

NAGA FOLK TALES

Kiran Shankar Maitra



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TO
BAMBINA AND JAYA

Preface

To the north-east, along the borders of India, lies Nagaland, the sixteenth State of the Union. In this hilly small stretch of land live thirteen principal tribes, viz., Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha, Rengma, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Koniyak, Phom, Chang, Zeliang, Kuki, etc. Each of the tribes has its distinctive features in respect of language, dress and culture, and of course, folk tales of its own. These folk tales give expression to the traditional admiration for valour, dexterity in warfare and love for romantic episodes.

While I had been in Nagaland for more than three years I had the occasion to travel in the hilly state extensively and know its people closely. The beautiful and romantic state, full of lively cascades, ever-chanting clouds, serpentine paths and lush green valleys, is rightly called, 'the Switzerland of the East'.

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The folk tales collected from different Naga tribes are naturally edited and rewritten, but immense care and pains have been taken to preserve their original flavour, atmosphere and peculiarity.

My labour will be rewarded if the readers of all age groups like and relish them.

I take this opportunity of thanking all my Naga friends who helped me in writing this book.

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Glossary

Angami	—one of the tribes of Nagaland.
Au phoh	—an expression of joy.
Bikhu	—a tree.
Chakhesang	—a Naga tribe.
Chitral	—a flower.
Dao	—chopper.
Doiyang	—a river.
Gaon-burrah	—village headman.
Kamkhu	—a fruit.
Kapu	—a hill.
Khang	—a basket made of bamboo and cane.
Kinnar	—half-god and half-human being according to the Hindu mythology. In reality they are inhabitants of Himachal Pradesh.

Kinnarlok	—the abode of Kinnars
Lotha	—a Naga tribe
Madu	—an indigenous intoxicated beverage of Nagaland
Manchi	—a flower.
Melak	—a river.
Morung	—traditional dormitory for unmarried Naga youth.
Oris	—one of the older tribes.
Prahara	—four hour make a prahara.
Sangtubi	—a bird.
Shravana	—the fourth Indian month which runs in July-August.
Thunnin Nimong	—harvest festival of the Yimchunger Nagas.
Tirinti	—a bird.
Yaksha	—Half god according to the Hindu mythology.
Yimchunger	—a Naga tribe.

1

The Story of Rusta

It is a story of many years ago and of those days when Lotha tribe was fighting a hard battle to earn a place of supremacy among the Nagas.

In those early days of valour and heroism, one night in a Lotha family was born a son. The parents named him Rusta after his grandfather. Little is known of Rusta as a child except that he was full of vigour and vitality. Rusta's story began when misfortune struck his family—his father having been killed during a local warfare with traditional rivals of the Lothas, the Oris.

Rusta, who loved and worshipped his father so much, was numbed with shock. He did not

even touch a piece of bread for four days and four nights.

Gradually, out of intense grief and anger was born in him an everlasting vow—a determined will to avenge the death of his father.

From that day Rusta had only one aim, one goal in his life, to avenge himself on the Oris.

Rusta was a farsighted youth. In those days fire-arms were not known to them, even not the bow and arrow. The weapons used by them were a javeline with a pointed head and a sharp-edged heavy spade. Rusta practised hard to be able to use these to perfection. Besides, he learnt boxing and wrestling.

For five years Rusta went through the rigours of training and held himself in readiness. At the age of twenty he appeared before his tribesmen as a shining example of courage and strength. People said he was stronger than a lion and cleverer than a leopard. As strong as thunder and as cruel as a demon, his invincible arms knew no mercy. For all these qualities Rusta was looked upon by the Lothas as a leader sent by the gods.

The revenge for which Rusta had thus prepared himself came to him suddenly. A band of Oris men one day snatched away a score of cattle from a field of the Lotha village. The angry Lothas went to Rusta and asked him to lead them against Oris, their traditional enemies. Rusta picked the most courageous men of his tribe and led them forward,

to the Oris stronghold, with a heart throbbing with excitement.

The fearless band of men under the leadership of Rusta invoked awe and fear in every village they passed through and the fear spread before them, into the Oris village. When the Lotha warriors met the Oris, they staged such a valiant fight that they could not resist the indomitable Lothas. Victorious Rusta struck as many enemy heads as he could with his long javeline. Thus, he satisfied his long-cherished desire of taking revenge upon the Oris. Wearing garlands of enemy skulls round their necks and war-music on their lips, the triumphant Lothas marched their way home. Keeping a strict vigil against sudden retaliation by the Oris, Rusta trailed behind his men. As a result, he found himself a little way behind his men.

One, who survived among the Oris tribe, had been watching Rusta as he trailed behind. He waited for Rusta to pass him so that he could drive his sharp spear into Rusta's stomach.

When Rusta walked along the road to join his people all of a sudden there was a speedy, sharp attack on him. It killed him almost instantly without any warning, without giving him a chance of defence.

But even in the throes of death, Rusta did not fall down. Collecting all his strength, he sat down on the roadside. He sat in a pose with a spear in the right hand and a shield in the left as if he was waiting for his enemies fearlessly to strike them.

While his body hardened with the cold hands of death upon him, Rusta left the earth happily as his ambition of life had been fulfilled.

When the Oris warrior who had killed Rusta reported this great achievement to his tribesmen, they hardly believed him. The villagers decided to go and see for themselves if his claim was really true.

But what did they see? They saw Rusta from a safe distance. He was sitting fearlessly on the roadside with the shield and spear in his hands to fight. The Oris people were furious with the man who claimed to have killed Rusta. As a result, they hacked Rusta's assassin to death. Thus Rusta's killer was killed by his own people who thought that they had been betrayed. Rusta was such a famous warrior! Even an armed group of the Oris did not dare to come forward.

For three days and three nights, the enemy camp kept a vigil over the body. But to their great astonishment the body did not move even for a moment. On the fourth day, they mustered all their courage to go near Rusta's body. They saw a fly passing round Rusta's face. This convinced them that he was really dead.

They carried Rusta's body to their village to see what extraordinary qualities were possessed by Rusta that made him such a stout-hearted, invincible warrior.

It is said that when they tore open Rusta's heart they saw at the centre two large red ants fighting with each other ceaselessly to swallow one another.

Lima and Tomo

Some one hundred years ago, in the Lungsa village of the Lotha Nagas, two boys lived. They were called Lima and Tomo. Lima and Tomo were great friends and their love and friendship grew with years.

One day while Lima was wandering in the jungle with his bow and arrows, hoping to shoot a good prey, he met Tunla. Tunla was the daughter of the headman of their village who had come to fetch water from the spring. Lima fell in love with the most fair-looking Tunla the moment he saw her.

But there was an anecdote prevalent about Tunla. Once Tunla was followed by a ferocious man-eater tiger, but she was lucky to escape. It was

traditionally believed among the Lothas that when a man-eater followed someone, it would kill him unless the animal itself was killed first. That is why Tunla's father had made a declaration that only he, who would kill the tiger, could aspire for Tunla's hand in marriage. But the man-eater was reputedly so fierce that even though Tunla was very beautiful the young men of the village did not think her worth such a great risk—a risk of losing their lives.

When Lima heard the story he got very worried. But he was helplessly in love with Tunla.

So one day when the evening sun was setting, Lima took his two dependable weapons—a sharp dagger and a long spear, and marched into the dense forest to find out the tiger and kill it.

Tomo, another valiant young Lotha, saw his friend walking into the jungle from a distance. He knew what purpose Lima had in mind. He knew that Lima was running a risk, a grave risk which even might cost him his life. Tomo, a true friend, decided to save his friend's life. So, he also picked up his axe and spear and silently started following Lima.

In a short while Lima reached the heart of the jungle. He saw a dead tree in front of him. He decided to sit on one of its branches. His eyes became dreamy as he watched the deep red horizon of the evening sky.

Treading softly, Tomo reached behind Lima. Suddenly he was petrified with fear. What did he see? Just below the tree where Lima's shadow hung, the dreaded man-eater was vainly trying with all his might to tear apart the human-shadow.

Taking utmost care and in breath-taking silence Tomo moved ahead. The moment he got an opportunity he pierced the tiger's heart with his sharp spear. The attack was fatal and deadly. But the animal also took his last toll. With all its might the animal flew with outstretched claws onto Tomo and ripped open his body.

Lima was lost in his thoughts and oblivious of what was happening. But the wild roar of the tiger startled him out of his thoughts. He saw the notorious tiger and his friend in his arms only to hear his last words: "Brother Lima, sever the tiger's head and carry it to Tunla's father and say that you have killed it. Let no one know that I met death at the tiger's hands. Bury, me here. If you really feel love for me, name your and Tunla's first child after me and plant a pine tree on my grave. It will protect my remains from sun and rain, and spread shadow over the grave"—with these dying words Tomo left the world for good.

Lima observed all the wishes of his ever endearing friend Tomo. Even today if you go to Lungsa village of Nagaland, you can see a mile away from the boundary to the east, a strong and tall pine

tree. Under it there is a nameless grave. Today one can find a number of small pine trees around the place.

The elders of the village say that Lima and Tunla had two children and both of them were named after Tomo.

The Poisonous Sky That was Blue

When Abhirangba was born long time back in a poor Naga family, his parents were very happy. But their happiness was short lived. His father was killed in the forest when he was cutting trees. His mother, a destitute, through great sufferings tried to look after him as well as possible.

Abhirangba became very strong, invincible and defiant in his youth. The Nagas had not heard the name of Hercules, otherwise they would have compared him with the Greek hero.

During the harvest festival when all the young men and women of the village joined the dancing

session in the village courtyard, Abhirangba met Rukovino. Rukovino was the youthful daughter of the richest man of the village. They fell in love at the first sight. Within a few days everybody came to know about their love-affairs. It reached Rukovino's parents as well. But they had wished to marry away their daughter to a rich family. Abhirangba, an indigent young as he was, was out of their consideration zone. But in the meantime much water had flown down the *Doiyang* river, many cascades went down from the Kuba hills. It was difficult now to make an end to the Abhirangba-Rukovino love-affair.

Ruko's father was very cunning and crooked. He imposed some very difficult conditions on Abhi for getting her. He thought it would be very difficult on the part of Abhirangba to perform those arduous tasks.

He first asked Abhi to bring ten *bikhu* trees from the forest. Each of the trees must be ten feet in height, free from any injury caused by storm or conflagration. The bridal place would be decorated with these trees.

Abhirangba had gone to the jungle and presently returned with ten *bikhu* trees as desired on his shoulders. Rukovino's parents were surprised. They did not however, arrange the marriage, but laid down the second set of terms: Abhirangba had to catch a basketful of *tirinti* birds. *Tirintis* lived on tops of the tallest trees in the Naga hills. It was

very difficult to catch them. But a determined Abhirangba set traps on the trees and at last caught a basketful of *tirintis*. The meat of *tirinti* was to be served in the dinner of their marriage. But Rukovino's father again denied them happiness. He rather assigned a harder task to Abhirangba.

The bird *Sangtubi* flew high in the sky. After having caught a living *Sangtubi* it had to be chained with horns of a deer. Applying all his strength and skill he caught both a *Sangtubi* and a deer as wanted by Rukovino's father. Ruko's parents got stunned at Abhirangba's daring feat. How he could do it, they thought. But they had no intention to give away their daughter in marriage to him. So, for the fourth time there was another test. And it was impossible to fulfil it for a human being.

There was an old and very big banyan tree behind Rukovino's house. He had to fell it down with a handleless little chopper within seven days. However strong a person might be it was a job beyond his reach.

Abhirangba started cutting that large tree with his handleless chopper. His mother brought *madu*—an indigenous drink for him in a bamboo tumbler in the night. Besides the restorative drink, she also provided him with a little sharp axe hidden inside the bamboo tumbler. Abhi used to cut the tree with that sharp axe during night time, unobserved, and during day time with his handleless chopper. The desire of getting married with Rukovino kept the resolute Abhi awake all through.

And what a wonder ! Along with the entire village Ruko's parents also observed the tree felling on the ground with a great commotion within the scheduled time. With that Abhi felt assured of the wedding ceremony to be arranged early as he had performed all the difficult feats. But, no, Ruko's parents would not let him have their daughter. The tasks which were impossible to perform for any human being, Abhirangba did not only once, but four times consecutively. He must be a haunted soul and did all the feats under the influence of the ghosts. How could they allow their daughter to get married with such a unnatural person ?

Abhirangba could not think that he would be slighted like this. His eyes were filled with tears, then transformed into vapour. Frustrated, he became mad. His heart was burning with the desire of taking the fiercest revenge. The fairies of sleep had deserted the garden of his eyes which was instead inhabited by the wicked spirits of bad designs. Thus, in frustration and despair, he took a vow to punish Ruko's parents. And in this muddle an innocent and unique hilly belle had to sacrifice her life.

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Harbouring a wicked design in his mind, one day he went to Ruko and said "Ruko dear, come, let us go to the deep forest near the Kubong falls and pluck some *chitral* flower which are in plenty there now." Rukovino was mortified at the injustice done to him by her parents. She had all

sympathy for him and wanted to redeem all his pangs and anguishes by her love. Readily she agreed to go with him. While they were proceeding towards the deep forest they found many *manchi* flowers on top of trees. Abhirangba knew—no girl could resist the temptation of getting this golden flower. It was a special favourite for Rukovino. She wanted to climb the tree and collect it herself. But the tree was very tall and somewhat plain. Abhirangba cut some notches with the chopper hanging from his waist so that Ruko could place her legs in them and climb the tree. Rukovino climbed the tree and went to the topmost branch. While she was busy in plucking flowers Abhirangba told her “Ruko, I’m getting down to get my basket so that you can take the flowers in-tact”. Saying so, he started getting down and make smoothening the notches he had made earlier with his chopper. Also he cut down branches making it impossible for Rukovino to get down from the tree. Engaged in plucking flowers Rukovino could not know anything of it. Descending the ground Abhi said with a boisterous laugh “Rukovino, pluck flowers on the tree for good. I’ve smoothened the notches You’ve no chance of getting down.” Then he addressed all the ferocious birds of the jungle, “Oh, murderous birds, come down on this delicate girl of a rich man. Eat her delicious meat, come down, come down, oh cruel hungry killer birds!”

Abhirangba, blind, and, mad in revenge, left the forest. Poor Rukovino asked for help, crying. But

who would come to rescue her in the desolate jungle? Only a few small birds flew away from her; a venomous snake was hanging from a nearby branch. With a tongue dangled in greed, it kept looking at weeping Rukovino with winkless blue eyes.

In the meantime the news of the unique feast reached the murderous birds. They came in flocks with their huge black wings. Ruko tried her best to defend herself from their attack by throwing branches of flowers, little branches of the tree on them. Then she took her ornaments and threw them all—one after another to drive away the killer birds. At last she was left with nothing but her clothes. That too she took out and threw towards the blood-thirsty birds. A unique uncovered golden body glittered on the tree in the green forest. Alas! all her endeavours were in vain. The huge black birds came in flock and covered Ruko's naked body. They started eating her with their long beaks. The crying Rukovino's tears mingled with blood flowing from the wounds. The birds ate her so much that at last she lost consciousness and fell down upon the hard ground. She died instantly.

The night came. It was mid-night. Rukovino still did not return home. Her anxious parents spent sleepless night. Next morning they went out in search of their daughter and asked everyone—save Abhirangba—if they came across Rukovino. They avoided Abhirangba at any cost.

None could give them any information about

Ruko. Days and nights rolled by. They lost all interest in life since their only daughter was missing without any trace. They were living lifeless. Abhirangba too on the other side was burning in the fire of repentance. After fulfilment of the revenge he thought of his vicious deed and realised the utter vileness of his action. How cruel he was? Ruko was not at all responsible for her parents' breaking the promise. Rather Ruko was the joy of his life, spark of his eye, a beverage drink in his thirst. He had hurled such a worthy girl towards a devilish death. The helpless and miserable condition of Ruko's parents melted his heart at last. What could be done at that time but to give the Ruko's death-news? Abhi wanted to convey the news to her parents through a song. In the dark and still night came the sad notes of music through the listless wind to Ruko's parents:

Rukovino was a sweet girl
Had remained captive on the *manchi* tree
She was, also, netted in a deception,
The innocent girl—poor girl
Could not get down from the tree
All the notches were plain.
Came flocks of killer birds
Blood-thirsty huge wings greedy beaks
Tears mingled with blood
Last cry in the blue sky
Rukovino was a sweet girl—a worthy girl.

The singing object vanished in the darkness of the jungle. Ruko's parents got startled and started going towards the *manchi* tree presently with indigenous burning torches in their hands. They found a few human bones scattered here and there and a few pieces of Ruko's clothes when they reached the *manchi* tree. There bloomed many fungi of golden colour. Ruko's father collected as many mushroom as possible in his Nagashawl. They got soaked with their tears the golden fungi which were grown on the flesh and blood of their beloved innocent daughter.

Next day they invited Abhirangba to lunch. Ruko's mother prepared various delicious dishes with the fungi collected the previous night. Abhi accepted the invitation readily. He did not know what destiny had in store for him!

Many plates of delicious fungi were served before Abhi. He ate all to his hearts' content. But she requested him to take more—another dish of tasty fungi “Had my daughter been alive she would have prepared many other things for you. Please eat this plate at least.”

Abhirangba gulped it. But Ruko's mother went on requesting him to take more. At last Abhi reached a stage when he was not in a position to swallow even an iota of foodstuff. But even then he had to take a plate of hot pickle made of golden fungi. Abhi by that time was at the verge of extreme suffering. He wanted a glass of water. Ruko's

mother said, “oh, I’m sorry, there is not a drop of drinking water. I didn’t notice it earlier. Why don’t you go to the cascade near the morung (dormitory for unmarried Naga boys or girls)?

Abhi had no strength to move due to overeating. With great difficulty he went to the spring with the help of a *manchi* branch. His belly was so full that he could not bend himself to drink water with his folded palms from the fall. So he fell prostrated to drink water. There was a piece of sharp stone by the side of the cascade. When he tumbled on his face to drink water his enlarged belly got hurt by the sharp stone which instantaneously had pierced his belly. He died suffering from immense pain. Ruko’s mother followed Abhi. She noticed his death as designed. She began to beat his deadbody with a stick and then scattered the pieces of his body all over the jungle.

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It was noticed after a few days that numerous leeches were coming out of Abhi’s flesh and bones and gradually they advanced towards the deeper jungle, and spread all over the world.

The Angami Girl and the Kinnar Man

Long ago an Angami girl became very famous for her beauty far and wide. Her beauty attracted all the Naga youths and they desired to marry her. But Crisivilo decided to give her hand to a young man who was both very rich and handsome. So she turned down all the proposals from the poor or moderately well-to-do Nagamen.

Gradually the fragrance of her beauty reached even the Kinnarlok of high hills. One night she was walking about the morung (dormitory for unmarried girls). The silver rays of the moonlight bathed her body. Suddenly a goodlooking Kinnar-youngman

appeared before her from nowhere. In the bright moonlit night Crisivilo seemed to be moving in a dreamland. In this enchanting atmosphere it seemed to her quite natural when the unknown Kinnar proposed to marry her. She assured him that if he was very rich he could go to her parents with the proposal and Crisivilo would give her consent.

Next day the Kinnar went to her parents and said that he came of a high family, the roof of his house was made of glasses of the sunbeams, from there one could observe the heavenly beauty. He was so rich that the same utensils were not used again.

Crisivilo's parents were so moved by the handsome looks and charming behaviour of the Kinnar youth that they agreed to marry their daughter with him. They did not feel any necessity to verify his whereabouts or his family background.

Without any pomp and show Crisivilo wedded to the Kinnar man according to simple Naga custom. After marriage the Kinnar took his wife home. There Crisivilo found to her utter dismay that what he had told about his financial and social position was all false. He had no house of his own but lived in a cave. The sunlight of course, played over the head as and there was no shed over them and many heavenly scenes were visible there. It was also true that he did not use the same plate for the second time since those were treeleaves thrown after use. Her husband was the poorest in the Kinnar society.

Crisivilo had nothing to do at that time but to curse her own fate and her want of intelligence. She just tried to adjust herself with the reality. But it was indeed a very difficult job.

Since they had no house of their own they had to shift from one place to another according to the varying moods of nature. In the meantime two daughters were born to them. Crisivilo could not take to the surroundings. When she thought of her parents who did not have plenty of money but had a comfortable living, she felt her life unbearable. She pined for coming out of her miserable married life every moment.

The Kinnar also did not have enough interest in Crisivilo as earlier. He began feeling enamoured by the women of his own community, spent time in their company.

Not even a handful of foodgrain was in their house one day. Both the daughters were crying for food. The Kinnar did not care. Rather he went out well dressed and spent the night in a dancing Kinnari's house along with his friends. When he returned home after midnight he was dead drunk and slept like a deadman. He was least bothered about Crisivilo and the two little daughters if they had had any food.

So long Crisivilo put up with all sufferings. But that was the limit. She left the terrible place that night leaving behind the two daughters.

She went alone through the uneven terrain, valley, deep forest, stream and reached her parents in the Naga village after an arduous journey of ten days. Her parents were modified to hear all her sufferings of all those years. They advised her to start life afresh and forget the past.

And Crisivilo did not err the second time. At least she married an Angami from her own community. He was a widower and not good looking but had enough property, foodgrain and domestic animals.

Sikhose and Her Sons

It is a story of forgotten days. A valiant Chakhesang Naga of Sathajuvasa village lost his life while fighting against another tribe. He left behind him his beloved wife and two affectionate sons.

The wife Sikhose would have followed in the footsteps of her husband but for her two young sons. She devoted her time to train the boys in indigenous sports, body-building and art of warfare. Thus, the two young Chakhesang Nagas gradually grew into strong, brave and skilled warriors.

When the sons came of age they asked their mother about their father. But Sikhose, as grief-stricken she was, never talked about her departed

husband. Thus, they always remained very curious about their father.

Once both the brothers were playing with some wooden toys along with their friends. The younger one hit his friend's toy so hard that it broke into pieces. The aggrieved boy cried—"why did you hit my toy so hard, you rascal? If you've so much of strength why don't you take revenge against those who had killed your father!"

Both the brothers were stunned to hear this. They ran home and asked their mother—"Tell us mother in the name of the tribe-god, who had killed our father?"—They narrated the story that they had heard from their play-mates. Sikhose replied, "My dear sons, hear me, your father died fighting enemies. It should not happen in your life. Remain alert."

Sikhose's revelation made a deep impression on their minds. In that young age they made a vow that they would avenge their father's death. With this firm determination they started sharpening their spears and Naga-dao (chopper) and practising seriously various arts of warfare.

Prepared to meet any challenge, at last they proceeded towards the neighbouring village whose inhabitant had killed their father. Strangely enough, the enemies were of chameleonic character. They were capable of changing their heads to that of the tigers and other wild animals. But the two brothers were

not afraid of these amazing powers. They had immense self-confidence and implicit trust in self strength.

When they entered the enemy village they saw them building a new house. They shouted at them—“Hey, ugly creatures, come out and fight with us if you have courage”.

The ferocious and strong enemies just ignored their threat and advised them to shut up and get going, “otherwise we would make delicious dishes with your young flesh tonight.”

“All your blusterings will be over right now”, they asserted, “we have come from Sathajuvasa, Why did you kill our father? We’ll take revenge of our father’s death. Our beverage will be made of your blood.”

The chameleon-enemies got very angry with their defiance. They ran towards them ferociously with their heads changed to that of tigers to kill them then and there. The two young brothers retreated a few steps outside the village gate and got ready for the fight. The enemies followed them and a fierce battle began between the two uneven parties. But Sikhose’s sons defeated and killed them with valour and skill. They tied as many enemy heads as possible with a creeper rope. They started for their village with this grand garland. They exulted all the way—“Ou phoh—Au phoh”—We are victorious—We are victorious.

Suddenly they noticed that somebody imitated

their voice. Amazed, they looked around but could not find anyone.

They again resumed the journey. This time the younger one was followed and guarded by his elder brother.

Again they heard the imitation of their voices. They warned the invisible—"If you are a human being you wouldn't be able to escape from us. We'll destroy you. Just wait for a while."

The imitator in a fact was one of the enemies. Somehow he could survive their wrath. Hiding himself, he was following them in the shape of a snake. He was just looking for an opportunity when he could kill the triumphant brothers. He presently appeared before them as a python. The elder brother asked the younger one to go ahead and kill it. When the younger brother approached it, it opened its huge mouth and devoured him. The elder brother presently chopped off the snake into two pieces. The younger brother came out alive of its belly.

Taking a little rest again they resumed their journey towards their village. Now one was carrying the garland of enemy-heads and other the body of the chopped-off snake.

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The two brothers returned home after many days. So long Sikhose had been alone. The lonely days were unbearable to her. So in absence of her sons she had given her heart to a man of the tribe

and was spending time in his warm company. Her sons returned home at this hour.

When they saw the door closed they asked Sikhose to open it. But she refused to comply with despite their repeated requests.

Baffled and mortified, they moaned—“Mother, we’ve returned victorious. We’ve avenged our father’s death, We’ve destroyed the enemies and brought their heads. Will you not open the door, mother?”

Sikhose realised that her sons really returned triumphant. But having locked into the amorous embrace of her lover and surrendered to him, how Sikhose, past forgotten, could welcome her sons? So she retorted from inside—“My husband had lost his life fighting the enemy. My sons also met with the same fate. I’ve no other son. What need I have now to open the door and come out?”

The sons said—“All right, if you don’t want to welcome your victorious sons, don’t do it. We’re leaving for good. But listen, when you’ll come out of your own accord during the sunset, you cast your eyes for a few moments towards the west horizon. You’ll attain then the true vision.”

Leaving these last words for their mother they started a new journey towards the west.

At last, at the end of the day, Sikhose also came out of the room away from her man and looked

towards the west. She saw her sons vanishing in the melting reddish rays of the setting sun at the far end of the valley. Looking into that direction suddenly Sikhose felt a cold shiver all through her body. She fainted on the ground.

She could never regain consciousness from the swoon.

The Cry of a Crow

Long ago when the Nagas had just started coming into a fold of society, their orphan children stayed neglected. They used to grow on their own somehow.

The place which is called Zunheboto now is one hundred and eighty-one kilometres away from Kohima, the Capital of Nagaland. Kohito, an orphan who lived near Zunheboto took a vow that one day he would become famous by doing some good work. So he started digging out a well at the end of the village in concealment, which was much needed due to water shortage in the village.

All his days from his boyhood to youth were spent in digging out the well. He did not let anyone know about his work. When he completed it his shadow was reflected on the mirror-like clean water of the well. Kohito's heart was filled with joy. He was able to give a fitting reply to the villagers' neglect and scorn, he thought. With a happy mind he went to break the news of his feat to his friend, Sikhose. She would no more be required to go to the distant falls to fetch water.

All the villagers came to know of this well very soon. All the girls started drawing the well-water in their pitchers kept in the *khang* (a basket made of bamboo and cane) on their back. The menfolk also followed suit. After the first wave of excitement was over, a question occurred to their mind—who did dig out such a nice well; who did do such a fine job?

Nobody could answer. The village-girls at last asked Sikhose—"You're the first person to give us news of the well. Do you know who dug it out?"

Sikhose just smiled. Then after a little persuasion she gave up and the villagers in no time came to know about Kohito. Presently he came to the light of popularity from the darkness of disgrace. Everybody praised an orphan like Kohito for his excellent feat.

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In the world of clouds under the canopy of blue sky, where the seven colours of the sun play all day,

lived *Yaksha-kinnar* and fairies. The fame of Kohito's well reached there also. The fairies started coming down much before the dawn from their land of light and played in the waters of Kohito's well. Not only they played but made the water dirty with branches of trees, flowers and so many other things. When the villagers noticed it in the morning they got angry and held Kohito responsible for it. "Since Kohito dug the well and owned it, who else would make it dirty?"

Kohito tried to plead his innocence, but nobody believed him. Kohito was nothing but a young orphan of the tribe. Everybody cautioned him not to make the water dirty. If he did it again, his hands and legs tied, he would be thrown down from the high hill.

Slighted and frightened, Kohito sat on the bank of the well. He bent down into the well. His sad face was reflected on the pallid surface of its water.

* * *

It was the eleventh or twelfth day of bright fortnight and the dead of night. Kohito sat still on the bank of the well. A few hours back Sikhose had come and warned him—if the water was again polluted the villagers would certainly punish him. Sikhose of course tried to believe him that he was not responsible for the unclean water. Then he should find out who did such a dirty thing.

Kohito was so absorbed in his own thought that he did not notice when the moon dropped down.

Fear and worry clouded his mind. Suddenly the moonlit world seemed to be very calm and quiet. The air was filled with heavenly perfume. He looked at the sky and found some celestial figures coming down from the dream world of the blue sky. Quickly he hid himself behind a tree. A few fairies descended with large bright wings behind them. They unfastened their wings and got down in the well.

Kohito observed everything from behind the tree. He dared not stay there any more. Something very strange would happen now, shiverring with fear he thought. This was the first time he saw some heavenly dwellers. Somehow gathering courage he ran towards the village. There was not much time to sun-rise.

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“Hey, hurry up, come to the well and see—who are making the water unclean and dirty. Hurry up, come-come right now . . .”

Exeited Kohito, called the villagers. They all rushed towards the well. There they found nobody. Only some dirty objects were floating on the water.

The villagers got furious. They came helter and skelter only to find dirty water! They rewarded Kohito with a beating and went to gaon-burrah (village headman) to complain against Kohito so that a heavy punishment could be awarded to him.

Kohito stood there stunned. Was it an illusion what he had seen only a few hours back?

Kohito remained there the entire day. A good amount of advice was showered on him. But nothing made him move. Sikhose also came to say a few words. When she saw his plight, she got worried—had he gone mad? She admonished—“Find out the way to stop the dirty business, otherwise they would throw you down from the Dipu hill.”

Kohito was unmoved though he knew the reality of her warning.

Kohito was at last gathered himself to a firm determination. Whoever were making his well unclean, what he had dug out with such great pains and care, and his life unsafe—he would take revenge against them whatever they might be.

A determined Kohito returned home and filled his belly with rice and *madu* (indigenous beverage made of rice, gur etc.). Though still there was daylight he went to sleep.

* * *

The bright moonlight overflowed. Pieces of white clouds sailed across the blue sky. The full moon dropped down to the horizon after sprinkling its mild light all over. Right at that moment a band of elated fairies flew down from the celestial world. They loosened their white wings and got into the well. Hurriedly came out Kohito from a bushy tree under which he had hid himself so long and took away a pair of wings of a fairy. He then waited behind the bush.

After some time before the daylight broke all the fairies came out of water. They took off on their wings towards their land of cloud. When they remembered of the blue fairy, who was not with them, they were half-way through. They saw the Sun-god coming down on the earth in his chariot drawn by seven horses. There was no time again to go down and search for the blue fairy.

The blue fairy at that time was searching her wings madly. It was about the time of day break. Kohito then shot out with the two wings from the secret place. He was helplessly enchanted with the celestial beauty of the blue fairy in the fresh dewy early hours of the day. He came forward and held her hands—"Come to my house. You are not in a position to return to your heavenly abode now. I want to marry you. I'll try my best to keep you happy, Please trust me."

Crying bitterly, the blue fairy, bit her lower lip, and then followed Kohito to the Naga village.

Three years passed by. Kohito then was a person, loved and respected, among the tribe people. By the fairy-wife he had two daughters. He was immensely happy. He sometimes looked at his wife and thought she also must be happy.

Some more years rolled on. The daughters grew, spoke Naga language. The blue fairy had been very unhappy and sad all the years. She was tired of earthy life and longed to return to her own

abode of clouds. But she was wingless, helpless and undone. How could she sail to her heavenly abode?

Kohito hid the wings in a secret place. The blue fairy searched and searched but could not trace them. Then one day when Kohito was out something flashed in her mind and she asked her daughters—"Oh my darling babies, tell me which side your father goes alone everyday before going out?"

The elder one replied—"Father goes backside to the cock-house everyday before going out for work."

Kohito reared many cocks. As the cocks made the place very dirty the blue fairy did not go that side at all. Kohito did all the errands for the cocks.

On getting the information the blue fairy rushed to the cock-house. The mother-hen was hatching on an egg. The moment the blue fairy put her hand into the cock-house, it was pecked at. The blood stains appeared like red pearls. She did not care, pressed her hand a little deeper inside it and oh god! She got her two wings there. A bit folded and stained with dirt. She saw this way and that way and then held the wings to her bosom. The blue eyes drowned in the sea of tears. How many years back did she untie it! The water-play in that full moon night? That was the first occasion, she came down on earth at the instance of her friends and she had to pay dearly for that folly all these years.

She cleaned the wings and then put those on her back. The daughters in amazement observed their mother. She told them, "I'm going to my abode in the land of clouds. I'll throw the rope of rainbow from there; tie yourself with it. I'll draw you up."

The blue fairy sailed up in the sky. There was a shower of rain after a little while and a rope of rainbow appeared. Her children acted as advised. Kohito's home again was rendered empty.

* * *

Kohito was cutting trees in the deep forest. Suddenly he shivered when rain-water fell on him. His axe scattered a little away. He did not like to work any more. When he was collecting the woods an iguana ran over his foot. He rushed home back called his children. Nobody responded. He shouted and entered home. No one was there. The void inflicted him like a sharp spear.

He came out and asked everyone if they saw his wife and children. Nobody could tell. He asked Sikhose also. With still eyes and cold voice she answered—"Oh, your fairy-wife had deserted you at last! What made her live with you so long?"

Something flashed in Kohito's mind. He rushed back home and searched the cock-house; then broke down in despair. His life circled in darkness—days after days, nights after nights. There was not even an iota of happiness left in his life.

* * *

The sun set behind the Diphu hill. The darkness

spread its wings everywhere. Kohito sat near his well. Nobody was there. Only a white crow was drinking water from the notches stored in between stones. After drinking water, the white crow stretching its neck, stared at Kohito. It cawed—"Why are you so dejected, you old fool! Can't you go to the land of your fairy-wife, oh accursed Naga?"

The harsh voice of the crow brought Kohito back to his senses. He looked at the crow, amazed, and asked—"How can I go? Where to? Do you know where they are!"

"Of course, I know. First your wife had flown away, then took the kids. I was on your house-top. Where you had been you block-head!"

"Tell me where they are", Kohito asked eagerly.

The white crow told everything. Kohito sought his advice as to how he could reach there.

"I can take you there. But promise, you'll change my white colour to black in return. I'm fed up with this colour which made me an outcaste."

Kohito agreed to his condition gladly.

Then they started their journey together. The white crow advised Kohito to imitate his voice whenever they would come across a high hill.

Obediently Kohito followed this instruction all through. At last they reached the land of the blue fairy.

As soon as Kohito stepped into the fairy land

he met his daughters. They informed their mother of his coming. She did not believe it. But when she came out and saw Kohito she was surprised and ashamed too.

The white crow was turned to black as promised. Happily it cawed down to the earth. Also happy was Kohito with his wife and daughters.

He found the cloud-land wonderful. Everything was well-arranged and decorated. No worry about food or dress. One could just walk in the perfumed atmosphere of light—flower and music. There were many diversions like hunting etc., also. The spotted deer and coloured lizards wandered about in the beautiful gardens. The varieties of birds cooed sweet notes there.

In the fairy land the birds were engaged in warbling music whereas the deer danced. Only the lizards and a very few animals were left to hunting. But they were so clever and fast to move that the very expert hunters of the fairy land were baffled. Kohito once strung the bow and what a wonder, he preyed a rare lizard! Yaksha and Kinnars were astounded. Even the expert hunters among themselves very often met with failure in hunting a lizard; and Kohito, a man from the earth who just had arrived here could do it so easily. They congratulated him for his feat outwardly, but felt very jealous. His fairy-wife and daughters were of course very happy.

Such a person should not be allowed to stay

in the fairy-land any more, the Yaksha-Kinnars thought he would certainly degrade them as hunters. This man should forthwith be sent down to his own place. Let him hunt as many animals as he liked there.

Hatching a wicked plan in their minds they went to Kohito one evening and invited him to a musical soiree—"Come, let us go to the golden-voiced Kinnari. She will indeed be very glad to have a person like you. You've earned a goodname as hunter everywhere."

Kohito accepted the invitation. He was infatuated with her beauty and music in her enchanting court. There was lavish arrangement of drink.

Kohito could not notice as to when the midnight was over in her magical music. He drank too much also in that dreamy atmosphere. He felt very sleepy and then fell in deep slumber.

The Yaksha-Kinnars were just waiting for this moment.

* * *

When the women's shrill voice broke his sleep in the late morning next day, Kohito saw himself lying near his well. He winked and tried to gauge the situation. Was it a dream?—he surmised. No, all the known Naga faces were there round the well. They collected water in the pitcher kept in their *khang*.

Kohito remained all day under a tree near the

well. Day and night, month, after month. Whenever the kind-hearted women gave him some food he ate, otherwise he stayed without food. In this way, gradually, his body dried like a black crow.

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That morning when the Naga women came to take water they did not find Kohito anywhere near the well. There was only a crow on the top of the tree which cawed sharply—

“Ka-ka—ka-ka—ka-ka—”

The women did not like its unpleasant crowing and abused it in scorn—“Be off—you accursed—be off—go away evil creature. . . .”

A Tale of Woes

Long ago a Yimchunger couple had a son and a daughter. Thanian was the name of the daughter and Murimong that of the son. Before they came of age their mother died. Their father remarried soon. With the arrival of the new mother began the life of hardship and suffering for them. They became the eyesore of their step-mother. She could not stand them at all and tried to find fault with them at every step. She gave them the rotten things and left-over to eat keeping the fresh and best food for herself. One day she gave them such putrefied food that even a dog would not touch it. What the poor helpless children could have done! They kept the stuff wrapped in a banana leaf on a branch of a

Kamkhu tree. On the third day it was found that decomposed rice had been transformed into *madu*—the country liquor. It is said that after this event the Nagas started using the bitter *Kamkhu* fruit to prepare *madu*.

The painful life of Thanian and Murimong went on the same way. Then came the day of *Thunin Nimong* festival. Every family prepared for the festival. They swept the roads, lanes and their houses clean; collected fuel, and made indigenous torches to illuminate the dance programme. In the festive atmosphere when everybody was busy to decorate their head dress with bird's feathers, snail-shells, *cowrie* etc., their step-mother sent them to the jungle to collect fuel along with a band of labourers.

Everybody received delicious food as to their expectation during the *Thunin Nimong* festival. While collecting wood in the forest Murimong asked other labourers whether they had got good food. Excepting only two workers all the others informed that luck did not favour them with delicious and proper meal. All the poor and dejected labourers decided then that none of them would return to the village to spend an abominable life. Taking this decision they asked the two lucky who got good food from their masters to fetch all their *Khangs* (a basket made of bamboo and cane which hang from back) and *daos* (chopper). When the two persons started for the village, all others went towards the Doiyang river. They took rest on the bank of the Doiyang for some time and then got down into the

river. They started throwing stones at one another while they were playing in the river water. The water made violent waves. Gradually all of them turned mad and indulged in suicidal play losing all their senses. The God of Doiyang river laughed a cruel laugh at their ill-luck.

When the two workers reached the village and conveyed the decision of the others the villagers came helter skelter to the Doiyang river. Murimong's father was also with them. Reaching there they saw them fighting with each other with murderous stones. The Yimchunger requested them to stop and coaxed them to come up. They paid heed to their request. But what a strange sight! When they came up one after another the villagers were amazed to see that they were changed altogether; their faces resembled those of monkeys, not a piece of cloth on their body. The entire body covered with hair and everyone had a tail hanging behind them. All of them were turned into monkeys!

The Yimchungers requested them to return home and promised them better and full meal, everyday, regularly. They all replied in a chatter:—

“Jā thuk kha khuk

Peru jā lik

Lang lik

Tsuli imolang

Māri myāngu

Langse Tsuli

Imolang Arilā”

[Living in the village
eating rotten food
and that food too
the step-mother gave unwillingly,
rather better to live in the jungle
better to be a monkey
and better to eat wild fruits.]

Singing so they jumped from one tree to another and started eating fruits plucking from the branches.

When the villagers requested them again to come down they threw big and hard wild fruits at them. The villagers had to retreat sadly.

From that incident whenever trees bent down with fruits and fields overgrew with foodgrain, the Yimchunger villagers noticed that a band of monkeys came down from the forest on their fields and destroyed their foodgrains and fruits. Before the villagers managed to stir out of their houses, they would vanish into the jungle.

The same event has been occurring every year till today since the old days.

At the Burning Hours of Moonlight

In the olden days when the Nagas were gradually coming into the fold of regular social life a middle aged Naga couple was blessed with a daughter. They had no other children. They became very happy with this child as she was born with all the charm and grace of a *manchi* flower. They took all care and pains as she was growing up. She was named Rangshangla. As she was coming of age everybody appreciated that the Tribe-god sent her to the earth with all the best things. The tribe people looked upon her with love, affection and respect. Consequently most of her time she remained surrounded by her admirers.

Rangshangla started sleeping in *morung* (a dormitory of unmarried Naga girls) along with all other Naga girls in the night. They also loved and respected her. She acquired all the good qualities of Naga girls like weaving, dancing and singing.

There was a tiny piece of plain ground on one side of the *morung* surrounded by pine trees. Before going to bed Rangshangla used to tell her friends various tales and some of them related to the valour and fighting of old days. Sometimes she would sit there alone while her friends had gone to sleep. She thought of many things looking at the distant horizon where the moon looked a crown burning on the head of a hill. The dream-gods lived in the realm of clouds beyond the blue hills, she thought their colour was like fire; they dressed in rainbow garments, the moonlight smiling on their lips and if they happened to step down on the earth all the places would get filled with sweet perfume.

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The wheel of time turned on. The fame and reputation of Rangshangla's beauty and good qualities spread all over day by day.

It was the day of harvest festival. All the Nagamen and women were engaged in preparation for the festival. Work in the fields was suspended for seven days, nobody would step in there. There was a festive atmosphere with dance and music. The entire Naga village got a clean and fair look.

The first *prahara* of the night was about to end. The festival-tired *morung*-girls were in the lap of

sleep. Rangshangla took part only in the main festival and dance. But she did not feel sleepy. Physically she was in the Naga village, but her heart was elsewhere. She always suffered from a feeling of unknown void and emptiness.

It was a moonlit night. Rangshangla came out and sat at his favourite spot surrounded by the pine trees. No Naga youth could so far reflect himself on the mirror of her mind. Who would be the man of her choice? Would he come down from the distant blue hills?

Rangshangla was rapt into her own thoughts in that calm, quiet and lonely place. She did not notice when a tall youngman entered that secluded corner secretly. Rustling noise of tree leaves broke her concentration. She suddenly saw him standing nearby. Rangshangla sprang up. Her whole existence got a jolt.

“Rangshangla, you must be surprised for my encroaching upon your privacy this way. Don’t get annoyed with me, please. I’ve heard much of you. I had a longing to see you and kept a trace of your whereabouts. That’s how here I’m able to meet you alone.”

“What made you to come over here?”

“You could’t perhaps perceive, Rangshangla. Ask your heart. . . . I broke huge stones, large branch of *bikhu* (tree), black bear’s head with these hands. Will you be kind enough to allow me to

touch your hands which are soft as *manchi* (flower) and mild as moonlight?"

She just lifted her left hand a little like a princess proud of her beauty, wealth and status.

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The secluded meeting between the two became a regular affair. Rangshangla's lily body bloomed with the rays of morning sun. The flower of love gradually opened its petals.

One day the unknown youngman proposed to Rangshangla. Her heart was filled with joy. She dreamt of the new life. However she did not give her consent readily. She wanted to think over the proposal for some time and observe the reaction of it on her own mind like other Naga girls. If she felt good omen inside her only then the smile of assent would appear on her lips.

For a few days Rangshangla was thinking of the proposal in seclusion. Would the wedding bring her blessings of happiness? Would it lead her to righteous path of life?

Whenever she felt drowsy some rays of light appeared. Whenever they tried to take the shape of a circle they got broken. This made her miserable. And then a burning question started haunting her mind—why did he come during night? Why not in day time?

* * *

A few days later.

The moonlight was burning in the sky. That tiny

plain spot surrounded by the pines. There were two living statues. She asked—

“Why don’t you appear before everybody during day time? Are you a nocturnal creature?”

“Don’t ask me anything about it.”

“Why do you come only in this *morung*? Why did you not meet my parents, headmen and other villagers?”

“Don’t put me this question.”

“Would I build house in the air with a man who shuns daylight?”

“Rangshangla, don’t desire to know more than what you’ve already known. Why are you not satisfied with this?”

Rangshangla did not like this obscurity. She told everything of the unknown youth to her parents the next morning. They advised her to fill a tiny bag with husk and make a hole underneath. “Somehow you tie it with the youngman’s dress when he will come to meet you in the night. Then follow him stealthily with the dropping mark of husk,” they said.

She did so and kept the man busy in conversation till it was nearing dawn. When the cock started crowing the youngman suddenly saw that the cover of darkness was gradually being removed; the sun would rise in the east now.

He hurriedly took leave of Rangshangla and ran

to his abode. She looked at the vanishing figure for some time and then started following him on the husk mark.

After some time the youngman was visible. He looked back carefully. Rangshangla hid herself behind a tree. Then they reached the Kapu hill. A lake was there. The man jumped into the lake and vanished. Strangely enough, neither did it make any sound nor any wave.

Rangshangla was stunned. She was so frightened that she began hearing her own heart beats. Gradually she collected herself and looked at the lake if the night-guest had appeared. But in vain. Her eyes were filled with tears.

She returned home and told her parents of her experience. They warned her—"This nocturnal creature must be a goblin in the shape of a man. He hid himself during daytime in the lake with his wicked soul. This demon will bring all sorts of troubles.

"Rangshangla, darling, we brought you up with all care and pains; don't be deceived by this demon soul," they had said to her.

A venomous cobra raised its hood in a flower garden. Rangshangla felt how difficult it was to remove a person from the mind whom once she had loved. But a charming body with a wicked soul must be avoided.

Next day. The night was not deep. The nocturnal visitor came to Rangshangla. But she did not

welcome him with a loving smile as usual. A black cloud covered her face, her body. The man went a few steps ahead to touch her hand.

“Remain where you are,” she thundered, “Don’t come forward even a step. Be off and for good.”

The young visitor was bewildered for a moment. He could not believe his own ears.

“What are you saying, Rang? Aren’t you in a good mood?”

“I’m quite all right. Rather you’ve come with a wicked soul in your sick body, you strange visitor of night. Why did you leave behind you the demon spirit in the lake?”

The man’s body hardened instantly. He shouted —“Keep quiet, Rangshangla. Come with me.” He advanced towards her.

Her body glittered like a lightning.

In the meantime all the girls from *morung* came out hearing the commotion. They encircled Rangshangla. She snapped out—

“You would not utter a word more. Don’t inflict your presence, get lost.”

“Rangshangla, I would not allow anyone else to touch your beautiful body either. If you don’t accompany me I would smash your bones to the hill ground.”

“Rather I would prefer my body to mix up with this land than to go along with you.”

“Then just wait and see—what happens to you, to your village.”

He hopped out in long strides. A shadow vanished like the black wings of an ugly bat. All the hills around became grave and cold.

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After a few days, fire broke out in the jungle down below. It went on for three days. Most of the trees were either burnt or roasted. Then rains started and continued for seven days. The lake the nocturnal stranger vanished in, was in spate, the entire village submerged under water.

The villagers waiting for the flood water to recede, heard an unearthly voice—

“I want Rangshangla—I want Rangshangla. . .”

They got frightened. Rangshangla shivered to the bones. Was the end imminent to her life?

The water level was still going up. Even it touched the hill top. The human and animal bodies were floating all over it. So long the flood had not reached the highest peak of the Kapu hill. All who survived ran towards it. Over the tormenting flow again the demand was sounded—

“Rangshangla—I want Rangshangla . . .”

It was echoed against the Kapu hill. All the survivors, along with Rangshangla's parents, heard the demand. They presently took the decision that Rangshangla had to sacrifice her to save the Naga village.

They made her sit on a large wooden log. It drifted away towards the lake.

The lake was the source of all flood water. The stranger used to jump from a side of the lake. If one saw it from a distance he would think that he jumped inside the lake as Ranshangla did. At one side of the lake there was a secret cave where he actually lived. He stored all his arms and materials in it in seclusion.

He removed many stones with his demonic strength from one side of the lake. That was how it had overflowed the village joining the flood water. When he saw Rangshangla coming towards the lake on a log he started repairing one side of the lake and diverted flood water another side by making a passage.

While he was removing stones to make this, water started rushing down violently from the sloping side. He waited there for Rangshangla to come on that current.

Rangshangla on her wooden log, was coming down as expected. She saw the nocturnal visitor in broad day light who now seemed to be a huge ape—ferocious with greed and malice. As soon as Rangshangla came nearby, he went to hold her with his long arms. But before that she jumped into the violent current of water. He also wanted to follow her. But suddenly the slope of stone on which he stood, got dislodged and he fell dangerously. His head got hit so hard that it broke instantly. His

blood got mixed up with the water. But before the blood mixed water touched Rangshangla's golden body she found the last resort in the deep of *Melak* river in the world of bright, soft and green moss.

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From the lap of the Kapu hill still flows a silver stream. The villagers say that a beautiful girl appears on it every eleventh day of the lunar moonlight period in *Shravana* with sadness in one eye—compassion in the other.

The Tales of the Angami Nagas

In Angami folk tales Gakripu or Mache is an amusing and witty character. He had been a deceitful person and flourishing at the cost of others.

Once he was going on a trading mission with only one hundred rupees in his pocket. On the way while passing through a forest he was attacked by a bear. He confronted the animal valiantly, but in the process his money was scattered on the ground. Meanwhile, riding on a horse, another man was also going through that place. Gakripu told him that the bear had defecated the money and if he fought the bear it would relieve more money for him also. The man believed it, got down from his horse and started to wrestle with the bear. At this opportunity Gakripu collected his money,

mounted the horse and galloped away. The stranger went on fighting with the bear without of course the expected result.

Riding merrily Gakripu came to a stream. There he met an old women and her daughter. They wanted to go across the rill, but water was too deep for them. Gakripu came forward to help them. He put the daughter on the horse and told the old woman that he would return after dropping her daughter on the other side.

And what did Gokripu do?

He did what was natural for him.

—He just ran away with the wench.

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Now here is another folk tale of Selupvra and his daughter.

It is a story of olden days. Selupvra Angami fathered a daughter out of wedlock. As he was very much ashamed of it he used to keep his daughter away from other's glare.

Gradually Crimino, his daughter, reached the marriageable age. One day he called her and ordered—"Go out and bring anyone home whoever you may find outside."

She went out and searched here and there, but could not find anyone.

Crimino was much affraid of her father. Since childhood she got nothing but strict instructions

from her father. Her father had commanded to take someone home, so when she failed to get anyone else she just took a dog home who appeared before Crimino and presented it to her father.

The dog was large, there were white patches in his eyes.

Selupvra was amazed to see the choice of his daughter!

“Hi, lass! if the dog is your choice then marry this animal.”—He said, dejected. Crimino did not dare to protest. She married that dog. Selupvra got a boat after their marriage, placed some amount of food and water in it and asked them to start for a far off place.

After a long and arduous journey this odd couple reached a secluded bank of Jhanji river. They got down from the boat and decided to settle there. They built a small hut and started their life. Soon they had many children within a few years.

Years passed by. Suddenly one day Selupvra remembered that he did not get any information from his daughter and ‘son-in-law’. At once he set out to make enquiry about them. As nobody knew where they had settled, he had to return without making any headway. Even then he did not lose hope altogether. He used to ask other villagers if any one of them had any information of his daughter and ‘son-in-law’. Thus, one day he came to know that someone had heard human voices inside the dense forest on the bank of Jhanji river.



A Naga headman in traditional dress



A Konyak Naga with his son in traditional dress



A Naga drinking 'madu'



An Ao Naga girl



Dancing Zeliang Naga Girls



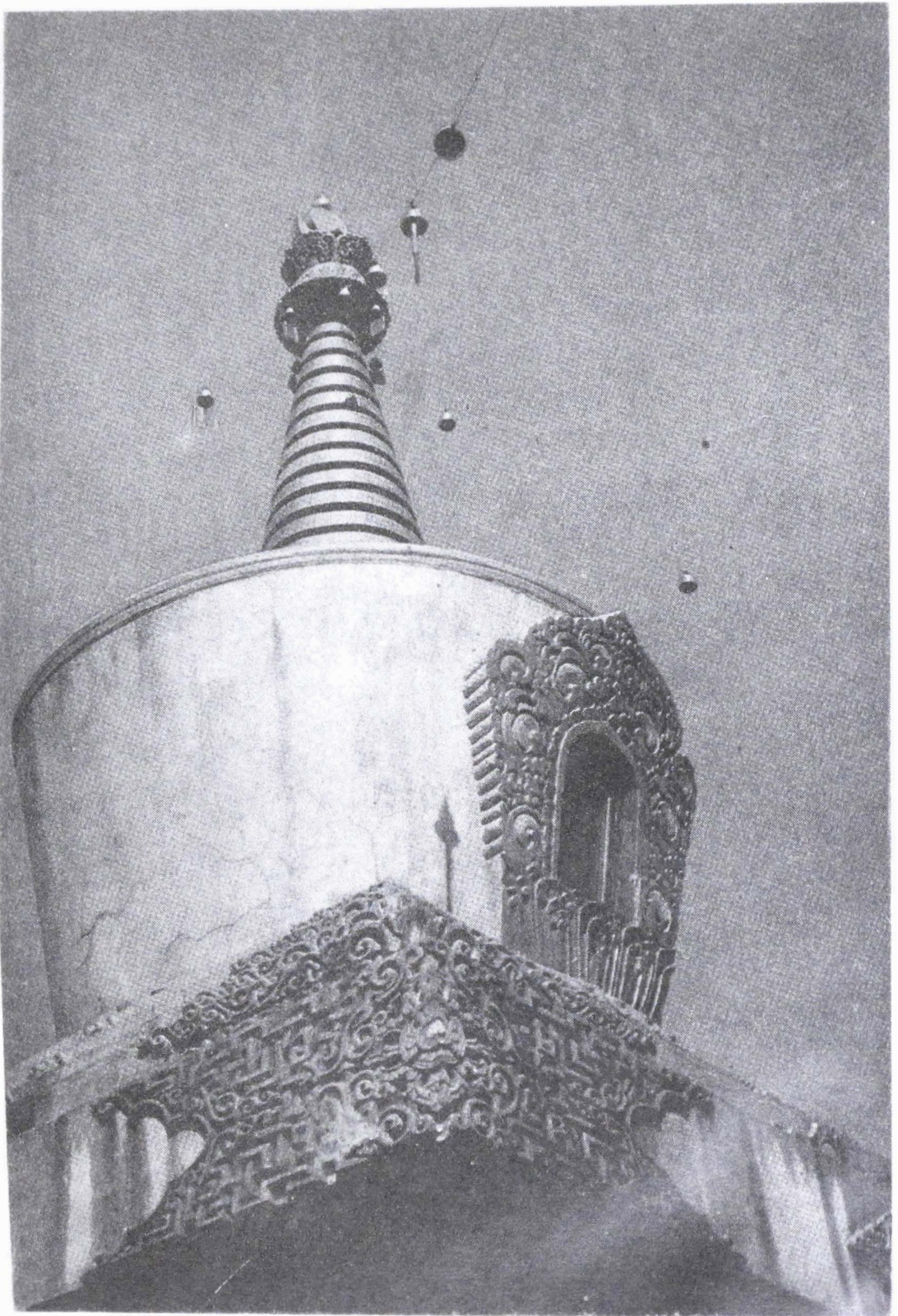
Naga Warriors



Chang Dance



A Naga 'gao-fura' (village headman) in traditional dress



A Chorten

