too young to understand what his father was doing. I got the deepest inspiration from him.

To one and all, I would herewith acknowledge the debt I owe, and say a hearty 'Thank you' because without their help and support this book would not have seen the light of this day.

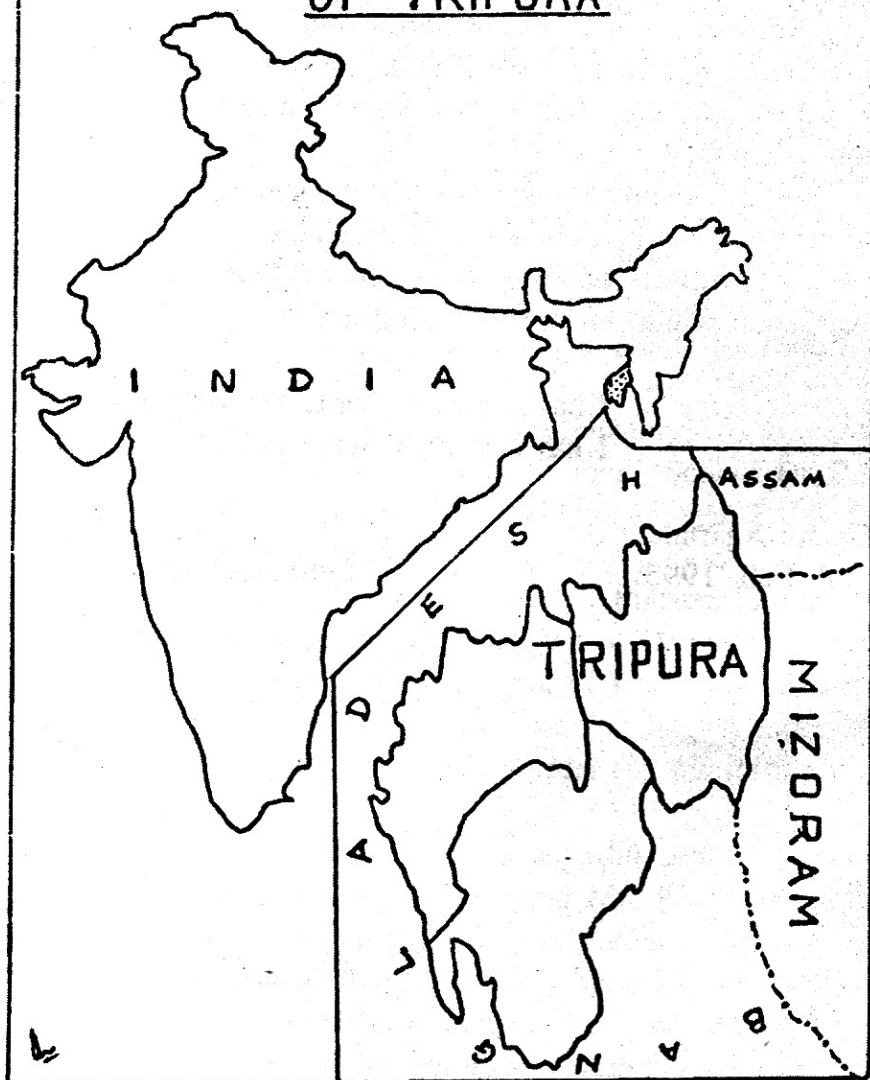
I do not claim for this work that it contain any aspect of the Darlongs in a complete form. Knowing that there are varied aspects worth studying about the Darlongs, the inspiration within me keeps telling me that

I have miles to write before I sleep,  
I have years to write before I sleep.

Dated: Agartala,  
24th Feb. 1995.

  
Letthuama Darlong.

# INDIA : SHOWING LOCATION OF TRIPURA



## CHAPTER ONE

### ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Darlongs, like many other tribes of the Kuki-Chin origin believe that man originated from a certain cave called 'Sinlung' which literally means closed stone. The Darlongs believe that their forefathers came out of this cave one by one, and when the sub-tribe Fatlei came out of the cave, they talked so much and made such loud noise that the guardian- god of the cave fearing that the human population had grown too large closed the cave with a stone preventing any further exit of human beings from the cave.

Similarly, many tribes trace back the origin of man to be a certain cave. For instance, a legend of the Kom tribe has it that their forefathers lived in the nether world from where they came out one by one through a hole. A tiger lay in wait and killed them as they issued. Karangpa came out wearing a striped cloth, and the tiger made friends with him because it resembled his skin. A certain man called Saichepa came out and shot the tiger and the tiger died. Everyone drank and ate the flesh rejoicing over the death of the tiger.

The legendary stories may differ slightly but the differences are insignificant in that they all trace back the origin of man to be a certain cave or hole. The Darlongs believe that the cave still exists somewhere in the present South-China but none dares go inside. If one listened from outside, one could hear a deep note of gong and

the sound of human voices. Recently attempts have been made to interpret the legend rationally. In one of the rational interpretations 'Singlung' or Chhinlung is said to mean not a cave but is the name of Chinese prince, Chin Lung. He was the son of Huang Ti of Chin dynasty who built the Great Wall of China in 214 B.C. The prince incurred the displeasure of his father and left his kingdom and settled in Burma. Many historians believe that this event, in course of oral transmission through the ages has lost its historical truth and is now termed as legend.

Hmar historians Mr. Darliensung and Mr. Hranglien Songate believe that the Hmar people came out of China during Chin dynasty of 221-207 B.C. Thereafter the tribe moved towards south-west along the present border of Burma and India. In his book 'The Hmars', Mr. Darliensung argues that the Readers Digest World Atlas page 69 shows the location of 'Singlung' at 100 degree 30' East Longitude and 30 degree 30' North Latitude. Which is situated on the right bank of the Yalung river. Like many others, he also believes that the Yalung's bank Sinlung, south-west of China is the Hmars' ancient Sinlung. The argument put forward by Mr. Darliensung is similar with the orally transmitted history of the Darlongs in regards to the probable ancient home and movement of the Darlongs. It is believed that the Darlongs like many other tribes settled in this region around 220 to 200 B.C. The Darlong elders claimed that the Darlongs then identified themselves as Hriam or Manma-si, both meaning men.

The Darlongs have not less than half a dozen of interpretations on the origin of the appellation 'Darlong'. One interpretation has it that in course of their migration,



A Darlong House- Close to the old model



Remnants of the Thangur Chief



the Darlongs raided their enemies and killed them by cutting on the shoulders. Hence they came to be known as 'Darlong'- a compound word; 'dar' means shoulder and 'leng' means cutting. In course of time Darlong came to be known as Darlong. But this incidence is said to have taken place in the later part of their migration. So this cannot be accepted as the origin of the appellation 'Darlong'.

According to another interpretation this tribe made a long halt at Darlong Tlang and came to be known as Darlongs after the name of the hill. This interpretation wins greater reliability on geographical and historical grounds, because the hill still stands as a living witness as Darlong Tlang (hill) in the present Mizoram. Besides, the historians are of one opinion that the Darlongs made a long halt at that hill in course of their migration.

However, according to some prominent historians like V.L. Siama, the author of 'Mizo History' and Pastor Liangkhaia, the author of 'Mizo Chanchin', and others, this tribe was known as Darlong even before they entered the present Mizoram, and the Hmars, the Hrangkhawls, the Chawrais, the Langrongs, the Mirawngs and the Darlongs were the first to enter and settle in the present Mizoram. The Historians are also of one opinion that the important rivers of Mizoram such as, the Tuirial (Sonai) river, the Tlawng (Dhaleswari) river and Tut (tributary of Tlawng) got their names from the Darlongs. This fact proves that the hill the Darlongs lived in came to be known as Darlong Tlang (hill) after the name of the settlers. Hence the traditional belief and interpretation which claim that this tribe got its name from the hill they halted in loses its ground, because there is no record of

any tribe permanently settling in the region prior to the coming of these tribes who could have given the hill such a name which is Tibeto-Burma in nature. If the hills and the rivers had had their names, there was no need of renaming them by the Darlongs. This fact clearly proves that the rivers were named by the tribes who came across them and the hills such as the Darlong Tlang got their names from their settlers.

Yet another interpretation has it that the headman of this tribe used to be called 'Darhlaw' and in course of time the entire tribe came to be known as 'Darhlaw' and then 'Darlong'. It is a known fact that during the ancient days and before the chieftainship, people of this tribe managed their own affairs under the leadership of democratic village headman. Everyone respected and obeyed him. It has a social binding that the hunter should give the headman the foreleg of the animal he had killed as a token of his respect and in recognition of his authority. Hence the headman was called 'Darhlaw' which means to receive (hlaw) the foreleg (dar) of the animal killed. In course of time the leader and the led came to be known as 'Darhlaw' and then Darlong.

I find this to be a reasonable explanation to the origin of the appellation 'Darlong' because of the fact that the Darlongs and other Kuki- Chin tribes had a democratic form of administration in the historical past and that giving and receiving the foreleg of the animal killed is still in practice in the small villages of the Darlongs.

In the same way the Tripuras called themselves as 'Borak', the Mikirs 'Arleng', the Garos 'Achikmandi', all meaning men, the Darlongs call themselves 'Hriam' meaning men. It is interesting to note that many tribal

communities identify themselves by different such appellations meaning men, which is a manifestation of ethnocentrism and a significant characteristic of so many people all over the world. This mental phenomenon is the result of consciousness and contentment of a people with its own culture so much so that they comfortably take themselves as 'men' and others as something less than men. Whatever be the feelings of the others, the Darlongs, like many other tribal communities are highly ethnocentric and contented with their culture to the extent that they often call and identify many of the other tribal groups as 'Miluk Milai' which implies that they (the Darlongs) are more knowledgeable and progressive than the others referred to. The term has a slight connotation of despise.

Hriam or Darlong has two sub-tribes, the Awmhroi and the Fatlei. The main difference between these sub-tribes lies in the accent of the dialects. But the difference has been almost totally done away with through intermixing. The present generation rarely use these two terms as they have been merged into one, the Darlong or Hriam.

The Hmars, the Mizos and the Kukis claim that the Darlongs are a part and parcel of their communities and the Darlongs believe that to be true. Because the Darlongs have a high degree of similarities with people of these communities. To understand the community status of the Darlongs the following facts may be taken into consideration.

1. The clan system, dialect, appearance, socio-cultural practices of the Darlongs are similar to those of the Hmars. Hence many Darlongs believe that they are a part and parcel of the Hmars.

2. The Darlongs, like the Hmars, Mizos and Kukis believe that man originated from a certain cave or hole called 'Sinlung' or 'Chhinlung'.

3. The Darlongs share the same chieftainship with the Mizos to the effect that the main chiefs of the Darlongs were Thangurs, the clan derived from the first chief of the Mizos, Thangura. Besides this, the Darlongs also share the same socio-cultural practices with the Mizos, and their original dialects have no significant differences, and a good number of the Darlong clans are but the clans or sub-clans of the Mizos.

4. Yet some others are of the opinion that the Darlongs are a sub-tribe of the Kuki Community. It may be noted here that the appellation Kuki was used by the inhabitants of the erstwhile East Bengal to identify the uncivilized, migratory and headhunting tribes of the highlands. Hence this covers a good number of uncivilized tribes like the Hmars, the Mizos, the Darlongs and many other tribes of the highlands. The Nagas and the Reangs who have no close socio-cultural affinities with the present Kukis were also known as Kukis. As a result, some of the Naga tribes still identify themselves as Naga-Kuki tribes.

As mentioned above, the appellation, Kuki was used to cover and identify almost all the so-called uncivilized tribes of the highlands. As a result the appellation Kuki was not equally known to all the tribes as was given to them by the inhabitants of the erstwhile East Bengal, because for their whole race they have no common name and were content to all one another by names of different clans. But their general characteristics are similar in all places and they are easily distinguishable from other tribes. Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear noted that in Lushai hills the term was hardly ever employed, having been superseded by Lushai or Mizo. Similarly, the Hmars also refused to identify themselves as Kukis possibly because they considered it to be derogatory. In the words of S.

Barkataki, author of the 'Tribes of Assam', the (Hmar) tribe never calls itself by that name which has a derogative sense.

Hence the Kukis are numerous and occupy a large territory. They are known under different names in different places all being independent of each other. Because they have never been able to find out their common identify and a nomenclature acceptable to all. As a result due to factors like egoism, clanism, self-pride and petty differences the sense of disunity appears to be stronger than the sense of unity among them.

During their stay in the highlands, the Darlongs identified themselves as Hriam and Manmasi. However, it appears that they comfortably accepted the term Kuki when they came in contact with people of the plain land and identified themselves accordingly. They started using Kuki in all their important documents, and by the time they came to settle in the present Tripura they identified themselves only as Kukis till the Christian Missionaries reminded them about their identity, Darlong.

So far the history of the Darlong is concerned, the appellations Hmar, Mizo and Kuki are homologous and practically the same inspite of their existing differences. Hence Darlong is a tribe of the three communities. The similarities in the legendary origin, history, chieftainship, socio-cultural practices, kinship, dialects, gods worshipped, faiths and beliefs, folklore, food habit are more than sufficient to prove that all the foregoing tribes were but one at one point of time.

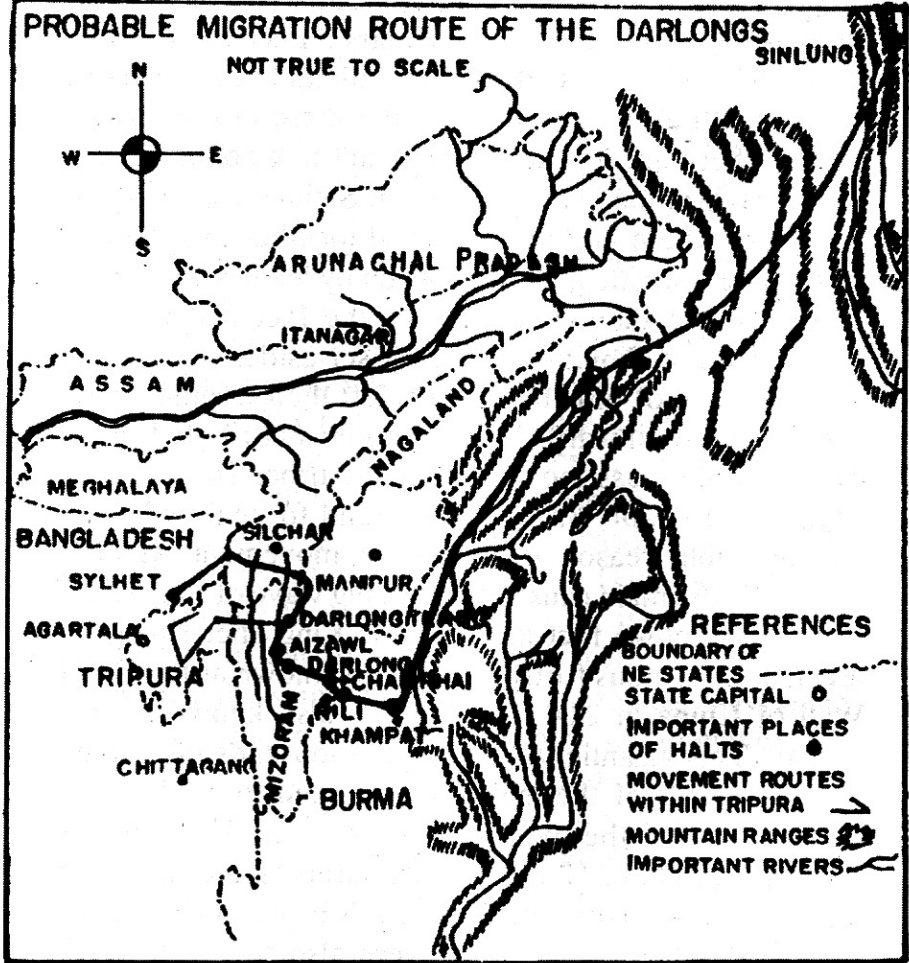
## Probable Route of Migration

As discussed earlier, the original home of the Darlongs appear to be Sinlung of China as argued by Darliensung, author of 'The Hmars'. Because the Darlongs also believe that their fore-fathers lived at Sinlung which they believe is situated somewhere in the present China. There are legendary tales that talk about Sinlung and its civilization. They talk about Sinlung as a place of happiness where all the clans lived together as a family, under a democratic government run by leaders appointed by the people themselves. Hence the fact that the Darlongs lived at Sinlung cannot be set aside.

In course of time the settlers left their original home and moved southward. Many historians attributed many causes to the mass movement of the tribes from central China around 200 B.C. Here I intend to deal with only one probable reason of the mass movement which I believe, is the main cause of such a big wave of migration.

It is a known fact that Chinese King Shet-Huang Ti erected the famous fortress popularly known as the Great Wall of China in 214 B.C. He was also known for his cruelty. This gigantic task required thousands of labours and two-thirds of the males were forced to work in the construction of the Wall. But soon after the death of Shet-Huang Ti in 212 B.C. the labourers fled away to set themselves free from the bondage. It is probable that the Darlongs (settlers of Sinlung) were also forced to work in the construction of the fortress, because Sinlung is situated close to the Great Wall of China. In his book, 'China Yesterday And Today', Dr. Edward Thomas Williams argued that 'the expansion of Chaw dynasty came to Chin dynasty creating pressures on the latter'.





Hence the Chin dynasty violated all the rules of warfare and subdued many of the tribes that were already in the land. Those who objected to be absorbed were pushed out. Besides, successive waves of Chinese immigrants also drove the earlier settlers to the south. Hence I have no doubt that the Darlongs like many other Sinlung settlers left their loved city due to socio-political pressures created by the China immigrants.

The general population movement of the century was southward and south-westward. This movement was believed to have brought many tribes to Shan Yanan Province through the borders of the Himalayas. The Shan province is believed to be modern Shan state of Burma. Shan was a generic term for the people who came from China, and immigrated to Burma. The term was given by the Burmans which means for the north and north-eastern people who migrated from south-western China. The movement took place perhaps along the foothills of the Himalayas. The Darlongs remember Himalaya as a beautiful lofty mountain. And they believed that the spirits of the dead must have to cross the Mountain before they finally reached the abode of the dead. Some Darlong elders even claim that the name 'Himalaya' has been derived from the Darlongs 'Mahi lawi eiti' - let us by-pass this. They said this to express their utter failure of crossing the mountain during their south and south westward movement. We may not agree on the origin of the word 'Himalaya' as claimed by the Darlongs, but we may have no difficulty to accept the proposition that the Darlongs once lived in and around the sub-Himalayan region in the historical past.

The people moved further south and came to settle in the unoccupied areas on the Indo-Burman frontiers and

built many villages. This further movement was attributed to their search for better security, shelter and food. The people were prone to diseases and they were in constant fear of elements ranging from the unseen spirits to the unpredictable enemies. Hence life was full of trouble and struggle which led them to spirit worshipping and headhunting to the extent that in the later days headhunting turned into a social lifestyle and became main game of the men to prove their manlihood. But this never ensured them security of their life, as a matter of fact, it only reduced their number.

The people moved further south in waves. The Hmars and the Lusheis were known to have moved closely. The Hmars then, were called 'Khawthlang' which means westerners, because they moved ahead of the Lusheis. According to historians this movement took place between the 8th and 9th centuries. Khampat is a well-known historical place of the Hmars, Lusheis and the Darlongs. They still tell stories about the banyan tree their fore-fathers had planted there with a promise that they should all go back to Khampat when the branches of the tree touched the ground. According to Omesh Saigal, author of 'Tripura', in 1921 when the branches of the tree touched the ground, many Lushais, amongst them Mr. Hanner of Lakhipur, Capt. Laikhuma of Aijal, Capt. C. Khuma, Capt. Vanpuilal and Capt. Lalmuana, all of active civil services, returned to Burma.

According to K. Zawla, author of the 'Mizo Pi Pute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin', the people came to settle at Khampat in 996 A.D. Khampat in Burmese means 'Golden Rosary'. The fore-fathers of the Burmans had a beautiful daughter who became the fore-woman of the province. They gave her a golden rosary, Khampat,

which, in course of time turned into the name of the place. A beautiful river called Run flowed along Khampat. The Kuki-Chin tribes have numerous songs and stories revolving around the Run.

From Khampat the tribes moved further and some of them including the Darlongs came to settle near Rili. Rili is a natural lake presently situated in Burma which is only a few kilometres east of the present Mizoram. The Darlongs tell tales and sing songs of the lake with awe because they believed that certain spirits lived there. This proves that the Darlongs had lived around the lake during their mass movement. Due perhaps, to the Pawis who often raided the other communities, they left the place and took a northern course and settled at the present Champhai of Mizoram. According to historians there are signs in support of settlement of the Darlongs in this area.

From Champhai they moved north-west and came to settle at Darlawng (Darlong) which still exists as a small village with its unchanged name on the side of NH 54 which is 20 km. South -west of Aizawl on a straight line. From this they came to settle at the present Aizawl crossing the river Tuirial (Sonai River). Historians claim that the river was named by the Darlongs. The Darlongs claim that Aizawl was named by them. It was called Aizawl because 'aihria' (*Amomum dealbatum*) a plant akin to the wild cardamom was available in plenty. Here 'Ai' stands for the plant mentioned above and 'Zawl' means a place. Hence Aizawl originally meant a place where 'aihria' was plenty.

From Aizawl the Darlongs moved further north mainly due to fear of their enemies and came to settle at a certain hill for a considerable length of time and the hill got its name from the settlers therein and came to

be known as Darlong hill situated approximately 30 km. north of Aizawl on a straight line. Perhaps from this hill the Darlongs separated into two main groups. One group moved towards the north led by the Thangur and the Palian chiefs, and the other group lesser in number moved towards the west led by the Rivung chiefs. The Darlongs entered the present Tripura from the north led by Thangur chief Hrangvunga and from the north-west led by the Palian chiefs, and from the east led by the Rivung chiefs. Probably the Rivung chiefs entered before the Thangur and the Palian chiefs. In the words of Sukhdev Chib, in his 'This Beautiful India: TRIPURA', the Darlongs now living in Tripura are said to have been led by Hrangavunga (Hrangvunga), a tribal chief i.e., *lal*. He led the party through Unukoti range while his counterpart Lianlura marched through the Longtarai (Longthrai) range. The Darlongs thus came to dominate the tract lying between Unukoti and Teliamura.

These facts are confirmed by the words of Lt. Col. J. Shakespear, 'it seems most probable that the country into which the various Thangur chiefs moved, under pressure from the Chins, was almost entirely occupied by small communities having no power of cohesion. The greater part of the small communities of the country into which the Thangurs moved were absorbed, and formed a majority of the subjects of Thangur chiefs; but some fled north and west into Manipur, Silchar, Sylhet and Tipperah where they are known as Kuki where their appearance caused much trouble.'

The Darlong elders believe that the group that moved towards the north entered the southern part of present Manipur and came to settle in the present North Cachar Hills of Assam. Mizos and Darlongs categorically call the

North Cachar Hills as 'Ngaibang Tlang', which means the mountains that takes away one's longing for home, the home being the early place of long settlement. The Darlong elders still sing a song on the Ngaibang Tlang, thus:

Ngaibang Tlangpui

A hnuai pialrem khur sunga

A mawi darlei-lawn

A chlar nghian e, which means -

Through the tunnel underneath the Ngaibang Tlang runs the train (darlei-lawn) with its harmonious chatter - how beautiful it is.

From this place they took a southernly turn and came to settle in the Sylhet district (now in Bangladesh). It may be emphasised here that it may not be correct to assume that the groups moved undivided all throughout. Because there are evidences on the entrance of the Darlongs into the present Tripura from the north as well. This was the period they conducted predatory raids into the British territory and to their neighbouring villages. These activities of the Darlongs bewildered the British authority to the extent that they tried to subdue them through the Maharaja of Tripura. But the Maharaja refused to assist the British authority because the Darlongs were in good terms with him. The Darlongs then lived in the hills and were constantly on the move. Quoting a number of secret proceedings of the year 1824, Alexander Mackenzie wrote that 'one of the Tipperah Rajahs married a daughter of Manipuri stock. This fact seemed to indicate that a means of communication did exist between these two kingdoms and Government caused efforts to discover the line of route. It was found that a road did exist but instead of passing into the interior right across the Tipperah Hills,



it ran along the outer margin of the hills on the north-west through parts of sylhet into Hylakandy, in cachar, thence through a Kuki village called Thanghum into Manipur (Secret Proceedings, 30th July, 1824, Nos. 6 & 7). There were disputes between the Cachar and Tipperah Rajahs as to the parts of Hylakandy and the Tipperah Rajah set forth claims to the allegiance of the Kukis lying south of Cachar.

Another group of Darlongs who entered Tripura from the east mainly led by the Rivungs were known to have settled at the Longtarai ranges. According to Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, the chief named Vanhnuaithangi had a large village on the longtarai Hill between the Chengri and Kassalong rivers.

From these main two places the Darlongs gradually shifted to places and came to settle in their present places of habitation. The elders clearly remember that some 40 to 50 years ago the dialect of the Darlongs living in the north had a certain degree of differences from the dialect of the south. Rapid intermixing of the Darlongs of the north and south divisions took place after they had entered Tripura and the chief clans ruled in different villages. However, in the later years the Rivungs ceased to rule due to their movement towards the Sakhan range.

### **Tripura Maharajas And the Darlong chiefs:**

The Darlong elders still recollect the sweet relationship between the Maharajas of Tripura and the Darlong chiefs. A number of the Darlong chiefs made friends with the Maharajas and won their favour. When they came to

Tripura they felt that their dreams had come true when they found that the Maharajas were in good terms with them.

In his welcome address to the Dewan, on behalf of the Lushais, Kukis and Reangs, evangelist Dr. Thanglura made the following statement on the former's visit to Fatikroy on 19th March 1931 on behalf of the Darlongs: "When we came in this land to settle, leaving our homes and country the way was far ..... and after suffering many (more) hardships and troubles we arrived in this land. But when we arrived here we found that his Highness the Maharaja and his officials were very kind to us; we were exempted from all taxes till we could easily support ourselves."

Specifically on behalf of the Darlong, Dr. Thanglura also stated, "About a century ago we came here in this part of land, we were very much favoured by his Highness the Maharaja, the ministers and the officers of the state. I am sure, our beloved minister is noticing with a painful heart that while every tribe and nation on face of the earth are increasing in number, we, his Honours' subjects in Darlong are decreasing year after year.....all these places around Kailashahar where the Kukis used to live in before, have all become now the graves of our fore-fathers .... we are enjoying full liberty and freedom under the protection of his Highness the Maharaja, and it is now becoming our second nature to live loyally to the state authorities till we are called from this world to the happier shore:

"To all the world I give my hand  
My heart I give my native land  
To seek her good her glory  
I honour every nation's name  
Respect their fortune and their fame  
But I love the land that bore me."

The early Darlongs were illiterate. They fully depended on jhoom (jhum) cultivation, and the Maharaja did not make any restriction on mass jhoom cultivation. The state had to give them gratuitous relief in cash or rice doles for months. As a result the relationship that arose out of the Tripura state's relations with British Government Forest Department of Sylhet continued as before causing a great loss of revenue to the state. In the year 1920-21 two conferences were held between the Dewan of Tripura Forest Department and the Divisional Forest Officer of Sylhet, but the two sides failed to arrive at any settlement. In 1922 Rai P.K. Das Gupta Bahadur Minister, Tripura state confessed in a letter to the political Agent, Tripura Comilla that hill families moved from one place to another and carried on cultivation on jhoom system on any waste lands in the territory with out entering into any land settlement.

The Darlongs repeatedly conducted raids into the British territory. This really developed ill feeling of the British against the Darlongs. But inspite of repeated request of the British Authority to subdue Kuki raiders, the Maharaja of Tripura did not co-operate. As per records maintained in the Tripura District Gazetteers, Krishna Kishore Manikya, the predecessor of Isanchandra, did not at all co-operate with the British authorities inspite of repeated instructions in regards to subduing the Kukis who conducted predatory raids into the British territory in 1826, 1836 and 1844 A.D. On April 16, 1844, the Darlong chief Lalsuktla conducted a raid on the Manipuri village situated at Kochabari. But the Maharaja did not take any action against the raiders. This indifferent attitude of the Maharaja displeased the British authority who concluded - "It is very clear that the authority excercised over the Kookies was more nominal

than real, for in every case we find the roads from post to post take long detours so as to pass through the plains, and not across the hills; the reasons given being always for fear of the Kookies." It was not unlikely, because in the words of Alexander Mackenzie, "It was discovered that some connection did exist between hill Tippera and these Kookies for Lal Chokla (Lalsuktla) had, it appeared, applied to the Raja to protect him against any measures of retaliation on our (British) part." And it was the Kukis who protected the Maharaja Birchandra Manikya from the Jamatias in the historic Jamatia Revolt.

After the death of Isanchandra Manikya, his son Birchandra Manikya seized the power in 1861. But in 1863, shortly after seizure of power he had to face the revolt of the Jamatias under the leadership of Parikshit. The Jamatias revolted against the Raja, stopped paying taxes and even dared to attack the royal palace at Udaipur. The Raja took the help of Darlong chief Ngursailoia and Kuki chief Haupuilala who sent 600 Kukis to fight against the Jamatias, who were only 200 in number. The Kukis were led by Chawngkuala, son of a Darlong chief, and Chanda. The Kuki soldiers fought to the last and killed all their enemies, burnt their houses and captured the rebel leader Parikshit. It is reported that 200 heads of the Jamatias were brought to Agartala by the Kukis as token of their victory, danced with them and kept hanging in terrorem. The Raja however, pardoned the rebel leader Parikshit.

The Darlong had their own administration system under the village chief during the chieftainship through the chiefs were partially under the rule and control of the Rajas. Besides, the titles of Raja and Bahdur were conferred upon them by the Tripura Raj Bahadur. From the Administration Reports of Tripura (1879--1880), it appears that the state adopted the policy of formally

conferring them the titular distinctions. Thus in 1874 one Jhoma Rajah, was made a Jung Bahadoor and in 1879 a chief name Lalja Chiya (Lalzaseia) was made a Rajah. A Kukis chief was allowed to appoint some Ujirs for different areas and with the help of the council of Ujirs, he ruled and exercised his control over the Kuki subjects under the Tripura Raja. These tribal chiefs were the sole arbitrators of their community in matters of internal administration. The ruler of Tripura seldom interfered with the internal autonomy enjoyed by the chiefs except that the latter were required to pay nominal homage to the state ruler once or twice in a year as a token dependence. The courts of the ruler had no effective jurisdiction over the tribes who could settle all their disputes and social squabbles internally under the control of the local chiefs. The declaration given here shows how the chiefs appointed the Ujirs.

### **Copy**

Chongngura Kuki of Bero Bari (Saidarbari - Gokulnagar) has been appointed as a Ujir of Bero Bari. He will see over the people of said village as well as Kuki custom and rules. He will give all necessary order of his people and will also receive all report from his people to take consideration on behalf of himself for compromise etc. according to Kuki customs.

And that he would be free from many sort of taxes as family rent and as house rent to the custom and the rule of this state.

Information has been submitted to the Divisional officer Kailashahar on the 25.8.1343 T.E.

Sd/- Illigible  
13/12

Sd/- Baja Ngursailiana  
Fatikroy Kuki Area  
13.12. 1933 A.D.

The Darlong subject paid nominal homage of Rs. 2/- (two) only in a year to the Tripura ruler as token dependence. Omesh Saigal in his book TRIPURA, writes that the Darlongs had a number of guns, which they were allowed to hold without licence. They were also exempted from paying any taxes. Reangs were not allowed to settle without the permission of the Darlong lal (chief). Another record has it that the Kukis used to pay gharchukti or kar or tax per household to the state. The old, infirm, lepers, widows, widowers were exempted. As vassals they were called upon to work for their feudal chiefs.

The Administration Reports of Tripura (1879) has it that as the chiefs did not get any rent from their people, so in their turn they did not pay any revenue to the state. Occasionally, however, they made presents of tusks and other things to the Maharajahs, and thereby acknowledge his authority.

According to Alexander Mackenzie 'the Rajah at this time had not, it would appear, any efficient control over the Kookies to the eastward. He did, indeed, lay claim to their homage and tribute, but it is doubtful whether he was strong enough to coerce any who did not choose voluntarily to give these.'

As a result of the deep-rooted friendship between the Tripura Maharaja and the Darlong chiefs, the former opened two boarding houses for the Darlongs. One boarding was attached to Christian Mission School at Arundhutinagar and another to Bijoy Kumar School. A good number of Darlong students lived in the boarding houses and received the Maharaja scholarship. Lalsiama of Deora, Vankhuma, Patdinga, Sangchuliana of Darchawi were some of the first students who lived in the boarding houses and received the Maharaja scholarship. This timely action of the Maharaja boosted the spirit of the Darlong students and it acted as a stepping stone to



fuller education to the Darlongs.

### **The Chiefs And Their Rule:**

This is the first attempt made for restoring the history of the Darlongs in general and recording on the chiefs and their rule in particular. But due to lack to records much have to be relied on the oral history told by the elders. However, in some cases some old records are available which, in other words, prove that the Darlong chiefs were of some importance during their times.

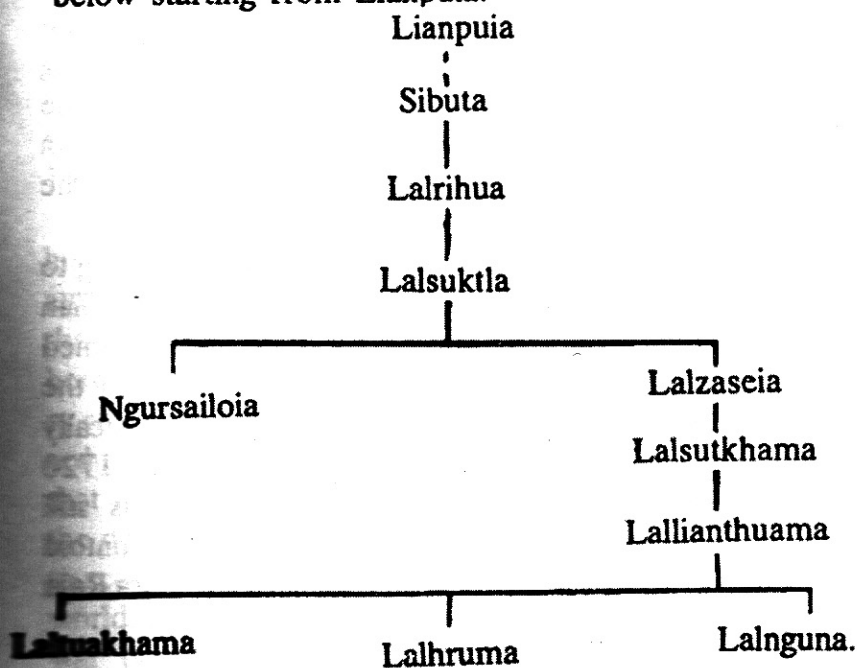
The Darlongs, like the Mizo and other Kuki-Chin tribes claim that their chiefs were descendants of a certain Thangura about whose birth they have a few stories to tell, which are both rational and irrational. Interestingly, the irrational stories win more popularity than the rational ones. However, history reveals that Zahmuaka is the father of Thangura. Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear observes that from Thangura the pedigree of all the living chiefs is fairly established. The Lusheis, in common with the Thados and other Kuki tribes, attach importance to their genealogies and pedigree given at an interval for apart, have been found to agree in wonderful manner.'

As stated above, Zahmuaka had six sons namely Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaa, Rivunga and Rokhuma. The six brothers ruled in different villages when the north country was occupied by the Sukte, Paite and Thado clans. According to Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, these appear to have been firmly established under regular chiefs ; but to the west the hills appear to have been inhabited by small communities formed largely of blood relations and probably each at feud with its neighbours. Therefore when want of good jhuming and the aggression of the eastern clans made it necessary for Thangurs to move, they naturally went westwards.

The four clans namely, the Palians, the Thangurs, the Rivungs and the Pachuais ruled among the Darlongs. The Rivungs ruled some of the Darlongs living at Longtarai for a short period of time. Hence they could not make remarkable impact and are less remembered. Brief accounts of the chief clans and their rule are given here.

### The Pallan Chiefs

Descendants of Paliana, the second son of Zahmuaka came to be known as the Palians. Lianpuia, the son of Paliana was one of the well-known chiefs of his time. His descendants gradually spread and ruled in various places. As we shall come to know, some of these chiefs were known for their cruelty whereas some others were known for their courage. Sibuta is still remembered for his cruelty and glory while Lalsuktla is remembered for his untold courage. The genealogy of the Palian is given below starting from Lianpuia.



Lianpuia is the son of Paliana who ruled around the Tiau river now under Champhai. He crossed the river Tian and ruled at Lianpui near Khualeng area from where they splitted into different branches and ruled at different places.

Sibuta, the most cruel chief of the Palian chan was known to have ruled in the latter half of the eighteenth century and was the sardar of about 25000-Paitu Kukis residing in the hills of the east and north of Tripura. He defied the allegiance of the Raja of Tripura and declared himself independent. However a section of his descendants paid taxes to the Tripura Durbar as a token of their allegiance to the Raja but other section preferred to be ruled over by the chief and hence the Raja of Tripura had no control over them.

Some historians are of the opinion that he might not have entered Tripura as his famous memorial stone still stands 13 kilometres south of Aizawl as a living witness of his ruling there. According to Rev. Liangkhaia he entered Tripura and went back to Mizoram. According to Colonel J. Shakespear, Sibuta and Lalsuklla are the best known chiefs of the Palian clan. Sibuta is said in Machenzie's 'Eastern Frontier' to have thrown off the Tipperah yoke with 25000 houses.

Many historians believe that Sibuta did not belong to Palian Clan, but he was brought up in the house of Palian chief who had no sons, but had a daughter named Darlalpuui. Others claim that he was an offspring of the ivung chief Whatever be the case, Sibuta grew physically and in knowledge. He inherited chieftainship in 1720 following the death of the (Palian) chief. He is still remembered for his successful ruling and for his untold cruelty alike. He ruled independently and the Tripura Raja had no control over him and his subjects.

He exhibited the culmination of his cruelty by killing his sister in the manner the mithuns were killed for the periodical annual feast made by the chiefs. She was punished, tortured and ultimately pierced and killed in presence of all the villagers including her mother. It is believed that he did it because Darlapuii used to humiliate him during his boyhood. The famous memorial stone of Sibuta still stands as a living witness of a chief who was dreaded and whose memory shall not fade.

Alexander Mackenzie believes that Lalrihua who lived in the present Sylhet district, was a chief of some importance. The Poitoo Kukis living there also made descents in the southern portion of Pergunnath Hylakandy and they too drove the inhabitants away from thence. The name of Lalrihua was also mentioned in connection with massacre of 1826. Alexander Mackenzie also believes that Lalrihua died in the beginning of 1844 or end of 1843, leaving his son Lalchokla (Lalsuktla) to lead his tribe. It is said that the Manipuri chief Tribonjit and his brother Ramsing caused much injury to Lalrihua. Perhaps it was to avenge the death of his father that Lalsuktla raided the Manipuri villages at Kochabari on 16th April, 1844.

Perhaps Lalsuktla made biggest fame mainly due to his undaunting courage that even worried the British authority. It is estimated that he lived somewhere near the present Gokulnagar, adjacent to the Bangladesh border. He was held responsible for a number of predatory raids into the British territory and he is best remembered for the raids of 1844. Alexander Mackenzie believes that Lalsuktla conducted the Adampore raids to avenge the death of his father Lalrihua and also to collect heads to accompany the spirit of his deceased father to the next world. Lalsuktla and his cousin Vantawia set forth on the war path towards the doomed village, the Manipuri

colony of Kochabari in Pertabgar (Pratapgarh). On the night of the 16th April, 1844, 200 savages surrounded it and amid the horror of darkness the bloody work went on, till 20 heads were secured and six captives taken.

The British authority requested the Raja of Tipperah to assist in punishing Lalsuktla and recovering the captives, as his co-operation was very unsatisfactory, the British authority felt that the step taken was manifestly inadequate to accomplish their object. As a result, a party troops assisted by a Kuki chief under the leadership of Captain Blackwood proceeded via Kailashahar on the first December 1844, to attack Lalsuktla's village, and surrounded it compelling him to surrender on fourth December. Captain Blackwood captured Lalsuktla and transported him to Hajaribagh for life imprisonment.

According to the Darlongs, Lalsuktla refused to surrender to Captain Blackwood due to his strong ego and undaunting courage, and the latter was ready to release him if he only called him 'father'. But Lalsuktla chose death to calling his enemy 'father'. Hence he was transported for life imprisonment.

Lalzaseia, son of Lalsuktla proceeded further east after his father had been captured by the British, and ruled at Zawngkhawtlang, where the present Kumarghat Block office stands. The Palian and the Thangur chiefs ruled in the present north district of Tripura in good terms and with relative success.

Ngursailoia, another son of Lalsuktla also ruled and he became well-known particularly due to his marriage with Vanhnuaithangi, sister of Suakpuilala a Sailo chief in the last part of 1861 or early part of 1862. According to Alexander Mackenzie, the Adampore raid was made on 22nd January 1862 on the occasion of the marriage between Ngursailoia and Vanhnuaithangi. In 1863 four

women who had been carried away and who managed to escape were known to have stated that the raid had been led by Ngursailoia, Hrangvunga and Lalhuliana. The first was the son of Lalsuklla; the second was the Sailo chief said to live on the banks of the Dullesurri, and was virtually independent, the other two were related in some way to Ngursailoia. It was also stated that Ngursailoia was an actual subject of the Rajah of Tipperahh and was on good terms with him.

Due to the wedlock, Ngursailoia and Suakpuilala became friends and the latter kept his brother-in-law supplied with muskets. But things did not remain the same. According to the Darlong elders Vanhnuaithangi's barrenness acted as a big wedge between the spouses and they separated ultimately. Vanhnuaithangi returned to her brother's house taking with her some families out of 50 families her brother sent to accompany her during her marriage. This poisoned the relationship between the two chiefs. Besides, Alexander Mackenzie observes that on the occasion of the marriage the Adampore raid was made. They did not know the village belonged to the Sirkar, and wanted to make up price of the bride. Suakpuilala and Ngursailoia had since quarrelled.

The Tripura Maharaja Birchandra Manikya took the help of Darlong chief Ngursailoia and Haupuilala a Kuki chief in subduing the Jamatias who revolted against him. The two chiefs sent 600 Kukis to fight against the Jamatias who were only 200 in number. They fought to the last and killed all the enemies and captured the rebel leader Parikshit and brought him to the Maharaja.

Lalsutkhama, son of Lalzaseia ruled at Zawngkha-wtlang and shifted to the north in the later days. He was declared Raja Bahadur by the Maharaja Manikya Bahadur on 24th October, 1922 in the Garden Party at 5 p.m. The Lushai chief Dokhuma Sailo was also declared as

Raja Bahadur on the same day. The two Raja Bahadurs were awarded with costly gifts in the form of a pair of swords, costumes, ornaments and Rs. 350/- each. Hrangvunga Sailo and Ngursailiana (Darlong chief) were also declared as Rajas by the Minister on behalf of the Maharaja. The tribal chiefs were invited by the Maharaja to celebrate his birthday which fell on 23rd October, 1922.

Lalsutkhama married Kungpuii, sister of Ngursailiana. Perhaps due to the marriage, the two chiefs became friends till their last days. The Darlong elders still recollect the days of Lalsutkhama who enjoyed making competitions with the Maharaja in the form of friendly entertainment and also for he being the most handsome man of his time, for his knowledge in Meitei dialect and his dexterity. In his later days he shifted to Talan and died there.

Lallianthuama, son of Raja Bahadur Lalsutkhama, ruled at Sertlang and Belkumbari, and died at Muruai. His eldest son Laltuakhama ruled for some years at Belkumbari and his power came to an end some time in 1940's when the Darlongs refused to acknowledge power of the chiefs following the coming of democracy to the Indian Union and due to formation of Village Council. Now Lalnguna is the only survivor of the brothers and is living at Deora.

It may be mentioned here that due to unknown reasons the Darlongs know the Palian chiefs as Thangurs and the chiefs themselves claim to be so. As a result most of the Darlong elders are not aware of the fact that there is a chief clan called Palian. However, as the names suggest, Palians and Thangurs are distinctly different from each other. Their genealogy recorded by the early writers prove the undisputed difference. Hence, how the Palians in Darlong have claimed to be Thangurs is still



unknown.

A Rivung chief Ngursunga also ruled at Gokulnagar and he was the contemporary of Lalzaseia. He had a son named, Vana who had no issue. Hence the rule of the Rivungs came to an end, and the other Rivungs migrated to Sakhan Hills which they still occupy. Some Darlong elders can still speak the dialect of the Rivung chiefs which was known as 'Chungtlang tawng' (or dialect of the highlanders) which can be Placed somewhere between the present Lushei and Darlong Languages.

### The Pachuais:

The Pachuais ruled among the Darlongs in places where there were no the main ruling clans and that too for a short period of time. Like many other clans, the Pachuais, both Chuaingoi and Chuaihang entered Tripura from the North. But there is no record, orally or otherwise about the Chuaihangs, and their rule. However, Vanpuilala, a descendant of Tulera, a Chuaingoi chief, proved to be a chief of some importance during his rule.

During his rule at Lungtian, in Chipui Thang (range) he made a record feast by slaughtering one hundred young mithuns which incurred the bitter envy of other chiefs. As a result, a Palian chief named Lalchungnunga challenged Vanpuilala and started collecting young mithuns for a grand feast that should surpass that of his rival's. But he failed to accomplish the work because the mithuns matured before they numbered a hundred. He made friendship with the Maharaja of Tripura and got an elephant from him in exchange of five mithuns. He killed the elephant along with the herdsman and became better known and respected than Vanpuilala. On his praise they sang, thus-

"Se za suna e Vanpui thang hmasa,

Kawrsai sun Lalngo a chungnung a.

This means, "Famous is Vanpuia who slaughtered a hundred mithuns, but more famous is Lalchungnunga who slaughtered the elephant."

According to Alexander Mackenzie, Suakpuilala and Vanpuilala were supposed to be the chiefs implicated in the Cachar raids. Vanpuilala was also known to have sent embassy to Cachar asking help against Lalpitari, a chief to the west, and against the Pawis who were pressing on him from the south. Assistance was of course declined.

Vanpuilala left his place and stationed himself at Talan where he died. His memorial stone erected by his wife still stands as a living witness of the rule of the Pachuais. This memorial stone is known as 'Tarnu Lungphun' by the Darlongs which means 'monolith erected by the old lady.'

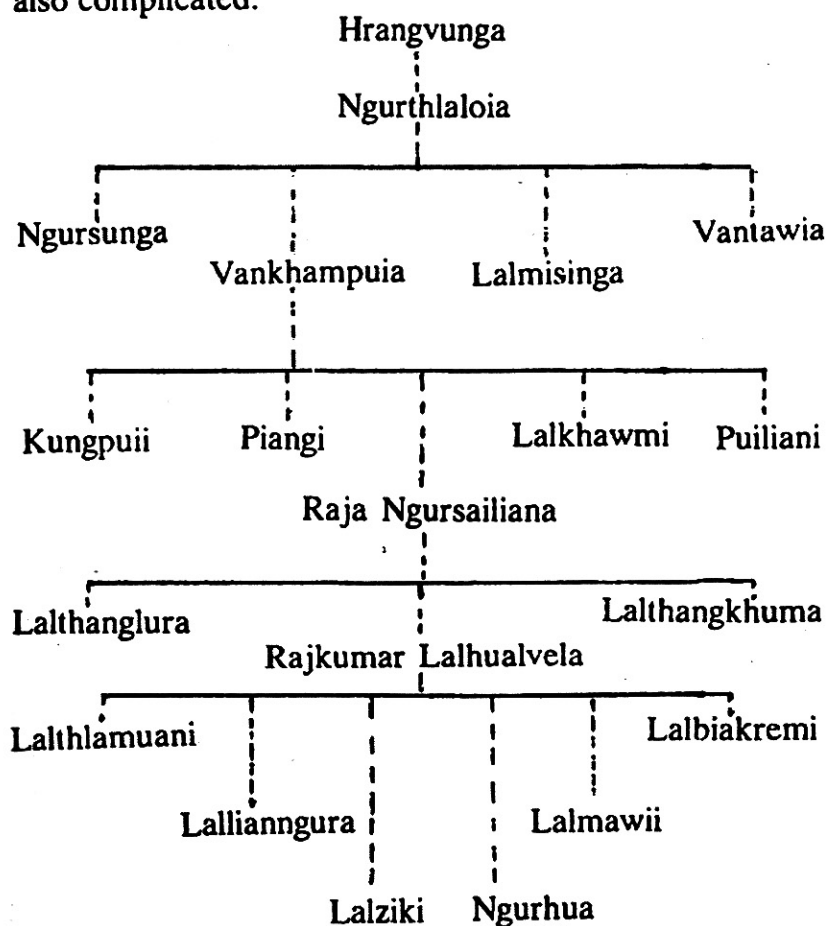
After the death of Vanpuilala some of his descendants went back to Mizoram, while others remained near and around Talan. His descendant, Neiliana ruled for sometime and died at Hmuntha-Serhmun on 15th August, 1956. Some of the remaining Pachuais came under the main chief clans, the Palians and, the Thangurs and they continued to act as Ujirs and tax collectors during the rule of the Maharaja.

### **The Thangur chiefs:**

Descendants of Thangura the fourth son of Zahmuka came to be known as Thangurs. Thangura has become a very popular and important person in the history of the Darlongs, because he is the first known chief to them. But inspite of his popularity, historians have not been able to come to a concensus in regards to the period Thangura lived in. Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear estimates that Thangura might have lived early in the eighteenth century.

However, based on the long genealogy of his descendants, I believe that Thangura might have lived in the early part of the seventeenth century.

Most of the present Darlongs know the Thangurs to be their only chiefs. However, it has been established that both the Palians and the Thangurs were the chiefs of the Darlongs. The early writers Liangkhaia and Zahmuaka agreed that the Palians are the Darlong chiefs (rulers). As stated earlier, due to unknown reasons the Palians have been mistaken for the Thangurs to the extent that establishing their genealogy has become not only difficult but also complicated.



Due to this fact the achievement of the Palians have also been attributed to the Thangurs. There is no doubt about the fact that the Thangurs and the Palians had been close to each other and were in good terms. But this fact has been misrepresented by way of accepting the Palians as Thangurs. The genealogy of the Thangurs given here will prove that the Palians and the Thangurs were two separate chief clans.

The Darlong elders can trace the genealogy of the Thangurs upto Hrangvunga. It is probable that Hrangvunga is the one who led the Darlongs from Unokoti to Longtarai range as stated by S. Barkataki in his book the TRIPURA.

The Darlongs elders can not tell much about the achievement of Ngurthlaloia and Vankhampua. However, they know much about Ngursailiana the son of Vankhampua. Vankhampua is believed to have ruled in Kailashahar for a short period. Perhaps he died an early death. Raja Ngursailiana ruled in two Darlong villages namely, Tlangte Khua with 40 houses and Talan with 30 houses from the early part of 1920's. He is known to have been considerate to the first Christians though he had to drive them out from his village due to the strong pressure he received from the non-Christian elders.

Raja Ngursailiana had two wives namely, Chawngdingliani and Zawnliani. He died at Talan in 1940 shortly after the death of his wife Chawngdingliani. After the death of her husband Zawnliani was left with her three children namely, Lalthanglura, Lalhualvela and Lalthangkhuma, who had not attained the required age to succeed their father. As a result of this Zawnliani conferred power of attorney upon Shri Gopalananda Bharati, the disciple of Bholananda Bharati as none of her children could be conferred the power upon. In August 1943,

under Gazette Notification Vol. XXII, No.9 Rani Zawnliani withdrew and cancelled the power conferred upon Shri Gopalananda Bharati as her children had attained maturity and declared that henceforth she and her children were not going to be under the power and control of Shri Gopalananda Bharati. Raja Ngursailiana was known to have a good relationship with the Maharaja.

Lalhualvela succeeded his father from 1943. He was conferred the Rajkumar title by the Maharaja and hence he came to be known as Rajkumar Lalhualvela. He ruled at Darchawi for a short period. His power came to an end in 1945 or so mainly due to adoption of Democracy and enforcement of Village Council.

The above brief account will prove that the Darlong chiefs had been able to make their presence felt, though they lived mainly in the highlands. Their undaunting courage, selfless sacrifice and their sweet relationship with the Maharajas of Tripura will be ever remembered by the generations to come.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PRESENT HABITATION

It is a known fact that the Darlongs now live only in Tripura and that too confined only within the north district. They live in 22 villages and build their stilted houses on the gentle slope of the hills. Lately modern and more developed houses have come up on the levelled land but till date most of the houses find their place in the gentle slopes.

History reveals that the Darlongs once lived somewhere in the south west china. Successive waves of migration compelled them to leave their original home before they came to settle in their present habitation. During migration, the Darlongs lived in a village for six to seven years and moved again, either in search of better jhum fiels or out of fear of their enemies. They had their own village administration run by the village elders headed by the chief to deal with the community affairs.

As they entered the present Tripura, they came to settle at various places within the north district of the state. Omesh Saigal observes that the Darlongs occupied the area from Teliamura to Unokuti under two chiefs, and that Kailashahar a sub-division town was previously known as Kulasor after the name of Kula the son of a Darlongs lal (chief). According to Sukhdev Chib the

Maharaja offered an extensive area of land to the Darlongs which covered the entire Fatikray area and extended beyond it. The schedule of the area is as given below:

South (Sim) - upto Lianlura Lungdaw (monolith), Longtarai.

North (Hmar) - Unokuti (Belkum range).

East (Sualam) - Hmuntha village.

West (Tlaklam) - Tarnu Lungdaw (monolith of the old lady), Talan.

Majority of the Darlong appeared to have lived mainly in the Kailashahar sub-division. Dr. Thanglura, an evangelist, on behalf of the Darlongs stressed on this point in his welcome address to the Dewan on the latter's visit to Fatikroy on 19-03-1931 and said, "..... all these places around Kailashahar where we the Kukis (Darlongs) used to live before, they all become now the graves of our fore-fathers. But neither do we desire nor want to leave this cemetery of our fore-fathers..... we are enjoying full liberty and freedom under the protection of his Highness the Maharaja, and it is now becoming our second nature to live loyally to the state authorities till we are called from this world to the happier shore."

The Darlongs live in the 'bials' (divisions) Hmar bial and Sim bial meaning North and South divisions respectively and each division has eleven Darlong villages. But the villages of the South-Division are larger hence they have more Darlong population than the north division. **author** of 'This beautiful India: TRIPURA, in the 1920's **the** town was inhabited by the Darlongs barring a few **Bengalis**. Till date the Darlong elders still call the town **as** Kulasor and the bazar as Kulasor bazar. Further they **still** tell tales about the famous Kula who was known for his bravery. The Darlong elders also claim that the



North Division		South Division	
Village	No.of houses.	Village	No.of houses.
Pipla	6	Talan	27
Boitang	80	Darchawi	153
Khalaigiri	28	Serhmun	24
Sertlang	31	Hmuntha	16
Depa	18	Nazareth	4
Muruai	49	Betsora	98
Deora	104	Kanchan	47
Tuingoi	53	Nalkata	53
Darser	28	Old Katal	51
Khawhreng	33	New Katal	51
Jamthla	11	Saikar	41

The Darlongs now live in four sub-divisions within the north district of Tripura. The sub-division-wise distribution of Darlong villages is as given below:

1. Dharmanagar : Two villages, viz., Pipla and Boitang.
2. Kailashahar: Fifteen villages, viz., Khalaigiri, Sertlang, Depa, Muruai, Deora, Tuingoi, Darser, Khawhreng, Jamthla, Talan, Darchawi, Hmuntha, Serhmun, Nazareth, Betsora.
3. Longtarai Valley.: Four villages, viz., Kanchan, Nalkata, Old Katal, New Katal, and
4. Kamalpur : One village, viz., Saikar.

Most of the villages are close to each other and each village is a compact clustered village. Sometime it becomes difficult to tell whether the houses belong to one or two, or more families. A compact clustered village has more than one advantages, where anybody knows everybody. This knowledge gives the people the feeling of brotherhood, and the feeling of being related even when

they are not actually related. As a result of this fellow feeling there prevail good understanding and the spirit of co-operation. Hence at the shout of the village 'tlangva' (crier) they all come out, for a community work or for a meeting as the case may be.

No village is an island because the Hnam Committee (Highest Body of authority of the community), other socio-cultural and the religious organisations are always taking active part for the welfare of the society and for higher spiritual achievement. So no matter where a Darlong lives, he neither forgets his people nor his place of birth for they are in his blood now.

Population:

The Darlong elders enjoy telling tales of the past days when a Darlong village had a thousand or more houses, and about their strength and power. This might sound more like a fairy tale than a fact, when centuries after, the Darlongs live in 1003 houses with a population of 5890. But one should not be carried over by this notion, without first looking another side of the coin.

1. The historians are of the one opinion that the Darlongs in large number with other five tribes moved ahead in fear of their enemies-the Paites, the Suktes and the Pawis, and come to settle at Darlong tlang (hill) which still stands as a witness to the fact, and that a good number of valuable articles left by the Darlongs have been discovered. The elders describe the number of the Darlongs of those days as 'raisawk sirsatka', that is to say that their number was so much that as they marched towards the Darlong tlang (hill) they broke a raisawk (a species of cane) by trampling which was lying one their way.

2. This may still sound vague. Let us now see what Dr. Thanglura the then evangelist said on behalf of the Darlongs in his welcome address to the Dewan on the latter's visit to Fatikroy on 19-03-1931. He said, "I am

sure our beloved Minister is noticing with a painful heart that while every tribe and nation on the face of the earth are increasing in number, we his honour's subjects in Darlong are decreasing year after year. There was a time when we were a thousand houses in a village and our population in those days was several thousands. But today I presume it will be very good if there are more than three hundred houses with population over fifteen hundred in Darlong."

In support of the above observations the following points may be taken into consideration.

a. At present there are no less than 54 clans under Darlong. Some of these have a reasonably good number of people while others have relatively very less. And the elders can trace not less than four past generations of each family as a social requirement particularly for the knowledgeable. Hence it is in no way possible for anyone to change his clan unless it was sanctioned by the chief and his council under special circumstances. Hence the number of the clans itself suggest that the people were large in number.

b. As already discussed in the foregoing chapter, the Darlongs came to settle in this land through a long route of migration. They came in contact with various tribes, and at places they mingled with them. Hence it is quite probable that some have been left behind, who now have come to identify themselves by different names.

c. The Darlongs still remember with a painful heart the killing diseases that claimed lives of their loved ones. The killing diseases like cholera, poxes, fever swept and rendered many villages without population. They made their periodical appearance and killed the people ruthlessly. The overall Indian census shows some fluctuation in the population growth particularly prior to 1921. The Darlongs marked the period 1911-1921 as a bad period when the killing diseases claimed lives of their

loved ones. In the Indian census the decennial decrease in the population was -3 lakhs with -0.30% decrease during the decade. Such was the impact of the killing diseases which claimed the lives of the Darlongs who had no idea about basic hygiene. Besides, unlike other tribal groups the Darlongs did not know much medicine to combat the killing diseases with.

d. During their time of 'survival for the fittest', to ensure better safety for themselves they had to adopt the hardest game, headhunting which in the later days turned into a social practice, for the men to prove their manhood. In the inter-tribal rivalry life was totally insecure. They killed, they died and they decreased in number.

3. In 1994 the Darlongs numbered 5890. It is difficult to tell what was their number in the past decades, as the Darlongs have not been listed separately in the Govt. Census. It appears from the census report that 'till 1921 the Luseis of Tripura were also included under the Kukis. But in 1931 census report, Thakur Samendra Chandra Debbarma made a clear-cut demarcation between the Lusheis and the Darlongs-Kukis' observes the authors of the 'Lusheis of Jampui Hills in Tripura.'

#### Hmar Bial or North Division.

##### Population

Name of village	No.of house	Male	Female	Grand Total
Pipla	6	13	25	256
Boitang	80	199	186	385
Khalaigiri	28	87	74	160
Sertlang	31	89	64	154
Depa	18	48	45	93
Muruai	49	166	156	322
Deora	104	356	280	636
Tuingoi	53	149	158	307
Darser	28	78	80	158
Khawhreng	33	81	79	160
Jamthla	11	42	43	85
	441	1308	1177	2485

Sim Bial or South Division  
Population

Name of Village	No.of houses	Male	Female	Grand total
Talan	27	68	58	126
Darchawi	153	485	470	957
Serhmun	24	79	73	152
Hmuntha	16	34	42	76
Nazareth	4	11	12	23
Betsora	98	309	293	602
Kanchan	47	151	153	304
Nalkata	48	124	128	252
Old Katal	53	184	178	362
New Katal	51	162	133	295
Saika	41	139	117	256
	562	1747	1657	3405

The above figures are based on a census conducted by the author in the month of April, 1994.

The Darlongs constitute 0.2% and 0.69% of the total population of Tripura and total tribal population of Tripura respectively. There are 928 females per one thousand males, with the average family members of 5.8.

Though a high percentage of the population depends on agriculture activities, the representation of the Darlongs in the government services is very good if not the best. Some well established farmers have been able to impart higher level of education to their children. Today the Darlongs have one Class-I officer for every 390 persons and within a few years they will have one Doctor for every 1078 persons. So far the representation of the Darlongs in the Government services, particularly in the teaching profession has been highly satisfactory.

Some Darlongs have been able to make commendable achievement in the world of sports as well. Lalhminga of Darchawi has been captain of the well-known football team, Blue Max in Shillong, Hnamsiama of Kanchan is

a gold medalist in the All India Junior Athletics in 100 metre sprint and the Darlong Football and Volleyball players are in high demand all over the state of Tripura. They prove to be good students some have won laurels in the university examinations, who now strive for better education and fuller development of their people.

## CLAN SYSTEM

From time immemorial, the Darlong had their own clan system. Before chieftainship, seven clans of the tribe were incharge of local administration. The seven clans were - 1. Chawngkal, 2. Chawnnel 3. Invang, 4. Rante, 5. Tlukte, 6. Tualngen and 7. Fenkawi. This clans continued to assist the chiefs during the chieftainship.

Thangura was the first known chief of the Darlongs. There are a good number of stories on how the first chief was born. Some of the stories are rational while others are not. Here I do not intend to venture on how Thangura was born. Instead I intend to prove who the Darlongs are in the light of the clan system which is strongly prevalent to this day. I find that the present Darlong tribe consists of various clans and sub-clans of the Kuki-Chin tribes, mainly those of the Hmars and the Mizos.

There are not less than 54 clans under the Darlong tribe, and it is not possible to conclude how many clans there were prior to the chieftainship. However, it is obvious that prior to chieftainship the clans were divided into two main categories - the ruling clans i.e., the seven clans listed above and, the non-ruling clans. During the chieftainship, the Darlong clans were divided into three main categories: 1. The Chief clans. 2. The Nusum Farual clans and 3. Lalchi Loi clans. Each category is briefly described below:

1. The Chief clans: The Palian, the Thangur and the Pachuai clans are the ruling clans of the Darlong tribe. The Palians and the Thangurs got their names from Paliana and Thangura, the second and fourth sons of Zahmuaka. According to the Darlongs, the Pachuai (Pachua in Mizo) clan got its name from a Palian chief Chuailala in the same manner the Sailo clan got its name from Sailova, a grand son of Thangura. The Pachuai clan consists of two sub-clans - the Chuaingoi and the Chuaihang (Chuaungo and Chuauhang in Mizo) clans. The chiefs of these ruling clans ruled among the Darlongs in different villages till 1940 or so.

2. The Nusum Parual Clans: The Nusum Parual clans are the ruling clans immediate subordinate to the chief clans. The Nusum Parual clans are : 1. Rante, 2. Tlukte, 3. Chawngkal, 4. Chawnnel. 5. Invang, 6. Tualngen, 7. Fenkawi, 8. Lawnte, 9. Hnamte, 10. Lungtai, 11. Tlangsasuan 12. Saite 13. Saivate, 14. Hmaisak, 15. Vanghroi, 16. Hawlzang, 17. Buangpui, 18. Khawhreng, 19. Chungtlang and 20. Biate.

The first seven clans continued to assist the chiefs in the village administration during the chieftainship as advisors and secretaries. The rest of the Nusum Parual clans confederated themselves with a common object of supporting the chiefs in all matters.

3. Lalchi Loi: The term 'Lalchi Loi' literally means non-chief clans. The clans are : 1. Sangate, 2. Puiloi, 3. Bawlte, 5. Bawng, 6. Betlu, 7. Ngawn, 8. Kangbur. 9. Thiak, 10. Sawngkhar, 11. Paitu, 12. Chawngthu. 13. Vangkal. 14. Laitui and 15. Tualte.

I feel that it is absolutely necessary to mention here that the above lists are not complete because a good number of clans have not been included. It is possible that some clans are comparatively new in the Darlong society,



if not all, because of which they did not find place in the list. These non-chief clans united themselves to contend with the chief and his immediate subordinate clans in time of any dispute or injustice done to any of the member of the non-chief clans.

Much can be said about the power and authority of the chiefs whose words were final. Once I wondered why the people did not raise objections if the chief was overexerting his authority upon them. I have found the answer to my question from the clan system. It appears that the chiefs diplomatically consiliated the clans in charge of local administration, and those with better profession and better social status to be on their side and to support each other in all matters. Over and above this, there are more clans on the side of the chiefs than on their counterpart. This system prevailed when might was right. As a result the right who had no might were often subdued.

However, in the later days the chiefs became more conscious of the sentiment of their vassals and did not dispense justice by themselves without consulting the elders. This served as a check on the despotic tendency of the chiefs in the locality.

It is interesting to note that most of the present Darlong clans are either clans or sub-clans of the Hmar or Mizo or both. The following table clearly reflects that.

The Darlong clans/Clan/Sub-clans of Hmar/Mizo

1	Bawlte	Bawlte, a sub-clan of Hmar, Bualte, a Mizo clan
2.	Betlu	Betlu, Mizo clan and a sub-clan of Hmar.
3.	Biate	Biete, a Hmar clan, Biate, Mizo clan.
4.	Buangpui	Buongpui, a Hmar sub-clan.
5.	Bawng:	Bawng, a Hmar clan.
	a. Thirthu	
	b. Thlangreng	
	c. Sialchal	
	d. Hreiha	

- |     |                  |   |
|-----|------------------|---|
| 6.  | Chawngthu        | Chawngthu, a Mizo clan and a Hmar sub-clan.         |
| 7.  | Chante           | Chawnate, a Mizo sub-clan; Chamte, a Hmar sub-clan. |
| 8.  | Chawnnel         | Chawnnel, a Hmar sub-clan.                          |
| 9.  | Chawngkal        | Chenkual, a Mizo clan.                              |
| 10. | *Darte.          |   |
| 11. | Ngawn (Darngawn) | Darngawn, a Hmar clan and Mizo clan.                |
| 12. | Invang           | Invang, a sub-clan of Hmar.                         |
| 13. | Hnamte           | Hnamte, Mizo clan, Hmar sub-clan.                   |
| 14. | Hawlzang         | Hawnzong, Hmar sub-clan.                            |
| 15. | Hauhnar          | Hauhnar, Mizo clan.                                 |
| 16. | Hrangchal        | Hrangchal, Hmar clan.                               |
| 17. | *Hmaisak         |   |
| 18. | Hmante           | Hmante, a Hmar sub-clan.                            |
| 19. | Khawhreng:       | Khawhkring, Hmar sub-clan; Khawhreng, a Mizo clan.  |
|     | a. Baite         |   |
|     | b. Saite         |   |
|     | c. Ngante        |   |
|     | d. Sialchal      |   |
|     | e. Tlaizang      |   |
|     | F. Hunhring      |   |
|     | g. Tlungur       |   |
| 20. | Khualtu          | Khualtu, an old Lushei clan.                        |
| 21. | Kangbur          | Kangbur, a Hmar clan.                               |
| 22. | *Lawnte          |   |
| 23. | Laihring         | Laihring, a Hmar sub-clan.                          |
| 24. | *Luakhua         |   |
| 25. | Laitui           | Laitui, a Hmar sub-clan.                            |
| 26. | *Lungtai         |   |
| 27. | Pachuai          | Pachuau, a Mizo clan.                               |
| 28. | Chuaingoi        | Chuaungo, a Mizo clan.                              |
| 29. | Chuaihang        | Chuahang, a Mizo clan.                              |
| 30. | Puilo:           | Puilo, a Hmar clan.                                 |
|     | a. Infim.        |   |
|     | b. Inthai        |   |
|     | c. Khualtu       |   |
|     | d. Khualhring    |   |
|     | e. Sorte         |   |
|     | f. Bawl.         |   |
|     | g. Thuamte.      |   |
| 31. | Paitu/ Pautu     | Pialtu, a Mizo sub-clan, Pielu, a Hmar sub-clan.    |

- |     |                |   |
|-----|----------------|---|
| 32. | Rante:         | Ralte, a Mizo clan.                               |
|     | a. Vancheng    |   |
|     | b. Selawn      |   |
|     | c. Taibel      |   |
| 33. | Ruankhum       | Rokhum, a Mizo clan.                              |
| 34. | * Sorgkhar     |   |
| 35. | Saivate        | Saivate, Hmar/Mizo sub-clan.                      |
| 36. | * Selawn       |   |
| 37. | Sangate:       | Chhangte, Mizo clan; Songate, Hmar Sub-clan.      |
|     | a. Kawmsena    |   |
|     | b. Singsima    |   |
|     | c. Khuksima    |   |
| 38. | * Salawnte     |   |
| 39. | Siate          | Siete, a Hmar clan, Siakte, a Mizo clan.          |
| 40. | Saite          | Saite, a Hmar clan.                               |
| 41. | Taksawn        | Tochhawng, a Mizo clan.                           |
| 42. | Tlangte        | Tlangte, a Hmar sub-clan.                         |
| 43. | Tualte         | Tuolte, a Hmar sub clan; Tualte, a Mizo sub-clan. |
| 44. | Thangur        | Thangur, a Mizo clan.                             |
| 45. | Tlängsasuan    |   |
| 46. | Tlungur        | Tlungur, a Hmar sub-clan.                         |
| 47. | Thiak          | Thiek, a Hmar clan.                               |
| 48. | Tualngen       | Tualngul, a Hmar sub-clan.                        |
| 49. | Tlukte:        | Tlukte, Hmar and Mizo clan.                       |
|     | a. Leiran      |   |
|     | b. Tualte      |   |
| 50. | Vangkal        | Vankal, a sub-clan of Hmar.                       |
| 51. | Varte          | Varte, a sub-clan of Hmar.                        |
| 52. | Zate           | Zate, a sub-clan of Hmar.                         |
| 53. | Zongte         | Zongte, a clan of Mizo.                           |
| 54. | Vanghroi:      | Vanghroi, a sub-clan of Hmar.                     |
|     | a. Thlawchonga |   |
|     | b. Zema        |   |
|     | c. Pialtu      |   |

\* Similar clans/sub clans not found under Mizo/Hmar.

The list shows that a good number of the Darlong clans fall under the clans or sub-clans of the Hmar Tribe because the Hmars claim and treat a good number of the Kuki-Chin tribes or sub-tribes as their sub-tribes. For instance, Betlu and Puiloi at serial No. 2 and 30 are clans of Biate (Biete in Hmar) sub-tribe, and Bawng at Serial

No. 5 is under Chawrai sub-tribe. Hence the list is given on the view point of the Hmars. So opinions are bound to differ on whether these tribes or sub-tribes are really part of the Hmars. However, it is obvious that similarities of the clans suggest that all these tribes or sub-tribes were but one and the same in the historical past.

However this comparison cannot be used as an inference to draw a hasty conclusion that the Darlongs are Hmars or Mizos. Because the recent divisions coupled with geographical barriers and distinct socio-cultural practices have grown to an obstacle to the popular theme - Reunification or Unification. Hence the Darlongs of Tripura recognise themselves as Darlong tribe which has not less than 54 clans.

Besides the above listed clans of the Darlongs, there are some more clans I found to be uncommon to the sub-clans and clans of Hmar/Mizo. They are (Chhakchhuak) Chungtlang, Fenkawi, Hmaisak, Lungtai, Luakhua, Sawngkhar, Salawnte, Selawn, and Tlangsasuan. Some Darlongs also use their sub-clans such as Bawlte-Vanghrawi, Khualtu-Puiloi, Lawnte-Selawn, Thirthu-Bawng, Hreiha-Bawng, Pautu-Puiloi, and Tlangte-Selawn.

From the above list of common clans and sub-clans, we may conclude that the Hmars, the Lushais and the Darlongs and other Kuki-Chin tribes were but one at one point of time in the historical past. The present divisions such as the Mizo, Kuki, Hmar, Biate, Darlong etc. are recent. In the same way the Darlongs call the Hmars and the Mizos as Hmar and Khawsak meaning the northerners or uplanders (in relation to their own situation and altitude of habitation) respectively, many Kuki-Chin tribes also got names of their tribe and clans from the places they had lived in or from the situation of a place in relation to their neighbouring areas.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LANGUAGE

The language spoken by the Darlongs is called 'Darlong tawng' or 'Hriam tawng', and 'tawng' means language or dialect. The language is assimilable to the languages of the Hmars, Mizos, and various tribes of the Halam-Kuki communities. All these dialects belong to the Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. The language of the Darlongs has undergone various stages of changes, doubtless, through contact with other tribes. The present 'Darlong tawng' is closer to those of the Hmars and the Mizos than any of the tribes mentioned above. The Darlong folk songs transpire that Darlong language was both a part of the Hmar and Lushei languages. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Darlongs understand more of the languages of the Hmars and the Lusheis, whereas the latter understand less of the language of the former's:

Thlite hrang vil vial

Min hnem rawh-2

Hmanlai nun hlui

Vangkhua chul tawh ka ngai e

Ka ngaih Hmansiali di awmna.

And,

Thlipui e a tleh ni chun tlangah

Siahthing a her tliah e;

Vala e ka thah ni chun ngawvar

Siahthing ka her tliah e

(Please find the meanings of the songs in Chapter NINE)

The Darlongs still sing these songs which they claim to be their own and tell stories about the origin of the songs, and why the songs were composed. The language of the song is worth noting - it is the present day Lushei language. This is important, because this tells a lot about the history of the tribe.

At a certain stage, some of the Darlongs also used 'Chungtlang tawng' which means dialect of the highlanders. The dialect could be placed some where between the present Lushei and Darlong languages. The dialect was widely used till 1940's particularly in the southern division. Now the dialect is known only to a few old people.

The Darlongs did not have any written language before the coming of the missionaries in 1917. Educational institutions and Roman script, with a phonetic form of spelling based on the well-known Hunterian system were introduced to the Darlongs by the Mizo evangelists in their Mizo Medium Schools in the Darlong villages. Pastor Tuakunga of Muruai recollects that the Darlong students used to write letters only in Lushei language. Thus:

"Ka pa duh tak,

I dam chuan ka lawm e: Kei pawh ka dam e, etc.

I fapa duh tak

.....Kuki."

This means, "Dear father, If you are fine I am happy. I am fine too, etc. Yours affectionate son,.....Kuki." The missionaries however, insisted that they should write 'Darlong' in place of 'Kuki' as their history revealed that they were Darlongs, and not Kukis.

The first schools in Darlong villages were established in 1926, and in 1940 four boys and three girls were sent outside the state for study. This way, slowly yet, steadily

the Darlongs learnt the Roman scripts, mainly as adopted from the Lushei language. The scripts remain, but the language has developed.

### A: An outline of Grammar:

In 1952, Johana Darlong published a booklet appropriately named 'Abul Bu' which means Book for the Beginners. The book has the scripts, thus :

A	a.....	LiKe u in English word sun and undone, but often rather longer when at the end of the syllable.
AW	Aw.....	Like o in English words pot, on, ox etc.
B	b.....	As in English.
Ch	ch.....	As in English chop. (c is never used in Darlong without h).
D	d.....	As in English, but pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the teeth.
E	e.....	Like e in the English words tell, ell.
F	f.....	As in English.
G	g.....	Used as initial letter in foreign words. It is then pronounced like g in English word gun.
NG	ng.....	The combined ng is pronounced like the ng in the English word sing.
H	h.....	Like h in English word home.
I	i.....	Like i in the English words sit, it.
J	j.....	Like j in the English words jar, jean.



K	k.....	As in English.
L	l.....	As in English.
M	m.....	As in English.
N	n.....	As in English.
O	o.....	Like o in the English words no, so.
P	p.....	As in English.
R	r.....	Like r in the English word rock.
S	s.....	Like s in the English word sip.
T	t.....	Pronounced with the tongue touching teeth.
Ṭ	t.....	Pronounced with the tongue touching roof of the mouth.
U	u.....	Like u in the English word full, and oo in English word took.
V	v.....	As in English.
Z	z.....	As in English.

A circumflex is put on A, Aw, E, I and U to give long sounds when necessary to distinguish them from the short ones.

We may observe the following characteristics of the Darlong language.

1. Both simple and complex sentences are used.
2. All parts of speech- Noun, Pronoun, Adjective, Verb, Adverb, Preposition, Conjunction and Interjection are used, However, preposition comes after a noun or pronoun to show the relation in which the person or thing denoted by the noun stands to something else. Hence this may also be called Postposition.
3. Articles: The indefinite articles are generally rendered by numeral 'one' or by simple mention of names of the objects. The indefinite articles are presented by demonstrative pronouns such as 'ma' (this, that), 'khu' (that down there), etc.

4. Genders: Inanimate objects do not have gender. In nouns gender may be shown by suffixing different words such as 'a' (pa, and 'i', 'nu', for male and female respectively. This system is only employed when speaking of human beings. Suffixes 'chal', 'tlang', 'khawng' are employed to grown-up male animals and 'pui' is employed for grown-up female animals e.g., 'schrat clal' (bull), 'uitlang' (dog), 'arkhawng' (cock) and 'uipui' (bitch), 'arpui' (hen). All male names end in 'a' and all female names end in 'i'. Some words are the same in both genders e.g., 'u', elder brother or sister, 'naite' a baby.

5. Numbers: The plural terminations are formed by suffixing, 'hei', 'rual', 'pawl,' 'zawng zawng' etc. for instance,

Lalhei lal..... King of kings.

Angel rual..... Host of angels  
or angels.

Thalai Pawl..... The youths.

Mi zawng zawng..... All mankind.

These terminations are omitted when the numbers are otherwise inferred by adding numerals:

Lal inthumka..... Three kings.

Lekhabu tamka ke nei..... I have many books.

6. Case: Nouns are not inflected. The agent is denoted by the suffix 'in' or 'n'.

Zawngin thing an hlui.....The monkey climbed the tree.

Lalan vawk a that.....Lala killed a pig. 'In' and 'n' are used to distinguish the agent of instrument. It may also be noted that object precedes the transitive verb governing it, and indirect object precedes the direct.

Lalin bu a pe..... The chief gave rice.

Lal darkhuang ke pe..... I gave a gong to the chief.

The thing possessed follows the possessor:

Ki in..... My house.

Lalin sechal a nei..... The chief has a bull metna.

Adjectives follow the words they qualify, but are not inflected.

Par tha..... Beautiful flower.

Naipang fel..... Good children.

When a noun is used as an adjective it precedes the noun it qualifies. Thus:

Thing leilak..... Wooden bridge.

Lung in ..... Stone house.

7. Numerals: The Darlongs have two main ways to call numerals - the short way and the long way.

- |     |            |                          |
|-----|------------|--------------------------|
| 1.  | - Khat     | - khatka                 |
| 2.  | - hni      | - inhika                 |
| 3.  | - thum     | - inthumka               |
| 4.  | - li       | - inlika                 |
| 5.  | - nga      | - ringaka                |
| 6.  | - ruk      | - rukka                  |
| 7.  | - sari     | - sarika                 |
| 8.  | - riat     | - riatka                 |
| 9.  | - kua      | - kuaka                  |
| 10. | - sawm     | - sawmka                 |
| 11. | - hleikhat | - sawm hlei khatka       |
| 12. | - hleihni  | - sawm hlei inhika       |
| 13. | - hleithum | - sawm hlei inthumka     |
| 14. | - hleili   | - sawm hlei inlika       |
| 15. | - hleinga  | - sawm hlei ringaka      |
| 16. | - hleiruk  | - sawm hlei rukka        |
| 17. | - hleisari | - sawm hlei sarika       |
| 18. | - hleiriat | - sawm hlei riatka       |
| 19. | - hleikua  | - sawm hlei kuaka        |
| 20. | - sawmhni  | - sawm inhika (ten two). |
| 30. | - sawmthum | - sawm inthumka.         |

100.	- za	- rizaka
101.	- za pakhat	- riza hlei khatka (hundred excess one)
200.	- zahni	- riza inhnika
1000	- sang	- sangka
10000	- sing	- singka
100000	- nuai	- nuaika
1000000	- maktaduai	- maktaduaika
10000000	- vaibelsia	- baibelsiaka
100000000	- tluk -le	
	-ding -awn.	

It may be noted here that the real numerals are 'khat', 'hni', 'thum' etc., and 'ka' being equivalent to unit. With numbers above ten the name of the thing enumerated, if a monosyllable, is often repeated, thus:

Ni (days) sawm (ten) hlei (excess) ni (day) inhnika (two) .....Twelve days

Ordinals are formed by adding 'na' to cardinal.

In sawmna lut rawh.....Enter the tenth house.

House the tenth enter.

Numeral adjectives are formed, thus:

Voi (time) sarika (seven)..... Times seven.

9. Demonstrative adjectives: The demonstration adjectives are:

Hi, Mahi..... This

Saw, Ma saw.....That

Ma, Maha..... That near you

Khi, Makhi.....That up there

Khu, Makhu.. That down  
there

Chu, Machu.....That.

When a noun qualified by these adjective is an agent, 'n' suffixes the agent and 'a' and 'ane' are used to indicate the first and second persons respectively, thus:

Ma ui khin ane ei.....That dog up there bit me.

Ma ui khun a ei.....That dog down there bit him.

Ma ui sawn a um.....That dog there chased him.

The personal pronouns have several forms, which are the same for both genders:

### Possessive

Ki, keima, ...my

Keimani, kin, eimani....our

Kita, keima ta .....mine

Keimani ta, eimani ta.....ours

### Nominative

Kei,ki, keima.....I

Keimani, kin.....We

### Objective

Keiman, keima.....me

Keimani, ei mani.....us.

The particles 'ki' (singular), 'kin' (plural), 'ni' (singular), 'nin' (plural) are never omitted, where the true pronoun is generally left out except when required for emphasis. The particle 'in' is prefixed to the verb in all cases. Thus:

Kin insual a.....We fought.

An inkhal a.....They quarrelled.

Nin inbuan a.....You wrestled.

10. Sentences: The Darlongs use both simple and

complex sentences. Here we shall see how the simple and complex sentences are formed. The simple sentences are formed thus:

Bu ke ne - I eat rice.

Rice I eat.

Bazara ki zu ta.....I went to the market (down there).

Bazara ki hang ta... I went to the market (up there).

Bazara ki va ta.....I went to the market (there).

The complex sentences are formed, thus:

Simple: An larna san kin hawi....We know the reason of his popularity.

Complex: I leia inlar maw achang k' a hawi.....We know why he is popular.

Simple: Mi inkhel chu ring an chang nawh.... A liar is seldom trusted.

Complex: Khel hril chu miin an ring nawh.....A person who tells lies is seldom trusted.

11. Persons and Numbers: The relation between persons and their numbers is noteworthy in the Darlong language. The following examples will transpire one of the interesting aspects of the language.

India hi ei ram a chang.....India is our country.

India hi kin ram a chang

(India this our country is.)

Both 'ei' and 'kin' are possessive pronouns of first persons plural number i.e., our. The possessive pronoun 'ei' is used to include the second person(s) spoken to. This is a case where an Indian talks of his country to another/other Indians;

Whereas the possessive pronoun 'ki' is used excluding the second person(s) spoken to. This is a case where two or more Indians talk about their country, India to some foreign nationals.

In the simple imperative sentences the person is left out. The number of the person is denoted by adding 'rawh' and 'rawi' to the main verbs for singular and plural numbers respectively.

Singular: Kal rawh.....(You) go.

Plural: Kal rawi.....(You) go.

12. Tense: Like any other languages, the Darlong language has three tenses.....Present, Past and Future.

### Present Tense.

Person	Singular Number		Plural Number	
1st Person:	Ke	kal.	Ei/Kin	kal.
	I	go.	We	go.
2nd Person:	Ne	kal.	Nin	kal.
	You	go.	You	go.
3rd Person:	A	kal.	An	kal.
	He	goes.	They	go.

### Past Tense:

1st Person: Ke kal/Ki kal ta. Ei/Kin kal (ta).

I went/We went.

2nd Person: Ne kal/Ni kal ta. Nin kal (ta)

You went/You went. You went.

3rd Person: A Kal (ta) An kal (ta)

He went/They went.

In some cases there may not be any differences between simple present tense and simple past tense, unless it is specifically emphasised, e.g., Ne lam...You dance(d). Ke lam....I dance (d). To emphasise the tense 'ta' suffixes the main verb. When 'ta' is used the subject changes from 'ke' to 'ki' in first-person singular number



and 'ne' to 'ni' in the second person singular number simple past tense without any change inflected in the number and person of the subject. In the first person plural number of simple present and simple past tense 'ei' and 'kin' are used to make assertion inclusive of and exclusive of the person(s) spoken to respectively. There are a good number of such cases which make the language a little more complicated.

### Future Tense.

Person	Singular Number	Plural Number
1st Person:	Kal keti. Go I'll.	Kal eiti/kinti. Go we'll.
2nd Person:	Kal neti. Go you'll	Kal ninti. Go you'll.
3rd Person:	Kal ati. Go he'll.	Kal anti. Go they'll

The words 'keti', 'neti', 'eiti,' 'ati', 'anti' are used and placed as suffixes to the main verb to make future tenses. Suffixes 'eiti' and 'inti' in the 1st person plural number are used to make the assertion inclusive and exclusive of the person(s) spoken to respectively.

13. Continuous tense: In all the continuous tenses the words 'vu', 'zel', 'tir,' 'ni' follow the main verbs.

- Persent continuous : Ke kal vu/hi..... I am going.
- Past continuous: Ki kal vu lain..... While I was going.
- Future continuous: Kal tir/ zel keti..... I shall be going.

There are no definite form of perfect and perfect continuous tenses unless they have been implied in the uses and other forms of expressions.

There are a good number or words in the Darlong

language which have more than one meanings. The meanings are ascertained through the tones, accents and through the relevancy of the context. There are three main tones - the upward, the downward and the level. the vowels (except o) have two main sounds indicated by placing a circumflex accent on the long one to distinguish it from the short one. Hence the words having more than one meanings are not as confusing as one might think, as the tone, sounds and accents are taken into account. Some of the words having more than one meanings are listed below (taking into consideration all forms of sound, tone and accents).

1. Lei: tongue, squarrel, fine (against an accused person).  
case, insipid, discourteous.
2. Zam: creeping (as of plants), nervous, spreading.
3. In: house, drink, sleep, close-knit.
4. zu: wine, go downward, mouse.
5. Sam: cry (announce), hair, running short of.
6. Chi: salt, seed, species, quality, variety.
7. Sa: meat, hot, animal, also.
8. Bel: utensil, fruit (of hard cell), courting, stick to.
9. Bul: root, beginning. lacking.
10. Sun: To pierce, day time, to bereave, to resemble someone.

#### B. Assimilations with other languages:

In the history of the Darlongs, much attempt has been made to prove the fact that all the Kuki-Chin tribes shared the same origin, and their existing differences in terms of languages, culture and other practices are relatively new. Hence the existing differences can be attributed to their contact with various tribes on their routes of migration. In spite of this, in most cases members of different tribes can converse using their respec-

language which have more than one meanings. The meanings are ascertained through the tones, accents and through the relevancy of the context. There are three main tones - the upward, the downward and the level. the vowels (except o) have two main sounds indicated by placing a circumflex accent on the long one to distinguish it from the short one. Hence the words having more than one meanings are not as confusing as one might think, as the tone, sounds and accents are taken into account. Some of the words having more than one meanings are listed below (taking into consideration all forms of sound, tone and accents).

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ctive languages. To my mind, there can be no better proof to the origin of the tribes than the assimilation of their languages. This is unique. Now let us see some common words of the Kuki-Chin tribes, and how they are interrelated to each other:

English	Darlong	Anal	Kom	Lushei	Vaiphei
Father	Pa	Pa	Apa	Ka pa	He pa
Mother	Nu	Hnu	Anu	Ka nu	He nu
Grandpa	Pu	Kapu	Apu	Ka pu	He pu
Grandma	Pi	Kapi	Api	Ka pi	He pi
Elder brother	Upa	Ka upa	Au u	Ka u	He u
Elder sister	Unu	Ka unu	A u	Ka u	He u
Hill	Hmual	Bung	Tlang	Mual	Mual
House	In	In	In	In	In
Winter	Phalbi/Thal	Phalbi	Kasitha	Thasik	Phalbi
Tree	Thing	Thing	Thing	Thing	Thing
Bamboo	Rua	Ru	Ru	Rua/Mau	Zua.

The similarities are listless, and languages of various tribes can be incorporated. The result however, will be the same i.e., to find their similarities.

C. Literary development: Formal education was unknown to the Darlongs prior to the coming of missionaries. The Mizo missionaries did not only preach the gospel, but they also taught the people to read and write. The first Darlong Christians used the Mizo Bible and Hymn book, preached and prayed in Lushei language as if God understood no other languages. This was how formal education was introduced to the Darlongs.

The North-East India General Mission shared the burden of educating the Darlongs and four Darlong boys were sent to Churachandpur to study there. Gradually the New Zealand Baptist Mission opened schools in the villages where a few Darlongs were employed as evange-

list teachers. The Roman Catholic Mission gave free education to some Darlong students in its headquarters at Mariam Nagar, Agartala. To improve their language, the educated Darlongs made full use of the knowledge they had acquired.

1. Attempt for further development: Reading, writing, preaching and praying in Lushei language were gradually given up and a great deal of effort was made to have the language in a written form. For this the Darlongs comfortably accepted the Roman script and the well-known form of spelling based on the well known Hunterian system introduced to them by the Mizo evangelists. As a result of the effort, *Abul Bu or Introduction of Alphabets* was published in 1952. This was also followed by some scriptural pamphlets. In 1974 a news magazine called 'Kuki Rawl' was published, and in 1975 Darlong Literature Committee was instituted to improve the language. Likewise, besides many others, the Darlong Socio-Cultural Organisation (DSCO) and the Darlong Thawktu (Employee) Welfare Committee were established in 1980 and 1990 respectively. The first songs in Darlong language were composed by Late Ngurkunga of Hmuntha village in 1960. Today the Darlongs have a good number of songs composed by them and some of them have been compiled in 1990 and others are being collected for compilation.

2. Publications etc.: In 1976 the *Hriam Kristian Hlabu* (Hriam Christian Hymn Book), in 1977 the *Hriam Kristian Hlabute* (also Christian Hymn Book), in 1987 the New Testament, and in 1992 the Gospel According to John were published. Besides these the Darlongs also make periodical magazines and other reading materials with the main aim of improving their language. However,

inspite of much affort make for the improvement of the language, the spellings have not been standardised due to various difficulties like lack of established grammar and differences of opinions. Now there are two main approaches towards standardisation of spellings - the old form and the new form. None of the two has been unanimously agreed to, and the tug-of-war is going on.

In the old form, 'aw' is adopted to present both long and short sounds - placing circumflex accent on the long one when necessary to distinguish it from the short one. Similarly other vowels are adopted to represent both long and short sounds under the system mentioned above. In the new form the approach is to use vowels 'aw' for long sounds and vowel 'e' for short sounds. Though the uses of 'aw' as long sound and 'o' as short sound appears to have been largely preferred, overall standardisation still needs a general acceptance, a consensus and adaptation in the literary developments.

#### **D. Weights And Measures:**

The Darlongs have various ways and means to express weights and measures much of which are not based on scientific measurements. Some of these are adumbral while some others are quite appropriate and accurate. Some of the weights and measures used by the Darlongs are given below:

a. Numerals: The numerals used by the Darlongs have been already discussed above. Hence another form of numerals which has been coined as group or collective numerals is discussed here. The terms 'bawp', 'ruai', 'dawng', 'hoi', 'rual' etc. are used as prefixes or suffixes of the nouns qualified. They are briefly explained below:

**Bawp:** It is used to indicate any two objects placed together or found together.

**Ruai:** This refers to a man and a woman or/two animals living together as husband and wife or believed to be so.

**Dawng:** Dawng means a family a group of people living under the same roof as members of a family.

**Hoi:** This indicates a group of living animals including men, who live or stay together under an organisation or with a specific common purpose.

**Rual:** This indicates a group of people or animals found living or moving together with or without a common purpose.

**b. Definite and indefinite measures:** Under definite measures any amount, length, height etc. are expressed in terms of specific members and measurements. Such measurements are discussed in the next point under c.

Indefinite measures on the other hand, are expressed with suffixes 'vel', tamka, hroika, etc. These terms may suffix the definite measurements and make the expression vague and indefinite. Here 'vel', 'tamka', 'hroika', mean approximately, much and less or few respectively.

**c. Measures of Length/Breadth:** Various objects including organs of human body are employed to express lengths and breadths.

**Belka:** This means as long or wide as a finger nail which measures 1 to 1.5 cm. approximately. Any thing slightly shorter, longer, wider or less wider than this is expressed in *ad valorem*.

**Kutchal tenka:** This means as long as the fore - finger, which is equal to 3".

**Khapka:** This means the span between the thumb and the middle-finger i.e., 8 to 9 inches.

**Tumka:** This means length of a foot or its print which is equal to 1 foot.

**Tawngks:** This is a distance covered by elbow to tip of the middle finger.

**Banka:** This means a measurement equal to the length of



the arm from the tip of the middle finger to a spot a little below the shoulder in a line with the anaxilla.

Kiinsawngka: It is the distance from the tip of the middle finger to the protuberance of the shoulder on the opposite side of the body.

Hlamka: This is a distance between the tips of the middle fingers on the right and on the left with the arms extended.

Inkhangka: This means width of an average house which is equal to 12 to 14 feet.

Indung: This means length of a house which is equal to 36 to 42 feet.

Inkhawka: This means a distance an average man can throw object at.

d. Measures of distance: some measures of long distances as used and expressed by the Darlongs are given below:

Chawhma Kal Invoika: The two terms mean (a distance of) half day journey and a distance or a place which can be visited on feet and be back to the place one started from the same day. Hence though the two are apparently different the distance they indicate is just the same.

Nika Kal: This indicates a distance covered by a full day journey which is equal to 25 km. or so. Any distance longer than this may be expressed in proportion to the estimated measurement of distance.

e. Measures of height: Some measurements used to measure height are given below.

Phei Artui: This means ankle. Which is used as the smallest unit of measurement of height. This may be used as measurement of height and as of depth. Such other measurements are based on the height of the human organs on standing on the ground upright. Some of the points employed are rikhuk (or knee), kawng (or waist), lai (or navel), tang (or chest), zakhnuai (or armpit), dar (or shoulder), kuar (or ear) and lusip ((or top of the

head). Above these is the height a normal man can reach with the hand extended upward.

Phaklai: Phaklai is a beam placed across the width of the house from the level of the top wall. Hence the height is equal to the top of the wall.

Inchung: Inchung means roof of the house. Hence this means a height equal to the roof of a house.

Bakrawkim: Bakrawkim means a long bamboo. This is also used as a measuring stick.

It is interesting to note that the Darlongs do not have any specific description of height above this level. Any height above this level is described in proportion to the height a long bamboo reaches. The ultimate height known to them is the blue sky above the head.

f. Measure of particles: Here particles means objects in the form of fine grains, such as salt, powder, rice etc.

Hmerka: This means a pinch of grain etc. with the thumb index finger.

Hawmka: This indicates the amount of grain particleless that can be held in the palm with the fingers clasped together.

Besides the above means of measurements, amount of grain etc. are measured with the indigenous home made baskets.

g. Measures of weights: The Darlongs do not have a good number of measures of weights. They usually use the modern or scientific measures on weights. However, some time they also express weights in terms of indawmka or which can be lifted with one hand, pelka or which can be carried on the head, inzawnka or which can be carried by two persons etc.

h. Measures of liquid: The smallest unit for measurement of liquid is 'farka' (or a drop). The amounts which or not convenient to measure with drops are expressed in terms

of the amount a 'bial' (or a bamboo tube with a node), 'tui-um' (or a gourd used for holding water), tuithei (or a bamboo tube used for carrying water) can hold. 'Kawla' (or pitcher) is one of the biggest indigenous objects used for measuring the approximate amount of liquid.

1. Measures of time: The Darlongs have numerous ways of measuring time. Some of such measurements are given here.

Mitkhapka: This means the twinkling of an eye, a short moment.

Thuakka: This means the gap between two breathings.

Hapka: This means the duration a normal man can hold his breath, that is, 45 seconds to a minute.

Chawhma: The time between the early dawn and the time immediately preceding the noon hour that is, forenoon.

Chawhnung: The period from the time immediately succeeding the noon time to dusk, that is afternoon.

Nika: This means one day. It covers the period from early dawn to dusk that is 12 hours.

Zanka: This means one night, and it covers the period from dusk to early dawn of the next day, that is 12 hours.

Nitungloi: This means late morning, that is from 8 to 9 am.

Chawhnung hmatum: This literally means the beginning of afternoon hours of work, that is 2 to 2.30 p.m.

Nitlak riawl: This is also called 'busuk' which means the time for pounding rice. The period is just before the sunset that is 4 p.m. during winter and 5 p.m. during summer.

Unai hmel inhmai: This literally means the time when kins fail to recognise their kiths (in the dusk) that is, late evening.

Zantualleng: This means the time to go for courting the young women or visiting their neighbours that is, 7 to 7.30 p.m.

Tuallengtín: It is the time to retreat from tualleng that is 9.30 to p.m.

Zing arkhuang: This literally means morning cock-crow which has three main timings khuangtír (or the first cock-crow), khuang voihni (or second cock-crow) and khuang voithum (or the third cock-crow).

The Darlongs still have a long way to go before they achieve a full literary development which has to start with a consensus on the system to be adopted and by standardising the grammar. Once these are fulfilled, development in the overall language and literature is expected to take place without much hardship.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

#### JHUMING:

Due to geographical condition and their socio-economic life, the Darlongs depended fully on their jhum or shifting cultivation so much so that the introduction of new methods of cultivation did not find cultural acceptability till the later part of the twentieth century. So every aspect of their life was interwoven with jhuming. The folk tales, the folk songs, religious pursuits and calculation of time centered round the operation of jhuming. These jhum cultivators were illiterate, but nature blessed them with strong memory, which enabled them to calculate time covering decades together without making any mistake in the sequence or number of the jhums they have had. So, to the Darlongs, jhum meant life, freedom, merriment and happiness.

A Darlong man in the jhum field, looking down the misty blue plain land with his beloved beside, singing to him with the cool mountain breeze merrily stroking and caressing him 'envies nobody', and perhaps 'nobody envies him' when he feels that he is the most envied man. Hence jhuming is not only a source of food, but is also a source of romance. So, the jhum cultivators were neither ashamed of themselves nor were ashamed of their old method of cultivation. Truly speaking, they were proud of it.

Jhuming involves various stages. The important ones are as follows:

1. Selection of the jhum field,
2. Cutting and burning of the jhum field,
3. Sowing of seeds,
4. Weeding,
5. Protecting the jhum field,
6. Harvesting and
7. Threshing,

### **1. Selection of the jhum-fields:**

The Jhum fields are selected months before the forest is cut down. While selecting the jhum fields factors like virgin site called 'Rihal' bearing mature bamboos, bushed and accessibility of the site are taken into consideration. First of all the owner of the jhum field takes a bamboo piece and splits it into two halves. He tosses and drops the two pieces of bamboo on the ground. If one half of the bamboo split falls on the ground obversely and the other reversely, the site is considered to be suitable. On the other hand if both halves of the bamboo pieces fall on the ground obversely or reversely the site is considered to be unsuitable for jhuming. If the auspicious sign is obtained, the owner makes bamboo crosses called 'Thlawr' and plants them at the foothill of the chosen site and clears a small portion of the field which can be seen easily. This is done to make the others know that that particular hill has been selected and reserved. Once this process has been completed, the man rests assured that there is none to dispute his choice.

### **2. Cutting and burning the jhum field:**

For preparation of the jhum field, all the plants and

bushes are cut down in the month of January. For this the young men and young women usually form a group to get their works done rotation-wise. With a great deal of cheerfulness, the young men try to prove their strength and skill while the young women watches them with full appreciation. This is where the jhum romance begins. All the villagers work very hard during this season. Soon after this hard work has been done they celebrate the much awaited 'Chapchar kut' with dances, songs and merri-ment. On the first day they offer chicken to "Fapite" (goddess). They call this ceremony "Kut inlum". In the present day of Christianity, "Kut inlum" has been replaced by 'prayer'.

After the "Chapchar kut" and when all the plants and bushes have dried fully, the jhum field is burnt. Burning of jhum fields offers heart throbbing views and excitement. After the fire has cooled down, members of the family go to their own jhum field and clear plants left unburnt. They may get blackened all over, but their joy and happiness know no bound working in the open and unclaustrophobic nature.

### 3. Sowing of seeds

Jhum is used as a multiple crop field, rice as the main crop. They mix seeds of pumpkin, cucumber, cotton, maize etc. with the paddy seeds. They prepare a small jhum hut called 'tu' in the jhum wherein they rest and eat. The mixed seeds are carried with a small basket attached at the back side of the waist and are put in the holes dug out. This sowing in dug out is done with excellent rapidity. Seeds of beans, sesamum, brinjal etc. are broadcasted and seeds of beans, arum and turmeric are sowed separately, in the process one may find that

a jhum contains a lot of crops which may amount to forty or more in number. Hence jhum may be the only cultivation wherein one may produce so many crops in a place at a time. This is one of the reasons why the Darlongs, like the other jhum practicing tribes, are so fond of it and are so closely attached to it. Both men and women participate in the sowing.

#### 4. Weeding:

Weeding has three stages. The first weeding takes place after three to four weeks of sowing the crops. This is called "Hlawihram tuan". As the sprouts are still young and tender, special care is taken for ensuring protection of the crops. For weeding the Darlongs bend the head of the dao to make it conveniently usable for the purpose. This bent dao is called "Hlawituan Chem" which literary interpreted means 'dao for weeding'. The second stage of the weeding called 'Inhni' is carried out after twenty to twentyfive days from the first stage. In a large jhum-field, even before this stage is over, its second weeded part may be ready for the third stage of the weeding. The third stage of weeding is called 'Inthum'. At this stage some crops have started yielding. To a young man, to pick a tender cucumber as the first harvest and handing it over to the damsel means a great excitement.

#### 5. Protecting the Jhum fields:

It is the duty of the owner to protect his jhum-field from the onrush of the animals on the ground and birds in the air, when the plants start bearing fruits. The Darlongs take a number of protective measures in respect



of their jhum-fields. Some of the important ones are:

a. Watch-house: A platform is either raised on bamboo poles or any usable big tree in the middle of the jhum-field, if there is one. Through this watch-house the owner keeps a close watch over the jhum field.

b. Thlawkbawk: 'Thlawkbawk' is one of the various means to drive the birds and animals away through peculiar startling sound. A big bamboo splitted into two halves upto two-third of its length is placed slanting, one end resting on the ground and the other end resting on another bamboo pole placed horizontally. A long rope is tied to the upper split either from the jhum-hut or from the watch-house which produces a peculiar loud clapping sound. This frightening sound is effective to drive away birds and animals from the jhum fields.

c. Traps: Various kinds of traps are used to protect the jhum-field from the animals and birds. As these have been dealt with under the 'means of trapping animals', they are not separately discussed here.

d. Effigy: An effigy which has been carefully decorated to make it as ugly or as frightening as possible is hanged in a long bamboo planted in the jhum-field. A long rope is used to hang it so it may swing freely. Sometime wings are added to the effigy to make it appear like a big hunting bird.

e. Bow and shouts etc: Having a bow and a loud voice may not necessarily serve the purpose fully if one does not know the tactics. Because there are a number of 'what' 'how' and 'when' in this art which may sound very simple. The shout has to be frightening and may be

accompanied by claps, if required. The people are so close to the nature that they know how the animals can be best frightened, and driven through bow and shouts.

f. **Harvesting:** Harvesting has different stages. Fawnghma (cucumber), mawnfawl (water melon), hmi-nkiar (maize), rimai (pumpkin), umfak (white-gourd) etc. make the first harvest. This harvest starts from the third stage of weeding onward. Paddy is considered to be the main harvest of all jhum produce. Paddy harvest is carried out by the family. When the members of the family fail to complete the harvest on time they ask for the help of the whole community. All men and women participate in the harvest. The harvestors carry basket on the back wherein they put the ears. One or two persons collect the yields from the harvestors and take them to the jhum hut and put them in heaps. In the joyous competition on who can take over the others, the men sing songs to themselves and some time they may also sing about anything. In both the cases the songs are of instant composition. The third stage of harvest takes place after the paddy harvest. The main crops harvested during this period are arum, turmeric, chilli, cotton flowers and sesamum.

From the third stage of weeding onward members of the family normally camp in the jhum hut to ensure safety of the crops and completion of the work. Under the starry sky they tell stories, sing songs and enjoy the best of the harvest. The young men may go courting their damsels to share the beauty of the moon-lit starry september nights. During this period they sing Lalkhawlor zai followed by a peculiar shouts. Life is full of cheerfulness in the midst of the friendly nature. There may not be any attraction strong enough to distract the mind of the people from this part of life which is full of romance and merriments.

## 7. Threshing:

Threshing is always a collective work unless the yield is less enough for the family to thresh within a day. Rice ears are threshed on bamboo-splits which have been woven like a net which is placed on a lifted platform. The platform is high enough to give enough space for the threshed ears underneath. The men joyously jump up and down as they tread over the ears for detaching crops from the plants, while the women keep supplying them the corn-ears. During this time the owner kills fowls (or a pig if there are a large number of people to feed) and apply the blood on the heap of the yields and pray to the 'Fapite' for blessings. The young men tread out the ears, the young women throw away the straw etc., the elder men and women remain busy preparing a community feast while the children play around. Everyone minds his own business and remains busy. On the day of threshing they do not carry home a single grain.

## HUNTING:

Hunting is closely associated with life pattern of the Darlongs. It is carried out both individually and collectively. Perhaps it is the best game to the Darlongs. Besides the main games like the wild boar, deer and bear the Darlongs also hunt the wild fowls, wild cat, monkeys and birds.

For the main game, usually the hunters form themselves into a collective group. They set out with their gun, dao and the hunting dogs. The hunting dogs are very important, without which the hunters rarely succeed. A

hunting dog is trained, given special food often mixed with some medicines that strengthen it physically, and also make it more ferocious. A hunting dog is carefully chosen when it is just a tender puppy. The pup is lifted in the air by pulling it by the ear, once each from the left and the right. The pup is selected if it does not cry

The hunting dogs are so tactful that they can chase the game towards the hiding hunters. From the barking of the hunting dogs the hunters can tell without a mistake what animal the hunting dog is encountering, and get ready accordingly.

When any big animal is killed, the hunters bring home the animal without cutting its meat. At the vicinity of the village the hunter who has killed the animal announces his success through a song called 'Bawhla' followed by blankfires in the air. On hearing the victorious song and the gunshot the villagers proceed to the place where the hunters keep waiting. This follows a great deal of merry making and dances. The animal killed is brought in the house of the hunter, where the women folk cook rice while the men remain busy cooking the meat. The elder men dance with the head of the animals while singing to the hunters. This makes a big day for the whole villagers. Some of the meat is given to the hunters, the right front leg to the village chairman and the head and some meat to the hunter who has killed the animal. The rest of the meat is used up for community feast.

### 1. Spear trap or kar:

Depending on the animals intended to be killed, a long bamboo tied to a few sticks is placed one and a half feet to three feet above the ground parallel to the track frequented by the wild animals. The anterior part of the

bamboo is forcibly bent back with ropes and sticks. A small and sharp spear made of dry bamboo is tied to the anterior end of the bamboo. The string is extended across the track and is the main controlling factor of the bent bamboo. When an animal passes through the track it touches the string and disturbs the pole and releases it which at once strikes the animal with its spear. If the animal is accurately speared, it may even die on the spot. Wild boars, deers, tigers and bears are killed with the help of this popular deadly trap called 'kar'.

## **2. Pit fall:**

Pit fall is mainly used for killing ferocious animals like tiger. A deep and circular pit serves the purpose. The pit has to be deep enough so that the animal might not be able to make its way out. The pit is covered with leaves and twigs to give it a natural show. A bait is placed in the middle of the pit. When the animal comes for the bait, it falls instantly and gets itself imprisoned in the deep pit.

## **3. Bow and pellet:**

The Darlongs hardly use arrows, but bows are largely used. A bow is strong bamboo split curved with a strong rope. In the mid point of the string a well knitted half dome shape curve measuring .70" X .95" approximately is made in between the main string. The string is sufficiently pulled, the earthen pellet kept inside it is grasped and released along with the string to hit the object aimed at. Experts can hit a small bird from a distance of 100 mtrs.

#### 4. Spears:

Spears of various sizes are used to kill various kinds of animals. Some speares are also used foor catching fishes. In the olden days spears were also used as weapons for war.

#### 5. Bird trap:

A square size well knitted bambooo board made heavy by its strong border are placed slanting on the ground. Some baits are placed in the interior side of the board in such a manner that the balance gets disturbed when birds start hitting the bait and the board gets them trapped.

#### 6. Bird lime:

Bird lime is an adhesive prepared out of sticky juice of jack fruit and banyan tree. The lime is applied on sticks which are planted around a bait. Once the bird is caught, it tries to free itself by fluttering, but the more it flutters the more it gets stuck.

#### 7. Hnambek:

This trap is a small rectangular chamber with bait inside, and with an entrance in the middle of the roof. The monkeys enter into the trap holding a piece of flexible bamboo stick placed in the middle of the entrance. The bamboo stick bends every time the monkeys try to use it for coming out of the trap. The chamber is so systematically made that the trapped monkey cannot find its way out. This way a good number of monkeys can be trapped under one roof.

## 8. Leitang:

'Leitang' is used for catching rats and squarrels. In this a traingular frame is placed on a horizontally placed bamboo which the animal is likely to pass by. The moment the animal enters into the frame, it disturbs the balance of the string and gets itself trapped when the bent bamboo on which the string has been tied springs back.

## 9. Zutang:

Zutang is used for trapping rats and sqarrels and it is similar to 'Leitang' described above. The only difference lies in that in this trap the spring is a part of the whole structure and can be removed and placed in any convenient place.

## 10. Vawm Tlak:

This trap is devised for killing bears. In this, two pieces of long woods are placed together hanging horizontally with a bait at the end. The moment the bear catches the bait, the balance is disturbed and the two pieces of wood fall spart and the animal falls dawn and gets itself pierced by the sharp bamboo spears planted on the ground.

## 11. Hmankhawng:

Hmankhawng consists of a long heavy log, and a tread board. The log is placed in a slanting position keeping balance with that of the tread board. As the game treads over the board it disburbs the balance and the

heavy log falls immediately on the tread board which presses the game under it.

## FISHING:

Fish is one of the favourite food items of the Darlongs. Fishing is done individually as well collectively throughout the year, and every family has basic fishing appliances. Some of the important means and methods of catching fishes as adopted by the Darlongs are as discussed below:

### 1. Fish poisoning or Ngaden:

Fish poisoning perhaps, is the most popular and enjoyable fishing practised by the Darlongs. It is a community fishing where one or more members of each family participate. A creeper plant called 'Ru' (*Millettia Piscidia*) and bark of tree with acasia-like leaves (*Albizzia procera*) are used for stupefying the fishes. The materials are cut into pieces, beaten, pounded and soaked in the water. The stupefied fishes are caught bare hand as well as with the help of appliances like nets. The catch is equally distributed to all the participants. Everybody, young or old, is allowed to participate in the fish poisoning except women during their mens period. It is believed that if a woman during her menstrual period participates, the poisoning gets ineffective.

### 2. Thorn Trap:

This cylindrical thorn-trap woven in a manner to allow water to pass freely is open at one end. A conical structure with thorns at the cone made of the extended sharpened ends of the bamboo splits with which the very



structure has been woven is placed at the opening end of the main and cylindrical structure, but the thorns obstruct the coming out of the trapped. A fence is made across the river with an opening in the middle facilitating setting of the trap. The trap is set against the water current during the early monsoon when the fish start moving upward against the stream and the process is reversed in the autumn when the fish start moving downward alongwith the water current.

### **3. Bare hand fishing:**

This simplest and oldest method of catching fish by bare hand is still a common practice among the Darlongs, particularly during the winter season when the water starts receding. There are two main methods of bare hand fishing. One of the two methods is capturing the fishes in their holes of hiding in the shallow water. In the other method, a few fishermen violently stir the shallow water and thus stupefy the fishes which start floating due to excessive tiredness. The fishes are equally distributed among the participants

### **4. Nets:**

Loose nets attached to bamboo frames of various shapes and sizes are used to capture fishes hiding in the water weeds. Special net circular at the bottom commonly used in the plain land is also used by the Darlongs to catch fishes in the pond as well as in the rivers.

### **5. Cutting:**

In the night, a group of men follow the river course upward with their bamboo torch and cut the resting and

sleeping fishes. They claim that the fishes caught in this method are tastier because they have been killed in their sleep without tiring them.

## 6. Lines:

Fish lines are called 'Ngakuai'. Earthworm and rice are used as bait. In the hilly areas certain fish measuring 4" to 5" called 'Ngaleng' are so swift that they manage to bite the bait covering the hook the moment it touches the water. In other cases the fish lining is done in the normal ways.

## 7. Scooping:

In winter season when the water recedes, a group of people go to the river and make bunds across the river. From the compartment the water is scooped out to the other side with the help of 'tuithiap', an implement made of tin sheets with a handle, a wide mouth and a tapering at the back. Fishes are caught when almost all the water has been scooped out.

## FOOD HABIT :

Meat is a favourite food of the Darlongs. Besides meat, they also take almost every known food available in their immediate environment. However, in the olden days of animism, the Darlongs had much restrictions in their food habit. They did not take certain meat like beef and flesh of any animal that was killed by the other animal. Even tea was totally avoided till they had come in contact with the other tribes. The restriction in food habit was more serious for the priests. This is also true

to other societies. For instance, the Hindus do not take beef because the cow is considered to be holy, and the Muslims do not take pork because they consider the pig to be unholy. Lately, the Darlongs have been able to do away with this religious belief particularly after the embracement of Christianity, not because Christianity encourages, but because it has not specific restriction. So, the Darlongs take almost every known food and meat excepting a few. Now instead of classifying their food as holly and unholy, they now classify them as healthy or unhealthy. They do not take certain meat mainly because they disgust or consider them to be unhealthy.

Rice is the main staple food of the Darlongs. They like rice so much that no other food is used as a substitute for rice. The range of the food they take is wide, covering the jungle leaves or roots to the modern manufactured food. From the jungle alone, they collect a good number of food in the form of plants, leaves, fruits and roots which are used as vegetables. Some of the jungle vegetables eaten by the Darlongs are given below with their meanings in English and how these are eaten.

1. Anchiri: A plant of the arum family the stalk of which are used as vegetable. Eaten cooked singularly or mixed with some other vegetables.
2. Aihria: A plant akin to the wild cardamom (*Amomum dealbatum*) Eaten cooked with soda (Sodium Bi-carbonate) or boiled.
3. Aihre til: The bud of aihria eaten as Sl. No. 2.
4. Anthur: A sour plant variously known as rosille, sabdariffa, rose mallow, Indian or red sorrel (*Hibiscus Sabdariffa*). Eaten boiled and sometime cooked.
5. Ankha: A wild jungle creeper, the leaves and the bark of which are used as vegetables, Eaten cooked with sodium bi-carbonate.
6. Indung: Long jungle leaves. Eaten raw with chutney.

7. Khawrkhe: A small plant that grows in a swampy area. The plant and its leaves are eaten cooked with sodium bi-carbonate.
8. Hratzang: A small plant that grows in a swampy area having thorny bark. Eaten cooked.
9. Thialkha: *Tacca leavis*. Eaten cooked with sodium Bi-carbonate, and dry fish.
10. Thurpui: A wild vine with round black grape like fruit. The tender leaves are eaten boiled.
11. Changvui: The flower and fruit bud of the plaintain and banana. Cooked with sodium bi-carbonate, dry fish, with oil and eaten also with chutney.
12. Changlawng: The plaintain or banana plant. Eaten with sodium bi-carbonate and dry fish.
13. Raw tuai: Bamboo shoots. Sing (*Bambusa Tulda and Bambusa Vulgaris*) and Rinal (*Dendro calamus*) species are cooked with sodium bi-carbonate whereas Rawmai (*Melocanna bambusoides*) species is eaten raw, boiled, cooked and also with chutney.
14. Kawkcha: Fern with edible leaves. The leaves are boiled with dal, cooked and fried.
15. Phuihnam: A variety of clerodendron. Eaten boiled.
16. Sing-i: *Zanthoxylum Budrunga*. Cooked with mixed vegetables. These leaves are mostly cooked with brinjal, flower and fruit bud of plaintain, potato and betliang (a species of peas and pulse tentil) mixed together.
17. Samtawk: Plant with bitter edible berries (*solanum indicum*). Cooked with sodium bi-carbonate or eaten with chutney.
18. Zawngbal: A species of arum of green leaved caldium. The flowers are mixed with some vegetables and cooked with sodium bi-carbonate or boiled with chilli.

Besides the above listed vegetables, the Darlongs eat a good number and varieties of other wild vegetables. One thing may be noted here that in most cases they use

sodium bi-carbonate which is of mainly two types the home made and the manufactured. The home made is obtained from the ash of dry tender bamboo which is put in a well woven basket and filtered pouring water every now and then. This is also used for washing cloth and side by side the Darlongs widely use fermented pork oil as a substitute (*occasionally in addition to dry fish*) to add taste to the curry.

## VEGETABLES CULTIVATED:

1. Bal and dawl: Arum and its leaves used as vegetables.
2. Nalnawk: Lady's finger. Eaten boiled and cooked.
3. Be: Varieties of beans. Eaten boiled, cooked and also raw.
4. Rimai: Red pumpkin. The stem, the leaves and its fruits are used as vegetables.
5. Umfak: Water pumpkin. Only the fruits are used as vegetables.
6. Balinpang: Tapioca (*Manihot utilissima*). The roots and leaves are used as vegetables. The roots are sometime taken boiled.
7. Ai-eng: Turmeric. The flower is used as vegetables.
8. Rawngta: *Purkia Roxburghii*. It's spilled fruits are mixed with chilli and are eaten raw. It is also cooked and fried.
9. Betliang: A species of peas and pulse tentil. Its fruits are cooked and eaten.
10. Bahra: A yam. Its roots are eaten cooked.

Darlongs are carnivorous. They eat almost all the known meat. Here it may be easier to make a list of what they do not take as food than what they take as food. Because the latter will only make a long, yet incomplete list. Raptiles of the lizard family, snakes, frogs, bats, are

not taken as food. Crow and vulture are also strongly loathed at.

### FOOD TIMES:

A few decades ago the Darlongs had the same kind of food habits as they all depended on jhum cultivation and lived isolated, uninfluenced by people of other cultural group. They took three main meals - in the morning before going to the jhum field, at noon time in the jhum field and in the evening at home. Besides these, they also took fruits and other indigenous produce. Rice was the main staple food and nothing was consumed as substitute to it.

Lately, because of education and intermingling with people of other tribes, the Darlongs have adapted themselves to various kinds of food with its varieties of preparation. Now most of the Darlongs take two meals, instead of three - in the late morning and in the evening, with breakfast in the morning and light tiffin at noon time. They also use flour and other food stuff as substitute to the main food, rice. The food timing particularly for food stuff other than rice has become more defined than before. As a result of cultural interchanges and time span, changes in almost every aspect of social life have become inevitable. As a result of recent changes in the food habit many of the Darlongs do not have any problem in adjusting themselves to different kinds of food served to them by tribes of different places. The main advantage in adjusting in this is that in general the Darlongs have little food restriction.

Today the Darlongs are in the threshold of transitional changes on various practices. Economically, qualitatively and in services, the difference between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' have become more pronounced than

ever. This in turn affects their food timing and the food they actually take. These differences are likely to become more pronounced unless the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' is bridged by way of achieving relative economic stability and better education.

## CRAFTS:

The Darlongs have a few crafts which they use for their domestic activities. They use cane and bamboo as main raw materials for the crafts to building of their houses. As a matter of fact they make practically nothing without indigenous raw materials like cane, bamboo and wood. Dao is the main implement used in the crafts. Now let us see some of the crafts made by the Darlongs.

**Bem:** Bem is a carrying basket. It is semiconical in shape, closely woven with bamboo splits. Its mouth is circular and the base square, and the upper part gradually swells from the base. Its height ranges from 18 to 20 inches and any one side of the bottom measures 7 to 9 inches. Bem is mainly used for carrying grains.

Here the interlacement technic is employed using letters U and D. The letter D denotes warp below the weft while letter U denotes warp over the weft. The underline denotes the nature of the floating the wefts. The horizontal numbers show the warp strips while the vertical number shows the weft strips.

Two-third of the total height of the basket is woven in the interlacement technic 'bangpui zia' which is given in Tech No. 1 and the remaining one-third is woven in the interlacement technic called 'Khatta' given in Tech No. 2 :

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	D	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	D	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	D	<u>U</u>
2.	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	D	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	D	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>	D

3.	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U
4.	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U
5.	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U
6.	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U
7.	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D
8.	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	U	U

### Tech No. 1.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U
2	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D
3	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U
4	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D
5	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U
6	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D	U	D

### Tech No. 2.

**Hleidar:** Hleidar is a bamboo tray for sifting and winnowing grains, made of bamboo splits closely woven with a raised rim. The sifting process is accomplished by shaking the tray up and down and from side in such a manner as to separate the husked rice from the unhusked and broken pieces of grains.

The up-and-down motion is also employed to winnow the unhusked rice and separate the full grain from the chaff. The interlacement technic is given Tech No. 3. :

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D
2	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U
3	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D
4	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D
5	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D
6	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D
7	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U
8	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	D	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D
9	D	D	D	D	U	D	D	D	D	D	D	U	D	D	D	D	D	D	U	U
10	U	U	D	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	U	U	D	D	D	D	D



### Tech No. 3.

**Paikur:** Paikur is a carrying basket used only by men. It is smaller and flatter than bem. The men use the basket for carrying their cloths and other articles of different types. The wefts run closely but the warps run half a centemetre apart. The simple interlace technic employed is as given in Tech No. 2.

**Vaisek:** Vaisek is a sieve used for separating broken pieces of grain by shaking from side to side. It resembles the 'Hleidar' but is smaller in size and has holes in the centre. Around the centre the interlace technic employed is given below and the centre has interlace technic same as the Paikur (Tech No. 2).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D
2	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D
3	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U
4	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U
5	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D
6	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D
7	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U	U	D	D	U

### Tech No. 4.

**Tuikawk:** Tuikawk is a carrying basket meant for carrying water. It is sparsely yet tightly woven to make it convenient for carrying pots and pitchers full of water.

The interlace technic at the first 4 inches and the last 3 inches is as given in the Tech. no. 4 called khatta. The rest of the body is woven by separating the pairs of warps which cross each other making hexagonal holes. Tuikawk is also used by the women for carrying fire wood.

**Phawr:** Phawr is a large basket with a closefitting conical lid or cover. The basket is woven double layers. This basket is generally kept in the house and used as a

receptacle for new cloths, and other precious possessions. It has a stand in each of the four corners.

Tabawng: Tabawng is a flat shallow basket with a close fitting cover. It is used mainly for keeping some household articles. It can also be used for other purposes, and its size depends mainly on its use. The interlace technic called hniphua is as given in Tech. No. 4.

Vutfar: Vutfar is a leaching funnel for making lye or potash solution from tender bamboo ash. This triangle shape funnel is closely woven with an interlace technic as in Tach. no. 4. Ash of tender bamboo is placed in the funnel which is kept suspended and water is occasionally poured into it to allow the potash solution filter through it. The potash solution is used for cooking some vegetable and for washing cloths.

Thingthleng: Thingthleng is a large round wooden plate with a raised rim made out of 'rivawng' (*Gmelina arborea*) wood. In this large wooden plate a family with five to six members can dine together. Rivawng wood is also used for making pigtrough, butts, drums, mortars, gun-stocks, basins, spinning machines etc.

These are some of the crafts made by the Darlongs with indigenous materials for their household uses. Besides these the Darlongs also weave their own cloths with the cotton grown in the jhum. This way they meet almost all requirements of their simple life.

## JOB:

A few decades ago there were no Darlong employees in the government services. However, today their representation in the government services is highly satisfactory both in quantity and in quality. This started with the informal education imparted to them by the dedicated missionaries way back in 1919 or so. This light of

education gradually spread and it gained satisfactory results when the government took up initiative in imparting higher level of education to the masses. The Darlongs made a good use of the opportunity. Slowly, yet steadily the number of educated persons in Darlong has increased since the day they were introduced to the three R's.

The thirst of the Darlongs for mass education is unquenching; as a result of which some publicly unknown and unrecognised volunteers have been taking initiative to teach the three R's to their fellow villagers, young and old. This way a good number of the Darlongs have learnt the ABC of reading and writing from these volunteers without going to school. People of the new generation feel terribly embarrassed if they should have to use their thumb impression instead of signing their own names. This outlook of the new generation is highly encouraging.

Today every Darlong village has at least a school where the children can start their primary education. Some villages have Senior Basic School in the vicinity of the villages where the children for whom there is no such level of school can continue their studies.

Now, inspite of the facts discussed above, the pass percentage in the school final examination etc. has not been always satisfactory. There have been drop out cases in the school level. The villagers do not seem to have a reasonable explanation to this. Some parents put the blame on their children and vice versa. Some others attribute it to some unseen or unknown natural forces. But I attribute this to lack of patience and seriousness on the part of the (school) children, and lack of proper and systematic plan, desired initiative and interest on the part of the parents. Mass education is the need of the day to bridge these gaps and to make both sides realize their respective duties. Once this awareness is infused in the

mind of the masses the quality of education is bound to improve and the quantity is bound to rise as the Darlongs are skilful and intelligent.

There is one gazetted officer per 348 persons and one Class - I officer per 390 persons in Darlongs. Within three to four years the figure is likely to stand as one gazetted officer per 300 persons. Qualitatively the Darlongs have one Indian Foreign Service officer namely Thanglura and one Scientist - D namely Dr. Vincent Thansanga. Representation of the Darlongs in the teaching profession and in the Church Ministry is highly commendable. There has been recent upheaval in the overall education of the school going children in the school final examination.

However, the educated Darlongs are trying their level best to boost the morale and spirit of the general masses towards achieving better education while many non-Darlongs claim that the education of the Darlongs is high above the average. The educated Darlongs are fully aware of this fact, but they feel that they should not be satisfied with the present achievement as the statistics may not prove to be true for long unless they take proper initiative, make plans and set objectives towards achieving fuller education. This can be one of the numerous reasons why the Darlongs are still remaining poor. Once their investment towards education gives results, they may not be lagging behind any of their contemporary tribal groups in Tripura.

I planned to write on the Education of the Darlongs in a separate chapter in this book, but I had to give up the idea because I felt that it was too serious a matter to write hurriedly. A careful research need to be conducted on the development, problems and prospect of education among the Darlongs, which I feel should be brought to light in the subsequent writings and publica-

tions to be true to facts, figures and in order to be able to draw some logical conclusion on the future trend based on the plan, interest, initiative and seriousness of the masses. Though it may not be wise to draw a definite conclusion on the basis of what has been achieved, it may not be too far wrong to forecast that the future of the Darlongs towards education is quite bright which will certainly raise their living standard and ensure economic stability.

## **GANDENING:**

The Darlongs were not much used to gardening till the later part of 1930's. However, today they are no longer strangers to gardening. The pineapple produced at Darchawi, Betchera and its adjoining areas appears to be much more than the local market can handle. The amount produced is significant. This large scale pineapple gardening has an interesting history.

Way back in 1924 Darchawi village consisted of twentyfive Christian families displaced by the chief. The inhabitants of the village faced various problems and difficulties economically. The evangelist of the village T.K. Tawna who also covered Lakhipur (Cachar) area brought some pineapple suckers for the villages to see. The villagers were interested in cultivating it, but they found that Lakhipur was too far for them to collect the suckers from. After a long search, in 1937 they came to know that some Rupini families at Panisagar were producing it. They sent twelve men to collect the suckers from the Rupini village.

The twelve men namely, Ngurchuliana, Ngurtualiana, Khamliana, Suadinga, Ngurtea, Tuathlunga, Liankung, Vanthlunga, Hmundinga, Suakhama, Ngurbawnga and Tuahnla brought 50 suckers each for Rs. 3/-. They

planted the suckers and started gardening for the first time without really knowing that it was going to turn into their economic backbone.

However, gardening has not been practised at the same rate in all the villages particularly in the north division where the Darlongs depend much on jhum and land cultivation. Due to shortage of cultivable land they have taken up gardening, which is gradually spreading in all the villages. The people in the north division have not practised gardening at a large scale as this has been treated as a second fiddle to land cultivation. But surely and steadily gardening is coming up.

Detailed informations on gardening will be dealt with in the subsequent publications.

## CHAPTER FIVE

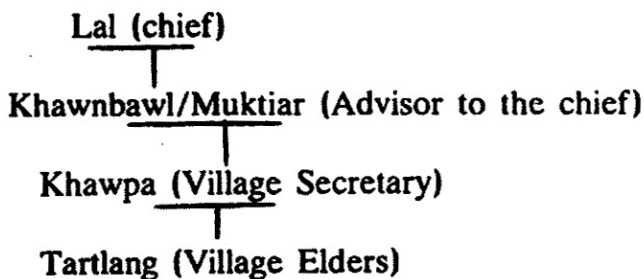
### CUSTOMARY LIFE

#### VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION AND CUSTOMARY LAWS.

From time immemorial the Darlongs, like many other tribal groups have been administering themselves with commendable success through a democratic system of village administration.

#### A. VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

The Darlongs have been maintaining a systematic village administration even before the chieftainship. During the chieftainship the chief was all in meeting justice to his subjects. However, he also needed a good number of people to assist him in his work of various aspects and of differing nature. The heirarchy of the village administration during the chieftainship is as given below:-



1. Lal: Lal, the chief was the highest authority in the system of administration. The chief could rule over one

or more villages. All his subjects awefully recognised his supreme power and were totally submissive to him. If any man was charged of mischief if he committed a serious crime such as murder he entered the chief's house and clinged to the middle post of the house. The chief forgave him and accepted him as his slave. After he had been accepted by the chief as his slave, he became free from any outside attack for the crime he had committed.

The chief was the recognised head of the village, and his word was law to the inhabitants. He settled all matters that might arise and was the general dispenser of justice. The chief had one or more headman called Khawnbawl to assist him in dispensing justice. The Khawnbawl was adviser to the chief on all matters of State, and the Khawnbawl who carried on negotiation with foreigners was called 'Muktiar'. Every house in the village contributed towards the chief's maintenance.

The chief's house was a refuge to all who choose to enter it. If anyone entered the chief's house, he and his family became slaves to the chief, and the chief in turn provided their needs. Those who committed serious crime like murder could claim sanctuary in the chief's house and become his slaves. This slavery continued till the slave had found a person to pay for his ransom. A beautiful female generally became the chief's concubine.

Slavery was not a severe order, and the slaves were well treated. However, should a chief ill-treat his slaves they would run away and take refuge in the house of some other chief, who would not return them.

2. Khawnbawl/ Muktiar: Khawnbawl and Muktiar were synonymous, but their functions were slightly different from one another. Khawnbawl was advisor to the chief within the village. Whereas, Muktiar was often employed to make the communication run smoothly between the



chief and chief of the other tribes. In both cases they were selected by the chief himself and were subject to lose their status if they failed to satisfy the chief. They were the village headmen. Every community meeting was held in the house of the Khawnbawl.

After abolition of the chieftainship, immense power has been vested on the village chairman. He is responsible for maintaining justice in his village, and that he must pay full attention to any complaints lodged in his court. He is assisted by the village Secretary and members of the village council. A hunter who has killed a wild animal is required to give the foreleg of such animal to the chairman. Though it is not mandatory, anyone who has made a feast is expected to invite the chairman and the Secretary to show respect to the village authority.

3. Khawpa: Khawpa is a village Secretary. He is to keep records of the incidence that takes place in his village. He is selected by the village elders. Any meeting to be held in the village is called by 'Khawpa' with the approval of the Chairman. During the chieftainship every meeting of the 'Tartlang' (meeting of the village elders) was held in the house of the 'Khawpa'.

4. Tartlang: Tartlang is a compound word which means the village elders. It is the sole duty of the village elders to see into the welfare of their villagers and to discourage any injustice done to any members of the village. Hence they play a very important role in the system of the village administration.

5. Leikam: There are two leikams or mediators selected by the elders. They are the mediators between the elders and the accused. They also cook the food for the elders. Their actions are closely watched by the elders and are

subject to lose their position if they get themselves involved in any unwanted activities. So they also play an important role in the administration of the village.

In 1933 Sordar Renga and Pu Vannghaka took an initiative to bring an end to the power and authority of the Darlong chiefs. They called a committee of the Darlong tribe and decided not to recognise the power and authority of the chiefs any longer, and instituted Village Council for the first time, to take the place of the chiefs in dispensing justice to the people. Chairman of the Village Council was made the highest authority in his village and the President of the Hnam (Community) Committee as the supreme power over the affairs of the entire Darlong tribe.

It was not an easy job to implement the decision of the committee as the chiefs were still in power and they could do almost anything to anybody who stood on their way. The committee, fully aware of the situation, sent the respectable elders to all the villages where the chiefs were ruling, and informed the chiefs and the villagers of their decision. As a result of this the Village Council started to function from 1936 curbing the power and authority of the chiefs. The last chiefs viz., Lallianthuama (Palian chief) ruled in the northern division till the early part of 1940's and his contemporary Lalhualvela (Thangur chief) ruled in the southern division about the same period. Hence the power and authority of the Darlong chief came to an end by the later half of 1940's.

## **B. CUSTOMARY LAWS:**

From time immemorial, the Darlongs have been having their own administrative set-up under the rule of the chief, and even after abolition of the chieftainship

they have continued to uphold their own administrative set-up and implement their customary laws. During the time of the chiefs, these customary laws were never reduced to writing. Today, with the gradual social upliftment of the tribe in question in customary laws have been reduced to writing and are used to solve almost all the problems arising in their society. There is not a case the customary laws cannot deal with. These are enforced in all the villages, and any case a village cannot settle is passed on to the Central Committee whose decision is final and binding. There is no appellant/authority.

At the village level, the Village Council deals with all the matter arising within the village. On disputes between two villages, Village Council of the two village meet to resolve the matters. No aggrieved party is encouraged to take up any case with the police or the administration of the State Government, because the customary laws can resolve any case ranging from a petty quarrel between two or more persons to a murder case. Outline of the customary laws in practice are given below.

## **1. LAWS OF INHERITANCE**

- a). In the presence of witnesses the father distributes his property to his children in the manner he wishes.
- b). In the event of the death of the father, the mother, in presence of witnesses, may distribute the property equally to her children.
- c). A sonless father may distribute the property to his daughters equally. After the demise of the parents, the property may be distributed by the children in the presence and with the consent of their close relatives.
- d). No property is given to an orphan who is of underage but the share may be given to him by his guardian as he wishes.

## **2. LAW OF ACCIDENTS**

a). If a person accidentally causes grievous hurt to anyone, he is to pay a fine of Rs.50/-. If the person so hurt dies, the person who causes such death is bound by law to bear all expenses on the treatment and funeral rites of the dead person.

b). If, accidentally fire breaks out and spreads over to the neighbouring houses, the owner of the house from where the fire broke out shall pay a fine to the Village Council, termed 'Khawhneng lak lei'.

## **3. LAW OF MARRIAGE**

a). Proposal for marriage is initiated through 'Palai' the negotiator.

b). In a marriage negotiation, the negotiators take with them a piece of soiled iron in the form of a soiled hoe or an adze as a token of engagement called 'Thilkhang' to leave it with the parents of the young woman who will accept it only if they agree to the proposal. No other young man can propose for the young woman unless the 'Thilkhang' has been returned by the parents of the young woman to the parents of the young man who have proposed for the marriage. This is in practice till cate.

c). The main price of the bride is paid in full, on the night before the marriage.

d). If, after finalization of the marriage, the young man refuses to marry the girl, he will pay a fine of Rs.30/- called 'Relthlem' and the girl will repay the young man all the payment made in advance as bride price. On the other hand, if the girl refuses to marry the man she will repay him only a portion of the bride price paid in advance, if any.

e). Should any other young man disrupt an engagement

resulting in cancellation of the marriage, he shall pay a fine of Rs.30/- and repay the amount of the bride price paid in advance.

f). Lawful marriage is ministered in the church by a pastor as per marriage guidelines of the church.

g). Unlawful marriage is arranged through a negotiator and is not held in the church.

h). Elopement and bringing home a girl by a young man are treated in the same manner. Before the young man and the girl reach the houses of the former and before bringing the matter to the knowledge of the village council the parents/relatives of the young women have got the right to take her back. The parents of the girl can not do anything after 'Armit en' (a red cock killed to ensure that there can be no claim from the parents/ relatives of the bride has been ministered in presence of members of the Village Council.

#### 4. LAW OF DIVORCE

Divorce is strongly loathed at by the society. But inspite of such stricture there have been divorce cases, which are generally settled in the following manner.

a). If he divorce is proposed and caused by the husband, he is o pay Rs.30/- as a fine called 'Maktha'. And if the same is proposed and caused by the wife, she is to repay the 'Imanpui' or the main price and all its portions to the husband's family.

b). If a husband divorces his wife during her pregnancy, the child shall belong to the mother.

c). If a husband divorces his wife with her children, he has o pay a fine of Rs.70/- called 'Faruang' without which he has no right to claim the children.

d). If husband and wife decide to remarry after their divorce, they may do so, with payment of Rs.200/- by

the husband as Hmanpui or main price to the parent/guardian of his wife.

e). If a man wishes to marry after the death of his wife, he has to arrange a tea party for the family of his father-in-law with the proper acknowledgement of the Village Council. This is called 'indeltha' or 'tarpu laka hneng la'. If the husband fails to undergo this formality, and if his father-in-law complains, he has to pay Rs. 50/- as a fine.

f). After the death of her husband, if the wife and her children can not manage to continue to live with the family of the late husband, mainly due to family discord, she may propose a divorce and leave the family of her late husband with payment of Rs.30/- as fine against divorce called 'maktha'. The wife will continue to possess the portion of the property given to her by her late husband and live with her parents. This divorce is called 'thihnung inma' or divorce after death.

g). When a young woman conceives before marriage, the father of the child is solely determined by the woman's version and the village court also accepts it without any further enquiry into the matter and if the young man refuses to accept her as his wife he shall pay Rs. 50/- as fine against 'divorce before marriage' called 'Ral inma'. But if the divorce is caused by the woman, no fine will be imposed against her.

## 5. LAW OF ADULTERY

a) If a married woman commits adultery she will take shelter in her father's house till finalisation of the case. If the husband has no objection to receive her back and if she is ready to settle with her husband, the husband and wife will be reunited with the proper knowledge of the village court.

b). If a married man commits adultery, his wife will charge the woman Rs. 50/- for committing adultery with her husband. This is called 'vawksun'. The fine will be used up by the women of the village.

c). If a man commits adultery with the wife of another man and takes her away, her husband will impose a fine of Rs. 40/- called 'Retlej' against that woman.

d). If a husband catches his wife committing adultery, he has the right to react on his wife, but not on the man.

It might appear that the coverage of the customary law is too limited to cover all matters resulting from the complex society, but officers of the village court enjoy tremendous powers to use their common sense and veto power. Natural justice appears to be the main base of such judgement. From the outside the whole system may appear to be rude and unscientific but the result in maintaining peace and harmony in the society cannot be underscored which is the ultimate aim of the court and justice.

#### 'LEI BI' OR RATES OF VILLAGE COUNCIL COURT'S FINE

Sl.No.	Category	Value	VC Share	Hnam Share
	1	2	3	4
a).	Bereizem	Rs.10/-	Rs.10/-	Rs.Nil.
b).	Sum 300	Rs.16/-	Rs.12/-	Rs.4
c).	Sum 500	Rs.20/-	Rs.15/-	Rs.5
d).	Sum 700	Rs.30/-	Rs.24	Rs.6
e).	Sepui lei	Rs.50	Rs.40/-	Rs.10/-
f).	Khaw lei	Rs.100/-	Rs.80/-	Rs.20/-

The first two categories are fine imposed on the guilty persons for charge of moderate nature such as minor disputes, quarrel and misbehaviour. 'Sepui lei' literally means a fine equal to the price of a mithun as it used to be. Now this has been reduced to Rs. 50/- only.

This fine is imposed on a guilty person for serious commission or commission. 'Khaw lei', as the term implies (Khaw', the adjective form of 'khua (village) and 'lei' fine), is a fine imposed by the Hnam (Supreme Body of the Community) on a particular village for act of violation of the code of conduct and rules of the Hnam. Sum 500 and sum 700 are nominal and symbolic fines imposed on persons at the rate of Rs. 20/- and Rs. 30/- respectively, for charge of causing irreparable damage such as murder, destruction of crop fields etc. to any person, or to the community, which the person causing it, will not be able to repay or repair in his life time.

## **6. POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICERS**

During chieftainship, the court under the chief was capable of settling every case arising in the community, and members of the community comfortably accepted the final judgement of the court. After the chieftainship the over-all administrative system has been modified to pronounce equal justice to every member of the community. Under the system, the Darlongs have two tier administration system. The Hnam President (President over the whole community irrespective of one's denomination and social status) is the highest authority assisted by the Vice-President, the General Secretary, the Asstt. General Secretary, the finance Secretary, the Treasurer and the 7(seven) Executive members. This highest authority over the community is called the Darlong Kuki Welfare Organisation (DKWO). In Article no. 24 of the local Administration of the Darlongs, the powers and functions of the DKWO officers have been given as below:-

a). The DKWO is the Supreme Authority for Welfare of the (Darlong) community.



b). The DKWO stands as the guardian and protector in respect of the Church, politics and denomination groups existing within the community.

c). The DKWO is the highest authority in meeting justice.

d). If there is any mis-interpretation of the law by the officers of the DKWO while pronouncing judgement, the responsible officers should readily abide by the enforcement of the law by paying a fine to the community.

In the village level administration, chairman of the Village Council is the highest authority in maintaining justice to his villagers. He is assisted by the Khawpa (Secretary), the Treasurer and executive members of the Cillage Council. The chairman of the Village Council and his officers are responsible for meeting equal justice to the villagers irrespective of their denomination and social status.

If there be any case the village council can not settle, the case is taken up to the Supreme Body, and the judgement pronounced by the President of the Supreme Body can not be challenged in any case, as the law specifically insi ts that no case arising from the community can be taken to the State Court or to the Police in Article No.3(4) of the Customary Law.

If there is any misinterpretation of the law by the Chairman of Village Council and his officers while pronouncing judgement, the Supreme Body may impose fine on that chairman and his subordinate officers.

a). The President of the Supreme Body and his officers are to be elected by the Chairman and their officers from all villages in a general meeting for the term of 3 years.

b). Chairman of the Village Council is elected by the concerned villagers but he and his officers are answerable

to the Supreme Body.

c). If the President of the Supreme Body incurs the displeasure of his subordinate officers the latter may lodge their complaint to the Vice-President who may summon and preside over the meeting of the officers and may impeach the President by 2/3 majority vote till the next general meeting.

d). The Chairman of the Village Council is subject to impeachment by his subordinate officers in the same manner the President of the Supreme Body is impeached.

e). If the post of the Chairman of the Village Council lies vacant for any reason, the said vacant post can be filled in with the consent of the Supreme Body.

f). Any member to the DKWO and Village Council must not be less than 25 years old and he must be intelligent, sensible, polite, impartial and should have good knowledge of the customary laws of the Community.

In the olden days the institution of 'Bukpui' played an important part in the village administration. All the young men lived in the 'Bukpui' and were directly responsible for protection of the village and its inhabitants from outside attacks and for maintaining justice in the society. Every villager looked up to the 'Bukpui' with hopes for protection and security. To suffer for the community was pride of the young men.

In the present days too the youths play a great role in assisting the village administration. In their local administration, the youths organise themselves to maintain peace and harmony in the village by way of assisting the village court. A law breaker may be examined by this group and give a report to the village court for final decision. They may also finalise some petty matters. In most of the Darlong villages, the youths take active role in controlling and disciplining the activities of the students

and impose some restrictions on their study schedule during which the students are not allowed to roam around. Hence the youth wing acts as a part and parcel of the village administration.

#### D. BUKPUI

Bukpui is a bachelor's dormitory. It was a popular institution owned by every village. In spite of its popularity the origin of 'Bukpui' is lost in oblivion. Bukpui was usually built in the centre of the village and near the house of the chief. The size of Bukpui was determined by the size of the village, or the number of young men for that matter. It was constructed in an ordinary manner. The Bukpui has an entrance in the front and an opening at the back which served the purpose of a window.

The whole village contributed free labour towards construction of 'Bukpui'. When the construction of Bukpui was completed, the chief usually gave the villagers a feast. However, this was optional on the part of the chief and the villagers had no claim.

Only the young men lived in the Bukpui. All the young men took their evening meal in their respective houses and reported in the Bukpui. They spent their time there singing, dancing, practising target shooting and wrestling, if they did not go out for courting the young women. The young men in the Bukpui had a leader called Tlangval ulian (elder) who is in charge of allocating duties to the young men. All young men respected and obeyed the order of the leader.

In Bukpui all matters were discussed and strategies taken. No one was allowed to leak out any secret discussed in the Bukpui, because doing so was an offence, rendering the offender subject to punishment. The young men maintained high degree of unity and discipline.

ne. Hence, Bukpui was a very important institution in the social life of the Darlongs.

The villages which had Bukpui were better united and disciplined than those which did not have any. The young men in the Bukpui were always ready to extend necessary help to the needy and to protect the village from outside attack. Visitors to the village had to report themselves in the Bukpui from where they were sent to their hosts. It was the moral duty of the young men to entertain the visitors to make them feel at home.

The Bukpui had a system of self-government, and the power of the chief depended much on the united strength of the young men in the Bukpui. The chief therefore had to be in good terms with them, if he really wished to have an ideal village. Children supplied water and fire-wood to the Bukpui regularly, for, defaulters were punished severely. The parents had no right to complain if their children were punished, because they only incur the displeasure of the young men if they did so. In time of need and trouble they looked up to the Bukpui for help with awe and hope.

Due to strict discipline of the Bukpui administration, the success and safety of the village administration depended much on the young men living in it. Hence Bukpui played a great role in the village administration, and in maintaining unity of the villagers.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RELIGIONS AND BELIEFS

The Darlong word for religion is 'sakhua', 'sa' means meat and 'khua' means village. Here 'khua' is used to mean nature. Perhaps it was because of the sacrifices and offerings of animals and their meat to the various forms of nature that the word 'Sakhua' was coined to denote religion.

The early Darlongs believed in the existence of supernatural powers in the nature. In some cases they could not even name the gods they feared and respected. Out of these fear and respect arose the practice of ceremonial offerings and sacrifices. They believed the gods they worshipped were men who dwelt both on the earth and in the heavens. The gods were believed to be able to bring them both blessings and curses. Mainly it was because of the fear of curses and the anticipation of blessings that compelled them to make offerings and sacrifices to the gods. They believed that to appease the gods was their ceremonial duty to bring blessings and prosperity in their house-hold and to enter the next world as free men. They believed in the existence of life after death though they did not exactly know how life prevails after death. In the early customary practice, whenever a chief died a young boy of his choice used to be buried alive with the body of the chief along with all the amenities like food, drinks and musical instruments. This was practised with a belief that the chief would retain his chieftainship and glory in the next world.

The religion of the Darlongs can be divided into two main categories - the old religion of animism and the new being Christianity. Under the old religion of animism the Darlongs had a large number of gods and goddesses. The number was so large that even the worshippers did not know all of them though they worshipped them with all dignity, fear and esteem. Anything strange, peculiar and unnatural were believed to be the abode of the spirits.

Hence in course of their movement from one place to another they discarded many of the gods and embraced many of the new-found gods. As a result of this, we may sub-divide the animism into two - the relatively old animism and the relatively new animism. The Darlongs embraced Christianity in 1919 and in 1974 the remaining Darlong animists were baptised. Today all the Darlongs are Christians who belong to five main Christian denominations namely, the Baptist, the Roman Catholic, the United Pentecostal Church (UPC), the Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI) and Presbyterian Church.

## **I. OLD ANIMISM:**

Besides many other gods and goddesses, seven gods and goddesses were considered to be the supreme ones and were addressed as 'Aw Pathian' meaning 'O god'. The seven gods and goddesses under animism are Tarpa, Rikul Khawbal, Rul Pathian, Bungzut Ripui, Lasi, Khua-chultenu and Rawdawn Ami.

### **A.Tarpa:**

'Tarpa' Literally translated means 'the old man'. Tarpa was worshipped in the courtyard where he was offered pig, goat and fowl.

### **B. Rikul Khawbawl:**

This god was worshipped inside a fence in the forest far away from the village. To appease him goat, chicken and pigeon were offered.

### **C. Rul Pathian or Snake god:**

'Rul Pathian' was worshipped in a corner of the inside house and was appeased with chicken. Rul pathian was worshipped by a few only.

### **D. Bungzut Ripui:**

Bungzut Ripui was worshipped in the vicinity of the village where they offered pig and chicken to appease the spirit.

### **E. Lasi:**

Lasi is a feminine spirit who could give fortune in hunting. The goddess was worshipped in a corner of the house. Pig and chicken were offered by men to restore good fortune and skill in hunting.

### **F. Khuachultenu:**

Khuachultenu (goddess), sometime called 'Zi-ngnghawrtenu' was believed to be the creatress of the earth. Sometime she appeared to be identical to pathian or supreme god. Goat and chicken were required to appease her.

## G. Spirits:

The Darlongs also believed in the existence of spirits which they believed were capable of blessing them or cursing them. The spirits are divided into two main categories namely, the good and the evil spirits.

a. The good spirits: "Khuachultenu" (goddess), 'Lasi' and 'Rul Pathian' (Snake god) are example of the good spirits. Besides these they also worshipped "Khuavang" who appears like dwarf human being who could inflict pain and cause failure to men.

b. The evil spirit: The Darlong world was a world of spirits to whom they ascribed all their diseases and sufferings. They believed that the hills, the rocks, the stream and the trees were inhabited by various demons known as "Rihli". There are various kinds of "Rihli", those inhabiting the water are called "Tuirihli", the head being 'Tuitarpa', those inhabiting the trees as "Thingkungrihli" and those inhabiting the land are called "Khawhri Ramhuai". These spirits were believed to have the capability of taking any form; The Darlongs used to be in constant fear of these spirits and it was to appease them that they offered all their domestic animals for sacrifices. They also believed in the existence of undefined spirits and demons to which they could not attribute any consistent form, nevertheless, they feared and revered them.

## H. Nature worship:

The Darlongs were worshippers of nature. They believed 'Si' to be the abode of demons. 'Si' is salty spring which rises in the muddy soil and remains damp all through the dry season. The water is warm and brackish and therefore frequented by wild animals. The 'Si'



frequented by elephants, deers and monkeys are called 'Saisi', 'Sakhisi' and 'Zawngsi' respectively. They believed that the demons of such a place could capture the soul of a man and that such capture could cause his death. If any person fell sick, they would go to such a place and offer sacrifices of fowls, goat or pig to appease the demons. And even to pass through such a place could be dangerous. So they used to make extra care that they might not hurt the sentiment of the demons.

The Darlongs used to make such offering of sacrifices to the natural elements they thought to be unusual. For instance, a tree which is divided into two trunks and united again on the top was believed to be able to cause sickness. Hence the people totally used to avoid any such place having such tree for their jhum field. Any spring found where water is not expected is called "Tuivamit" and 'Tuilut' which used to be equally revered and appeased with similar sacrifices.

### **I. Ancestor worship:**

The Darlongs also used to make sacrifice to the spirits of their ancestors known as 'Pupui'. The worship uses to be carried out by a 'zawlnei' (prophet) who had magic powers. The 'Thiampu' (priest) or "Zawlnei" would mutter charms before the pig was killed. He addressed by name the souls of the male ancestors of both the paternal and maternal lines of particular family. He called them to accept the sacrifices and asked blessings upon the family.

### **J. Raminhual:**

The Darlongs were believers of evil spirits possessed by certain trees, water source, stone etc. These evil spirits

were highly esteemed and feared. These spirits were summoned only when they had summoned all the known gods for recovery from illness and when that need had not been fulfilled. So, they would summon the spirits out of utter distress and anxiety to challenge and compete them.

In the middle of the night the guardian of the sick person would go to the jungle believed to be the dwelling place of the spirits taking with him a tender chicken as an offering. Out of utmost esteem and extreme fear he would summon, challenge and compete the spirits saying:

Vi vi vi .....

Nang Sinhleite, kei Sinhleipui,

Nihmai tial pinpen kan

Ni bai sen him hem kan

Hawng raw in thaw eiti. This means-

Vi vi vi .....

Come you ugly spot-faced,

I am strong and you are weak

Come, you ugly red mouth.

Come and let us fight.

Taking out the hard stones, porcupine quills, thlete (marked cloth) on the shoulder and a dao held with the teeth he would challenge the spirit and say,

Ei ek nih ei ek in ang eiti.

Ei hmul nih ei hmul in ang eiti.

Ei zia nih ei zia in ang eiti.

Ei ha nih ei ha in ang eiti. This means-

Let us emulate our excreta,

Let us emulate our hairs

Let us emulate our nature (marks)

Let us emulate our teeth.

He would then take the hard-stones, the porcupine quills, the thlete and the dao and say.

Ki ek mazaka

Ni ek mazaka (chai)  
Ki sam mazaka  
Ni sam mazaka (chai)  
Ki zia mazaka  
Ni zia mazaka (chai)  
Ki ha mazaka  
Ni ha mazaka (chai). This means-  
My excreta is this much  
(taking out a lot of the hard stones)  
Your excreta is (only) this much  
(taking out little stones)  
My hairs are this much  
(taking out the porcupine quills)  
Your hairs are (only) this much  
(taking out any symbol of hair)  
My nature (mark) is this much  
(exhibiting the marked cloth).  
Your nature (mark) is (only) this much  
My teeth are this much  
(exhibiting his dao)  
Your teeth are (only) this much.

During such challenge and competition the people always had great fear expecting that the evil spirits might really come for a fight. Due to this fear these evil spirits were seldom challenged. The elder people still have instances of instant healing of the patient through this strange system of summoning the spirits.

## II. THE NEW ANIMISM:

The Darlongs comfortably embraced new form of animism when they came in contact with people of other religions in their new environment in course of their migration. For instance 'Lungtan Pathian' and 'Longtarai' were totally unknown to them before they came to settle

in Tripura. Some of the relatively new gods of animism worshipped by the Darlongs are given below.

### **A. Khawbiak:**

'Khawbiak' may be translated to mean gods of the community. The gods were to be worshipped and offered sacrifices during the first harvest of the year. Meat was sacrificed in the worship and was collected in the evening. It was the time for making feast for the grand-children, called 'tuhrai'. So the children would seldom eat in their houses and the young men and the young women went door to door and took drinks wherever they wished. Perhaps these were the only gods they worshipped without fear of curses of illness.

### **B. Hrawlsenahei:**

'Hrawlsenahei' literally translated means, the two (brothers) with red sticks. The people believe that these two brother-gods had one stick each to discipline their worshippers. It was believed that they had both curses and blessings. Hence they worshipped them and offered sacrifices so to appease them. In the worship, they erected two sticks and decorate them with red threads. As they offered sacrifices, they prayed for sound health and prosperity.

### **C. Longtarai:**

They believed that Longtarai possessed evil spirit. To please the evil spirit they placed seven stones in the enclosure to represent seven gods, and three stones were placed outside the enclosure which represented three other gods. Two of the three stones represented the old

man and his son and one of them represented the lungtan pathian (spirit). So all the ten stones represented the ten gods. The people would offer ten fowls for all the gods. The ceremonial sacrifices were made with all dignity and seriousness. The gods could be worshipped at any time. Worship during illness was called 'Khawbawl' to differentiate it from the other forms of worship.

#### **D. Lungtan Pathian:**

Lungtan pathian, literally translated means god of the cut stone. The cut stone still stands in the hill between the Kailashahar and Dharmanagar Sub-Divisions. They believed this stone had an evil spirit. So they worshipped to appease him.

#### **E. Tarahel para or the old man and his son:**

It was believed that these gods were able to bless and curse them. So they are called both in time of illness and in time of happiness.

Both the father and the son were plurally addressed as 'Ramhualpuma'. When they called them separately the father was addressed as 'Baro Mon' and the son as Tero Mon. Surprisingly, the words 'Baro' and 'Tero' are Bengali words, meaning twelve and thirteen respectively.

They characterised these gods as almighty who could do almost anything except giving life to the dead. Hence appeasing them was considered to be their birth-right.

During illness they called them as 'Tual Pathian' literally meaning gods of the earth. And during their time of happiness they called them as 'Dairawi'. This Dairawi worship took place mainly at the end of the year just after the harvest.

In both cases to please and worship the gods they

would offer sacrifices in the form of pig and chicken, coupled with 'ZU' or their home made wine. They offered the meat to the father and the son separately. All the meat from the right portion of the animal was given to the father and that of the left portion to the son. The meat offered to the gods was collected after a reasonable lapse of time and was used to make a grand feast where they invited the priest and any other as they wished.

## **PRACTICE OF MAGIC:**

"DAWI" (magic) played an important role in the life of the Darlongs. Through this a man could make his fellow man sick, mad or he could even take his life. For the healing of such victim a 'puithiam' (Priest) used to be summoned who would channel his magic to make his request reach the ears of the High God who would in turn heal the sick person. The 'Puithiam' always carried a small guerd "Dawi um" or "Haifian" which he used to blow whenever he uttered his magic. A sacrifice was also required to make their request reach the ears of the god.

## **SACRIFICES:**

Sacrifices were the only acceptable means of worship and appeasement. Hence there are various kinds of sacrifices for various sicknesses and for prosperity. They are:

- a. Sakhua: Sakhua is a sacrifice to the guardian spirit of the clan or family.
- b. Khal: Khal is a sacrifice to the spirits supposed to frequent the village and the house.
- c. Daibawl: Daibawl is a sacrifice to propitiate the spirits in the jungle, stream and mountain.
- d. Sacrifices connected with hunting and killing animals

- e. Sacrifices in case of sickness, and
- f. Sacrifices connected with agriculture (jhuming) prosperity.

### **III. CHRISTIANITY:**

The Darlongs embraced Christianity in 1919 for the first time and the last Darlong animists were baptised in 1974. Christianity has brought great changes in the outlook and in the field of their socio-cultural life. Today all the Darlongs are Christians and believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. They believe Jesus has set them free from the bondage of sin and its power. The Darlongs have embraced five church denominations namely, the Baptist, the Roman Catholic, United Pentecostal Church (UPC) Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI) Presbyterian Church. Details of Christianity is given in the "Impact of Christianity" in Chapter TEN.

### **LIFE AFTER DEATH.**

The Darlongs believe in life after death. The soul or spirit of a man leaves his body at death, lingers for about three month around the house of the deceased and then leaves the earth for the spirit world. The spirit world is believed to have two compartments separated by a river called "Pial" or "Lungthlaleng".

One compartment is called "Mithi-Khua" a compound word literally meaning "Village of the dead". The other compartment is called "Pialral" which literally means "across the pial" where only those who earned the "Thangsua" title during their life time could go. Life in the "Pialral" is luxurious with plenty to eat and no work to do. All the dead, excepting the "Thangsuas", go

to "Mithi-khua" where life is dull and full of hardships and difficulties.

The Darlongs always desire sound health and prosperity during their life time on the earth which is full of perils and dangers. This is indicated by the endless sacrifices they offered to the gods and spirits. The institution of "Thangsua" title suggests their concern about life beyond the grave. There are two means of earning the "Thangsua" title, both of which are equally difficult to accomplish. They are:

### **1. Making a Series of Special Feast:**

An aspirant for the honour "Thangsua" title must make to the public a series of special feasts, seven or eight in number. This is termed as "In Thangsua" meaning "Thangsua in the household riches". This involves considerable riches and expenses. It may even take one's lifetime to complete the whole series. So not many people could afford to complete it.

### **2. Killing Prescribed wild Animals:**

The other means of earning the "Thangsua" title is to kill the following prescribed wild animals - elephant, bear, wild bison, stag, barking deer, wild boar, man, viper, eagle, and flying lemur. A man who had killed all these wild animals was called "Ram Thangsua in hunting wild animals". Hence to earn this title a man has to be very good a hunting. One may have killed a hundred wild animals but unless he has killed all the prescribed wild animals, he cannot earn the title. After one has killed all



the prescribed wild animals the "Ai" ceremony has to be performed which required killing of a domestic animal. The elders and the young man drink and dance in front of the row of the animals. skulls. "Salulam" and "Silailam" are the most common dances of the ceremony which literally means 'dancing with the head of the animals' and 'dancing with the gun'.

In the Darlong society, to earn the 'Thangsua' title was the highest possible achievement and honour. The few who gained the coveted title had special privileges of wearing "Thangsua" dress, opening a window in their house, building a raised summer house in front of their house and above all entering "Pialra" when they die. So "Thangsua" is a coveted title and also a passport to "Pialral" or paradise.

These religion and view existed before the Darlongs became Christians.

## **ROLE OF THE PRIESTS (THIAMPU OR PUITHIAM):**

Thiampu or puithiam played a very important role in the Darlong society. Whenever there was a sick person in the village, they called upon him to offer on their behalf sacrifices to the objects they believed had caused the sickness. The priest was not expected to refuse such call so as to benefit the sick ones in his village. All sacrifices were conducted by him and without him there could be no sacrifice. He was remunerated for his service in term of paddy called 'Thiamhlaw'. Besides this in every sacrifice when a quadruped animal was killed, the priest received a share of it. In special sacrifices as in 'Dairawi' he was offered some puan' (cloth). 'Dairawi' is a kind of thanksgiving to the gods, 'Tarahei pafa', observed by the family, at the end of the year, participated by the whole villagers. Every year after the people had burned

their jhum, the priest had to perform a ceremony called 'Kangdai' for the whole village. This is an expression of sadness or sorrow for the lives of the beasts and insects which had been killed by the fire when they burned the jhum. It was performed so that the people might not meet any accident while working in the jhum. If the paddy plants were harmed by worms or insects, the 'Thiampu' went to the jhum and offered sacrifice known as "Lawithawi" in order to appease the aggrieved worms on insects. All these sacrifices were made only by the "Thiampu" who was the only mediator between men and the object of worship. Hence the village "Thiampu" played a very important role in the life and society of the Darlongs.

## **SUPERSTITIONS:**

### **Omen:**

Omen may be defined as anything or sign believed to forebade good or evil. The Darlongs have a good number of omens which they may or may not take and observe seriously. There are both good and bad omens. Some examples of good omens are:

1. If a sick person sneezes twice at a time, it is believed that he or she will recover soon.
2. In the rainy season, if the ants come out and roam around, it is believed that the weather will be good.
3. If a cock crows towards the end of heavy rain, it is believed that there will be no more rain on that day.
4. If one's palm itches, it is believed that he or she will receive a letter from his/her loved ones.
5. If two persons speak out the same thing at the same time accidentally, it is believed that the elder one will receive a letter.

6. If a spider swings in front of spinter, it is believed that she will soon get a proposal for marriage.
7. In a journey, if one comes across a lady with pitcher full of water, it is believed that the journey is going to be a successful one.
8. If a child is born with any unusual mark or manner such is mentioned in the name believing that the same may not be repeated in the next issues if that has been done.
9. If a person dreams his/her love, and if he/she wishes to be dreamt too, he/she should turn his/her pillow.

Some examples of bad omens are:

1. If hunters comes across a tortoise on their way to hunting, it is believed that the hunting would be an unsuccessful one.
2. If one stumbles at the door the person is likely to have a bad journey.
3. If a dog climbs on the roof of a house, misfortune or death is likely to come to the owner of that house.
4. If a tree falls or if its branch breaks without any strong wind, an important person in the village or the person who had been it, is likely to die.
5. If a cock crows at an odd time or if a hen crows like a cock, misfortune is likely to come to the village.
6. Intermittent twitches of the right eyebrow or right shoulder for considerable length of time are indication of the death or serious illness of close relations.
7. If a dog or a cat runs away from its owner's house and takes shelter in the other's house, there will be a bitter quarrel in the house of the owner.
8. If a pig runs away from its owner's house and takes shelter in the other's house or, if it sits like a dog, its owner may come across misfortune or may even die.
9. If a crying eagle hovers above a village for a considerable length of time, death or misfortune is sure to come to that village.

## **Dreams:**

The Darlongs believe in dreams, but sometimes they may not take it very seriously. However, they are fond of telling dreams and trying to interpret for fun or with serious intention. Sometimes the interpretations may differ, but some dreams dealt herewith have common interpretations. Dreams can be divided into two main types, the good dreams and the bad dreams.

### **Good Dreams:**

1. Climbling ladders or mountains successfully in dreams are signs of success.
2. Dreaming a clean water is a sign of happiness.
3. If one catches fish in his dream, he is likely to get cash money.
4. Killing a snake in dreams means defeating one's enemy.

### **Bad dreams:**

1. If a person dreams a house on fire, some family dispute is likely to occur.
2. Dreaming dirty water is a sign of ill health and unhappiness.
3. Failing to climb a ladder or a mountain in dream is a sign of failure.
4. Dreaming a naked or nude person is a sign of disgrace to the person dreaming it.
5. Dreaming fire or blood is a sign of quarrel and blood shed.
6. If one dreams a snake, it is a sign of enemy, the bigger the snake is the stronger his enemy. If the snake is killed, he is to defeat his enemy, and vice versa.

7. Falling of tooth is an indication of serious illness.
8. If a person dreams a dead person and shakes hands with him/her it is a bad sign of a nearing death to the person dreaming it.
9. If a person is bitten by a snake in his dream and fails to kill the snake, he is likely to be defeated by his enemies.
10. Taking heavy food, particularly with meat in dreams is a sign of illness, particularly stomach upset.
11. Encountering a ghost in a dream is a bad sign of misfortune and illness.
12. It is believed that if one repeats his dream to different persons in his own dreams seven times, he is bound to die.
13. Dreaming dry pond or climbing on a dry tree in dreams is a sign of poverty, misfortune and illness.

## ASTRONOMY:

The Darlongs get immense pleasure in watching the stars and telling stories about them to their young ones. In the autumn season lying on the open platform of their houses and while enjoying the warmth of their camp fire in the winter nights, they look up to the sky and teach their young ones about the constellations. Most of the stars and constellations have been personified and they have their own stories. Some of the stars and constellations as known by the Darlongs are given here.

### 1. Siruk:

'Siruk' is a compound word meaning six stars forming a constellation which appears like a question mark and is to be seen in the mid-sky. In the beginning they

were seven friends but a very strong storm took away one of them and now they are six in number. In remembrance of the death of their friends, they disappear once in a year after the strong storm that takes place in the first week of May every year. The storm is called 'Sirukla' meaning taking away of the six stars. This makes the end of the storm and the hiding of the six stars for a few months at a stretch.

## **2. Koloia:**

Koloia was a brave young man. In a great war his enemies broke his legs and beheaded him. After his death he ascended to the sky. He is seen lying while the bees hover above his broken and rotten leg.

## **3. Chawngmawii and Hrangsuana:**

Chawngmawii, the well-known beautiful lady was in love with a handsome young man Hrangsuana. They lived in separate villages. A great war broke between the two villages. In spite of the great risk, Hrangsuana continued to court his sweetheart. One day he was caught and killed. The villagers did not know who the young man courted. So they called all the young women in the village to see the dead body. When Chawngmawii saw the dead body of her lover, she broke into tears and she was killed too. The two lovers ascended into the sky as stars. They are the two bright stars above the western horizon. There they meet periodically. The Darlongs say that people who marry during the meeting of the two lover-stars are lucky and are prosperous.

## **4. Naipang Pawi Inkap:**

This literally interpreted means children playing

with seeds of thick woody creeper (*Entada Scandens*). In the games the seeds of *Entada scandens* are placed on the ground in row which the players hit. This constellation resembles the playing of such game.

### **5. Naipang Zu Inhual:**

This means children chasing a mouse. The children are chasing the mouse with sticks and the mouse is still running.

### **6. Sithlung Inzawn:**

This resembles a number of people carrying a big log on the shoulders.

### **7. Sivawk Kawk:**

This literally interpreted means a constellation that resembles a pig basket.

### **8. Sikhawvar:**

This means star at dawn. This star appears on the eastern sky in the morning and is bigger and brighter than any other star.

### **9. Indi Puansuk:**

This constellation resembles two ladies weaving side by side.

### **10. Hrangkhupa Selu:**

This literally interpreted means 'head of Hrangkhu-

pa's mithun'. The elders can identity all parts of the head of the mithun.

### **11. Sir Vakim:**

This literally interpetted means folding back the edge. It appears like folding back of the edge of some thing long and big.

### **12. Simeikhu (Comet):**

The Darlongs picture the comet as a harbinger with a fire torce announcing famine or death of a chief

These are some of the stars and constellations as known by the Darlongs.

### **THE ORIGIN OF STORM:**

One day the king of the Termites and the Wind picked up a quarrel. The Termite king stuffed the hole of the Wind which the Wind blew off. The Wind was so tired blowing off the stuff that he took a rest and went to sleep. The Termite king ordered all the Termites in his territory to fight against the Wind. All the Termites worked together and stuffed up the holes of the Wind. The Wind woke up and found that all the holes had been stuffed up and that he could be longer blow the blockade off, and his right hand had also been eaten up. So he promised to supply food to the Termite king every year if only the latter set him free. Satisfied, the Termite king freed him. Due to this whatever the wind breaks is twisted anticlock-wise because he has no right hand and the termites gather their food from the destruction caused by the wind.



## **DELUGE AND ITS ORIGIN:**

A woman was weaving. The weaving took such a long time and she used so much of water in her weaving that she finished all her water. Her baby cried for water. But she could find no water. She heard a water falling merrily from the distant fountain. 'If the water could only make itself big enough to reach my house, I could have quenched the thirst of my baby' she said. Tuitarpa, the water-god heard it. He made the water so much that it covered the whole house of the woman. The woman ran away with her child and took shelter on top of a mountain, but the deluge still reached there. The villagers came to know that the woman was responsible for such unusual deluge. Hence they chased and caught her. They snatched away the cloth she carried her baby with, and the baby fell down. The water took away the child and subsided.

## **ORIGIN OF ECLIPSES:**

An old woman had a piece of wet cloth which she kept in her basket meant for keeping the good cloths. Every time she had some ailment she used to rub her body with the wet cloth and get healed. Every time she went out she asked her daughter-in-law not to open her basket. One day in her absence the daughter-in-law stealthily opened the basket and there she found only a piece of black cloth which was wet. She dried it in the sun. The sun and the moon saw it, and they came down to take it away. But the old woman had two dogs-the red dog and the black dog. The two dogs caught the sun and the moon and refused to free them. The sun and the moon pleaded for their release and said that the dogs should devour any of them every time they came to take

any position they do not normally take. Hence every time there goes some thing wrong in the position between the sun and the moon, one of the two dogs devour either the sun or the moon. The eclipses are of two types the red eclipse and the black eclipse. Due to this incidence none is allowed to open other's basket without the knowledge and approval of the owner. This prohibition is specifically mentioned in the customary law of the Darlongs and is still enforced.

### **THE ORIGIN OF EARTHQUAKE:**

One day a beetle rolled down dung of the pigs to the underworld. The people of the underworld asked what it was. The beetle in reply said that he had been to the upper world and that all the people had died, so he brought the ball of their cotton as a proof of their death. To confirm the statement, people of the underworld shook the earth. But they heard people of the upper world shouting, "We are still alive, we are still alive". They hammered the month of the beetle flat for teeling lies and it remains to be flat. During earthquake the Darlongs still announce "Kin la dam. kin la dam", (We are still alive, we are still alive) though they no longer believe in the story.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SOCIAL LIFE

In sociology, society has been defined as a group of composed men, women, and their children that has established patterns of cooperation by means of which its members are able to survive and produce. In other words the study of man and his social institutions (system of procedures and the establishments that observe them) is sociology. In the society of the Darlongs, family can be treated as a unit of a social life. A village consists of a few families. An ideal Darlong family consists of a few members - wherein the father or grand father is the head of the family who is responsible of providing the members of the family with a great variety of the needs.

The chief was the overall head of the whole village who was also responsible of dispensing justice and ensuring protection of his subjects. He was assisted by the elders of the village in all matters. Though some chiefs were known for their harsh nature, some others depended on the village elders. In this chapter only a few social practices of the Darlongs have been discussed.

#### MARRIAGE:

The marriage systems of the Darlongs form an important aspect in the traditional life of the community. Their marriage systems are similar to those of the Hmars and Mizos. In their social set up which has not much restriction on the free mixing of the opposite sexes, a

young man often selects a young woman of his choice. Love and intimacy may bud and flower sometime in the jhum-field and some other time in the social activities where both the young men and the young women participate.

In the glorious past days the traditions of bravery and spirit of adventure were the order of the day. It was quite a game with some lovely girls to ask their lovers to prove their worth in the battle-field and to bring home heads of the enemies as a proof of their bravery and manhood. Once a young man in love has proved his merit, none was to challenge his claim in winning the hand of the girl who ordered him.

### **Courting the Girls:**

In the society of the Darlongs, courting the girls is treated as one of the chief amusements which they do with or without serious intentions. A young man in love goes to his lover's house at night along with some of his close friends where the lovers try to steal time to share their feelings under the thatched roof. The parents of the girls may simply to bed if they have no objection towards courting of their daughter by the young man. Courting is socially sanctioned. A married man may also court a young woman. A young woman is expected to welcome every one warmly irrespective of whether she has any personal interest or not. Otherwise she runs a great risk of being branded as impolite and nasty. Once a young woman is marked for her unsatisfactory behaviour she becomes a subject of hatred and criticism which might stand as a stumbling block to her marriage. So a young woman has to take extra care of her behaviour gesture and words.

## **Selection of life Partner:**

Though the young men and young women are free to select their life partners, formal negotiations are necessary before a young man can be allowed to bring the bride to his house and establish a new family.

It is worthwhile to mention here that the Darlong parents exercise their utmost care and solemnity in selection of life partners of their children. It is the duty of the parents to carefully enquire into the character and the lineage of the bridegroom or the bride-to-be, A marriage into a family where there has been a case of insanity of almost any kind is not well looked upon. Similarly, many other characteristics such as talkativeness, laziness or drunkenness are taken into consideration for finalisation of the marriage.

## **Types of Marriage:**

There are mainly 9(nine) types of marriage in the Darlong society. these are locally known as:-

1. Rihnat Inkham
2. Zutuikawk
3. Burhul
4. Raw Koi
5. Intlun
6. Di Thangtlan
7. Maklut
8. Hrawlkawng Intukpui, and
9. U Nupui Lua.

### **1. Rihnat Inkham or arranged marriage:-**

Rihnat inkham is the most desirable type of marriage in the society. It is socially sanctioned and agreed to by

both the parents of the bride and the bridegroom. In this form of marriage the parents of the bridegroom shoulder the burden of initiating formal negotiations through a go-between called 'Palai'.

### Negotiation:

Once a young man has selected a girl of his choice he informs his parents about it. If the parents have no objection they choose a reliable man to act as a go-between on their behalf. The palai plays a very important role in that he gets himself involved in the affairs of the marriage. In case of divorce of the couple, it is still the duty of the 'Palai' to settle the whole affairs.

On the night of first negotiation, the parents of the bridegroom-to-be send the 'Palai' accompanied by some of their close relatives to the house of the bride. When the parents of the young woman see the 'Palai' and his company entering their house conscientiously, they have no difficulty in understanding the purpose of their coming. To set the ball rolling, the parents of the young woman ask them, "Respectful men, what brings you to our humble house?" In reply, "we come to ask for your 'Fachi' (rice seed) for our young man" they say. With utmost politeness the parents reply, "Though our daughter appears to be quite grown-up physically, she is not mature enough to build a home in the house of the others. However, as you prove to be quite serious, please allow us to take the opinion of our daughter". However, the 'Palai' and his party would try to leave with the parents of the girl "Thilkhang" (a token of bond given in terms of soiled hoe or an adze). The parents of the girl has the option to accept or not to accept the 'thilkhang'. If they accept it the battle is half-won, in that no other proposal can be entertained till the 'thilkhang' has been returned

and the negotiation finalised. The 'Palai' and his party are in dark till the 'thilkhang' has been accepted. This way the negotiation may continue for three to four rounds before finalisation of the marriage. No negotiation is initiated in the month of 'Thlaphal' i.e., December.

On the last negotiation, the day for the marriage is fixed and a portion of the bride price 'hmantir' is paid to the parents of the girl. It is worthwhile to mention that bride price of the youngest daughter and a young woman who marries before her elder sister is higher than the usual bride price by one 'Sial' i.e., the prices equal to the price of a mithun. On the night of finalisation of the marriage, 'Sial' is paid as 'hmantir' and a formal celebration takes place where the 'Palai' and the parents of the bride-to-be and their close relatives drink their home made 'Zu' together and spend the night in merriment.

### **The marriage ceremony:**

On the night of the marriage all the guests assemble in the house of the bride's parents, and the bride-to-be takes shelter in the house of her paternal uncle and the bridegroom-to-be in the house of his paternal uncle or in any house if he has no paternal uncle. The 'Palai' and the 'Thui ritlang' (a caretaker of the bride and the bridegroom) play a great role in that no decision can be taken without their consent.

A grand feast is arranged in the house of the bride. The entire expenditure of the feast including the wine they drink and other expenditure are borne by the parents of the bride. As they drink and make merriment, the Palai, the parents of the bride and some of their close relatives sit together and settle the bride price. The bride price is distributed to the close relatives of the bride as listed below:

## Bride price:

- a) Pu hrang or share of the paternal uncle/grand father of the bride.
- b) Nu hrang or share of the mother of the bride.
- c) Ni hrang or share of the sister of the bride's father.
- d) U hrang or share of the brother/sister of the bride.
- e) Palai hman or share of the negotiator.
- f) Cham hman or share of the friend of the bride. This makes the first night.

In the second night the bride is taken to the house of the bridegroom. As there is no arrangement for feast in the house of the bridegroom, the bride and her party carry with them meat in bamboo tubes and a pot of 'Zu'. The 'Palai' carries a hen to be killed by the priest, paternal aunt of the bride carries 'Zuar Puanri' i.e. quilt specially made for the marriage. On the way to the bridegroom's house, if they come across any village, the young men of that village will await the marriage party on the way to demand 'Zawlkhum Zu' or wine specially prepared on the occasion of the marriage. The party is freed only after 'Zawl Khum zu' has been served to the young men who have stopped them.

In the house of the bridegroom the marriage party is welcomed by the 'tartlang' or village elders, and the marriage party hand over to them all the cooked meat and wine they have brought from the house of the bride's parents. The groom contributes only a red cock and wine towards the marriage feast. As the marriage party enters the groom's house the young men make merriment and try to pour water on the bride and smear colours and dirt on the face and body of the 'Palai'. To avoid such mess the bride usually goes back to her paternal uncle's house the same night.



The priest takes the red cock and the hen, and with strict observance of religious rites, he holds the two fowls together, and chants-

Ribung rizai chang rise,

Indung insei inkhang

Inlian kan awm rise.

Vakul, vahai an par tlanin

Inri dum kan awm rise.

English translation:

May their descendents be numerous.

May they live in houses

Strong, long and wide.

Let the birds of the air frequent their flowers,

And fill the air with their chirping music.

After the priest has chanted syllables, he makes the two fowls drink the best of the wine and observe the movements of their heads. After observing carefully the movements of the heads, the priest kills the fowls by one stroke. If water comes from the beaks of the fowls that is said to be a good sign. The groom calls his best friends to dress the fowls. They make merriment out of the fowls making them husband and wife etc. This is followed by feast out of the share brought by the bride and the two fowls. The young men may remain awake the whole night making merriment and taking drinks. The next day is set aside for drinks and dances.

It is interesting to note that after the second day of the marriage, all the villagers attend their own business and only after a week of the marriage, the bride is finally brought to the house of the groom. But this time there is no drinks or dances. This practice, except the negotiation part is obsolete now.

## **2. Zu Tulkawk:**

'Zu tuikawk' is a system of marriage for the poor. After finalisation of the marriage through negotiation, the first part of the marriage takes place in the house of the bride on the scheduled day. Due to their poverty, the parents of the girl are required to serve only a pot of wine in the marriage and the bride carries with her a pot of wine to the house of the bride groom. The marriage is completed after the two fowls have been killed by the priest, followed by a small feast. This practice is obsolete now.

## **3. Burhul:**

This is also marriage of the poor. 'Burhul' literally translated means dry vessel; 'bur' means vessel and 'hul' means dry. In this arranged marriage the bride carries only a pot of wine to the house of the bridegroom. The two become one in a wed-lock after the priest has pronounced the magic words and killed the fowls. This system of marriage is obsolete now.

## **4. Raw Kol:**

The term 'Raw Koi' literally means bringing or calling (the bride). It is an arranged marriage and is the simplest form of marriage for the poor. The 'Palai' brings the bride to the house of the bridegroom on the appointed day. This practice is obsolete now.

## **5. Intlun:**

This is a marriage by elopement. This often takes place when a young man and a young women in love

decide to settle matters without the knowledge of their parents. Out of fear of being disapproved by their parents or out of excessive intimacy the two lovers decide to settle the matter for good by adopting this system. In the system, the young man brings home his lover and calls the elders of the village court to approve their elopment as marriage. The marriage is over after the red cock has been killed by the village court to approved the marriage. This marriage takes place between a young man and a young woman of the same village.

It is worthwhile to note that the parents of the young woman has the right to take back their daughter forcefully if they can catch the two lovers up before they (two lovers) reach the house of the young man and before the 'armit en' has been performed by the village court. After 'armit en' the parents cannot but approve and accept the marriage.

In the olden days, the young man in love would cut down all the branches of a tree that grew on the lower side of a village road to disclose his secret affair. Seeing the sign, the villagers would come to know that a certain young man in their village had a secret affair with a certain young woman. People who come across it would ask with a great deal of curiosity and surprise "Who can he be?" They would leave it knowing that it would only take a month or two for revealing the secret.

## 6. Di Thangtlan:

'Di Thangtlan' is similar with intlun' in that it is also a marriage by elopment. The difference lies in that 'intlun' occurs between a young man and a young woman of the same village. Whereas 'Di thangtlan' occurs between a young man and a young woman of different villages. During elopment, if the parents of the young

woman hope to be able to catch them up on their way, they may start chasing them. In spite of the fear of being caught up on their way, the couple had to dance at every junction of their road. It was believed that if they failed to do so, a tiger would devour any one of the couple within a short span of time. The marriage is final after the 'armit en' has been administered by the village court in the house of the young man.

## 7. Maklut:

Muklut is a marriage by service. In this practice, after all the negotiation has been completed the young man is required to pay his service in the house of his father-in-law for a period of two to four years depending on their agreement during the negotiation. On the night when the bridegroom enters the house of his father-in-law he is welcomed with a feast and drinks. The bridegroom is also required to take with him one 'sial' as the price of the bride, failing which his service period is extended by one more year. One 'sial' (mithun) equals to the price of a mithun. The bride and the bridegroom live in the house of the parents of the bride as husband and wife. On the expiry of the service period, the husband brings home his wife to establish a new family.

It may sound queer to look at the system superficially, but most of the time there are reasonable causes behind it. It may so happen that the young woman may be the only daughter of the old parents. As a result the old parents may insist that their son-in-law should help them before he finally takes home their daughter without whom they are to be totally helpless.

However, because of their male ego, most of the young men refuse to undergo the system because they do not like to surrender upto that extent. This practice

is rare, but the possibility of this taking place cannot be totally ruled out especially when love is blind or the need is reasonable.

### **8. Hrawlkawng Intukpui:**

It is a marriage of the aged people. Sometime it may so happen that an old widow and an old widower may decide to establish a home in their old age. On approval of the village court they may marry and establish a new home together. This practice is rare but its possibility cannot be totally ruled out depending on the need and circumstances.

### **° 9. U Nupui Lua:**

It is a case of junior levirate, under this system the younger brother marries the childless widow of his elder brother. This is no longer in practice. If there is any reasonable ground for junior levirate, the marriage has to undergo the usual procedures. It may also be noted that there is no social sanction for the elder brother to marry the (childless) widow of his young brother, and it is strongly loathed at.

All these practices are of the past. The modern practice, ministered under the Christian codes is different almost in every way except the 'Negotiation.'

In the present day practice, the marriage takes place in the Church after necessary negotiation and finalisation of the marriage through the 'Palai'. Unlike the pre-modern period, a feast is made in both the houses of the bride and the bridegroom. The priest announces, 'The two have become one until death do them part.'

The Darlongs neither encourage nor discourage to get married with or to the other tribes. Hence the society

is neither exclusively clan-endogamous nor is it exclusively clan-exogamous. In fact, intermarriages are not at all new to the Darlongs. To get themselves adapted to the waves of socio-cultural changes around them, intermarriages are comfortably accepted so long no harm is caused to the community as a result of such marriages and so long the couple live together happily.

In the recent years there has been some changes adopted in respect of the bride price and its portions in consonance with the change of living standard and social status of the people. The latest bride price and its portions are listed below:

- a). Hmanpui or main price for a virgin/first marriage, Rs. 300/-
- b). Hmanpui for non-virgin/second marriage, Rs. 200/-
- c). Pu hrang or share of paternal uncle/grand father of the bride, Rs. 50/-
- d). Nu hrang or share of the mother of the bride, Rs. 20/-
- e). Ni hrang or share of the sister of the bride's father, Rs. 20/-
- f). U hrang or share of the brother/sister of the bride, Rs. 10/-
- g). Palai hman or share of the negotiation, Rs. 10/-
- h). Cham hman or shares of the friends of (5+5) the bride and bridegroom, Rs. 10/-
- i). Hrawlkawng intukpui or marriage of the old may be settled by the two parties in the manner they deem fittest.

'Hmanpui', the main price of the bride is payable to the father of the bride. Out of this the father of the bride is to give the shares of the persons in the manner listed above. The paternal uncle or grand father of the bride gets a portion of the price, which is called pu hrang. This share is very important in that if someone neglects to pay it, the paternal uncle or grand father is entitled to call off

the marriage till he is duly honored with his share. Nu hrang or share of the mother of the bride even in case of divorce of the parents of the bride. Similarly, Ni hrang, and U hrang go to the sister of the bride's father and the brother/sister of the bride respectively. Palai hman or share of the negotiation is also very important in that once the Palai receives his share, he is honour-bound to protect or shelter that woman in case she gets into any difficult situation in her new home. A portion of the bride price called cham hman, goes to the friends of the bride and the bridegroom who accompany them during the marriage ceremony, they are also witnesses to the marriage.

## **DIVORCE:**

Inma or Inthen means divorce. The customary law of the Darlongs on the subject starts with a sentence that reads divorce is not allowed in the same way 'God forbids it'. However, there have been divorce cases arising out of certain circumstances that compel the couple to undergo this forbidden practice. Some of the main causes of divorce are given below:

1. A man who feels that it is no longer possible for him to establish a home with his wife may declare that he has divorced her. If the wife is 'thisen pal' that is to say if she has had any children with her husband, the husband pays Rs. 70/- as 'faruang' (share of the children) to retain the children. If a man divorces his wife during pregnancy, the womb child belongs to the mother. In such cases the husband will pay Rs. 30/- as 'maktha' (fine for divorce).
2. If a woman divorces her husband, she will refund the full bride price and the children if any, will belong to the husband. If the woman bears unborn child during such

divorce, that child will also belong to the husband. The woman is not required to pay a fine as 'maktha'.

3. If after divorce the husband intends to remarry his divorced wife, and if the divorced wife agrees to remarry him, the husband has to undergo all the procedures involved in the normal marriage and pay Rs. 200/- as 'hmanpui'(the bride main price).

4. Hlawmbang: It is a divorce by agreement. This happens particularly if both the husband and wife find it difficult to adjust with each other or if they are childless. In such cases they may talk over the matter and get separated without any hard feeling. They may divide their property in the manner they wish.

5. Nupui rawkhal: This is a divorce by abandonment of wife. If a man abandons his wife and family and goes away all his property will belong to his wife. The wife becomes lawful head of the family. If the husband returns after a considerable lapse of time, the wife has the right to accept or reject him.

i 6. Ral nma: This a divorce before marriage. In a love affair with a high degree of intimacy, if either of the lover refuses to marry the other that amounts to a divorce before marriage. If a man divorces his lover before marriage, he will pay a fine of Rs. 50/- as 'maktha'. On the other hand if the woman divorces her male lover she is not required to pay any fine.

7. Thihnung inma: This is a form of divorce after the death of one's spouse. If, after the death of her husband, the wife finds it difficult to continue to live with the relatives of her deceased husband she will pay Rs. 30/-



as 'maktha' and go back to her father's house. She is also entitled to take all her share of property given to her by her husband.

Most of the divorces described above are almost totally unknown to the new generation, particularly after the embracement of Christianity. But provisions are kept intact as the possibility may not be ruled out totally in a society where complexity is on the increase.

## **TLAWMNGAINA:**

In the word of N.E. parry, 'tlawmngaina' is a word which has no exact equivalent in English. It really represents code of morals and good form. In the word of J.H. Lorrain, 'tlawmngaina, and 'tlawmngai', verb form of 'tlawmngaina' means - 1. To be self sacrificing, unselfish, self-denying, persevering, stoical, stouthearted, plucky, brave, firm independent (refusing help); to be loth to lose one's good reputation, prestige etc.; to be too proud or self-respecting to give in, etc. 2. To persevere, to endure patiently, to make light of personal injuries, to dislike making a fuss about anything; 3. to put one's own inclinations on one side and do a thing which one would rather not do, with the object rather of keeping up one's prestige etc. or of helping or pleasing another, or of not disappointing another etc. 4. To do what ever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient it may be to oneself or to one's own inclinations; 5. To refuse to give in, give away, be conquered, 6. to not like to refuse a request; to do a thing because one wishes to please the others. 7. To act pluckily or show a brave front (also used as adjective and adverb).

The above explanations are appropriate and clear enough to explain what tlawmngaina is. Let us now see the occasions the Darlongs generally show their tla-

tlawmngaina for the sake of individuals, the community and any other situations that demand their self-denial. A man who practices the precepts of tlawmngaina is looked up to and respected, while the tlawmngai person does not crave for such respect.

A Darlong who has come across a heavy laden person is expected to help him though he might have not been fit physically for the work. A sick person is attended to, no matter how much pain it requires to do so. If the sick person does not improve, he or she is carried to the hospital leaving behind urgent works. If the sick person dies the young men volunteer themselves to inform the relatives of the dead person far and near, they dig the grave, bury the dead body, do all the works of the bereaved family, give them accompany and comfort them by spending days with them.

If any one's cultivation has stopped due to sickness, the villagers do the cultivation besides helping him in the household works. If the village requires a risky task to save its existence, the young men are expected to show their self-denial, prove their stoutheartedness, perseverance, patience and their refusal to give in to save their village and its people, not considering the pain and suffering they have to undergo. In time of need, a Darlong man tries to hide his pain and illness in order to be able to help and please the others.

In the precepts of tlawmngaina a Darlong man tries to make his inclinations aside, and tries to please or help the others in need. A tlawmngai person, on the other hand, tries to refuse such help, and not be a burden to the others.

Tlawmngaina therefore, is a beauty of the socio-cultural life not only of the Darlongs but also of many other tribes. This makes life enjoyable, because giving is more beautiful than receiving. Life is bitter where the people

can not taste the sweetness of tlawmngaina.

## **POSITION OF WOMEN:**

There are a number of sayings that reflect the position of a woman in the society. The popular ones are:

1. Nupang naipang;
2. Nupang thaloi nih sirtum thaloi a thleng a ning;
3. Nupang thaloi vawn pumin;
4. Nupang lungvar vaww kawng dawng;

They mean:

1. Women and children (are of equal status)
2. A bad doorstep and a bad woman should be changed;
3. Divorce a bad woman during her pregnancy;
4. Wisdom of the woman is worthless.

In the old socio-cultural life of the Darlongs, the epithet 'Weaker sex' can almost be said to have been applied literally to the women. From childhood, there is a clear-cut division of labour between a man and a woman. What is considered to be the job of a girl would not be touched by a boy. The girl child is given duties more than what she manages to handle, whereas a boy of her age is totally burdenless. The most important and critical period in the life of a girl is that which precedes her marriage. During cultivation it is customary for a young man to exchange labour with a girl under a system called, 'inhlawm'. Under this system four to five young men form a group including a young woman. Besides helping her group in the main works this young woman also supplies water to her group and washes all their clothes. During the interval the young woman goes to the jungle to collect plaintain leaves, fuel and some edible vegetable.

In the jhum hut the young woman serves food to ther

group in the lunch. She joins them but she is never free enough to take sufficient food.

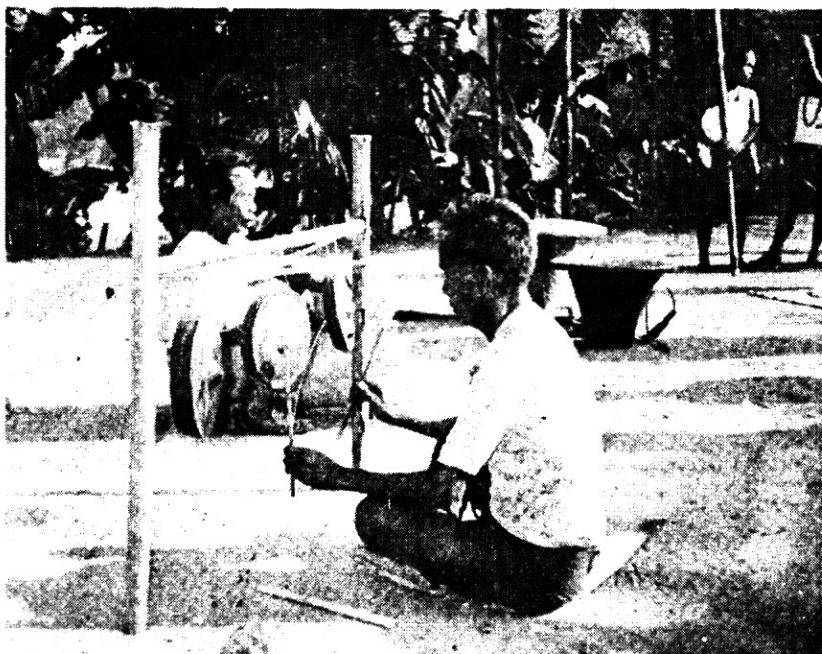
In the evening the young woman carries all the clothes of the young men, carries the fuel, leaves and vegetables she has collected for her household use. On reaching her house she pounds rice, draws water and cooks the food. At night she has young men courting her with or without serious intention. The young woman, while entertaining her suitors continues her spinning work and preparation of food for the pigs. Her most important task is to make no distinction whatsoever between her suitors. The young men may stay as late as they wish, but the young woman is not expected to doze away. In a word, she must not incur the displeasure of the young men which might make her liable to adverse criticism and which might even become a stumbling block to her marriage. This young woman sleeps late and gets up early in the morning and performs all the household chores, before she joins her group. On the way to the jhum, the young woman carries all the food and cloths of her group.

In the pre-Christian times, a married woman besides taking care of her children also had to do all the household chores and join the husband in the jhum cultivation. There was no end to her troubles. Above all she was prone to suffer from mental anxieties and physical torture from her husband and in-laws any time. The wife had to live with constant fear and uncertainty.

But things have changed in the post-Christian times. Now the wife enjoys freedom of speech and plays a greater role in the domestical forefront. She helps her husband in the earning and takes part in the church and social activities. Children of both sexes are given equal responsibilities and are going to school enjoying equal freedom. So the days of discrimination are over and women are shouldering the same duties and responsibilities.



New Generation in old Costumes



Craft and Music

ties. In some cases it become difficult to decide who actually manages the family.

## **BIRTH RITES:**

In the olden days a pregnant woman hardly got any time for rest so long as she was healthy. So a pregnant woman had to carry on with all the household chores including bringing home fuel from the jungle and drawing water from the distant water source. When a woman gave birth to a child, she was assisted by any of the village women irrespective of whether she had any experience or not. The placenta used to be collected in an earthen pot and buried.

After the child birth the mother had to observe a purification rite called 'Ser awp' for a period of seven days during which she was prohibited to work and was to take complete rest. During the period of 'Ser awp' the father of the child was not allowed to kill or injure and animals. Because such act of the father could affect the new born child, which they called was 'chuk' or 'kut chuk' (causer), in which the actions of the father get imprinted on the child in the form of birth marks or infirmities.

If the mother died at or soon after child birth, the child was smothered and buried with the dead mother because nobody was willing to take the burden of bringing up the baby. The woman stopped their works till the dead body had been buried because they believed that this could cause them misfortune.

Naming a child is celebrated with gaiety both in the past and in the present days. The new born child is named after a month or so after the birth. The child is often named by the grand parents who carefully choose a suitable name to become, attain or achieve in his life. If

a child carries any unusual birth mark, such may also be reflected in the name. Because they believe that if such things are not reflected in the name, the same may reoccur on the next issues.

In the recent trend, the Darlongs usually have three parts in their names the English name, the real name and the surname. The English name may be given by the one who has named the child or by the Church during christening of the child. The real name has three main characteristics. They are -

1. Most of the names have four syllables,
2. Name of a female ends with letter 'i', and
3. Name of a male ends with letter 'a'.

In most cases they use only a part of the name which is officialised. Otherwise the same person can be called in different ways taking any part of the full real name. For instance, Lalbiakkimi may be called Lali, Biakkimi, Lalbiaki, Biaki, Kimi.

In the naming ceremony the grand parents give a chicken and some outfits to their grand child and others may give eggs, money or anything useful for the child. The parents of the baby arrange some tea party, the priest offers prayers for the child.

## **DEATH RITE:**

According to the Darlongs there are two main types of death - natural and unnatural deaths. The death of a pregnant woman was attributed to some evil spirits while the death caused by others was believed to be caused by some magic. Body of unnatural death used to be kept inside the house. In both cases, the body was washed and the hair decorated before final disposal. Relatives often gave their home made cloths to dress and to depart their kin. The 'raltha' (warrior) and 'thangsua' were dressed



with thangsua puan (cloth none but the great warrior or hunter could wear).

A baby born dead or which died immediately after birth was called 'Lairu' and was placed in the earthen pot and buried. A baby which died before having teeth was called 'Ramte' and the body was taken out through the side wall and not through the door. Out side the side wall a lady awaited for the dead body with a latchet, carried it and got it buried.

The old person who died a natural death was carried with 'Rilang', a pair of bamboos and was buried. Whereas body of a person who died unnatural death was caarried with 'Langkhat', a piece of bamboo and was buried outside the village area.

The dead body was buried in the courtyard or in the entrance of the village as there was no cemetery. For burying the dead body they had three main types of graves 'Khur naran', 'Vakal' and 'Pangkhawk'. 'Khur naran' literally means ordinary hole (grave). The dead body was laid at the bottom of the ordinary grave and buried. 'Vakal' is a hole made on the side wall of the grave deep and long enough to hold the entire coffin longitudinally. 'Pangkhawk' is also a hole made on the side wall of the main grave, but in this, the coffin is placed side way. The grave is deep in horizontal length and in width it is deep enough to hold the coffin on its side way.

The dead bodies of a chief and his wife were not buried at all. It was put inside a wooden coffin and was placed near a special hearth built near the wall of the dead man's house. A bamboo tube was fixed to the bottom of the coffin with the end running into the ground and the coffin was sealed air-tight. The coffin was heated continuously for a period of three months till it decomposed totally, by which time only the dry bones were left in the



coffin. The coffin had to be opened time to time to facilitate faster decomposition of the dead body. Only the Tlanguasuan clan who had no taboos could open the coffin and tear the skin with the help of their teeth. The clever ones often used some knife to do the job while pretending that they had really torn the skin with the help of their teeth. After the entire body had decomposed, the bones were collected and were buried in a special grave which was deep and wide.

The cruel chiefs could demand almost anything from their dead bed which had to be fulfilled after their death. In some cases, to fulfill the demand of the departed leader, a young woman or a young boy had to be buried alive along with the bones of the chief, but in a separate compartment. A hole was made to facilitate the breathing of the person buried alive. This was done to fulfill the demand of the chief and to give him a company.

Within three months from the death of a person a feeding day was observed. On the feeding day they prepared special food which they placed on the grave of the dead. They believed that the spirit of the dead could partake of it. Perhaps this was the origin of the ancestor worship. If a woman, whose husband had died had any affair before the feeding day, that was considered as adultery.

The erection of monolith in memory of the deceased took place after the feeding day. Pictures of animals were engraved on the monolith of the Thangsua or the great hunter in appreciation of his achievement. They made a feast, drank and sang sentimental songs.

In the Post-Christian times, the dead body is put in a coffin and is buried in the cemetery. The last rite is still observed, but to commemorate the death of their relative, many people opt giving something or the other for the Church to erecting a stone. In the last rite, they pray for the soul of the dead and sing hymns.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

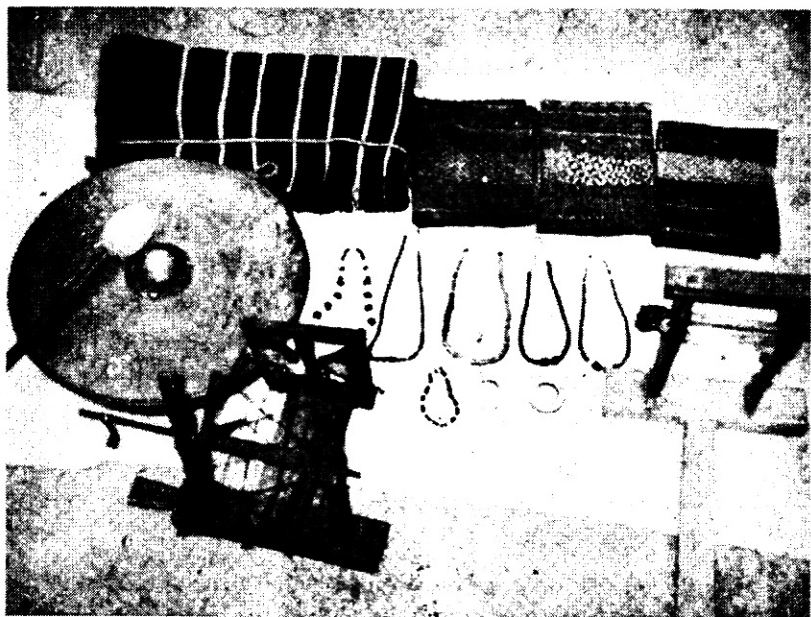
### CULTURAL LIFE

Culture, in its broadest sense, consists of all the ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that individuals learn and share with other social behaviour, languages, religions, ideas, values, and ways of doing and making things. The term is also used in a more specific sense, to refer to the way of life of a particular group. Only a few aspects of the cultural life and activities of the Darlongs have been discussed here.

#### HEADHUNTING:

Headhunting, purely a man's game was common practice prevalent among Garos, Nagas, Khasis, Mizo, Hmars and Darlongs. One's social status was fully dependent upon this risky game. For the tribals it was necessary to prove their bravery, social maturity and manhood. Successful headhunters won the hearts of the aspiring damsels and were highly respected by the society. In spite of its popularity, the origin of the game is not known. However, some of the causes of headhunting are as given below:

1. Rivalry between villages or between the chiefs sometimes led to headhunting wherein brave men of one village tried to bring as many heads as possible from the other village.



Durlongs Customs and Ornaments



Local Textiles of the Durlong

2. Headhunting also resulted out of the desire of young people to prove their manhood and to gain dignity and honour through successful headhunting. Above all, unsuccessful men in headhunting were considered effeminate.

3. Religiously people considered the human head as the greatest gift to God for blessings in the family and village. Thus taking away a head from the family was considered as losing a blessing from that family.

4. When a chief of a village died, the people set out for headhunting in order to offer the heads to bid farewell to the departed leader believing that the defeated enemies accompanied the chief in the abode of the dead as slaves and served him there.

Headhunting was not considered to be a cruel act. It was socially accepted and highly appreciated. To prove his manhood, maturity and to win the heart of the damsels, a man was required to undergo the game, and bring home as many heads of the enemies as he could. The successful headhunters were highly respected and were called 'Raltha' meaning, 'Great warriors or hunters'. To them it was more than a mere fame, for they believed that only such hunters were entitled to settle in Pialral (Paradise) in the life after death, where the defeated enemies served them as slaves.

Bright star on the right side or left side of a new moon was considered to be good sign for headhunting. During such period the brave headhunter or 'Ratha' usually prepared themselves for the risky game, and cautioned their members of family to be cautious and alert. If a certain bird cried and flew towards their destination the hunters took it as a sign of success. On the other hand, if the bird cried and flew towards their village they took it as a bad sign of misfortune, as a result

they may even go back home. Even when they got a sign of success the chief never allowed all the young men to go for the game so to ensure protecting of his own village. In most cases rivalry between villages would lead to war and headhunting. The hunders always preferred to surprise their enemies instead of attacking them openly. In their surprise attack they would march towards the village of their enemies in the night with the stealthy pace of the wild cat, in the most profound silence. After the victory, the assailants or the 'Ratha' returned home taking away the heads of the slain, and if they had got much slain, they simply took home the skins of the forehead of the slain. If they were defeated, they would go back home as silently as they came and lived in disgrace till their failure was retrieved. When any enemy was killed and brought home the assailant standing by the side of the enemy killed would call his own name thrice out of joy.

This was done to let the slain know his (assailant's) name so to enable him identify his master, his assailant, whom he would have to serve in the abode of the dead. Because the victims the warrior had killed in his life-time were expected to accompany him in the world of the dead as slaves.

To enter their village the victors had to wait in the vicinity of the village for the fall of the evening. There they would spend the rest of the night firing in the air and proclaiming their victory. The villagers would welcome their victors by various acclamations. The young men practiced target shooting around their camp-fire in the dormitory, 'Bukpui'. The young girls would make beautiful wreaths and the chief's wife, beads or special wreaths while the whole villagers remained awake. Thus they would fill the air with gun shots both from the victors and the young men in the Bukpui.

In the early morning the victors announced their final entrance to their village by gun shots and through their songs of victory. The young girls with their beautiful wreaths, the elders with their drums and the whole villagers would gather to receive and welcome them. In their gathering they made merriment in the form of songs and dances. All these were the source of fame and glory to the victors, which encouraged them even to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their people. To them there could be no greater virtue or glory than killing their enemies.

Record has it that in the Jamatia revolt against the Raja in 1863, 600 Kukis were sent to fight against the Jamatias who were only 200 in number. The Kukis killed all the 200 Jamatias and captured their leader Parikshit. The Kukis brought all the 200 heads of the Jamatias to Agartala as token of their victory. The Darlongs were deployed in the fight and, it was the last of their cruel game 'headhunting'.

A Darlong tradition has it that there were two good friends, a rich man of Awmhroi clan and a poor man of Sawnlén clan. The latter invited his friend to his home claiming that he excelled his friend in riches. His friend visited him accordingly, but he was fooled and disgraced there. Out of utter confusion he climbed on a big tree which stood by the side of a river. The villagers decided to guard him there the whole night so to kill him the next day. Out of despair the man sang:

Khua'n ni chawise aw  
Khua'n ni chawise aw  
Ki zia lung ki ral Vawnga  
Khua'n ni chawise aw.

This means -

O God, save my life,  
O God, save my life,

From all my enemies

O God, save my life.

Hardly had he finished his song it started raining and a strong wind started blowing all over, bending a bamboo from the other bank of the river that touched the tree the man climbed on. The man caught hold of the bamboo and crossed the river. After he had crossed the flooded river the man sang a song of victory:

Chawnsai hi zaka laia

An lal hrai ki tha

Khawn cham irel dawtuanga

Langpat and ki sai.

This means-

Amidst the crowded villagers

Killed I the Chief's daughter

On the floor of her house

I beheaded her.

This story is told as an example of the extent headhunting might go.

## **FESTIVALS:**

In the olden days, free time was almost unknown to the people whose life revolved round their shifting cultivation which was subsistant in nature. So, at specified times and seasons of the year the people had community festivals to get themselves relieved from the high pressure of their every day work. The Darlongs had four annual community festivals called 'Kut' which make four different stages of their agricultural process. They are :-

1. Ramzu In or Chapchar Kut: This can be called 'Spring Festival'. It is celebrated after the hard work of cutting their jhum and before they are burnt, that is towards the end of January and towards the beginning of February. This festival lasts for three to four days. Long

before the ceremony is due, the villagers start preparation of rice beer and feeding their fowls and pigs which are to be slaughtered on the Kut day. The men-folk go out hunting and making traps. On the day of the festival, the young and the old dress themselves in their best festive costumes. On the first night, the young men dance the whole night and perform special dances the next day, where the young women join them. This is a festival everyone looks forward to.

2. Kangdai Kut: This festival is observed from the evening of the jhum burning day to the following day. It is held in April. Here they make some merriment and appease the Gods for blessings on their jhum and on their health. This does not make a big festivity. Hence it is less significant than the rest of the festivals.

3. Thlantawi Kut: This festival lasts for a day only. This festival is observed in remembrance of their loved ones who have left the world. They prepare and offer the best food on each grave to show their love for the deceased and for their own mental satisfaction. This special day is called 'Baihnachar' which is very strictly observed. During the observation of the day nobody is allowed to go to the field and work there. Whoever violates the village stricture is to be punished severely.

4. Tharlak or Mim Kut: This festival may be called 'Autumn Festival', which is observed during the harvest of the maize crop and after the completion of weeding work in the rice fields in July. This festival is particularly observed in honour and remembrance of the dead and the gods. This festival is believed to have originated from the legendary lovers 'Pangama and Thuitlingi' (Folk tale No.- 2). Thuitlingi died leaving Pangama. Pangama felt so lonely that he visited his wife in the abode of the dead. There he found that Thuitlingi had become so thin that



he promised to feed her with the fast crops, particularly the maize, which harvest precedes that of the paddy. From this the festival came to be known as Mim (maize) Kut harvest to their loved ones along with their special home made cakes. So the festival is not a joyous one, as it might sound, instead the people may observe with heavy heart as they remember their loved ones who have gone ahead.

All these festivals have deep inner meanings, but they have become things of the past the Darlongs who have the tendency to forget them due to non-practice through decades. They may become so, unless the aspiring new generation revives them. Dances reflect the culture of the people on a certain time, and are the reflection of how man was influenced by his immediate nature. The dances of the Darlongs dealt with herein will reflect how close the people were to their immediate environment. The dances are of two main types-mimicry and non-mimicry. In the mimicry dances the dancers immitate the action and movements of natural objects particularly the wild animals. This is the outcome of collective consciousness of the tribe of their environment which they were so close to.

1.Parkam: Parkam is dance of the young women performed every night of a full one year to learn all types of dances. A young woman may feel to have run short of the social requirement if she does not know all the dances. Hence much importance is given to learning the dances.

The young women first decide as to whether they should perform the dance in a particular year or not. Once decided, they go in search of a 'Pisi' (an experienced dancer), two 'Khuangpus' (male drummers) and two 'sempus' (players of music made of guord and bamboo

pipes) to lead the group round the year. After the 'Pisi', the 'Khuangpus' and the 'Sempus' have been found to assist them in the dances, the young women set off in search of a host. A host has to be well established so to be able to meet their basic requirements like tea and some petty eats every night.

The young women dance every night of a whole year upto any extent of time they wish. At the end of a year, they perform special dances. It is in a way to show how much they have been able to learn throughout the year. To make their final display, the young women collect flowers which they plant in the knot of the hair while dancing.

In the final performance all the dancers dress in new white cloths which have been decorated by the young men with colourful parrot feathers and with shells of iridescent beetles the young women make their final performance during the day and the young men dance the whole night. All the villagers observe the final day as a special day and do not get themselves involved in their personal works. Hence all the villagers get together to witness the dances.

The host make a grand feast for the whole villagers. For the feast, each of the dancer contributes a pot of wine which has been specially prepared with the help of they young men. This does not only make a grand feast but this also makes a great day to all the villagers young and old.

It is evening, and here come the young men to make their whole night performance. They enter the house of the host with a dance called Zawillam palak (a lively dance of the men performed with a great deal of cheerfulness) with their uniform outfits. The young men dance the whole night while the whole village remain fully awake.

2. Chem lam: 'Chem lam' literally interpreted means 'dao dance'. In this dance the dancer exhibits her skill in a very dangerous feat. The dancer is to dance with sharp dao maintaining steps with the music strictly. Chem lams are of two main types.

a. Chem insui: This means kicking the (sharp) daos. In this dance the dancer repeatedly kicks the edges of the sharp daos strictly keeping beats with the music. The daos kicked may be planted on the earth or they may be tightly held by the strongest men between the two legs so that the daos do not make slightest movements. It is said that a mistake in the music is likely to cause great injuries to the dancer. Hence due to fear of diversion of attention the musicians are not allowed to watch the dance themselves. Tuachawngi was the last chem insui dancer who performed her last dance at Muruai village when the author of this book was a boy of 8 years old, i.e. in 1967.

b. Chemvel lam: In this dance, the dancer balances one dao in each thump and rotates and dances with full speed without dropping the daos. Hence the dance is performed with a great deal of skill and dexterity. This dance is also equally dangerous as that of the 'Chem insui'. Both the two dances can take away the breaths of the viewers and offer them complete silence.

3. Fahrel inkan: Fahrel inkan, in the present day context, is 'bamboo dance'. Initially it was pestle dance performed by both young men and women. The dancers step between the two pestles and jump back. For a single dancer two pestles horizontally placed are used whereas for two to four dancers four pestles are used two on top of the others. In the dance the rapidity of the striking of the wooden pestles gets faster with the rhythmic climaxity.



Fahrel Inkan: A Pastle Dance



Vathu Indi: Doves in Love

4. Riki Fachawi: This dance shows how closely the people observe what happens in their immediate environment and how this happening interests them. In this dance, the dancers through their graceful movements with the rhythm of the music immitate how the hungry parrots stealthily carry away corn-ears of the ripening crops to the branches of the tree in the harvesting seasons and enjoy their own harvest there. This shows the relationship between man and his nature.

In the dance, the young women stand in a row, take three steps forward and sit down. They get up and walk back they repeat the actions round the circle and complete the dance.

5. Pualvachang hem: Pualvachang hem is a mimicry of the dance of Pualvachang (hornbill) out of delight on seeing its food. The Darlong women dance the same in the new harvest to express their delight in the harvest. The dancers move their left legs across the right legs and vice versa. They repeat the action four times and rotate anti-clockwise to come to the original position. They take a step forward and repeat the entire action. This way they revolve round the circle slowly, yet gracefully.

6. Sate tual infai: 'Sate' is a wild quadruped animal. The peculiarity of 'Sate' is that it dances to any music or noise it hears. Hence 'Sate tual infai' is a mimicry of the dance of 'sate' on hearing any music or sound.

The dancers form a circle. The half seated dancers incline on one side and stoop down, swing the right leg and come out of the circle. They repeat the action revolving round the circle.

7. Arte tual phit: It is a mimicry of how the fowls sweep the courtyard and collect their food from it. The dancers take four steps towards to the centre of the circle and swing back their left and right legs to immitate the sweeping of the courtyard by the fowls.

8. Vathu indi: This means 'doves in love'. In this dance two or four dancers face each other to immitate the actions and movements of doves in love. The dancers place their hands on the knees in a half seated posture, jump forward and then to backward to convey their love to each other. This way they make several rounds dancing at the beat of the drum and the rhythm of the rawsem (a musical instruments made of a guord).

At the end of the dance, a coin is placed on the ground representing a grain which one of the dancers with great skill and high degree of perfection, and with a highly flexible body has to pick up with the tongue in the same way a dove collects the grains from the ground, while seated on the toes.

9. Khuallam or Thlangrawte lam: At the beat of darteng (a small gong) the dancer dances with two sticks which he strikes at the back, in the front, above the head, under the left and right legs from a slow movement till he reaches the incredible speed. That is the climax of the dance. The dance is performed only by male dancers.

10. Salu lam: Salulam literally means dancing with the head or skull of an animal which has been killed and brought home. The elders of the village dance as they sing in unison:

Tuipui Rengsial e kan tha hi  
Tiai hlei kuanga,  
Kañ tha ni chun sabung hi

Zotlang tina etc. This means-

We have killed king of the water animals. Let this be known to everyone all across the hills. Traditional story has it that the Darlong killed a crocodile, but they did not know its name. An old lady singer came forward and said that what should be said of this animal and sang this.

The elders hold the head of the animal and dance singing the salu lam hla (song) while jumping up and down. There are a good number of songs sung in the dance.

11. Silai lam: Silai lam is literally interpreted as gun dance. Silai means gun and lam means dance. Silai lam is performed only by man dancers. The dancers hold the gun, take a posture of aiming at an animal and move forward and backward proceeding towards the right handside. The dancers sing in unison:

Ral an lian e Lalvuadura

Lal lian e

Kei e masat in rala e etc.

The song tells about a great hunder who volunteered himself to fight against the enemies.

In all these dances khuang (drum), rawsem and darteng (a small gong) are used. However, only khuang and darteng are used in the salulam and silai lam.

## **COSTUMES AND ORNAMENTS:**

The Darlongs lived a very simple life in the old days. They put on simple dresses and did not use much of ornaments. In various occasions men and women used almost the same costumes which was the outcome of their simplicity.

## Men's dresses:

The men wore simple dresses consisting of a simple cloth which they put on carrying on the left shoulder and under the right arm across the chest, or a piece of colorless loose white shirt with a vertical opening in the front, woven at home by the women with indigenous cotton material. When a work, the man wrapped their cloth round the waist letting the end hang down in front. They also used a turban-like twisting of cloth round the head with two projections, one above the forehead and the other at the back. During festival, or any special occasions, the men wore stripe cloths, and the usual shirt with glistening wing cover of green beetles.

During war, the men generally dressed themselves exquisitely, tied their waist with a piece of cloth, and with a gun or spear and a dao in the hands. Each one had his own haversack hanging over the shoulder. The dress of the chief was much the same with that of the common men, except on occasions of ceremony or festival, when they wore dark blue cloths with red lines of particular pattern, and plumes, made of the tail feathers of the king crow in the hair knots. The cloth referred to above could also be worn by one who gave certain feasts.

## Ornaments worn by men:

The men kept their hair long in knots at the nape of the neck, and used hair clip made of brass, or a hard wooden or bamboo piece. The clip was so hard and strong that it was also used as a weapon in the absence of normal weapons. The hair comb was made of a piece of bamboo about four inches long, a centemetre thick and two inches or so wide, into which were inserted, very close together, strips of bamboo about two inches long.



The men had their ears pierced, and wore either small wooden studs with flat heads about two-third of an inch in diametre, and coloured red, or red beads of the same diametre. The beads, called 'theibuang' were also suspended by piece of string. The beads were so highly valued that there are a good number of folk tales which depict its value and importance. The story of Ralruanga (story no. 5) is one of such stories. The men used bangles called 'bala', made of silver, but women never used them.

The men were also fond of necklaces which were made of beads and amber, usually used by the well-to-do, some common men and most of the children hang tigers' teeth and grains of job's tears round the neck as ornaments.

### The women's dresses:

The women, like the men folk were not addicted to fine cloths. They were almost the same costumes with those of the men's. A dark blue-cotton cloth with its exquisite designs, of the same colour as above, just long enough to go round the wearer's waist with a slight over-lap, called 'puanzem', and held up by a girdle of brass wire or string called 'Kutkhi', served as a petticoat which only reached the knee.

Puanzems were of various types - Hmar-am ( with square designs), kawcha dawn zia (with a design of fern leaf), ngaru zia (with a design of fish bones placed obversely and reversely facing each other), saivate, and zemdum (a plain black piece of cloth without any designs). The other piece of cloth used covered the breasts only. Besides these, the women, like the men-folk occasionally put on white shirts.

During festivals, the women put on full sleeves

dark-blue shirt which they decorated with wing cover of green beetles while the comb remained planted in the hair knot. They decorated their head with feathers of parrots at the end of which they suspended the wing cover of green beetles.

### **Women's ornaments:**

Every young girl had to get her ears pierced in order to be able to insert the real earring in the later days. After the ears had been pierced, small wooden plugs were inserted, which were replaced by larger ones until the real earring, 'tangka kuarbe', silver disc of eight centemetre diametre could be inserted. Widows who abandoned all thought of re-marrying slit the lobes of their ears and removed their earrings.

Women were also fond of necklaces, called 'rithei'. 'Thi tak' made of red beads with the biggest one in the centre, and small to smaller beads away from it; 'tangka thi' with a silver coin after a bead also called, 'thival', and 'Khuaihnr', a costly necklace made of valuable stones were some of the most popular types of necklaces used by the Darlong women.

Most of the ornaments have been eigher lost or sold, a few who still possess them are preserving them with utmost care. An attempt is being made to collect them and preserve them and preserve them as heritage of the past glory.

### **MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:**

The Darlongs do not have a good variety of musical instruments. But some of their instruments are unique

and highly priced. Some of the musical instruments played by the Darlongs are given here:

1. Rawsem: Rawsem is made of cell of gourd with a narrow neck. A round hollow is made in the main body of the gourd wherein seven bamboo pipes with different musical notes are placed. The instrument is played blowing and puffing from the end of the neck of the gourd and the notes are controlled by both the hands. Rawsem produces harmonious and perfect blend of sounds. Expert can play almost any type of songs with it. Rawsem is required almost in all the Darlong dances.

2. Darkhuang: Darkhuang is a big gong with a projected round centre to beat it on. The sound produced is deep and lowpitched. The gong is often kept in the basket used as a receptacle for precious possessions and is played only on special occasions. Both 'Rawsem' and 'Darkhuang' are so specially valued that the Darlong Hnam (Community) Committee accepted the two as an emblem of the Darlongs.

3. Darribu: Darribu is a set of three gongs of different sizes, which, when not in use fit into one another. Each has a different tone and a good number of songs with three notes are played with the three gongs. One of such songs is given here:

Va-akpa thing khawk rawh

Thing khawk nawle

Lung khawk rawh

Teng tawng.

(Crow, peel bark of the tree, or of the stone, teng tawng)

4. Khuang: Khuang is a drum made of rivawng (*Gmelina*

*arborea*) wood and covered with animals hide at both ends. The drum is played in all the dances.

5. Darteng: Darteng is a small gong mostly played in the men's dances such as khuallam with meaningful beats. Some dances cannot be performed without 'Darteng'.

6. Belem: Belem is nothing but a bamboo flute. It can be played by anyone at any time.

7. Tuithei: Tuithei is a bamboo tube used by the Darlongs for carrying in, or for holding water. In the men's dances 'tuitheis' are pounded on the ground to keep beats and to give music simultaneously.

8. Kaikawng: It is a string stretched across the mouth on which the player produces vibration by blowing and giving tones simultaneously. The length of the string at one end is controlled by the right hand to control the notes and tunes effectively.

The Darlongs have also adapted themselves to playing modern musical instruments and sing the latest songs.

## CHAPTER NINE

### FOLKLORE

Folklore is a general term that takes in traditional beliefs, customs, stories, songs, and sayings. The most is concerned mainly with folk tales, folk songs and folk games of the Darlongs.

Folklore plays a very important place in the formation of literature. Hence it is difficult, if not possible, to say where folklore leaves off and formal literature begins. Richard M. Dorson, an American authority on folklore, coined the word 'folklore' to describe the adding of details to traditional lore by professional writers.

Folklore has been called 'the culture of uncultured peoples' it usually comes from the common people, and is related to their daily lives, their beliefs, their nearness to the forces of nature, and their simple joys and sorrows. Illiterate peoples are of special interest to folklorists, since their traditions continue to be transmitted by word of mouth. The very word 'folklore', as Dorson puts it, 'usually suggests the oral traditions channelled across the centuries through human mouth'. Story tellers have played an important cultural role, often combining entertainment with explanation of instruction, since long before the dawn of recorded history,

## FOLK TALES.

Telling stories is very much a part and parcel of the Darlong cultural life. The old folk tell stories to the young ones with great enthusiasm and to induce interest in the young minds, they would insist that the young ones reply them 'o, yes' as they start the stories with common introductions like "One day a certain man," "There lived a king", etc. Here we are dealing with some of the favourite stories told by the Darlongs.

### SURA.

Sura is one of the most popular characters amongst the Mizo, Hmars and other Kuki communities. There is no a child who has not heard at least one story or another about Sura. Many feel that he was the silliest of all the simpletons, whereas some other feel that he was the wisest of all. Two popular stories about Sura are given here.

#### 1. Exchanging a house with Haifinga

Haifinga, the elder of the two brothers got married, moved out from the ancestral home and build a new house. However the house was poorly built and was leaking all over. On the other hand Sura had built himself a house completely rain proof. So Haifinga proposed that they should exchange their houses.

"No", replied Sura, "your house is leaking"

"Don't you know" replied Haifinga, "that through the holes of the roof you can see, count and comtemplate the stars in the sky?"

At this Sura agreed and they exchanged their houses. One day as he was looking at the stars lying on his bed

there was a sudden downpour, and he was completely drenched. So sura had to build himself anew the entire roof.

## 2. Sharing and Sparing a Mithun

Sura and Haifinga had a mithun. As it could not be divided, the two brothers decided to share it jointly. It was agreed that Sura should have the tail and Haifinga the head. Every morning Haifinga would tell Sura to clear the night soil as the same came out from Sura's share. Tired of the job, Sura suggested for exchange of their respective shares. Haifinga agreed. Now every day he would ask Sura to bring fodder for the animal, the mouth being Sura's share. In course of time, the mithun calved and Haifinga claimed the calf, and the subsequent calves inspite of Sura's protest. Eventually out of utter desperation Sura declared that he was going to take away his portion of the share, that is the head of the mithun. At this Haifinga had to acquiesce and share with Sura all the calves equally.

## 3. Chemtatrawtpa

One day a certain man called Chemtatrawtpa was sharpening his dao on the bank of a river. A lobster pinched one of his testicles. The man got infuriated and cut a bent bamboo which in turn hit a certain climbing plant called kha um (*Hodgsonita heteroclita*). The fruit of the plant hit a pregnant deer and the deer trampled on the feathers of a wild fowl, and the wild fowl with fury scattered ant's nest, and the angry ants nipped the testicles of a wild boar, who at once uprooted a plaintain tree and disturbed a peaceful bat having its daily snooze and the bat entered right on to the elephant's ear, the

upset elephant trampled down the house of a poor old woman, and the poor old woman in desperation left her excrement at the source of the village water.

The village people charged the poor lady insisting that she should pay a fine for dirtying the village water. "Why did you dirty the village water"? they asked her. "Because the elephant had trampled down my house" she replied. So they went to the elephant and asked why he had trampled down the woman's house and the elephant said because the bat entered in his ear, the bat argued that he had been disturbed by the wild boar by uprooting the plaintain tree where he was snoozing, the wild boar said that he did such a thing only because the ants nipped his testicles, the ants said they nipped the testicles of the wild boar because the wild fowl had scattered their nest, the wild fowl said she scattered the ants' nest because the pregnant deer had trampled on her feathers, and the pregnant deer put the blame on the kha um creeper of hitting her, kha um creeper charged the bent bamboo for hitting him, the bamboo blamed Chemtatrawtpa who caused him extreme pain, Chemtatrawtpa angrily explained that he only cut down the bamboo for the pain inflicted on him by the lobster who had pinched one of his testicles. The village people called on the lobster and asked why he had pinched the testicle of Chemtatrawtpa. The lobster found himself confounded and simply said, "Ter-er-er-er, if you burn me I will turn red, and if you put me back into the water I turn pale".

So the people burnt him and he turned red, and he became pale when they put him back into the water where he managed to swim again. When they saw him swimming, the village people chased him with 'hnathial' (*Zingiberaceae*) stick to kill him. Before he died he cursed the hnathial stick saying, "Curse on you for trying to kill me - you die down before your seeds are mature".



Because of the curse the hnathial die down before the seeds are mature.

#### 4. Khuangthli Rihli

A man had two daughters who used to go to the jhum to keep a watch over the crops and to drive away the birds which used to collect ears of the ripening crop. There was a big tree Khuangthli tree by the side of the jhum which possessed a spirit in the form of a serpent dragon. In the precess the elder sister fell in love with the serpent dragon which the younger sister was terribly afraid of. The elder sister used to eat up the tasty tiffin with his unusual lover. The younger sister started losing her health as she did not partake of the tiffin out of fear of her sister's lover.

One day the father asked his younger daughter as to what she thought was the reason for her getting so thin. But she begged to be excused on the ground that she dared not say. But the father was insistent and demanded that she should tell him the truth however distasteful it might be. At this point she told her father that her sister fell in love with a serpent dragon and they used to eat up all the tiffin. The father became very distressed and decided to go to the jhum in order to kill the serpent dragon. On arrival at the jhum, the father asked her younger daughter to call her sister's lover. The younger sister called out:-

Khuangthli rihli, rihli aw,  
Ki u-in hong rawh nang a ti.  
(O, spirit of khuangthli,  
come, my sister's calling you.)

On hearing the call, the serpent replied:-

Ki lu ki khui lai tak,  
Hrang sam ki zel lai tak.  
(My hair am I dressing beautifully

My hair knot I am tying exquisitely.)

Then out he came with flowers in his knot of hair to embrace his sweetheart. As he entered the jhum hut the father of the girl axed him in two pieces. The father hid the head in the ash, the body in the quarry and kept the intestine on the brinjal plant. As the elder sister returned from the jungle to the jhum hut, the younger sister said to her, "Our father wants you to throw the ashes, bring edible stone from the quarry and pluck some brinjal". As the elder sister went to throw the ashes she found her lover's head. Out of utter sadness she cried:-

Sim ral maw ni tawng:

Hmar ral maw ni tawng?

(Did you come across enemies  
of the south or of the north?)

The head in reply said:-

Hmar ral hom chang mak

Sim ral hom chang mak

Ni nu nih ni pa ral ki tawng.

(Neither came I across enemies of the north

Nor enemies of the south

Came I across your parents.)

Soon after that the elder sister went to the quarry to collect some edible stone and there she found the body of her lover, the serpent. And when she went to pluck the brinjal she found there the intestine of her lover. She cried so much that she lost her voice. With a heavy heart she carried some fuel and went home. On reaching her house she found her father's hunting dog lying at the fuel store. She shouted to drive the dog away, but the dog could not even hear her voice which was so low, and as she placed her heavy burden, it fell on the dog and the dog died on the spot. Her father was furious and out of anger he cut the belly of his daughter. From her belly came out young snakes in a large number which started

to hide themselves in the bush. The father however, fought back and succeeded in killing all but one which got away. This one grew to a large size and it used to eat up one child every day to avenge the death of its mother. The villagers never knew how a child got lost everyday. An old lady opened the secret and said that it was a big snake that took away their children every day. To catch the snake the villagers made a big noose and placed it in the hole of the snake. They pulled the string when the snake appeared in search of the children that evening. As they pulled, the snake said, "No matter how hard you may pull me, my tail still touches end of the earth". As they pulled it, they started cutting it into pieces. In the morning a cock announced as it crowed:-

"Nin khua nimin kai ati,

Mikhua a khualhei-kal ta rawi chu.

(The village will be land-slided,

Guests, you leave for your villages.)

Hardly had the guests gone away, the land slide took place that killed all the villagers, and all their domestic animals turned into wild animals. The hole of this snake is known to this day as Ruallung, a large hole in Mizoram.

## 5. Ralruanga

Ralruanga's father camped in his jhum hut to protect the crops from the wild animals. He used to be troubled by a certain tiger-man called Rimawla every night, and he could not sleep. He asked his son Ralruanga to go to the jhum hut and camp himself there. Ralruanga readily complied and left for the jhum hut taking with him rawsem (a musical instrument), porcupine quills, elephant tusk, hard stone and a drum. That night the tiger-man prowled about to frighten the inmate of the jhum hut. The inmate Ralruanga played the musical instruments all

at a time to make his counterpart believe that he was not all alone. The Ralruanga challenged the tiger-man and said, "Come, let us compare our hairs, teeth this is my hair", and showed him the elephant tusk and said, "This is my tooth" and as he showed him the hard stone he said, "This is my excrement".

By this time the tiger-man became quite afraid of his counterpart, and he offered to befriend him. Ralruanga agreed and they tied bond of friendship. They spent the night together but neither of the two slept as each was equally afraid of the other.

The next day they went hunting and killed one deer each. To carry the meat home Ralruanga plated a bamboo basket. Rimawla however insisted that two bamboo tubes should be sufficient to stuff the meat in. So Rimawla stuffed the meat in two bamboo tubes while Ralruanga was watching him closely.

All the way home Ralruanga was contemplating how he would learn that magic. Just to see how the magic was administered, Ralruanga spilt the meat intentionally and called his friend for help. Rimawla came forward and filled the bamboo tubes with the meat. Ralruanga watched him closely but he failed to learn the magic. So in order to make his dream come true, Ralruanga repeatedly spilt his meat till Rimawla got sick of it. At last to avoid the trouble, Rimawla taught his friend the magic and they continued their journey. Ralruanga knew that his friend had a bead tree and called his friend to test him. As Rimawla came, Ralruanga proudly showed him his only bead and said, "Look, what a fortune I have found". Rimawla disgustingly replied, "That is useless, that may be from my bead tree, eaten and defecated by the birds. If you want you may pluck as much beads as you like from my bead tree and take home."

On reaching his home, Ralruanga decided to visit his

friend, mainly to pluck the beads. The tiger-men were so surprised to see him that they started shouting, "Here comes, a hairless man, here comes a hairless man".

In the house of his friend, Ralruanga wanted see his friend's parents. But Rimawla was so ashamed of his parents that he had hidden them in one corner of the house. When Ralruanga asked Rimawla to take him to his parents, the latter told his friend that his parents were no more. Ralruanga pleaded repeatedly and compelled Rimawla to yield. Having no further excuse to make, Rimawla pulled out his parents from their hiding place and showed them to his friend. Ralruanga gave them some drinks and began to clean their paws. Rimawla's parents were so highly pleased with Ralruanga that they said to their son, "You have found a good friend and you must allow him to pluck beads from the tree". Rimawla allowed his friend to pluck heads from the tree. Using the magic his friend had taught him, Ralruanga was able to pluck a good amount of beads. He was treated generously during his stay in the house of his friend, though the villagers did not like him to stay in the village any longer. To challenge the unwanted guest, the villagers kept asking about him. Rimawla was promise-bound to protect his friend. So he showed them the whetstone he had pretended to boil as meat and said that his friend would go only after he had eaten the meat. The villagers would touch the hard stone and leave believing the it was the real meat.

On the day of his departure, Ralruanga left long before dawn to avoid the unruly villagers. Rimawla sent his friend with a packet as a present and told him to open it only after he reached his village. On his half way Ralruanga opened the packed out of curosity and a pleasant breeze blew fast to Rimawla's village. When the villagers came to know that Ralruanga had gone, they

roared in anger and immediately ran in pursuit of him. Rimawla also ran with the villagers to help his friend. He out-ran them, caught his friend up who was then resting by leaning on a big tree with a big hollow. Rimawla hid his friend in the hollow. When his villagers arrived, Rimawla asked them what they feared most. "We are not afraid of anything, we only want to kill that hairless creature," the villagers replied. "As for me, I am terribly afraid of the whistle in the early morning when the dews start falling on the leaves," replied Rimawla. The villagers in unison replied, "Yes, we are also afraid of that".

Early in the morning, Ralruanga whistled at the edge of his dao which produced sharp sound. All the villagers ran away hearing the whistle. And he managed to return home safely. When Ralruanga set out on his journey to Rimawla's village his wife was pregnant, and when he returned home his wife had not only given birth but his beautiful daughter was already in her teens.

Before he reached his home Ralruanga came across a beautiful young girl at the village water source. Ralruanga not knowing that she was his own daughter tried to seduce her, but no matter how hard he tried, the girl refused to yield. Having no other choice, he promised to give her a bunch of beads if she only yielded. "I do not need your beads", replied the girls, "because my father had gone to pluck beads from the tree when I was in my mother's womb and very soon he will be back home". Ralruanga came to know that she was his own daughter, and this made him speechless. In their house the mother introduced the father to the daughter. This innocent carefree girl could hardly refrain from telling her mother what had happened at the water source. Every time the

daughter said, "Mummy, at the water source....." Ralruanga would take the beads and give them to his daughter and said, "My darling daughter, the best are for you only". But his daughter could not control trying to confide the secret that really interested her mother. Ralruanga was so embarrassed that he beheaded his daughter to conceal the secret.

Ralruanga and his father then decided to set out on journeys to different places - the father to Hrangsaipuia's village in search of mithun and Ralruanga to the village of Zangthlapuia to learn magic. On their way the father and son planted a tree on the road side. The tree was very important because it would die when either Ralruanga or his father died. Ralruanga mastered himself in magic and was returning home to find that the tree they planted had died. "Hrangsaipuia had killed my father", he said, and rushed towards Hrangsaipuia's village to avenge the death of his father.

Hrangsaipuia was as good a magician as Ralruanga. He was out of his house when Ralruanga arrived there. Hrangsaipuia's daughter was cooking rice then. Ralruanga started applying his magic, and instead of the rice getting cooked, the water got even cooler when the girl finished all her fuel. Puzzled, she went out to call her father, and told him everything.

On reaching his house Hrangsaipuia wanted to know what game Ralruanga had played with his daughter. "Nothing, she was a little negligent that's all," he replied and showed him the rice he had cooked. They immediately started the combat by raising a broom which always fell towards Hrangsaipuia. However, Hrangsaipuia was not ready to surrender. He prepared special rice mixed with some strong magic poison to kill his counterpart. Ralruanga was fully aware of the trick Hrangsaipuia played. As they went to take their food, Ralruanga tried



to exchange the food. But he failed to divert the attention of Hrangsaipuia. So he decided to play the second fiddle, so he made the villagers pick up a fight, and said that Hrangsaipuia should then do something to settle the fight. In reply Hrangsaipuia remarked that it was simply their habit. However, when Ralruanga made another village attack the villagers of his counterpart, Hrangsaipuia could no longer control himself and came out of his house to fight back. In the absence of Hrangsaipuia, Ralruanga took the good food. When Hrangsaipuia came home and asked his daughter whether Ralruanga took the poisoned food or not, she could not reply as Ralruanga had already made her dumb.

Now Hrangsaipuia had no other choice than offering the mithun to Ralruanga, "You take the mithun your father failed to take," he said. All the mithuns were marched and Ralruanga chose the thinnest but the only genuine one as the rest were mere make-beliefs.

Soon after he reached his house Ralruanga took back the magic he had spelled on the daughter of Hrangsaipuia, and she told her father that the food he took was the one prepared for Ralruanga. He found that to be of great consequence and advised his daughters to cut off a piece of meat from his thigh after his death and present that to Ralruanga telling him that it was part of the meat they ate on the occasion of their father's last rites. He also advised them to revisit Ralruanga after three years had passed.

After their father had died, the sisters cut a lump of meat from their father's thigh and presented it to Ralruanga, who preserved it by drying over the fire. After three years, Hrangsaipuia's daughters revisited Ralruanga, who received them with great pleasure. "Feel at home, my daughters. Cook the smoked-meat and prepare food for all of us," he said. The sisters complied and cooked the



meat. After they had taken their food, Ralruanga confided that the meat they had just taken was the meat presented to him by them. The sisters came to know that they had been out-tricked, but there was nothing they could do, so they all succumbed to death along with some members of Ralruanga family. Only Ralruanga was alive as he did not partake of the food. Now Ralruanga was all alone. Out of total desperation, he set out trying to find a place to die in. Ultimately he met a lady wizard who took him on her lap and made him sleep deeply singing lullabies to him. There he died a slow but painless death.

## 6. Rimenhawii

There was a king down the river in a distant land. One day his servants brought him a fish which consumed a long hair that when wound into a ball, was as big as a big ball of cotton. The king was astonished. He ordered his servants to find out the owner of the hair so that he could marry her. The servants followed the course of the river and found her living on top of a big tree spinning on her spinning wheels. The servants reported to their king that they had found her and that she was living on top of a tree. The king again ordered his servants to go back and ask her name. As the king's servants asked her name, Rimenhawii replied -

“Rihiming bak bak ki nei nawh,

Hnadawn chungu bu ne thin” which means-

“No name do I have,

Eater of rice of the leaf am I”.

The messengers returned to their king and told him what they had seen and heard. The king sent them back

to repeat the same request to her and said, "Eating rice on a leaf is common to everyone". Accordingly, the messengers went back to her and repeated the request. Rimenhawii replied -

"Rihming bak bak ki nei nawh,  
Rivong thlenga bu ne thin" which means-  
"No name do I have,  
Eater of rice on the wooden plate."

The messengers returned to their king and reported what they had heard from Rimenhawii. But the king was not yet satisfied. So, he sent them back to repeat the same request to her. The messengers went back and repeated their request. Rimenhawii replied-

"Ki rihming tak tak chu Rimenhawii,  
Menchanghawii" which means-  
"Rimenhawii is my real name,  
Also called Menchanghawii."

The messengers returned to their king and told him that the name of the lady was "Rimenhawii". The king was so impressed by the very name that he sent his messengers back to fetch her for him to marry. The messengers went back and told Rimenhawii that their king had asked them to bring her so he could marry. In reply Rimenhawii told them that she would come down only if they would bring her all the known creatures in pairs including a pair of men, horses and elephants, and slaughter them in her name.

With all that Rimenhawii had demanded, the king's messengers went back to her and slaughtered the creatures in her name, and requested her to come down. Rimenhawii refused to come down and said that she would come down only if a carpet was stretched from her place to the king's palace. It was done accordingly, but Rimenhawii still refused to come down.

The messengers reported the matter to their king.

The king was furious. He ordered his messengers to cut down the tree she was living in. The messengers went back with all their tools and started cutting the tree. But every time the tree was about to fall Rimenhawii would say,-

‘Rizawm rawh, rizawm rawh,  
Satarai thing rizawm rawh” which means-  
“Be joined, be joined,  
Satarai tree be joined.”

And the tree got joined. When the king came to know about it he was equally angry and anxious, and ordered his servants to go back and shoot her. Rimenhawii said to them, “I know you are angry, because you have spent a lot. Now I am coming down.” She asked the tree-

“Rihniam rawh, rihniam rawb,  
Satarai thing rihniam rawh.” which means-  
“Be short, be short,  
Satarai tree be short.”

And the tree became so short that Rimenhawii comfortably got down from it and the king married her immediately.

Rimenhawii got pregnant. She told her husband that she was bearing seven male children hence he should make seven swords for them. In the absence of the king, a time came for Rimenhawii to give birth. The king’s first wives were envious of Rimenhawii for all the love and affection she got from her husband. From the pain preceding child-birth, the first wives of the king shifted Rimenhawii from one place to another telling her that it was a tradition of the princess. From the corner of the house they shifted yet to the river side. As she gave birth, the other wives heheaded each baby, applied the blood on the stone and threw them to the river, and the water-god gave them life out of pity.

When the king returned home, his wives told him

that Rimenhawii gave birth to seven stones, and showed him all the seven stones. The king was furious, and cut off Rimenhawii's breasts and ears and threw them to the river. Rimenhawii's children received their mother's breasts and ears. One day the king's servants went to the river to draw water and there they found seven children of the same age playing in the water. The king called all the other kings he knew and went to the river side to see them. But the children refused to meet them. The king remembered what Rimenhawii had told him during her pregnancy. So, he sent Rimenhawii to go to the river side and meet the seven children thinking that she might have something to do with them as they were seven in number. Rimenhawii complied. Hardly has she reached the river bank then the children came to greet and meet their mother. They brought with them their mother's breasts and ears and the water-god healed Rimenhawii as well. When the king came to know about the treachery of his first wives, he was so infuriated that he killed all of them.

## 7. Sakhi Darlong

One day a certain man made a trap and killed a deer. He dried some of the meat over the fire. Every day when he came back from his jhum the man found that his food had already been cooked by someone. He was greatly surprised. One day he hid himself in a corner of his house in order to find out the miraculous truth. His surprise knew no bound when he found that the dried meat turned into a beautiful damsel and started cooking his food. The man jumped upon the damsel and caught her. "Leave me alone, leave me alone," the girl shouted. Instead of leaving her the man caught her tighter and begged her to marry him. The girl made a condition and said, "If you promise that you will never call me Sakhi (deer) Darlong

only them I will marry you." The man promised and they became husband and wife.

They lived a happy life and had three children. One day the man attended a party of drinks and it was getting late. So Sakhi Darlong sent her children to call their father. The children went to call him, but he refused to return home. "I shall be back within a shortwhile," he said and sent his children back home. The mother sent her children to call their father again and again till he was angry. He said to his children, "Your mother Sakhi Darlong is unnecessarily pestering me. Go home and do not come again". The children came home and told their mother what they had heard from their father. Sakhi Darlong was so hurt by the words that she turned into a deer and ran away to the nearby forest. One of her children was a suckling. So she advised her children to take their baby brother to her whenever he felt hungry or thirsty. So whenever the baby felt hungry the elder children took him to the forest and called their mother saying:

" Enu enu, enu Sakhi Darlong,  
Sisepin thlum tui a hral", which means,  
"Mother, Mother, Mother Sakhi Darlong,  
our baby brother is thirsty."

Hearing the call, Sakhi Darlong came and fed her child.

The father was angry, and he decided to kill the deer. The deer advised her children saying that if their father killed them they should cut off her breast and throw it away. The father killed the deer. The children cut off their mother's breast and threw it away. This grew to be a tall Phunchawng tree which started giving milk to her son. The man came to know about it and decided to cut down the tree. Before the tree was axed, it told her children that when the father axed her, little piece of her

body would fall on the water and she would turn into a big fish. The men cut the tree down and its pieces turned into a big fish, and she started feeding her child as before. When the man came to know about it, he was so angry that he decided to catch the fish and kill it. The fish told her children that whenever she would run upward, her children should about downward, downward, and whenever she would run downward they should shout "Upward." The children did accordingly. At last the fish swept down her children with her tail and they all turned into fishes.

Thereafter the mother and her children lived happily together.

### 8. Zawlpala and Tualvungi

There lived a handsome man, Zawlpala by name, who married a beautiful woman, Tualvungi. The report of Tualvungi's beauty started to spread far and wide. When the report reached the ears of Bakvawmtepu, a powerful king and magician, he decided to see her for himself.

When Bakvawmtepu came and saw Tualvungi he was stunned with her beauty. He wanted to marry her and asked Zawlpala who she was. Zawlpala thought if he told him the truth, Bakvawmtepu might kill him in order to marry her. So, out of fear, he replied that Tualvungi was his sister. Bakvawmtepu said to Zawlpala, "I am ready to offer you anything you demand, if you would give me your sister in marriage".

Tualvungi asked Zawlpala not to open his mouth. Zawlpala thought, to retain his wife he should demand a price which Bakvawmtepu would never be able to pay. So Zawlpala said, "If you can bring me as many mithuns as there are posts and pillars in my house, swords enough

to fill up all my walls, bead necklaces plenty enough to break the biggest beam in my house and cloths plenty enough to break my cloth-beam, you can marry my sister."

The demand made by Zawlpala did not worry Bakvawmtepu a bit. Bakvawmtepu came back with all items demanded for Tualvungi's price. Zawlpala was at a loss then. All the articles were checked and found to exceed Zawlpala's demand. Zawlpala was however honour bound to keep his words and gave his beloved wife to Bakvawmtepu in marriage. So Tualvungi was compelled to follow her new husband.

However the love between Zawlpala and Tualvungi instead of dying was getting stronger each day out of their separation. In course of time Bakvawmtepu came to know that Zawlpala was the husband and not the brother of Tualvungi. So he started planning what he should do if Zawlpala tried to take back his wife. One day, much to the surprise of Tualvungi, Bakvawmtepu proposed to invite Zawlpala and said to his wife, "We have not seen your brother for such a long period of time, why don't we ask him to visit us?" Tualvungi suspected the intention of Bakvawmtepu. But her longing to see Zawlpala was so strong that she agreed to the proposal thinking that it could be the last time they would see each other. So Zawlpala was asked to visit them and he came. Tualvungi was sceptical about the intention of Bakvawmtepu, and warned Zawlpala to be on his guard. One day Tualvungi found Zawlpala in great pain, and she came to know that he had been poisoned. So he was sent home immediately where he took his last breath. Before he died he requested his villagers to inform Tualvungi about his death saying that he had died a peaceful death.

Everyone agreed that a messenger should be sent to convey the sad message to Tualvungi; but, whom to

send?' was the question. The crab ('ai' in Darlong) volunteered himself and said, "I will go to convey the message" The people asked him, "How will you convey?" "I will say ai, ai," he said. The villagers rebuked him saying that that was no message and trampled over him. So the crab became flat, and he remained to be flat. Then came the crow (va-ak). "How will you convey the message?" they asked him. "I will say ak, ak," he said, "That is no message". They said and poured on him blackened water used for dying yarn; so he became black. Then the villagers asked him "Ber lawk, ber lawk," he said. "That is no message" the villagers replied and pierced on his buttocks which started bleeding. So the buttocks of the robin bird remained to be red. Then came a wood penguin (Vahui). "How will you convey the message?" They asked her. She said she would go and sing-

"Huii huii, huii e,  
Zawpala a thi an ti,  
Tualvungin ruak va ral rawh." which means-  
"Huii huii, huii o,  
Zawlpala is no more  
Go, Tualvungi his funeral to attend."

The villagers were highly satisfied with the answer the wood pigeon gave and send her to convey the message to Tualvungi. The wood penguin went and perched herself up in a wooden post in front of Tualvungi's house and repeated the message. Tualvungi got the message. She asked permission from her husband and said "My brother was not well when he returned home from our house. I am so worried and I propose to visit him if you have no objection." Bakrawmtepu flatly refused the proposal. In order to prevent her from going he placed a sharp dao at the doorstep which Tualvungi was sure to tread on it if she came out of the house.



In the absence of Bakvawmtepu, Tualvungi rushed out of the house and trod on the sharp edge of the dao and out herself severely. She bandaged her feet with her new cloth and set off in search of Zawlpala's grave. She asked whomever she came across if they could tell her where Zawlpala's grave was. When she came across some children playing with 'pawi', seeds of thick woody creeper (*Entada scandens*) she asked them through her song:

"Naipang pawisiai ka te hei  
Khawi maw Zawlpala thlan ?" which means-  
"Tell me, O playful children  
Where is Zawlpala's grave?"

The children replied through their song:

"Zawlpala thlani tlanga  
Khuangthuai vai ang vul tung  
Sahran lu hman tlarbung kan" which means-  
"Zawlpala's grave lies on the hill where bloom  
Beautiful 'khuangthuai' flowers  
Adorned by animal skulls."

At last, Tualvungi reached Zawlpala's grave and found there the beautiful flowers and row of pillars where skulls of animals were placed. As Tualvungi wept at the grave of Zawlpala ceaselessly, an old woman appeared and asked Tualvungi to stop her crying. But the old woman failed to comfort her. Tualvungi dug the grave of Zawlpala with the help of the old woman. The only remains to be found were the bones, for a full decade had already passed by then. Tualvungi decided to put an end to her own life, but there was not enough space for her to lie down. Seeing the depth of her sorrow, the old woman asked her to request Zawlpala to move. Tualvungi requested accordingly, and the love of Zawlpala was so strong that his bones moved to make sufficient space for Tualvungi to lie on. Tualvungi prepared her bed beside

Zawlpala, covered herself and the bones of Zawlpala with her best cloth and she died with her lover. In their reunion both Zawlpala and Tualvungi turned into two beautiful butterflies.

When Bakvawmtepu came to know about it, he got so infuriated that he went straight to the grave of Zawlpala, and dug the grave. As he dug the grave, he found two colourful butterflies hovering and making love in the air. He broke all the bones he found in the grave, and put an end to his own life. Bakvawmtepu also turned into a big black butterfly. Till today wherever there are two beautiful butterflies making love, there is always a third big and black butterfly chasing them. The beautiful butterflies are called Zawlpala and Tualvungi till to date and the big butterfly is never capable of disturbing the happy pair.

## 9. Ringmairikela and Tuanpuui

There lived a certain ugly man, Ringmairikela, whose neck resembled a crooked bamboo root. Like other young men in the village, he was a member of a working group called "hlawmber" under which they worked in the jhum of every member of the group on rotation. Tuanpuui, daughter of the village chief, known for her beauty was in the group. The road to the jhum was long, uncleared and was always wet with dews in the morning. Hence they always found themselves drenched with the dews by the time they reached the jhum. But Tuanpuui never got wet with the dews.

Ringmairikela was curious to know why Tuanpuui never got wet with dews like the others. One day he set off to the jhum early in the morning and waited for his

friends in the jhum hut. Much to his surprise, he saw Tuanpuui coming towards the jhum hut totally nude. Alas, to her utter surprise, disgrace and embarrassment, Tuanpuui found herself standing nude in front of the ugly man in the jhum hut. She was so embarrassed that she offered her ring to Ringmairikela and said, "That is how I used to avoid getting wet with dew; please accept my ring and conceal the disgraceful incidence." "But when my friends ask me where I got this from, what shall I say?" Ringmairikela asked. Tuanpuui was so helpless that she offered her body to him and asked him not to conceal the incidence to anyone.

Tuanpuui got pregnant and gave birth to a son. But nobody knew who was responsible for that, as Tuanpuui did not tell anyone who the father of her son was. As a result, her father made a public announcement that whomever his grandson called "father" was to be the father of the boy and he would marry his daughter. The young men in the village were so attracted by her beauty that they started courting her with all their beautiful gifts for the baby boy. But Tuanpuui's son did not call anyone 'father'. At last Ringmairikela was asked to go and see the baby. He took a locust only. The moment the baby saw him he jumped over, called him 'father' and hugged him happily. Tuanpuui's father got so angry that he drove his daughter and Ringmairikela out along with their son. In the jungle they built themselves a house on stilts on the bank of a river. Tuanpuui and her son lived in the platform of the house and beneath the house lived Ringmairikela and his sickly dog.

One day Ringmairikela and his dog strolled in the jungle and came across a small lake. His dog saw its own shadow in the water and barked at it ceaselessly. Ringmairikela got so irritated that he pushed his ill dog in the water. When the dog came out of the water it was free

from any blemish. Ringmairikela thought the water might have some magic power and dipped his knife to confirm. He found that his soiled knife had become new and sharp. Ringmairikela jumped into the water believing that it was magic water. Out from the lake, he found himself new, fresh and handsome with his new and tender skin.

That day the new-Ringmairikela returned with his new dog and stayed under their old stilted house. Tuanpuui peeped down and saw that Ringmairikela and his dog had changed, and that Ringmairikela was so handsome that she fell in love at the first sight. But she dared not call him because she had refused to live with him as husband and wife. Desperate, she asked her son to call his father.

"Father, please come up and sleep with us", said the son to his father.

"How can I come my son, because your mother does not love me", replied the father with utter sadness.

The son repeated his request several times but Ringmairikela did not make a move. So Tuanpuui could no longer control herself and said, "Please do not refuse; come, your son is calling you". Ringmairikela complied and climbed up to the doorstep of the house. Tuanpuui understood that it was not easy to convince Ringmairikela that he was really loved and needed. She asked her son to call his father to share their bed. The son asked his father accordingly, but Ringmairikela said, "I cannot come my son, because your mother does not love me." The son repeated his request. Ultimately Tuanpuui called him and they spent the night happily for the first time.

The next day, Ringmairikela and his dog went to the jungle and came across a group of monkeys playing on a tree. The leader announced, "One branch with ripe fruits and the other with raw fruits" and beat his drum. Instantly fruits of one branch got ripe and fruits of the

other branch got raw, and they were fighting for the ripe fruits. "That might be a magic drum. If I could only get hold of that.....", Ringmairikela thought. So he decided to snatch the drum away from the monkeys. The dog chased the leader while Ringmairikela chased the other monkeys. After a long struggle Ringmairikela and his dog snatched away the drum from the monkeys.

Ringmairikela beat the drum and he got cooked rice and cooked fish which he shared with his dog. Ringmairikela's joy knew no bound to find that the magic drum could give him whatever he asked for. So, through the magic drum, he made a big village, riches and all he wanted. The village was so big and the population so large that the river water got blocked with their soiled bamboo tubes used for storing water thrown over it. The village of Tuanpuui's father was down the stream. Tuanpuui's father was furious to know that the blockade was caused by Ringmairikela and his villagers. So he sent his men to kill Ringmairikela and all of his villagers.

All the strong men of that village attacked Ringmairikela's villagers and killed a lot of them. But he was least bothered. When almost all the villagers had got killed, he took his magic drum and started beating it. All the enemies got tied up and killed. Ringmairikela raised all his villagers and lived happily ever after.

## 10. Pangama and Thuitlingi

A certain man Pangama and a certain woman Thuitlingi were in love from the time they were in the wombs of their mothers. In their womb days they never allowed Pangama's mother to go ahead of Thuitlingi's mother. Such was the love between the two. But when they attained the age of marriage they failed to marry each other as Thuitlingi was married to another man by her

parents against her will.

On the day Thuitlingi got married, Pangama escorted her to the house of the bridegroom and in turn Thuitlingi accompanied Pangama back home. On her way back to her husband's house Thuitlingi was all alone with a heavy heart. She walked the lone road lost in her own world. On her way she got so startled by the sudden flapping of wings of a dove that she died there on the spot. The dead body of Thuitlingi was so stiff and heavy that nobody could move it. But when Pangama touched it, he found that it was still soft and tender. "Love even after death" he exclaimed with a painful heart and removed the body, and buried it.

Pangama was so sad that he made a beautiful flower garden in remembrance of Thutlingi and did not allow anyone to pluck flowers from it. Thuitlingi came to know about it from the abode of the dead and sent a certain animal to go and steal the flowers. Pangama kept a close watch over the garden to catch and punish the trespasser. One day Pangama caught the animal stealing his flowers. "I planted the flowers for Thuitlingi, and not for a beast like you", Pangama shouted at the animal. "I came to collect the flowers only because Thuitlingi sent me, so please leave me and let me go to her," the animal pleaded. With a great deal of joy and surprise, "Thuitlingi sent you?" Pangama enquired. Pangama thought that he must not miss the rare opportunity and said, "If you were really sent by Thuitlingi, you must be able to take me to her place of dwelling." The animal assured him that it could take him right to the place where Thuitlingi was, and Pangama followed it.

In the abode of the dead, Pangama found himself surrounded by the dwellers therein who shouted, "The living man, in the abode of the dead." Thuitlingi heard the shout, came to see him and took him to her place.

One day the people went fishing and Pangama followed them. The people caught the fishes which were mere bamboo leaves. Pangama watched them with great surprise because he did not find any fish to catch. He was even more surprised to see that oil came out of the fishes (leaves) when they burnt them, but when he tried doing the same, they all got burnt up.

Another day the people went hunting and Pangama followed them. They hunted a big spider which they called was a big bear. After the people had got tired enough, Pangama killed the bear with the help of his hair clip. They were too surprised to see how strong a man could be.

Yet another day, the people gathered for building the village "Bukpui", a male dormitory. The log they chose for the main beam was so big and so heavy that they could hardly lift it up. At the end Pangama lifted it up with his left hand and placed it on the right place, because it was just a stem of 'talnangkawn' (Talnangkawn is a wild plant with a stem which exhibits snake-like markings). The people looked at him with utter surprise and appreciation. Pangama spent a few days in the abode of the dead and came back to the world of the living.

After his death pangama also entered the abode of the dead. There Thuitlingi welcomed and received him. In the abode of the dead the two lovers re-united and lived happily. In the house of Thuitlingi, Pangama saw a big head of a bear place above the fire place in order to get it dried and smoked. As he wanted to know who had killed such a big bear he killed during his first visit to the abode of the dead. Pangama also saw the big beam of the 'Bukpui' and asked Thuitlingi how such a big beam was brought and placed there. Thuitlingi again reminded him that it was the very beam he himself placed during his first visit. Pangama recollected his first experiences



in the abode of the dead and accepted the fact that it was a different world altogether from the world he had left.

## PROVERBS:

The Darlongs have a good number of proverbs based on their socio-cultural practices. They are often used to elucidate incidence or happenings in a clearest and briefest way. They are nothing but a clear miopic eye. Not to talk about equivalent contemporary proverbs, some of them even cannot be literally expressed. Some of them however, may be interpreted but may lose their implication and clarity totally e.g., "Ipa thaloi rihnu thuama" literally interpreted means, "A bad man at the breast." This actually implies that a bad man should be divorced by his wife while the child is still at the suckling age. Because according to the custom the child belongs to the father. Hence, he has to bear the burden of nursing it. This is considered to be one of the best ways to inflict punishment on the man both mentally and physically. There are a good number of such proverbs which have not been included in the list here. Equivalent proverbs have been given for some of the Darlong Proverbs, while some others proverbs have been transliterated. Here D.P., E.P. and T.L. mean Darlong proverbs, equivalent proverbs and transliteration respectively.

### A

- D.P.: - Avang lai nak nak te.
- E.P.: - Be filled when it is full.
- D.P.: - Arpui rihnu sem.
- E.P.: - To give to have none.
- D.P.: - A pumin vaibe tia loia.
- E.P.: - Small and little.
- D.P.: - Ama hmun vaipa lam.



- E.P.: The same and no change.  
 D.P.: A bel boia inhai.  
 E.P.: Getting drunk without drinks.  
 D.P.: Amitin raldang a en, a kutin zawngbal a tuai.  
 T.L.: To do something while looking at some other thing.  
 D.E.: Ar ek sir hmasa.  
 E.P.: The elders are more experienced.  
 D.P.: A ting ka ti ding, a be ka ti ding.  
 E.P.: To be between the deep sea and the devil.

## B

- D.P.: Bak inmawh phuhlum ar hrawi thin.  
 E.P.: Spare not for the morrow.  
 D.P.: Bakpa a leng a leng a fukna hnachang.  
 E.P.: A loitering bat but rests on a leaf.

## CH

- D.P.: Chal inchang a roi, ram inchang a bu.  
 E.P.: Justice by the old, harvest by fertility.  
 D.P.: Chawhnung vantha.  
 E.P.: Late luck.

## D

- D.P.: Duamna chu channa.  
 E.P.: The greedy forfeits.  
 D.P.: Duaiin kawlbula rua a nghak.  
 T.L.: The lazy wait for the rain in the horizon.  
 D.P.: Duai sum fahrel thleng.  
 E.P.: A work ill done must be done twice.  
 D.P.: Ditloi ikua nih kongchun ichun a na.  
 E.P.: The hug of the unloved but hurts.

## F

- D.P.: Fakhma niang a hlut.  
 T.L.: It is tastier before eating.  
 D.P.: Fata luata lei ei a.  
 E.P.: Too much of anything is bad.  
 D.P.: Fahra chang nih chulpawn chang a awi.  
 E.P.: Every child is prone to orphanage.  
 D.P.: Fawl rut fawl pai.  
 E.P.: What you sow so will you reap.

## NG

- D.P.: Nghalin sa a fak.  
 T.L.: The shameless eat the meat.  
 D.P.: Ngalleng inmawh tuikawi a chawn thin.  
 T.L.: Fish do not know short-cut ways.

## H

- D.P.: Hna thawktu chu hlaw hmu tlak.  
 E.P.: Pay a worker what he deserves.  
 D.P.: Hlu lera tla.  
 E.P.: Pride goes before a fall.  
 D.P.: Hmelma tawng nih sum kara nisa a na.  
 E.P.: Words of the enemy hurt the worst.  
 D.P.: Hmelse par tawn ui ek tuar.  
 E.P.: An ass is an ass, though laden with gold.  
 D.P.: Hmelma nui naw rawh, lamrua-ah e naw rawh.  
 T.L.: One should not despise an old road and an enemy.  
 D.P.: Hrawding hawi loi pialbang sik.  
 E.P.: Confusion begets confusion.  
 D.P.: In-awngin kuar a nei.  
 T.L.: Crack floor hears.  
 D.P.: Inriang ki hmu hur thang ki tum.  
 T.L.: To pity and be known as lustful.

- D.P.: Inpam ki hawi inrawl thang ki tum.  
 T.L.: To be reluctant to waste and known as glutton.  
 D.P.: Ina ki awm tarpi tarpu, rama ki fe kei-vawm ki ti.  
 T.L.: To face tiger in the jungle and in-laws in the house.  
 D.P.: Invak dikdek thi tawng nawle fak tawng.  
 E.P.: A wonderer comes by fortune and misfortune.  
 D.P.: Inhrit hrita saipa lian.  
 T.L.: Mutual respect makes us as big as the elephant.  
 D.P.: Inriang bu loi luah, inchawng bu loi zawlah.  
 T.L.: Riches of the poor are easily exposed but riches of the rich are not.  
 D.P.: Intlaw var tak awmmak.  
 E.P.: No mad are wise.  
 D.P.: In-iam lubur inkhawi.  
 E.P.: Pride goes before a fall.  
 D.P.: Intlaw kunghmui sik.  
 E.P.: Fools know no direction.

# K

- D.P.: Khatka ek che hlawm ek che.  
 T.L.: To blame the company for mischief of one.  
 D.P.: Kut para'n tum ban bula'n zam.  
 E.P.: Give him an inch and he will take an ell.  
 D.P.: Khawvar lungvar.  
 E.P.: Let the morrow take care of itself.  
 D.P.: Kel khum awng.  
 E.P.: To cry like a panned goat.  
 D.P.: Kei ti vawm tawng.  
 E.P.: To be between the deep sea and the devil.

- D.P.: - Ki awm hrawi hrawi dolhrawi ki fak.  
 E.P.: - The lazy deserves the worst.  
 D.P.: - Ki chang rak rak, chang rak ki fak.  
 E.P.: - As you sow, so shall you reap.  
 D.P.: - Khawpa nih saihli innem dawm rise.  
 T.L.: - Headmen must be meek and mild.  
 D.P.: - Kei inmaw tuipui ral a kana a zia a mak  
 thin.  
 T.L.: - A tiger does not lose its colour by crossing  
 a river.

## L

- D.P.: - Li li chang inzawn mak hra hra chang  
 inzawn mak.  
 E.P.: - Every dog had his day.  
 D.P.: - Lamrua nih zawhlui ekhum naw rawh.  
 T.L.: - Don't despise an old road and a deserted  
 village.

## M

- D.P.: - Misual chu a um boiin an raw.  
 E.P.: - A guilty conscience needs no accuser.  
 D.P.: - Mite lung nih bete phul.  
 E.P.: - A little pot is soon hot.  
 D.P.: - Mi kut chungsa satlin inlian.  
 E.P.: - Another's bread costs dear.  
 D.P.: - Mi vaikawm inza inhruk.  
 T.L.: - To obstruct other's way.  
 D.P.: - Manmasi chang ding chiktawitein.  
 E.P.: - Childhood shows manhood.  
 D.P.: - Mi kut chungsa rulkhur inpur.  
 T.L.: - To do a dangerous thing through the  
 others.  
 D.P.: - Manina inpak sakhi ringala a kawp a boi.

When one sings his own praises the note is  
E.P.: always too high.

N

D.P.: Nupang nih bahra a ngul a ning.

E.P.: A good husband makes a good wife.

D.P.: Nupui nei nawk nih bukkam thleng infuk  
tak awmmak.

E.P.: Re-marriage never goes unerring.

D.P.: Naipa khatka tangka chengka.

T.L.: A son and a coin.

D.P.: Naipang thudik hril.

T.L.: Children speak the truth.

D.P.: Naipang tuai khek nih fahra nupui inchang  
khawk rise.

T.L.: An orphan should marry a mature woman.

D.P.: Nu awp lum, pa awp dai.

T.L.: Mothers tend warm, fathers cool.

D.P.: Nu-nih-pa kawchak loi thlamawka zing  
inzen.

T.L.: Undisciplined parents beget undisciplined  
children.

D.P.: Naipang tir awl.

T.L.: Obedient are the children.

D.P.: Nupang thaloi nih sirtum thaloi a thleng a  
ning.

T.L.: Bad door step and bad women should be  
changed.

D.P.: Nun nih tualmei a sem a ning.

T.L.: One's nature and a camp-fire depend on  
how you tend.

D.P.: Nupang thaloi vawn pumin.

T.L.: Divorce a bad woman during her pre-  
gnancy.

Nuveng-paveng insawm nih puan tia

D.P.: insawm antak.

T.L.: Maintaining soiled cloths and nursing the old are equally difficult.

## P

D.P.: Pasia nih sakhiin khua neimak.

E.P.: The wretched don't have home.

D.P.: Pa lung nih umhring koi ei hawi nawh.

T.L.: It is difficult to know when a man's heart breaks.

D.P.: Pase kum sawm nakuma.

T.L.: Better luck next time.

D.P.: Pase thing-tui hliai.

E.P.: A poor man's articles are soon used up.

D.P.: Puan suk hratin tuampuan a nei nawh.

E.P.: A weaver without cloths.

D.P.: Phuloi nghak khawtlaina.

T.L.: Late marriage by awaiting the underserved.

## R

D.P.: Rama kei kual thoi naw rawh.

T.L.: Don't wake up the sleeping tiger.

D.P.: Ri dur dur le sur lemmak vawi tuk tuk le e lemmak.

E.P.: Thunder without rain.

D.P.: Rua nih ek mawh mawng loiin a awm thin.

E.P.: Everything has its end.

D.P.: Rawl hmawna meiah.

E.P.: Fire for fast food.

D.P.: Ral enhawi, khaisir pare.

E.P.: All that glitters is not fold.

D.P.: Sanghar tam nih ar khawlai.

E.P.: A hungry cat and a roaming fowl.

D.P.: Sakhi thing chung inhlui.

- E.P.: Building castle in the air.  
 D.P.: Sakhi ring inrak ding saipa ring an rak.  
 T.L.: Hunting deer and catching elephant .  
 D.P.: Se suak hnunga ripal sin.  
 E.L.: To make fence after the mithun is gone.  
 D.P.: Sain a rual a zawng.  
 E.P.: Even animals need company.

# T

- D.P.: Thing chi mawh balin a mawng thin.  
 E.P.: A wild goose never laid a tame egg.  
 D.P.: Theibuang be ti naw rawh, rawte be ti rawh.  
 E.P.: We stumble on pebbles, not on the mountains.  
 D.P.: Thli an thlit naw chun nangtuai an sai nawh.  
 E.P.: Where there is smoke there is fire.  
 D.P.: Theithur baikaw tawngsia baikaw.  
 T.L.: A bite of sour fruit and an ill word.  
 D.P.: Theithur baikaw tawngsia baikaw.  
 T.L.: A bite of sour fruit and an ill word.  
 D.P.: Tum tama lua boia.  
 E.P.: Grasp all, lose all.  
 D.P.: Tikfir ta leitha ifak.  
 E.P.: The covetous spend more than the liberal.  
 D.P.: Tlailuat hin pawina a nei.  
 E.P.: Better early than late.  
 D.P.: Taimaka van vela.  
 E.P.: He that shoots oft shall at last hit the mark.  
 D.P.: Tuithu arin a ek khum.  
 T.L.: To throw dirt on dirty water.  
 D.P.: Thi hnung thang tha.  
 T.L.: Concerning the dead (speak) nothing but good.

- D.P.: Tawng insir nawk nih ar pa'n chuk a na.  
 E.P.: There's no venom like that of the tongue.  
 D.P.: Tui thiam tuia.  
 E.P.: Good swimmers at length are drowned.

## U

- D.P.: Uite lam hawi.  
 E.P.: Every dog knows his master's house.  
 D.P.: Ui kual hmun nih duai kual hmun mawh a boi thin.  
 E.P.: Dogs and lazy persons need no bed to lie on.  
 D.P.: Ui nih saru mawh an nghak nghak thin.  
 E.P.: An open door may tempt a saint.

## V

- D.P.: Vawm lu tuk naw rawh kei lu tuk rawh.  
 T.L.: Cut the head of a tiger and not that of a bear's.  
 D.P.: Voi loi intum a na.  
 E.P.: Silly blame hurts.  
 D.P.: Vanduai kalna sazuk thi thoi.  
 E.P.: Misfortunes never come singly.  
 D.P.: Voika ngalchang ha tawt maw a tlum thin.  
 E.P.: A thing once done cannot be undone.

## Z

- D.P.: Zal tawa bal phum nih tar hnunga nai nei faktak awmmak.  
 T.L.: Late issues don't serve the parents.  
 D.P.: Zawng tuar ding uitein a tuar.  
 T.L.: Dog bears punishment of the monkey.  
 D.P.: Zu chang ding aba-in.  
 E.P.: Morning shows the day.



**D.P.:-** Zufe nghak chu inkhal nghak, khawram  
nghak chu sanghar nghak.

**T.L.:-** To wait for liquor is to wait for a quarrel  
and to remain in a deserted village is to  
wait for the wild cats.

Proverbs are usually used to described certain situation and incidence in a short and vivid way without explaining the whole thing. 'Thing chi mawh balin a mawng thin' which literal interpretation means 'A ginger seed does not sprout up as arum plant' (Which equivalent English proverb given here is 'A' wild goose never lay a tame egg) is said of a son of an offender who has committed an offence.

## **FOLK GAMES:**

### **Men's Games:**

1. Inhnawi: 'Inhnawl' means pushing. In this game, one person holds one end and the other holds another end of the bamboo. Each one tries to push the other back. Whoever can push the other back is the winner.

2. Inbuan: 'Inbuan' means wrestling. The wrestling is more like the Japanese 'Sumo wrestling', Where each one tries to throw the other down.

3. Inher: 'Inher' means twisting. In this game a one person sitting on the ground holds the bamboo between his legs as tightly as possible while the other person standing tries to twist him. They change positions and complete the game.



Children Playing Pawis



Thum Thum : Trio Pounding Rice

4. Pawi inkap:- 'Pawi inkap' is a game played particularly by the children with the large bean-like seed of 'Entada scandens or Entada pursaetha.' The pawi beans placed on the ground on line are hit by the players with great skill and accuracy in eight different styles and manners.

5. Tapaw inkap:- 'Tapaw' means top. In this game, one makes his top spin on the ground. This is called 'inlam' which literally interpreted means dancing. Another person tries to stop the spinning top by hitting it by his top. This is called 'inchuk' meaning hitting. If the hitting fails to stop the spinning of the other top, the turn is reversed.

Besides, the games described above, the Darlongs play with great skill a good number of games played by people and over the world. A few persons have been able to compete even in the national level. They are as skillful as any other tribe given the chance and facility.

As compared to the men folk, the women have less games to play. The main game they play is the 'pawi inkap' described above. However, in the common games they take active part. Some of the common games wherein men, women, young and old participate are described below:

### COMMON GAMES:

1. Tongue twisting: Tongue twisting is treated as a game. In this, one tries to recite the verses faster than the others without making any mistake. The tongue twister swiftly recites often produces totally different meanings. The Darlongs derive much fun and pleasure out of the meaning they get from the distortion resulting from such recitation. Some of the common tongue twisters are given below:

a). Vutfar pin pep, bawm mawng, sum mawng,

sim mawing pin p ep.

b). Pardi bul chawr kawr hner hmul chawr.

c). Tuki ki nu ni sua a sen.

2. An suang indik or guessing the curry: In this game one proposes to his friends to guess the curry he has taken or his friends may propose to guess his curry. The person makes a long and complicated discription of his curry. He tells the answer only if the persons guessing it surrender voluntarily. The person needs to be a good orator and intelligent.

### CHILDREN GAMES:

1. Lailute: In this game, the children hold hands and start moving from one end entering between the two hands of the last and the last but one of the other end; next they enter between the hands of the second and third persons from the other end. This process continues till all of them have got themselves tied by hands. In the next move they untie the whole knot by reversing the process. They continually sing:-

Kur kur hnuaia lailute lailute,  
Hnathiala rum sut in salka,  
Thialhna a rum sut in salka.

2. Pipe Rainuka: The scated children make a circle each child holding his/her hands at the back. One of the children stands in the middle of the circle while one goes round the circle bending to each and, places a stone in the hands of any one of the children. The children in the centre guess as to who holds the stone. If he is right he wins. During the game they continually sing:

Pipe rainuka, rainuka le changpana  
Changpan piring parang kaikum sial  
Tu kuta maw ki sia ding dik hlang rawh.

ii). The game is also played in a different way, in which the children are not allowed to look back, one of the children goes round the circle and places the stone in the first round. In the second round he/she hits the child behind whom the stone has been placed. The child gets up immediately and chases the person who has placed the stone. If the child manages to touch the latter before he (the latter) occupies the vacant seat of the former the game goes in favour of the child who chases.

3. Tutu Ribik: Tutu ribik means 'hide and seek'. The game of hide and seek is played both by the boys and girls.

4. Intang Telem: It is a children's game in which they play being grown up. In this game the children try to depict the activities of the grown up.

5. Raw Pheikal: 'Raw pheikal' means stilts. The male children play with the stilts. They make competition on who can handle stilts higher than the others, who can dance and show tricks and, they also make a fight in which the person who falls first is declared the looser.

The Darlongs also play most of the modern games which are within their reach. They have players and sport persons good enough to play at the national level and lead a club as captain. Their skill in various games simply cannot be underrated. All they need is the chance and training facilities.

## FOLK SONG:

The Darlongs have a good number of songs composed and sung by good composers and singers. Lalkhawlu-ra is known as the best composer and singer. The songs

believed to be composed and sung by him are called Lalkhawlur zai. It is quite possible that some songs composed by others with similar tune to the songs of Lalkhawlura might have been mistaken to originate from this singer. Some of the singers and their songs along with their meanings in English are given below:

### LALKHAWLUR ZAI-I.

Dawtuanga zal e vala rawn tho la,  
Changseliani ki kham hong ti rawh.  
Changseliani khamna ki nei nawh;  
Bethi sensiar ki kham chang rawh se.  
Bethi sensiar e ki kham ta hnung kha,  
Val namenin kai la se kin ti,  
Val namenin kai la se kin ti,  
Baw-ar tenin kai la se kin ti.

### ENGLISH VERSION.

Lie no longer idle my man  
Come, place a mithun as a security,  
No mithun have I to claim you  
Place I my red beads as a security.  
My red beads have I placed for a security  
Her house no man shall ever enter,  
Her house no man shall ever enter  
Nay, not ev'n a cock shall ever enter.

Note: This romantic song reflects the social practice of the people in the negotiation for marriage.

### LALKHAWLUR ZAI-II.

Bel zukuanga e sakawl tin a kiak  
'Chawiin len rawh, zai vawr rawh' min ti.

Ki tak fam sia ki zai fam loiin  
Ki zaiin liankhua la chul rawh se.

#### ENGLISH VERSION.

Near the wine pot broke a tiger-nail  
'Lift', they told me, 'and sing over it',  
Let my body, not my songs pass away,  
Let my songs resound through the earth.

#### SONG OF KHAWLIANLALA.

Chawngawi ken vuang e  
Thangvani zawla,  
Lungdi basamah  
Va uai rawh la.  
Du loi basamah  
Va uai ma rawh

#### ENGLISH VERSION.

Locust, I fly you  
High in the sky,  
To my darling's hair  
You go and sit,  
On the hair of one I love not  
You shall not sit.

#### LAMKHAWZOI.

Lamkhawzois are sentimental songs, extempore in nature. The Darlongs have numerous such songs by which they express their deep feelings of sentiment and emotion. Some of such songs with their English translation are given below:

Muvan e maw lai ta,  
Riang ri ai a thang e maw vanzawla;  
Laira e maw ki ta,  
Riang ri ai a la e khum chung a,  
Ki chuni maw ne chang e  
Ki zuan e?  
Nin hrai leng ang ni chawi rawh  
Thangvan zawla.

#### ENGLISH VERSION:

O crying hawk of the sky  
Your cry fills the air with pensive sadness  
That makes me, an orphan cry,  
As I lay me down on my lone bed.  
Tell me, are you my mother  
Or are you my father?  
Come, take your orphan away  
High up in the sky.

Note: The crying of a flying hawk in the mid-sunny day used to bring pensive sadness to the people, particularly the poor and solitary ones such as this orphan. Here a solitary orphan, out of total disappointment expresses his desire to unite himself with the hawk of the air which flies around (perhaps without any anxiety).

#### BAWLHLA.

Bawlhlas are songs composed and sung by the hunters who have killed the wild animals. The songs are often sung at the vicinity of the village to get the villagers informed of the hunting success. The themes of the songs varied depending on the circumstance and the feeling of the hunters. Some of the songs dealt with herein will



make the point clear.

I.

Lengi e puana sua la arsi  
Vangrang a zau ve lo.  
Vanrang a zau ve lo,  
Khuai vawm e ka duh thlala  
Kan runa  
Sathang thawm ka thleng hi aw.

### ENGLISH VERSION .

Look up darling to the sky where  
The stars spangle.  
The stars spangle,  
The night a big bear have I killed,  
In our house.

Have I brought you tidings of victory.

Note: Killing a ferocious animal was a proof of one's manhood and victory. Through this song, a man who has killed a big bear informs his darling wife of his victorious achievement, which he believes, his wife should be really proud of.

II.

Thlipui e a tleh ni chun tlanga  
Siathing a herh tliah e.  
Vala e ka tha ni chun ngawval  
Siathing ka herh tliah e..... (silai puak).

### ENGLISH VERSION.

The day the wild wind sweeps the hills,  
Breaks it the stout trees,  
The day kill I the wild boar,

Break I the stout trees too..... (gunshot)

Note: Through this song a valiant young man who has killed a wild boar proclaims his victory claiming that he is as strong as the wild wind that sweeps the hills and breaks the stout trees.

## HRANGHLA.

Va hrang ila, va hrang ila e

Rali gaia theichang hna

Va hrang ila e.

Va nem ila, va nem ila e

Phainu tawna chawnpat ang

Va nem ila e.

## ENGLISH VERSION.

Let us be rough, yea let us be rough  
To the enemies like leaves of the fig  
Let us be rough.

Let us be soft, yea let us be soft  
To the damsels like fresh cotton  
Let us be soft.

Note:- This song carries a beautiful philosophy. It teaches one to be rough or soft depending on the situation and circumstances one comes across.

It is worth noting that most of the songs including the songs of victory have tones of pensive sadness and are sentimental in nature. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why the early missionaries did not encourage the people to uphold the old cultural heritage.

## CHAPTER TEN

# CHRISTIANITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DARLONG SOCIETY

### A: MISSIONARY ENDEAVOUR

Several attempts had been made by the missionaries to spread the gospel in North-East India, but much could not be achieved due to strong objection from various corners. In 1890, J.H. Lorrain, a Baptist Missionary from London tried to enter Tripura but he was not allowed to. He and his friend, E.W. Savidge tried again but they failed. Under the initiative tried again but they failed. Under the initiative of Rev. W.R. Roberts, a renowned London based evangelist, Dohnuna was sent to Tripura who stationed himself at Tlangsang, Jampui in 1917. Dohnuna had to face a lot of hardships and objections particularly from the local chiefs and the Maharaja, who strongly opposed Christianity. Along with some other evangelists, like Zatua of Behliangchhip, Jampui, Dohnuna carried on his preaching. Besides the opposition from the chiefs and the Maharaja of Tripura, a small pox epidemic hit the village in which the Christians lived.

Due to the strong endeavour of evangelists, Dohnuna and Zatua, Ngurkhuma, Ngurdingliana, Hmuna and others embraced Christianity in 1919 and they were baptised on 20th February, 1920. The same year Hrawma, the father of Ngurkhuma also embraced Christianity which invited the displeasure of the chief who drove

him out of his village. Evangelist Zatus was not to give up; he also shifted to the new village where he converted many people to Christianity including Liankaia who served as evangelist from 1921 onwards.

The first Christians had to undergo fierce struggle of resistance. Their life was full of difficulties because they were despised, hated, and discriminated by the non-Christians who outnumbered them. Out of utter displeasure, the Maharaja ordered that whoever should preach Christianity should be imprisoned and their houses should be burnt down. The chiefs were equally displeased. They requested the Christians to abandon their new religion. But the Christians were ready to face anything for the sake of upholding Christianity. So the chief drove them out from his village, Saidara. Some of the Christians who were driven out from their villages set up a new village, Tualsungi Lungdaw. The Christians were driven out empty-handed, but they managed to get their articles back with the help of the Zonal Divisional Officer, Kailashahar who was brought up and educated under Christian environment. The desperate Christians lived in their jhum huts from where they attended the Sunday school services held in the village. However the chief insisted that they must cross the river Mahu (Minaw in Darlong). As a result of this order, in 1923 Sualiana, Renga, Zatus, Liankaia, Lahmuna, Kapa and Thuama had to establish a new village, Darchawi, from where they started spreading the gospel to all the villages far and near.

In this way, under great hardships the first Darlong Christians grew in number. The Darlong Christian Jubilee was celebrated in 1969 that is five years before the remaining non-Christians were baptised in 1974. Today all the Darlongs are Christians.

The Darlong Christians confine themselves in five

main denominations, the Baptist, the Roman Catholic, the United Pentecostal Church (U.P.C) the Evangelical Free Church of India (E.F.C.I) and Presbyterian Church. A brief account of the different Churches and how the Darlong Christians belong to them is given here.

## **1. The North-East India General Mission:**

Rev. Watkin R. Roberts founded the 'Thado Kuki Pioneer Mission' which came to be known as the 'The North East India General Mission' in 1924. He assumed his responsibility for the Missionary works in Tripura as the Welsh Mission could no longer take care of the Tripura Christians.

Rev. W.R. Roberts sent two evangelists, Thangte and Khuanga in 1917 and Rev. Dohnuna in 1918 to work in Tripura. Rev. Dohnuna worked as field superintendent of Tripura. This way a few other Missionaries came to Tripura to preach and proclaim the gospel.

The first Missionaries had to face a great deal of hardships and hatred. The village chiefs who declared themselves as the supreme authorities were, in fact, under the control of the Maharaja and were answerable to him. The Maharaja and the village chiefs strongly opposed the gospel; as they anticipated a loss of control on the Christians if their number increased to a greater extent. As a result of this the Maharaja sent his chief Dewan to Behliangchhip, Jampui to assess the activities of the Missionaries.

In spite of the strong opposition both from the chiefs and the Maharaja, Rev. Dohnuna, who was well known for his will power and intellect did not give up hope for mass conversion to Christianity in Tripura. Because of his enthusiastic evangelism, it was possible to bring the Darlongs under the domain of Christianity.

## **2. The Jampui Presbytery:**

The first meeting of the Presbytery formed by the Mizo Christians (Presbyterians) who migrated from Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) to Tripura was held at Tlangsang in 1918. In that presbytery some Mizos notably Darthanchhunga, Laia, Lailianchema and Thangkunga were appointed as evangelists. Under the supervision of Rev. Dohnuna, Darthanchhunga was sent to the Darlongs at Saidara village in 1918, Saidara village was also known as Lalvankunga village (named after the village chief, Lalvankunga). At the beginning of 1918, cholera broke out at Saidara and about 70 adults died. The Mizo missionaries began to preach the gospel in this village which had 50 houses only. They did not give up hope in the midst of the killing disease on one side and the strong opposition from the chiefs and the Maharaja on the other side.

As a result of the unfailing endeavour of the Missionaries, the first Darlong Christians were baptised in this village on 20th February 1920. They incurred the displeasure of the chief and, as a result the latter drove the Christians away from his village. The destitute Christians established themselves a new village and preached the gospel from there. The chief found that the Christians were not giving up. Hence he ordered that the Christians should cross the river Manu.

## **3. The New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society:**

The New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society had tried to enter Tripura as early as 1885. But only in 1937 the Eade brothers were permitted to visit Tripura, and in 1938 the Tripura Maharaja permitted the NZBMS to

establish a station at Agartala.

The NZBMS started their mission of preaching and trespassed into the organised Presbytery under the NEIG Mission. As a result the Darlong Christians were separated from the Jampui Presbytery, and in 1942 all the Darlong Christians joined the NZBM. Rev. G.H. Jones was one of the first Missionaries of the NZBM to enter the North Tripura district and to proclaim the gospel mainly from Darchawi, a subcentre of the NZBM.

## **B. THE GROWTH OF CHURCHES:**

The first Christian movement among the Darlong took place at Darchawi. It was started by the four youngmen Hrawma, Renga, Liankaia, Sualoia were driven out of Saidara village by the chief for embracing Christianity. These four young men prayed together and preached in the villages far and near with commendable success. The Christians increased in number rapidly and by the end of 1929 they numbered 400. Behind this high growth rate was a strong revival that took place in 1929 in many villages. In the revival, the Christians experienced higher spiritual attainment and the revived Christians loved praying, singing and preaching. They also had visions. They filled the air with songs, prayer, happiness and excitement which led to mass embracement of Christianity.

Due to split in the church, between 1929 and 1944 the membership decreased to 360. However after 1944 the growth rate went up again and by the end of 1954, the total membership was 650, and by 1964 it increased to 1,000. The Darlong Christians did not only increase in number but their participation in the ministry was remarkable. Some dedicated Darlong Christians began to take active part in the mission of proclaiming the good

news with different capacities. Some of them served under the Tripura Christian Union with high responsibility and made commandable success in the Church history of Tripura.

## **C. SPLITS IN THE CHURCH:**

### **1. Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission:**

In 1926 a dispute broke out, involving Rev. W.R. Roberts, the founder of the North East India General Mission. He left the N.E.I.G. Mission and formed another Mission that was known as "Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission", in 1928.

The Church split, the workers divided and misunderstanding and quarrelling ensued. Trouble started everywhere, in Manipur as well as in Tripura. Thus the Darlong Churches were divided into two groups, the North East India General Mission and Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission. As a result of the disputes many Darlong Christians were left uncared.

The Darchawi Church joined the I.B.P. Mission and the Talan Range and Northern Churches joined the N.E.I.G. Mission. Some of the Christians were so confused that they invited a Roman Catholic Church to provide them pastoral care.

### **2. The Roman Catholic Mission:**

At the time the Talan and Saikar Churches were enquiring about the NZBM, Howaibari came to them and informed them that their Mission, N.E.I.G. did not allow them to join any other Mission. However, when Ujaw Khasi heard that they were searching for a mission, he told them about the Roman Catholic Church of Jowai.



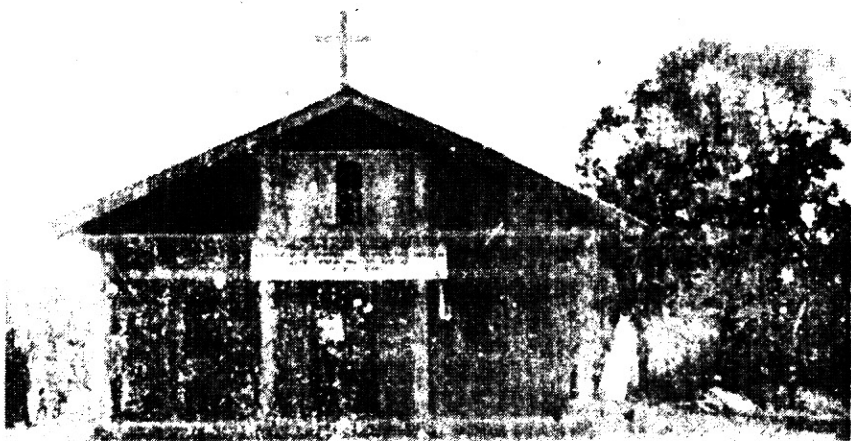
The Churches enquired accordingly and the Jowai Roman Catholic Church directed them to contact the Agartala Mariam Nagar Roman Catholic Church centre. The two Churches contacted Fathers of the Mariam Nagar Catholic Mission centre. The Fathers came and started a mission in Talañ - I and II. Tlangte, Tuikawinek, Nengsen and Khanchan. However, today the Roman Catholic Churches are existing only in Khanchan and Katalcherra, because all other Churches returned to the NZB Mission.

### **3. The United Pentecostal Church (UPC):**

The United Pentecostal Church was established at Darchawi in 1968 under the leadership of Vankhuma. Formerly Vankhuma was a Hostal Superintendent of St. Paul's School of the NZB Mission in Agartala. He resigned from his post following a dispute with his department and returned to his village Darchawi. He invited Lerthanchunga, the pastor of the UPC in Cachar, Assam to deliver some sermons at Darchawi Church. Paster Lerthanchunga came and preached. Some Christians responded to the sermons and joined them. This way the U.P.C. was established among the Darlongs but it has not spread to any other village.

### **4. The Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI)..**

There was a strong feeling on the need for establishment of a High School at Darchawi. Some of the Church leaders contacted Rochunga Pudaite, Leader of the EFCI, Churachandpur and enquired whether the Church could help them to establish a High School at Darchawi. He sent some evangelist teachers who preached and taught simultaneously. In a short while some families embraced EFCI Church and under the leadership



View of a Local Church



Darlongs at University Convocation

of Sangchuliana, an EFCI Church was established at Darchawi in 1976. Formerly Sangchuliana was a pastor in the Baptist Church. The EFCI Church is spreading fast in the Darlong villages.

### **5. The Presbyterian Church:**

In 1994 some families of Tuingoi village, Kailashahar, embraced Presbyterian Church and came under a pastoral care of the Presbyterians in Mizoram. They established a new Church in their village, and it has not spread to any other village.

## **IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE DARLONG SOCIETY.**

One cannot underscore the important changes that have taken place in the Darlong society following the embracement of Christianity. The Missionaries like Darrhanchhunga, Dohnuna, and Laia started their mission of preaching among the Darlongs in 1917. As a result in 1919, Ngurkhuma (F/O Hranthuama), Hmuna (F/O Rev. Tuakunga), Ngurningliana and Sualiana (F/O Rev. Lahluala) accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and were baptised on 20th February, 1920. Today all the Darlong people have become 'Pathian thu awi' (believers or obeyers of God's words meaning Christians).

### **A. PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION**

#### **1. Village Appearance:**

To understand the degree of changes that have taken place in the village appearance of the post-christian

Darlong village, one should try to picture the village scenerio of the pre-Christian Darlong village. There were tombs and tombstone at the entrance of the village. There, stilted house were built with bamboo leaves roofing, bamboo plaited walls and splitted bamboo floor. The houses had no windows. The pigs were kept and fed underneath the house. The front wall of the house was decorated with skulls of all kinds of animals. It was more than a mere decoration, because the social status of a man depended on the number and kinds of animals he had killed. Every village had the "Bukpui" (male dormitory) and the chief's house ad prominent buildings in its centre. As a whole, the village was unattractive.

In the post-christian times, the people have learnt to keep themselves, their houses and the courtyard clean. There are no tombs and tombstones at the entrance of any village because every village has its own cemetery outside the village. The pattern of the houses and the materials used in the construction have improved. The houses have windows and the pigs and other domestica-ted animals are kept in their enclosures away from the main house. They no longer decorate their houses with skulls of animals but the houses are now decorated with modern decorations. Today in place of the 'Bukpui' and the chief's house, the church and school buildings are the most prominent buildings of the village.

## 2. Appearance of the people:

The appearance of the Darlongs people has also undergone a drastic change following the embracement of Christianity. In the pre-Christian times they hardly put on any shirt, but they almost always put on their home made 'Puan' (clothes). Both men and women wore their hair long, combed back and tied in a knot at the nape

of the neck. Sometime it was difficult to tell a man from a woman, because they both wore 'Kuarbe' (ear rings), bangles and 'Rithei' (necklaces made of beads). The women wore a black piece of skirt above the knees and men wore a long white cloth called 'Puanfen'. The children wore no cloths and they seldom bathed. Some children had animals teeth hanged in the neck.

The Darlongs seem to have taken the Bible in letter and spirit which says, 'Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, the new had come'. (II Corinthians 5: 17). As a result, the post-Christian Darlong men cut their hairs, put on paints, shirt and shoes like the highly civilised people. The women put on beautiful dress, make hairs, use cosmetics which were virtually unknown to them half a century age. The children go to schools, dress in uniforms, play with modern toys, and like to wear modern dresses. The appearance and attitude of the Darlong people are like that of other civilized people. They have learnt to put on modern yet modest dresses. This change has come like an explosion with the coming of Christianity, though it is not a vital part of Christian belief and practice, nonetheless, It is attributed to the influence of the Gospel. The impact of Christianity is so strong that the new generation is totally in dark about the customary practices of their fore-fathers, for which the people, not the gospel, are responsible.

### **3. Social Life:**

After the embracement of Christianity the social life of the Darlongs has undergone drastic changes in regards to their mood of social gathering. Social activities and many other aspects related to their social life. The example given below will certainly throw light on the

change of their social life in the post-Christian times.

a) In the pre-Christian days the institution "Bukpui" (male dormitory) was the main place for the men folk to meet and discuss on various problems and prospect of the society. This institution was also used as a place for festivity, feast, drinking beer, singing and dancing.

In the post-Christian time the Church has become the common meeting place where every body young and old praises God, listens scripture message and have fellowship with one another. In the Christian festivals like Christmas, New year, Good Friday, Easter Sunday they sing hymns and read the scripture. The marked difference between the pre- and the post-Christian times is that in Christian festivals and feast there is no drinking, which was the main characteristic of the pre-Christian festivals and feast. Today in place of rice beer they drink tea.

b) In the pre-Christian Darlong Society there was no co-operation between villages. Every village was independent of the other. There was always a tendency to fight against each other, and especially the young men were trained for such unpredictable fight. The enmity between the villages was so strong that headhunting became part of their social practice to bring victory to the village and for the young men to prove their manhood. Perhaps they were not aware of the existence of love and fellowship between neighbours.

In the post-Christian times the people have learnt to follow the commendment of Jesus; "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, with you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another". (John 13,34 & 55). As a result of this, they have learnt to do away with all their

disputes which separated them. Today particularly the young men and women take great pleasure in visiting other villages to have fellowship, to sing together and discuss the scripture. Today unlike the pre-Christian time, there are love and affection between the villages far and near and people of all walk of life.

## **B. CHANGING COSTUMES:**

In the pre-Christian times, if a mother died during or soon after the child birth, the child used to be smothered and buried along with the dead mother, because they believed that a motherless child caused barrenness. The missionaries like, Daitree, a lady doctor from British Baptist Mission, fought against the evil practice and were able to do away with such cruel practice through their limitless patience and endeavours.

Regarding twins, if both were sons, they believed that they could cause death of the father, because they were believed to be the reincarnation of "Ramhuai" (evil spirit). Today twins are no longer regarded as dreadful but are equally welcomed by the Darlongs.

### **1. Custom Concerning Marriage:**

Marriage in the pre-Christian days was civil contract where the bride price played an important part. Many lovers failed to marry each other because the young men could not fulfill the demands of the girl's parents. Sometimes the girls were forced to marry against their will by greedy parents for the sake of a handsome bride price.

Marriage under Christianity, is a solemn religious ceremony requiring a solemn marriage vow between the bride and the bridegroom. Paying of bride price still

continues, but the price is fixed for everyone irrespective of one's socio-economic status. Hence Christian parents no longer compel their daughters to marry against their will for the sake of material gain. Marriage is still a community affairs where the whole village takes part in the celebrations. But unlike the pre-Christian days, in place of drinking rice beer and killing "Ramar" (agreement chicken) the people sing community hymns throughout the night and day, with tea and home-made cake served at interval. Whoever can afford still give public feast which is not compulsory.

Christianity has got rid of bad practices connected with marriage such as throwing of water, mud, rotten eggs and smearing of dirt and colours on the bride's party.

In the pre-Christian society there was no proper co-operation between husbands and wives. The husbands were too authoritative and the wives had little right if any at all. Divorce was easy and common as the proverb says: "A bad doorstep and a bad woman should be changed." The village chiefs had polygamy system.

In the post-Christian society, husband are less authoritative but are more helpful to their wives. Divorce is rare, and polygamy has turned into a history. There are better love, kindness and understanding in the Christian families.

## 2. Custom Connected with Death

In the pre-Christian times many deaths such as the each of a pregnant woman and a death caused by another person were attributed to the act of the evil spirits. In the post-Christian time every village has its own cemetery outside the village where all the dead, rich or poor are buried. When a person dies the church bell is



tolled ten times to get the whole village informed of the death. In the night the young men, young women and the elders of the village gather in the house of the dead person and sing Christian hymns the whole night to console the bereaved family. Every family tries to help the bereaved family in kind or in cash besides rendering physical helps. The young men voluntarily dig the grave while some other set out to inform the relatives of the dead person in other villages. Singing of gospel hymns in the house of the dead person continues for a week or longer.

### **C. ECONOMIC LIFE.**

In the pre-Christian days, the Darlongs fully depended on the primary activities like jhuming, hunting etc. Their subsistence economy was dependent on the soil and the overall climatic conditions. To carry out their primitive methods of cultivation they had to shift from one place to another and they hardly stayed in a place for the period of ten years at a stretch. They were self supporting no doubt, but they lived a nomadic life in search of better forest for jhuming. A good rich man might take some pride in helping the poor, but he also wasted a lot of rice by making rice beer. There was no room for the future. Feasting and drinking were considered to be the main entertainment. "Spare not for the morrow" was their motto. It was to say that one should enjoy life by eating and drinking for the morrow will take care of itself. They were so short-sighted that they never put their money into savings. In spite of all these, they were self-contented and least bothered about the future.

In the post-Christian times the Darlongs have learnt to till the land, make garden and save their money in the Bank or in the Post Offices. Today the Darlongs are no

longer fully dependent on jhuming. Besides tilling the land, they have achieved much success in gardening. Above all, the Darlongs are now educated. Every child goes to school and many families are now dependent on government jobs. They have high level officers in the form of one Indian Foreign Service, one Scientist-D, and their representation in the State's Civil Service and Police Service is above average among their contemporary tribes in Tripura. Besides, there are a good number of teachers and government employees with different capacities which make their representation in government services even better.

The Darlongs have adjusted themselves with people of civilized societies, adopted new and improved methods of cultivation and they have educated themselves. Now they are at par with their contemporary tribals if not ahead.

#### **D. EDUCATION:**

Education was unknown to the Darlongs before the coming of the missionaries. The Mizo evangelists introduced the art of reading and writing to the Darlongs. The medium of instruction was Mizo, and its influence was so much that besides using the Mizo Bible and hymn Book, they also preached and prayed in Mizo. There was no formal school. Education was imparted in the Church Building by the missionaries.

As a result of the missionary endeavour, three Darlong boys were sent to Churachandpur to attend school there between 1938 to 1943 and two young girls were sent to Durtlang in Mizoram to have nursing training. In 1943, New Zealand Baptist Missionaries started St. Paul's School at Agartala where a good number of Darlong boys got their education. The NZBMS also started some schools in the Darlong villages where the

students read upto class-II. Students who passed Class-II from the village schools were sent to St. Paul's School to continue their study there.

The Roman Catholic Missionaries gave some Darlong boys and girls free education within Tripura, and some students were also put into the Don Bosco School at Shillong. In 1975, a new English medium school was opened at Darchawi which now facilitates the schooling of many children.

Today, the Darlongs have the New Testaments and hymn books in their language and their dependency on the other languages had been much reduced. They also have some songs composed in their language, a compilation of which has been published in the Children Association Jubilee in 1990. Most of the indigenous songs composed are based on the love and salvation of God.

## **E. SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**

The Darlongs have undergone a great spiritual transformation in that they have done away with the belief in the power of the evil spirits. They have found that "Pathian" (God) is more powerful than the evil spirits. So they have stopped appeasing the spirits. Now they know that god is all powerful and the devil can not harm them any more. They trust in God, His power and salvation.

They know that salvation of God is so great and so wonderful that it can not be hidden. So they come out to preach the good news of God's love, and salvation for mankind which he had made possible by the death of his only son Jesus to redeem all that who believe in Him and accept his plan of salvation. They believe in the historic resurrection of Jesus and whoever accepts his plan of salvation are to be resurrected to enjoy the eternal bliss of Heaven. This is a source of their joy, happiness and comforts in time of pain, sorrow and hardship.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

I find the Darlongs to be highly ethnocentric, dexterious, skillful, intelligent and confident. They are self-contented people. To them the term 'Darlong' is a symbol of a tribe of self-esteem and confidence. Their crafts require high degree of dexterity. The women cap, the three layer basket, the rawsem (the best musical instrument), beautiful and complicated designs in the cloths are only a few examples that show the degree of their dexterity. Due to their skills, confidence and intelligence, the Darlongs have been able to make their presence felt.

The Darlongs also have some weak points, the main being their lack of patience and consistency. This unwanted nature has been acting as the main stumbling block to achieving greater success. Attaining a certain level of stability in education and economy would prove the best weapon to fight the inconsistency and to make the people goal-oriented and successful. This will prove their worth that they are the assets, and not liabilities of their country.

All aspects of human life and activities are changing rapidly. It is becoming more and more difficult to tell the good from the bad though it is certain that they all have some imprint to make on our life. This could well be one characteristic of modern development. One should not be too surprised to come across occurrence of undesirable stray incidence, for the turbulent waves are new to them and they are learners in sailing.

The Darlongs were used to living on the bounties of the nature which is rapidly giving a rebuff to them. This will make them to learn to live within their means and limits. This is a necessity which will prove to be the mother of invention to them.

The Darlong language needs standardisation in syntax, spelling and in its grammar. If they can come to a consensus there are immense possibilities and opportunities to fulfill the basic requirements towards standardisation of the language. Once this is achieved, literacy development in the true sense is going to be as sure as the sun rising in the east every morning. But among themselves there prevail some differences of opinions, on the phonetics, form of spellings and the overall grammar which if unsolved, may prove to be the main obstruction towards development of the language and its literature.

The need of the hour is to discuss over the matter, to adopt any convenient system and to standardise it to a literary form. There is a possibility of some development taking place in this field within the following decade if the people can come to a consensus and if the flame of inspiration is not allowed to die down.

Like many other tribal groups, the Darlongs had a rich and variant cultural heritage in their glorious past days. They were illiterate no doubt, but they had their own idealism, beliefs and practices that made their cultural life rich and the people ethnocentric. But in due course of time they failed to uphold their cultural practices when they encountered new environment and hardship in their new place of settlement. Besides, when they first became Christians they started giving up drinking wine and gave importance to Christian code of conduct to the extent that most of them even developed the idea that Christianity and the old cultural practices should not go together. Hence, they did not only abstain

from their own cultural practices but they also did not hesitate to sell out their valuable ornaments and alike. None can be blamed for this ignorant act of the masses. Because there were some elements in the social practices which deserved giving up if the people really had to change their life style for a better and more successful living. For instance, most of the songs the people used to sing were but 'threnodies' or songs of lamentation which always pushed their mind back-ward and never forward.

Whatever be the reasons, the invaluable culture has been out of practice for decades together and these are entering the coffins of the elders. Hence, they can no longer be recovered in their original forms.

Various attempts have been made to restore and uphold the rich cultural heritage and the attempts are getting momentum. The new generation has come to realise that every society needs an identity in the form of established culture which consists of all the ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that individuals learn and share with others social behaviour, languages, religions, ideas, values, and ways of doing and making things. A people may survive without any of the above established cultural elements, but such a society can be compared to a man without any garment. Hence various steps have been taken to weave the cultural fabric by way of collecting the ornaments, costumes, musical instruments and other implements. The new generation has also taken interest in learning the dances in modified forms if required, and learning the songs, manufacturing clothes and garments, and above all to record all these in writings. This is a tedious job, involving money, sufficient manpower, and it requires self-sacrifice for success.

The feeling on the need of total development of socio-cultural activities is now strong enough in the mind

of the people. So, for achieving success they have to find ways and means to organise themselves to take up this gigantic task on which much of their socio-cultural status, living standard, educational status depend.

In 1937 Burma was separated from India. Chin Hills and Upper Chindwin have gone to Burma. Again in 1947 when the Pakistanis got Independence, Chittagong Hill Tracts came under Pakistan, Which was renamed as Bangladesh in 1971. Thus the Kuki-Chin people have been scattered into three different independent countries, creating a lot of difficulties for communication and personal contact for this people from one country to another. As a result of this they have come to identify themselves under different names, for they never have been able to find out their common identity and nomenclature acceptable to all. No-matter how much reunification of all these tribes is attempted to, the sense of disunity is found to be still stronger than the sense of unity among them. Due to lack of direct contact and communication each group had development its own ego, clan system, self pride and tribalism which act as forces that pull each of the tribes away from the others.

That the Kuki-Chins were separated by boundaries in India, and international boundaries of India, Burma, Bangladesh, and were given different nomenclatures such as Kuki in India, Chin in Burma and Mizo in Mizoram who share high degree of similarities in respect of socio-cultural practices. As a result, this group of people are scattered as weaker section of the society due to lack of common identity. About the Kuki-Chin tribes of Manipur, L.S. Gangte writes that the Kuki-Chin people were simply called KUCHI which means 'nomadic'. Because their ancestors used to migrate frequently from place to place. Of the 29 recognised tribes in Manipur, 21 tribes belong to the Kuki-Chin group. Outsiders called

them by anything as they appeared to them without knowing their identity and the people themselves readily accepted different names as real and origin. It is imperative to deliberate upon the matter of the factual origin to prove its accuracy. In most cases the name of their title for sub-clan has bearing in dialects spoken by the concerned clans. But surprisingly enough Kuki has no bearing in any dialect whatsoever.

Had the Kuki-Chin group been able to accept a nomenclature acceptable to all, the group would have proved its worth. If the Nagas are able to unite themselves under a nomenclature inspite of living in different states in India and divided by the international boundary of India and Burma, and without understanding one another's dialect even between one village to another village of the same tribe, there would not be much difficulties in uniting this group of people. This is absolutely important. Because common identity is a source of unity and of strength.

The terms Kuki and Chin are foreign words unheard of by the people themselves at first. The foreigners gave these names to this group of people as their generic names without the knowledge of the people themselves. These names have caused confusions in the minds of the outsiders and the insiders alike. This is a result of (a common) identity crisis of this group of people taken together.

It will not be desirable to separate this group of people who are closely interrelated having many common characteristics such as belief in common origin, historical course of migration, possession of common folktales, clan songs, marriage system, linguistic affinities and socio-cultural practices. Hence naming the same group of people is really confusing for the insiders as well as the outsiders. An outsider may think that Chin is different



from Kuki and vice versa. An outsider who may like to accept either Chin or Kuki is embarrassed when another name is applied to him. The number of common affinities shared by this group of people is sufficient to conclude without any hesitation that all these tribes belong to the same stock.

The Kuki-Chin tribes now feel a crying need for a nomenclature embracing all these tribes. A good number of organisations have been formed out of a pathetic groping for an acceptable name which should have a firm rooting in the social fabric. According to Dr. H. Khamkhenthang there are three possible names for the Kuki-Chin tribes namely, Chin, Kuki, and Zoumi. Of the three names, Zoumi gets maximum organisations pleading for its acceptance at various levels.

Many people agree that Kuki-Chin groups of people find hard to accept 'Chin' which was given and imposed upon by the Burmese revolutionizing it into 'Comrade'. They feel that while exploiting mercilessly and threatening their own existence on the surface of the earth, the Burmese did not have any moral right to call the Zoumi as Chin meaning 'Comrade'. A group of people also agree that the word 'Kuki' can not be accepted as a generic term. It is interesting to note that none of the 29 scheduled tribes of Manipur had been recognised as Kuki under the modified list of Scheduled Tribes of Manipur 1956. Had Kuki been a generic name it could have been included in the list of recognised tribes. Many people have already discarded the term as they find it derogative (Why it is felt derogative has been already discussed in chapter one).

Considering all the facts and arguments put forward, we may have a few questions to ask. Will this group of people continue to identify themselves by the different names they identify themselves today? Will they come forward and say that they want to identify the whole group

as Kuki, Mizo or Zoumi? Will such identification solve the problems of their disunity? or, will this act as a force for integration and brotherhood? The answer lies with the people.

The Darlongs are now more aware of the important role their fore-fathers played towards protection of the state from the outside forces and how the Maharajas counted on them. The Administration Reports of Tripura (1872-1890) has it that in time of emergency, they were serviceable to the state for which they were prepared to carry arms to the fields, a work which undoubtedly was entrusted to them in days gone by, and for which perhaps they were exempted from the payment of any rent.

The Darlongs believe that this selflessness led them to lose many of their warriors. The Maharajas were fully aware of the sacrifices the Darlongs had made. The close friendship that developed between the Maharajas and the Darlong chiefs was a manifestation of thankfulness, indebtedness to and recognition of the sacrifice the Darlongs had made.

In spite of the above facts only three clans of the Darlongs have been listed in the second schedule under Kuki. The word 'Darlong' has not found a place in the list. This has become a disheartening fact to the Darlongs. While many lesser known tribes have found names of their tribes in the said list, the comparatively better known Darlong has not found its place in it. Hence their number can be ascertained only by a separate census conducted on them. The Darlongs find it to be of great consequence and hurtful.

The wheel of development is on the move towards better and fuller development. The Darlongs are facing better competition in the field of education and in ensuring economic stability. They will certainly make new achievements within the following decade if the inspiration within is coupled with full perspiration without.

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