

## Parameters of forest usage among the Khasi of Meghalaya

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### Abstract

*The significance of nature in shaping the culture and ways of life of people in a given habitat has been a widely recognized subject of social scientists in recent times. Living in harmony with nature has been an integral part of traditional and indigenous societies. To them nature has often been exemplified as “cultural space” expressed through its invocation and representation in myths, ethics, beliefs and folk ways. The natural wisdom of the tribes in particular has endowed the indigenous people with natural management skills that exemplify their deep sense of eco-consciousness. Nature has served them as an economic base sustaining their livelihood and supplementing their daily requirements for food, fodder, shelter and fuel by way of collecting NTFP (Non Timber Forest Products). The Khasi are a matrilineal tribe inhabiting the North Eastern region of India. The symbiotic relationship between the Khasi and their natural surrounding is evident in their deep rooted customs and traditions such as preserving sacred forests or Law Kyntang, their ancient tribal lore of folk medicine, use of forest produce for daily sustenance, livelihood strategies etc. However of late due to pressure of population, the development debate, privatization of land, forest legislations and issues of the politics of environment, this close affinity between the Khasi and nature has undergone severe strain. This paper is primarily focused on the different parameters of tradition bound linkages between the culture, economy and way of life of the Khasi with forest as a part and parcel of nature and at length aims to discuss the challenges and modern forces of development affecting man-nature relationship.*

**Keywords:** Khasi, Matrilineal, Sacred Groves, Livelihood, Forest Legislations, Land alienation.

### Introduction

The Khasi Hills are located in the northeastern corner of India in the middle of the Meghalaya plateau with East and West Garo Hills lying towards its West and Karbi Anglong District of Assam towards the East. The Khasis occupy a unique position both from ethnic and linguistic points of view among the congeries of the tribes inhabiting

the mountainous terrain of India's North East. There are numerous interpretations of the word "Khasi". Hamlet Bareh suggests that the term "Khasi" means "born of the mother"; "*kha*" means "born of" and "*si*" refers to "ancient mother", thus bringing out the matrilineal character of the Khasis who trace their descent from the mother. (Bareh, 1985) The Khasi follow the principles of matrilineal descent where ancestral property is passed from the mother to the daughter, preferably the youngest daughter or the "*khadduh*". The matrilineal Khasis of Meghalaya believe in the ideology-"*Long jait na ka kynthet*" which means "From the woman sprang the clan". This ideology is so deeply rooted in the Khasi ethos that it has brought to light the role of women in perpetuating the clan from one generation to another. Descent line in a Khasi family is reckoned only from the mother's clan or '*kur*' as a result of which the children belong to the descent group of the mother.

### **The Khasi Concept of Forest**

The Khasis have a deep rooted affinity with nature. The earth which is symbolized as 'mother' or 'meiramew' is looked upon as the caretaker of all the natural resources. According to H.O Mawrie, '*U Khasi U im bad ka mariang bad ka mariang ka im ha u*'. (Mawrie, 1981). This resounding declaration which when translated means "A Khasi lives with nature and nature lives with him" bears testimony to the fact that nature with all its bounty shares a harmonious relationship with the Khasis. Thus, forest holds an important place in the social, economic and religious life of the Khasis. For a Khasi the forest or '*ki khlaw ki btap*' as they call it, is a well loved home, a game sanctuary and also an abode of worship all rolled into one, around which his social, cultural and religious activities revolve. It would be pertinent to discuss here the parameters of forest usage in various aspects of Khasi life and culture.

### **Parameters of Forest Usage Among The Khasi: -**

The usages of forest and forest products by the Khasis can be enumerated under the following categories:

#### **1. Forest Legends and Folklore:**

The Khasi folklore and legends, "*Khanatang bad Puriskam*" have played a very important role in shaping their ethno-cultural traits and values. Most of them are woven around the various forces of nature such as the hills and vales, rocks and caves, the flora and fauna. These elements of nature are personified in the legends as the mother and son, husband and wife and friend and foe according to their natural behaviours, their love, hate, jealousy, pride and vanity which are projected out before the listeners with the sole purpose of teaching moral and spiritual values. A well-known Khasi legend centres on the belief in "*U Diengier*", a giant tree on the top of a hill. The tree signifies the foundation of human

society within the eco-system. According to this legend, God planted 'ka diengiei' as a sign of the covenant of coherent existence of all creatures. But man in his foolish greed decided to cut down the tree of social covenant believing that he would see the light of wealth and prosperity, but instead his heart was filled with deep sorrow and remorse. He turned to '*ka Lei-Synshar*' (God's executive attribute) and begged for her forgiveness and promised before her that in place of ka diengiei which he had cut down he would set up '*Ki Law Kyntang*' (sacred groves) all over the land. The Khasis believe that a tiger is always guarding the *Law Kyntang* and it is the same tiger of yore that licked the diengiei in an attempt to save it from wanton destruction. This tiger is known as *U ryngkew U basa* or *U la ryngku*. This folktale throws ample light on the attitude and perception of the ancient Khasis towards tree and forest. They considered forest as the home of Gods and evil spirits, as something dreadful and looked them with a sense of awe and reverence.

## 2. Forest for musical Instruments:

The Khasi love dances, music and songs. From time immemorial, the Khasi have their own indigenous musical instruments, which consists of different kinds of drums, pipes, harps and cymbals. The musical instruments are locally made which bring to light the artistic skill of the Khasi. Among the different types of musical instrument, the most prominent are:

### 1. The Drums ( *Ka Ksing* ) :

- (a) '*Ka bom ka nakra bad tasar*' or the big drum.
- (b) '*Ka ksing bom*' or '*sing nakra*' or the smaller drum.
- (c) '*Ka ksing kynthei*' or the female drum.
- (d) '*Ka Ksing shynrang*' or the male drum.
- (e) '*Ka padiah bad ka ksing dingphong*' are smaller drums.

### 2. Stringed Instruments: Some of the stringed instruments are '*ka duitara*', '*Ka marynthing*', '*ka maryngod*' all of which are similar to the Hindustani Sitar which originated in India.

### 3. Blowing Instruments

- (a) '*Ka tangmuri ne Ka Muhuri*'
- (b) '*Ka Sharati*'
- (c) '*Ka besli*'
- (d) '*Ka mieng*'
- (e) '*Ka shawiang*'

(f) '*Ka tanglod*'

(g) '*Ka put sla*'

All these blowing instruments are made of bamboo except '*Ka put sla*'. Khasi drums are nearly always made of wood, not of metal or earthenware. '*Ka Padiah*' is a small drum with a handle made of wood while '*Ka Ksing*' is a cylindrically shaped drum and '*Ka nakra*' is a large kettledrum made of wood having the head covered with deerskin. '*Ka duitara*' is a guitar with *muga* silk strings, which is played with a little wooden key held in the hand. '*Ka tangmuri*' is a wooden pipe, which is played like a flageolet. The Khasis also play a Jew's harp (*ka mieng*), which is made of bamboo (Gurdon, 1975).

Thus, we find that the Khasis make an extensive use of bamboo and wood in their indigenous musical instruments.

### 3. Forest for Weaving and Dyeing:

The Khasis learnt how to depict various designs and colours in their clothing from nature. They are well acquainted with the art of weaving. According to Gurdon, many weaver families were known to have settled in Khyrwang villages of Synteng, Mynso and Sutnga. The Khyrwangs weave special pattern of cotton and silk cloth with stripped red and white. Before the British came, this industry was considerable. The Census conducted before 1907 gives the number of weavers in Khasi Jaintia as 533. The Khasis of Bhoi weave cotton and dye it with leaves of a plant called '*U Nob*' for black colour. They also boil the coloured thread in the leaves of a tree called '*Ka Lakhynroh*' (*Symplocaceae*; *Symplocus glomerata*) to make the colour a lasting one. They also use the bark of the tree called '*Dieng Pyrshit*' (*Eurya accuminata latifolia*) for dying thread. It gives a yellow colour (Gurdon, 1975).

There is a village called Umrasun in Ri-Bhoi district where the local villagers still continue the art of weaving their clothes with various designs and colours depicting symbols such as trees, bamboos, flowers, animals and birds with threads already dyed in various colours obtained from lac or leaves and barks of trees. These special clothes they make are called '*Phali*'.

Rearing of Eri Silk worm (*khñiang ryndia*) is an ancient art known to Khasis. They use a tree called '*Ka Lakynjor*' (*Bignonaceae*; *Oxylum indica*) as feed for the silkworm. They also cultivate '*Larynda*' (castor plant) for this purpose (Khongsit, 1988).

The Khasis also carry out lac culture by rearing insect on the '*Sohphyrnu* tree'. They tie the insects on this tree where they eat and grow up and increase in number. They collect lac in the month of October. Another type of tree called '*Ka Jrisim*' in Bhoi is

also used for rearing lac insect. Lac is cultured till today in Nongstoin areas in a village known as 'Umsohpieng'. They use the tree named '*dieng Risim*' in these areas. During the lean season the lac cultivators preserve lac insect on the trees called '*U toh Laha*' (*Popilianeae*; *Cajanus indica*) as seed until the time for cultivation arrives. This tree is small about 8 to 10 ft. tall with green barks and grows well in Bhoi. During winter, the insects are kept on the '*Toh Laha Tree*' then are transferred to Diengsohphyrnu or Jrisim or Diengrai for cultivation.

A particular tree called '*Ka Dieng Sohtung*' (*Aralia* Sp.; *Araliaceae*) has black coloured leaves and the Khasis of yore used these leaves for dying threads for making the '*jymphong*' or sleeveless coat worn by men.

Besides these trees the following species of trees are also used as dyes:

- (a) *Ka Nuli* (*Strobilanthes secundus*) – brilliant black colour
- (b) *Ka Pantaro* (*Strobilanthes*) – brilliant red colour
- (c) *Ka Dieng Mitang* – red colour of different shades.

#### 4. Forest for Weaponry:

The weapons of the Khasis are swords, spears, bows and arrows and a circular shield, which was used formerly for purposes of defence. It is surprising that in the Khasi sword, the handle is never made of wood or bone or of anything except iron or steel, the result being that the sword is most awkward to hold and could never have been of much use as a weapon of offence.

The Khasi weapon par excellence is the bow. Archery may be styled as the Khasi national game. The Khasi bow '*Ka ryntieh*' is made of bamboo and is used mostly for hunting purposes. The bowstring is of split bamboo and the bamboos that are used are of 3 types: (a) '*U spit*', (b) '*U shken*' and (4) '*U siej-lieh*'.

The Khasi arrow '*Khnam*' are generally of two types: (a) The plain-headed (*sop*); (b) The barbed-headed (*ki pliang*). Both types are made of bamboo. The feathers of birds like vultures, geese, cranes, cormorants and hornbills are used for arrows.

#### 5. Forest in Khasi Rituals and Ceremonies:

Rituals abound in Khasi religion and culture. In the words of H.O. Mawrie, "*Ka Kolshor bad ka niam ki long kiba la ngam ha ki thied snam jong ngi kum ka jaitbynriew bad ban bret ia ki ka long kumba patar da lade ia lade.*" ("Rituals are a part and parcel of our culture. They have embedded their roots deep down in our flesh and blood and to think of mankind to throw away either of them is to tear oneself apart.") There are rituals

pertaining to three important stages in one's life:

- (1) Naming ceremony (*ka jer ka thoh*)
- (2) Marriage (*poikha-poiman*)
- (3) Death (*niam iap*)

**(a). Naming Ceremony**

The following are some instances of the use of forest products during the birth ceremony:

- a) When the child is born, a sharp splinter of bamboo cuts the umbilical cord. No knife can be used on this occasion.
- b) When the umbilical cord, after being tied falls off, a ritual is performed by offering worship to certain water deities '*Ka blei sam-um*' and also to forest spirit '*U 'suid bri*' or "*U 'suid khlaw*".
- c) For the naming ceremony, the pounded rice flour is placed on a bamboo winnower called '*U prah*.'
- d) A plantain leaf is used to place five pieces of '*Kha piah*' or dried fish.
- e) Liquor is placed in a gourd (*klong*).

**(b). Marriage Ceremony**

A simple wedding ceremony of the Khasi would include the exchange of distilled liquor from two gourds (*klong*) which are mixed together. The priest then says a prayer of blessing over the couple and pours the entire liquor on to the three '*khapiah*' or dry fish. These are then placed in a container and preserved over the hearth.

**(c). Death Ceremony**

The following instances of the use of forest products are evident in death ceremonies of the Khasis:

- a) The dead body is laid on a mat (*japung*) made of bamboo.
- b) A small bamboo basket (*ka shang*) is hung up over the head of the corpse.
- c) Sometimes the body is placed in a coffin, which is laid on a bamboo bier (*ka krong*).
- d) As the funeral party sets out to the bone repository (*mawshieng*), one person in front strews a line of route with leaves of the tree known as '*dieng shit*'. If any stream is to be crossed, a rough bridge is made of branches and grass. This trail of leaves and the bridges are intended to guide the spirit of the deceased to the cairn.

## 6. Forest for Food

A large variety of Non-Timber-Forest Products (NTFP) are used by the Khasis to supplement their daily food requirements. These include tubers, fruits, roots, wild edible plants, mushroom, bamboo shoot, creepers etc. The Khasis have a variety of wild plants which they use as their daily food and it is a natural wisdom of the Khasis to be able to differentiate between different wild plants. They can also distinguish between edible and poisonous mushrooms. The Khasis know of a wide variety of mushrooms, each of which they call by name. A trip into the woods and forests to collect vegetables and mushrooms is something they love and do regularly (Mawrie, 2001)

It is also interesting to note that the Khasis generally use the prefix ‘*Ja*’ to name the wild variety of edible plants that are found in the woods. The reason for this could be that ‘*Ja*’ which literally means ‘rice’ is the staple food of the Khasis and so the use of these edible plants with the prefix ‘*Ja*’ was a supplement to rice specially amongst the poorer section of the people. Khongsit, who made an in depth study on the various types and uses of forest produce with the prefix ‘*Ja*’ gives a list of 113 species of such plants and herbs. This list is given in Appendix-I for reference.

## 7. Forests as Sacred Abodes

Preservation of forests as sacred groves has been existent since time immemorial amongst the Khasis. People are mostly governed by their belief systems in conserving these forests. The existence of “*U Ryngkew U Basa*” or “the guardian spirit” in these forests is a belief that has existed amongst the Khasis since time immemorial. The ‘guardian spirit’, according to them, resides in the forest and takes care of the village community and protects them from sickness, pain, invasion by enemies, etc. Therefore, destroying or cutting of trees, grass etc. from these groves is considered to be against the wish of *U Ryngkew U Basa* and, therefore, people are afraid of these spirits (Tiwari *et al.*, 1999).

“*Law Kyntang*” as they are generally known are also known by various names such as “*Law Lyngdoh*” or “*Law Niam*”. These forests are set aside for religious purposes and are managed by the Lyngdoh (a religious priest) or any other person to whom the religious ceremonies for the particular locality are entrusted. Till today, these sacred groves are held in high esteem and every now and then religious ceremonies including worship of forest deities, dances and rituals are regularly performed, by the ‘*Lyngdoh*’ together with the villagers inside the grove. Mention may be made of the sacred grove at Pahampdem village located at Ri Bhoi district which is popularly known by the local people as ‘*U Lum Mawker*’ or ‘*U Lum Umphar*’. The grove is the biggest recorded sacred grove in the state with an area of 900 ha.



## 8. Forest for Medicine

The Khasis are known for their unique knowledge about plants wealth and herbals drugs in curing diseases. The origin of Khasi system of medicine is not known, as Khasi folklore and legend are silent about its origin. But the psychological, social and cultural contribution to this system is very prominent.

### **Khasi land tenure system and forest management**

‘Land’ and ‘Forest’ are both the natural endowments of nature on humankind. They have both played a historical role in the social, economic and cultural life of human communities through the centuries and one cannot undermine the importance of land and forest both as a resource and as property. As a valuable natural resource, land and forest represent the principal forms of wealth, are a symbol of social status and a constant source of economic and political power. However they have to be dealt as separate entities.

Land locally known as “*Ri*” by the Khasis has a deep attachment to their pattern of social organization and permeates every aspect of their socio – economic life. Land to the Khasis is a “gift of nature” that belongs to the community, therefore access to land not ensures economic security for the individual, but control over it symbolizes territorial integrity for the community as a whole (Nongbri, 2003). There are three categories of land in the Khasi Hills, viz., Community Land known as *Ri Raid* Land, Privately owned land called *Ri Kynti* Land and Government land.

#### **I. *Ri Raid* Land (Community land)**

*Ri Raid* Land is Community Land which is managed and controlled by the concerned community. Every member of the community has the right of use and occupancy of the *Ri Raid* land without payment of land revenue. The community may be a village or a group of villages. No person has proprietary, heritable or transferable rights over such land. He has only the right of use and occupancy, and such rights revert to the community when the person ceases to occupy or use the land for a period of three years or more. The only way in which a person can inherit land or obtain transferable rights over such land is by making permanent improvements on the land in the form of permanent buildings or cultivation of permanent crops and plant like fruit trees or cultivation. But these rights lapse if he abandons the land over a long period.

#### **II. *Ri Kynti* (Private Land)**

‘*Kynti*’ means ‘absolute possession’. Therefore, *Ri Kynti* lands are private lands which have been acquired by a man or woman individually, or in the case of a woman, inherited from her mother. Such lands must entirely be distinguished from lands of the



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clan. Colonel Gurdon notes that privately held lands “may be sub-divided into *Ri-Kur* or lands which are property of the clan, *Ri-Kynti*, family or acquired land property”. The clan lands, originally when the population was sparse, were owned by families but as the members of the family increased and a clan was formed out of the increasing number of families sprung from a common ancestress, the lands became the property of the clan instead of the family. Such clan lands are properly demarcated by boundary marks.

The Khasis also traditionally maintain Forest lands under various categories:

1. *Ri 'Law Kyntang, Ri 'Law Niam or Ri 'Law Lyngdoh*

These are forests in Raid Lands set apart for religious purposes, managed and controlled by the Raid or the village or in the case of the *Ri Law Lyngdoh* by the *Lyngdoh* (Priest) of the community.

2. *Ri 'Law Adong, Ri 'Law Sang, Ri 'Law Shnong*

These are village forests reserved by the villagers so that any member could obtain timber or firewood for personal needs or for use as water catchment areas.\_

3. *Ri 'Law Sumar*

Which belongs to the individual, clan or the village who had first occupied and afforested then and maintains them thereafter.

### Issues Before Us:

With the change of time and tide over the last couple of centuries a tremendous change in the pattern of social life of the Khasi has taken place. The symbiotic relationship between man and nature that existed in the past has gradually given way to ecological stress and strain. Pressure of increased population, the development versus environment debate, advent of Christianity and flow of new culture and a borrowed world view, all have combined together to shatter the age-old economy, culture and tribal ethos of the Khasi. There has been an increased global interest in the diverse modes of human interaction with the larger ecological setting. Nature has been perceived as an inexhaustible domain of utility which was to be mastered, tamed and brought under man's power to satisfy his needs and minister to his happiness. It would therefore be pertinent to discuss some important issues that have affected the symbiotic relation between the Khasi and the forest.

## **1. Infringement of traditional rights over forest (Forest for Revenue)**

The British policy on forest management was primarily oriented towards earning of revenue for the government. To meet that end the British established subsequent Forest Acts and regulations in 1865, 1868, Indian Forest Act, 1878, and 1927 which conferred the government with the right to constitute Reserved Forests on 'any forest land or waste land which is the property of the government'. These Acts not only debarred the local people from entering into and removing any forest produce from the reserved forests and protected forests but also permanently alienated them from the land itself. This had a far-reaching impact on the livelihood of the people in more than one way.

During the long period of British rule a considerable area of forested land of Khasi and Jaintia Hills were brought under ownership of the British Government, depriving the tribal forest dwellers of their natural rights. According to an estimate the land converted into Reserved and Protected forests in Khasi and Jaintia Hills amounted to 427.79 sq. km., which is certainly a large area for a small hill district. The British left India but the process of erosion in tribal rights that was started by the colonial rule did not stop with their departure. The Government of India adopted new National Forest Policy in 1952 and enacted revised instruments for management of national resources but the basic character ingrained in the Indian Forest Act, 1878 and 1927 continued to remain in the Indian forest laws. While new concepts of forest for environment and biodiversity were brought into the forest policies the poor people whose livelihood depended entirely on forests were completely lost sight of.

The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, which is the major legislation currently followed by all forest departments of the country has three main objectives – to check deforestation, to prevent diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes and, to enforce compulsory afforestation in lieu of forest land diverted. The Act thus, provides stringent measures for protection of forest from being reduced in size but at the same time it deprives the forest dwellers of their age-old rights enjoyed by them by prohibiting them raising of minor crops in the forest fringe areas. What is unfortunate is that, this Act is silent about creating conditions for alternative livelihood opportunities to the forest dependents that have been refrained from cultivating in fallow forest lands.

The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and Amended Act 1991 which seek strengthening of conservation of flora and fauna and prohibiting extraction of wild plants, animals and birds, puts a complete ban on collecting orchids/wild flowers and medicinal herbs from the forests for the purpose of local consumption and sell. There are great number of people - florists and herb dealers who live on these professions in Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the forest department is so far liberal in enforcement of this act on the ground

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that similar forest products are also available in private or community forests which are existent in large number in this part of the country.

Unlike many other states in the North East region, Meghalaya has vast areas of forested land owned by private individuals/ clans or communities which are controlled and regulated by the Autonomous District Councils according to their Acts and rules. In order to bring these forests under the jurisdiction of the state forest laws and rules the Government of Meghalaya introduced Meghalaya Forest Regulation (Application and Amendment) Act, 1973. This act is silent about the livelihood issues of lakhs of people engaged in these forest activities. If this Act is strictly enforced a large number of men/women and children who are directly dependent on collection of NTFPs (Non-timber forest Produce) will be thrown out of employment.

The United Khasi and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Management and control of forest) Act, 1958 which regulates the management and control of different classes of forests, prohibits the removal of forest produce including the minor forest products or NTFPs for the purpose of trade, from the Council's reserved forests, protected forests, community forests, Green Blocks etc. without permission from the competent authority. The Rules framed under this Act known as United Khasi and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Management and Control of Forests) Rules, 1960 provides elaborate procedure for removal and transit of forest produce from all categories of forests under the control and management of the District Council. This Act refuses to recognize the tribal rights and privileges of the community to enjoy the NTFPs of the forests in their own land. Although there exists a provision in the Rules for allowing the residents/ communities to collect non-timber forest produce for domestic purposes, the lessees to whom contracts for trading the NTFPs are given do not allow the villagers to remove the products which belong to them as per contract. Thus, the provision made in the rules which permits the villagers to use NTFPs for domestic purpose practically amounts to a naught. Large quantities of unprocessed broom-grass, tejpat, cane and bamboo etc. collected by the lessees find their ways to outside the state every year and the benefit of these natural resources goes to the pockets of the rich businessmen instead of the rural poor. Given the required financial and technical assistance, the Khasi village men and women who have traditional knowledge and skill to process the minor forest products into finished goods could have easily made their livelihood and at the same time helped boosting up the state's economy. The potentiality of the technique of value addition and marketing of various goods and domestic articles produced by village artisans have not been fully realized by the Government or the District Councils of Meghalaya.

## 2. Alienation of community land (Forest for Development)

As the implementation of Five Year Plans progressed in the country more lands were required for multifarious development purposes. Large areas of land were utilized for construction of roads, government buildings, extension of townships, industrial sites, stadiums and play grounds, air ports etc. These lands were, undoubtedly, acquired by government at the cost of agricultural or forest lands and major part of the land were *Ri-Raid* land that belonged to the people. This process of land acquisition caused large scale alienation of land from the people to the government or institutions rendering the poor cultivators landless.

Another form of land alienation visible in Khasi Hills is the conversion of community land (*Ri-Raid*) to private land (*Ri-Kynti*) by dubious means. Large areas of community land of Khasi Hills, especially in the Ri-Bhoi district and the southern border of Khasi Hills district are in the process of privatization by a section of people taking the advantage of the Khasi land tenure system which allows conversion of *Ri-Raid* land into *Ri-Kynti* by permanent plantation or other development of land. This process has been facilitated by Government sponsored schemes like establishment of Poultry Farm, Fish Farm, soil conservation or agricultural farm etc. In recent years the Joint Forest Management (JFM) scheme introduced by the Forest department is becoming an incentive for many Khasi individuals or clans to privatize community lands for building up private forest at the cost of government and the community. To quote Sanjeeva Kumar of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India- “despite its avowed claim to promote participation and conservation, in effect, JFM seems not only to extend State control to community space but also tends to deligitimise community” (Laine and Subba, 2012)

### Conclusion:

In a country like India, where the vast majority of the rural households are dependent on the environment to meet their daily household needs, accessibility to natural resources seems to be a crucial problem in recent years. The issue of development in North East India has posed a challenge to planners since Independence. The region, predominantly inhabited by tribal people has its own opportunities and constraints, strengths and weaknesses, but many of the developmental initiatives in the region follow the national perspective of development where the environment was found to be the most potential resource for industrial and infrastructural development. This approach followed by the Government of India has directly affected the livelihood of the rural poor living in the North East. The tribals of the region depend on biomass or biomass-related products, which are mostly collected free from the immediate environment and they live within nothing other than a biomass-based subsistence economy. Another important problem that has surfaced in

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recent years is the alienation of land from the poor peasants due to possession of land by a few private owners and acquisition of land by the Government for various developmental works. As the resource demands for massive developmental programmes like roads, railways, industries, dams, airfields etc increased, it induced the Government to acquire vast areas of common lands, which was the main source of livelihood to the economically vulnerable and poor village folks. The basic need of the people in the North East depends on the fundamental concept of fair and just distribution of the natural resources which consists in the land and forest. However the Government has not entirely been successful to construct a development agenda in the interest of the rural poor. Despite its vitality and rapid rise to prominence the environmental movement against development has been unable to contribute creatively to major debates on development policy in contemporary India. Yet this is a debate that can be enriched only by balancing the sometimes conflicting objectives of economic growth and environmental protection.

**List of plants and herbs which begin with the prefix ‘Ja’**

(Source: S. Khongsit, 1999. *Kiba Ngi Khot Ja*, Shillong: Mrs. Sucila Khongngain, San Mer.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) <i>Jakhria</i> ( <i>Rhynchotechum ellipticum</i> )              | 23) <i>Jakhain</i> ( <i>Asteraceae; Pieris hieraciodes</i> ) |
| 2) <i>Jalyngiar</i> ( <i>Sunchus arvensis</i> )                    | 24) <i>Jakhain pakham</i> ( <i>Asteraceae Hypocharis</i> )   |
| 3) <i>Jabuit</i> ( <i>Acanthaceae; Phloganthus gamflei</i> )       | 25) <i>Jarem</i>   |
| 4) <i>Jalyngkthem saw</i>  | 26) <i>Jarem saw</i>   |
| 5) <i>Jalyngab lieh</i> ( <i>Asteraceae; Senecio densiflorus</i> ) | 27) <i>Jarem Shrieh</i>                                      |
| 6) <i>Jalyngnap iong</i> ( <i>Asteraceae; Inula cappa</i> )        | 28) <i>Jahynwet</i>  |
| 7) <i>Jaskei</i>   | 29) <i>Jaralud</i>   |
| 8) <i>Jamiaw</i>   | 30) <i>Jali</i>  |
| 9) <i>Jamiaw madan</i>   | 31) <i>Jali Sniang</i>                                       |
| 10) <i>Jathang</i>   | 32) <i>Jali Krem</i>   |
| 11) <i>Jatira</i>  | 33) <i>Jali Pnar</i>   |
| 12) <i>Jada dieng</i>  | 34) <i>Jalynteng</i>   |
| 13) <i>Jada hati</i>   | 35) <i>Jalwain iong</i>                                      |
| 14) <i>Jada shnong</i>   | 36) <i>Japri</i>   |
| 15) <i>Jathynrait rilum</i>  | 37) <i>Jasniang</i>  |
| 16) <i>Jathynrait riwar</i>  | 38) <i>Jalyngiem</i>   |
| 17) <i>Jasnian</i>   | 39) <i>Jawer</i>   |
| 18) <i>Jatung</i>  | 40) <i>Janailar</i>  |
| 19) <i>Jarasang</i>  | 41) <i>Janailar Phud</i>                                     |
| 20) <i>Jalynsiang</i>  | 42) <i>Jalu</i>  |
| 21) <i>Jatangniang</i>   | 43) <i>Jarumshiah</i> ( <i>Zehneria heterophylla</i> )       |
| 22) <i>Jarain</i>  | 44) <i>Jashun</i> ( <i>Verbanaceae ruvela</i> )              |
|  | 45) <i>Jahynlaw</i> ( <i>Viburnum caryaceum</i> )            |

## Parameters of forest usage among the Khasi of Meghalaya

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 46) <i>Jaiur</i>             | 73) <i>Jalyngkhan</i>  |
| 47) <i>Jaiur jhur</i>        | 74) <i>Jaltham</i>   |
| 48) <i>Jaiur khlam</i>       | 75) <i>Jawieh raij</i>   |
| 49) <i>Jalynnoh</i>          | 76) <i>Jalieh dymmiew</i>  |
| 50) <i>Jalynnoh skei</i>     | 77) <i>Japu</i>  |
| 51) <i>Jadaw</i>             | 78) <i>Jakba</i>   |
| 52) <i>Jalyngbien</i>        | 79) <i>Jalong</i>  |
| 53) <i>Japung</i>            | 80) <i>Jamiyang</i>  |
| 54) <i>Japung ktieh</i>      | 81) <i>Jamiyang synrai (Ternstomoceae;<br/>Camellia sp. F. Theaceae)</i> |
| 55) <i>Jaler</i>             | 82) <i>Jashiah</i>   |
| 56) <i>Jalmut</i>            | 83) <i>Jaler lum</i>   |
| 57) <i>Jalmut shniuh</i>     | 84) <i>Jakhaw shoin</i>  |
| 58) <i>Jamynsleh</i>         | 85) <i>Jashun</i>  |
| 59) <i>Jamyrwai</i>          | 86) <i>Japri</i>   |
| 60) <i>Ka Jamynrei</i>       | 87) <i>Japri lum</i>   |
| 61) <i>Jamyrwait rit sla</i> | 88) <i>Jajew shilliang</i>   |
| 62) <i>Jamynrei ritbian</i>  | 89) <i>Jajew shyrtong syiar</i>  |
| 63) <i>Jajew skei</i>        | 90) <i>Jajew saw</i>   |
| 64) <i>Jakrai</i>            | 91) <i>Jajer</i>   |
| 65) <i>Jakrai Lum</i>        | 92) <i>Jawieh</i>  |
| 66) <i>Japongdung</i>        | 93) <i>Jawieh</i>  |
| 67) <i>Jalyniar prohsla</i>  | 94) <i>Jaum</i>  |
| 68) <i>Jamyrdoh</i>          | 95) <i>Jalynnoh skei</i>   |
| 69) <i>Jangew</i>            | 96) <i>Jalbuit</i>   |
| 70) <i>Jalkhan Lieh</i>      | 97) <i>Ja Dieng Janai</i>  |
| 71) <i>Jalkhan iong</i>      | 98) <i>Jating</i>  |
| 72) <i>Jalkhan heh</i>       | 99) <i>Japiur</i>  |



*100) Japiur iong*

*101) Jasat*

*102) Jakhi iong*

*103) Jakhi shniuh*

*104) Jakhi rit*

*105) Jakhi nuli*

*106) Jaiing*

*107) Jalyngap sohriewlong*

*108) Jalyngap shymprong*

*109) Jarsang*

*110) Jasar*

*111) Janei*

*112) Jaryndem*

*113) Japang (Probila denticulate)*

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