CHAPTER IV

Myths and Archetypes and the Garo (A·chik) Folk Life

Myths and legends are traditional verbal materials passed on orally rather than in writing through generations. They form an essential part of the folklore of the people. The A·chiks have developed a rich store of folklore. The A·chik myths and archetypes are those connected with rivers and the physical features of the lands they settled in. Archetypes occur in different times and places in myth, literature, folklore and rituals. They have woven myths and archetypes around mystic and mysterious physical phenomena like that of the rivers, clouds, the thunder, lightning, the sun and stars, the hills and other natural formations to give plausible and imaginative explanations of their origin and existence, adding more mystery to them in the process. An element of reverence and fear can be traced in those myths. Myths make a large part of the thematic content of their oral narratives and poetry. Myths serve to explain the intentions and actions of supernatural beings. Most myths are concerned with religion, which involve rituals and prescribed forms of sacred ceremonies. A religious myth is the mental and spiritual orientation by which man relates himself to the
divine. The symbolism, the imagery and the rites of different people reflect their particular need in their life-situation and orientate them about its existence. Eliade would say:

> Religious symbols, inspite of their cultural differences, emerge from the human need to live in a paradigmatic world, to participate in the mode of being of gods and supernatural beings at the beginning of things (Dhavamony, 1973, 154).

Religious man realizes that this cosmos and the order of men derive from the doings of the divine and supernatural beings. A significant way by which man expresses his religiousness is to live according to religious myth and ritual. Within religious context myth and ritual are the dynamic power whose embodiment brings forth the sacred reality and makes the religious person live this reality in everyday existence. There is an intrinsic relationship between the divine power and its symbolic image. Man’s existence is seen to be dependent on the sacred manifested in the symbols which are found in myths and rituals.

Some of the recurring myths that have a strong presence in the cultural narratives of the A·chiks are associated with places like Balpakram, with rivers like Songdu (Brahmaputra) like Dura A·bri, Rangira, with spirits, with mountains, with ideas of reincarnations, the whirlpools as in Te·matchi Wari (in River Ildek), Mrik Wari (in River Simsang), Dombe Wari and many more.
Psychoanalyst Carl Jung, in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconsciousness* (1968), illustrates the four types of archetypes. They are (i) mother archetypes, (ii) forms relating to rebirth, (iii) spirits and (iv) trickster figures. These archetypes of Jung can be traced in Garo folk narratives.

The concept of “narrative” is often, explicitly or implicitly, tinged with connotations of “fiction”. An emphasis on the plurality of stories is, among other things, a reaction against such concepts as “truth”, “reality”, “theory”, or “validity in interpretation”. Power, rather than validity, is often seen as the factor informing choice among alternatives. In some social-political contexts, “narrative” is seen as a way of giving voice to minorities or disadvantaged groups, generally repressed and silenced by the hegemony. These connotations of “narrative” are particularly prominent in feminism, post-colonialism, legal studies, and the medical humanities. Although stories can give voice to individuals and groups that are often marginalized by the hegemony, they can also lose their political power by being interpreted as “merely stories”: As Kenan puts it “Even when accounts remain rooted in a critique of hierarchy, storytelling has real dangers (2006, 15).

Ryan says that a narrative is a sign with a signifier (discourse) and a signified (story, mental image, semantic representation). The signifier can have many different semiotic
manifestations. It can consist for instance of a verbal act of storytelling (diegetic narration) or of gesture and dialogue performed by actors (mimetic, or dramatic narration) (Ryan, 2001). The A·chiks have developed the act of story-telling to a large extent to communicate their myths and archetypes.

I

Mother Archetype

The mother archetype appears under an almost infinite variety of aspects. Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype. The symbols of the mother in a figurative sense appear in things representing the goal of our longing for redemption, such as Paradise, the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem etc. Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance the Church, University, city or country, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea, matter, even the underworld and the moon can also be mother-symbols. This archetype is often associated with things and places associated with fertility and fruitfulness. The qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility
In mythology, the mother archetype is often linked to the idea of the Great Mother. This includes Great Mother deities such as *Gaia* and Mother Earth. Rivers are among the earth’s most vital resources. Much of human activity and development centres on rivers and bodies of water. Water is the beginning of life, it is also a principle of life, a primordial force that generates, vivifies and regenerates life. For *A·chiks* the river form a major archetype and it symbolizes fertility as well as a mother figure.

One of the oldest symbols which date back to antiquity is the river. Apart from its practical utility as a commodity, the river has about it a mysterious, elusive and fascinating quality. This, coupled with the fluctuations of the tides has made it a perennial symbol of the ebb and flow of human fortunes (Gurudev, 2004, 137). Down the ages, water has been a symbol both of fertility and of resurrection. Centuries can be telescoped through the image of a flowing river (Gurudev, 2004, 139). A river is commonly associated with powerful feelings. Images of flooded rivers, overflowing its banks are analogues to human emotions like bursts of pent up fury, welling sorrow, drowning in a sea of pain etc (Gurudev, 2004, 141). Rivers have sometimes been considered the ultimate reservoirs of truth. It is the river that answers one’s deepest questions.
The river forms a major theme in A·chik folk narrative mostly symbolizing fertility as well as motherhood. The Rivers are also shown as enduring symbols of the passage of time. It also highlights the conception of a river as the source of the origin, evolution and growth of human civilization. Kanak Chandra Sharma in his article writes: “The Brahmaputra in A·chik is called the ‘Songdu’ river... They also call it ‘Amawari’ meaning ‘the mother of rivers’. Songdu represents the female aspect of a benign divinity”. This is revealed in a folk-story called ‘Earthquake’ found in “Apasong Agana” (As told by our Forefathers) compiled by Dewansing Rongmuthu. When the Supreme Goddess, Nostu Nopantu began fashioning the earth, rock and stone were made to grow into various shapes and sizes, thus making the earth stable; then the mother earth was cut into furrows. Into these newly fashioned furrows water freely flowed. The A·chiks called this accumulation of water Aema Ditema, or ‘mother of fullness and overflowing’, Songduma, Sagalma (mother of oceans) etc. In many folktales, the name Songdu occurs as the name of the river, Brahmaputra. In the story ‘Durama Imbama’, Simera, the daughter of ‘Durama Imbama’, the tutelary Goddess of A·chikland in the A·chik Pantheon is married to Singra, the son of mother Songdu who is represented by the river Songdu (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 71).

There is a legend that the world was gradually created by a Goddess named Nostu who sprang up from a self begotten egg
and from her womb streams of water issued which became rivers. After that all kinds of seeds and grass sprang up then fish, birds and animals appeared and lastly and very significantly man came up. It highlights the conception that the river is the source or origin, of the evolution and growth of human civilization (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 74).

Caroline Marak is of the opinion that rivers are used predominantly as symbols in literature. Rivers, streams, mountains and rocks are full of archetypes and myths. The A·chiks believe that Garo Hills is a dwelling place of the gods and goddesses whom they worship. The A·chiks have always been fascinated by the rivers, streams and their sources. Much of their poetry, folklore and legends are connected with rivers. They have explored all such bodies of water in the Garo Hills, and given them appropriate names, as also to their flora and fauna. Gods are believed to dwell in the rivers, their sources, in the forests and in the mountains. Rivers are their source of sustenance and well being (Caroline Marak, 2004, ix). The land, full of flora and fauna adorned the entire hills and mountains of Garo Hills and the people living therein. They keep alive all the sleeping hills, mountains, valleys and make them suitable and pleasant to live in (Julius Marak, 2004, 154).

Garo Hills is blessed with rivers, lakes and streams making the land fertile the naturally available items of food are
found in abundance. In the early days people never went hungry because they knew how to use nature and live with it. Abundant flora and fauna adorned the entire hills and mountains of Garo Hills and the people living therein (Julius Marak, 2004, 154).

Earlier A·chik villages were located near some stream or waterfalls. Kanak Chandra Sharma observed that the A·chiks were great lovers of clean water. Water from streams and high waterfalls was piped through bamboo pipes to their places of residence. The fact remains that the river-system has remained a perennial source of benefit in various ways (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 75).

Most of the rivers of the district originate from the Tura and Arbella range, the centre and heart of the district, and the water dividing line or watershed falls through the centre from the West till it touches the Khasi Hills in the East. Therefore, the water divides, or the drainage basin of the district can be divided distinctly into two zones:

The Northern river basin zone

The Southern river basin zone

The Northern river basin zone can be demarcated into eleven sub river basins. The longest basin is Damring River and its tributaries and there are six large sub-basins, namely Didram, Manda, Galwang, Ringgi, Didak, and Diti. The rest of the rivers
have only small basins. In the southern river basins, *Simsang* is the largest out of a total of fourteen rivers. The other second and third large river basins are *Ganol, Bugi, Darang* and *Bandra* and the rest are small rivers and streams only (Gassah, 1984, 26).

Goswami opines that there are a number of rivers and rivulets in Garo Hills with which several myths and tales are associated which will be inserted below. The rivers in Garo Hills flow in three directions, i.e., towards the north, west and south. The rivers *Damring, Ildek, Manda, Didak, Jinjiram, Didram* flow north while the *Ringge, Galwang, and Ganol* flow west and *Moheshkola, Mahadeo, Simsang, Dareng or Nitai, Bhogial/Bugi* flow down south. There are a few small rivers such as *Tulong, Marsi, Sonai, Roki*, etc. which flow westward. All these rivers have made remarkable contribution to the maintenance of good climatic condition in the Garo Hills for the preservation of its forest, growth of Sal trees, bamboo forests, various types of decorative orchids, a large number of medicinal herbs, forest plants with food value and a good number of rare wild animals, birds, reptiles and fish etc (Goswami, 2004, 101 - 102).

There are more than eight principal rivers in the district says Kanak Chandra Sharma that rise from the *Arbella* range and flow north – westward and namely the rivers such as *Dudhnoi, Krishnai* and *Jinary*. The river *Kalu*, known as *Ganol* in the district
rises near Tura and flows north-westward passing through Goalpara for about 16 kms where it finally falls into river Jinjiram. Rongkhon is the principal tributary of the Ganol River (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 75).

1. The Simsang or Someswari River

The SIMSANG or SOMESWARИ rising from the Nokrek and taking a zigzag course enters the Mymensing district of Bangladesh and falls into the Kangsa River (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 72). In olden times, the Simsang River was called “Chima” (Chi-Water and Ma-Mother). The Simsang is the largest and the second longest river in Garo Hills. D.N Majumdar wrote on this longest and largest river Simsang: “The Someswari flows through picturesque valleys, flanked with hills. In its upper reaches there are many waterfalls. One who has seen its crystal clear water and the carved pillar like stones along the banks can never forget it” (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 79). So this river was supposed to be the mother of all the rivers in the District. In connection with this, there is an old village known as ‘Chimagre’ on the banks of this river named after the ‘Chima River’ near the Nengkra village (Mihir Sangma, 2004, 161). The banks of the Simsang River is also a treasure house of wealth and possession which is reflected in another story of A·chik lore, called ‘Kalkame Kalgra’ (the god of
destiny). In this story, *Durama Imbama*, the goddess of wealth and possessions, settled down in the *Simsang Rikam Rongdong Bra*, i.e., the bank of the *Simsang River* at the confluence of the *Rongdong* stream on the eastern extremity of the Tura Range (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 80). The river offers vast scopes and possibilities for economic development of the region (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 79). The important tributaries of the Simsang River are *Rongkai*, *Rompa*, and *Chibok*.

In the south-eastern region, the *Simsang* group of rivers has played a very prominent role in shaping the social and cultural life of the *A·chik* people.

*The Kanchru Wari* the literal meaning, the Pool of the Earthworm is immediately above the *Rangram Patal*. This is believed by the *A·chiks* to be the deepest pool in the *Simsang* River in the Garo Hills and, to be the headquarters of all the aquatic living beings of the river. Aquatic serpents of immense size, known as *Sangknis* or sea serpents, are said to have made this pool their chief permanent abode. The *A·chiks* assert that there are enormous aquatic serpents, measuring between two hundred fifty to three hundred cubits in length in big rivers, pools and lakes.

These waterbodies gain their impressive length and depth from the serpents that live in these pools or *waris*. These gigantic serpents are so afraid of *Goera*, the god of thunder and
lightning, that they are seldom seen above the water (see Rongmuthu, 2008, 351).

The Mrik Wari is in the Simsang River at Rongbinggiri which is believed by the A·chiks to be the second deepest whirlpool in the Simsang River. The rocks on both sides of the pool, though rough-shaped, are smooth-surfaced and provide excellent seats to laze in. This pool is stated to be the Chigat or Watering place of Nokma Abong Chirepa, the last independent and Paramount Highland Chieftain in the Hills, who had his headquarters on the left bank of the northern spur overlooking this pool. When the water is clear, this pool and the jagged rock on its banks look really grand. It is an excellent pool for angling (Rongmuthu, 2008, 310).

Dengreng Kitik Wari Chora: A deep eddying pool in the Simsang River, known as Dengreng Kitik Wari Chora, is sacred to the A·chiks. An ancient A·chik legend maintains that Dengreng Kitik Wari Chora was the chigat (watering-place) of Dimrimpa Dimsimpa Gaeripa Singeripa, the ancient patriarch of Mande, who was the first to taste death among mankind (Rongmuthu, 2008, 336).

Matma Wari or the pool of Matma (Buffalo) in the Simsang River beside the village of Chimagre in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills is renowned among the A·chiks as the original and the first chigat (watering-place) of Abong Noga Raja, the
Paramount *A·chik* Sovereign of all the Hills, now known as Garo Hills (Rongmuthu, 2008, 337).

*The Nosari Bandari Wari* or the pool of *Nosari Bandari* in the *Bugi* River, on the south-eastern side of the *Nokrek* Peak of the Tura Range, is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in *A·chikland*. It is surrounded on both banks by rock-cliffs. According to an *A·chik* legend *Nosari Bandari* was once the abode of two water-nymphs, named *Nosari* and *Bandari* respectively, who lived in friendly terms with the *A·chik* people. Certain signs of their habitation are said to be still visible by the pool (Rongmuthu, 2008, 337). According to an ancient legend of the *A·chiks*, *Gonga* (who first taught the *A·chiks* to make thread for clothing) is said to have spent many of his most romantic days here with his two lovers, catching fish, crabs and prawns, and bathing and swimming in the pool. *A·chiks* believe that the *Kilbolma* (gigantic cotton tree), which *Gonga* felled with the help of the god of the Winds, *Jaru Me·a Jabal Pante Okkuangsi Ja·patchongsi*, the god of Winds, had grown by the side of this pool, some of its fossilized roots are still seen there (Rongmuthu, 2008, 313).

2. Damring River

The story of *Chela Asanpa* and *Brara* originated in a village on the banks of the *Damring* River. Similarly, in another folk story, about the *Living Beings* who ‘First Acquired Steel’, it is said
that *Dakgipa Rugipa Tatara Rabuga* (literally, the Creator and the maker, the moulder, the most worshipped, the most profoundly taken), the supreme deity in the *A·chik* pantheon, fetched steel from the sub-terranean region for fire and the defence of mankind and melted it at a place known as *Chiginap Rongjamap Chibrasni Chongsni*, i.e. place of the confluence of seven streams of water where seven clumps of *Jati* bamboo grew. Rongmuthu in his book, *Folktales of the Garos*, mentioned that there was a place bearing these names, sacred to *A·chik* priests at the vicinity of the village *Rongribo* and *Kalak* on the upper reaches of the *Damring* River which flowed in the mid-northern part of the Garo Hills. For some other reasons also, the devoted *kamal* or priests were said to be very respectful of this sacred place. Some *A·chiks* used to associate this place with the name of *Rama Cholsni* i.e. the parting of seven path ways. The bringing of steel is very significant, considering this as an important factor for the growth of civilization. For primitive people fire and steel were the primary resources for leading a social life (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 77).

Dewansing Rongmuthu writes that the place is called *Chondodenga* Hillock in *A·chik* (1377 ft.high) lying east of *Mahadeo* river. It is also called *Ringchanchok*, meaning the ‘leaning boat’. According to *A·chik* legends, in the past this hillock was on the sea-shore. A demi-god, *Ago-Dinggopa*, followed by *Chando*, a merchant-prince, was bringing a boat laden with untold riches and treasures
for Dikki, the renowned hero of *A·chik-lore*. This boat is said to have capsized in this place. This hillock therefore contains within its bowels invaluable treasures which are being guarded by the theophanic spirit of *Chando*, the merchant prince (Rongmuthu, 2008, 326).

The river *Rongdik* rises in the south-eastern side of the *Meminram* Peak of the Tura Range. A tributary of *Simsang*, it is mentioned in the *A·chik* Folktales of ‘*Dombewari*’. The main incident of meeting the celestial damsel, ‘*Opsoras or mitdemechik*’ (goddesses) by the young *A·chikman Daran* occurred on the bank of the hill-stream, ‘*Chibok*’ flowing through the village, ‘*Dingrang Bawegiri*’ (Rongmuthu, 2008, 46-53). Thus, it can be seen that most of the rivers in the Garo Hills, are linked with traditional stories and folklore.

In Garo Hill the river *Dudhnoi* is also called *Manda*. It originates from *Jangekoknal Damal* area of East Garo Hills and enters Goalpara and finally merges with the Brahmaputra. The region has no town and density of population is also low (Goswami, 2004, 103). The *Manda* River is nature’s precious gift that has become an integral part of peoples’ lives.

The *Nitai* is known as *Dareng* by the *A·chik* people. It also originates from the majestic *Nokrek* range in central Garo Hills. Flowing southwards it enters the *Mymensing* district of Bangladesh,
where it meets the *Meghna* River which ultimately pours into the Bay of Bengal. In the upper reaches, close to its source, the *Dareng* is lined with a rich tropical forest which is home to many wildlife species—both flora and fauna. Besides watering the soil, the river adds moisture to the air through evaporation. Delicate ferns and rare orchids thrive in its moist conditions. Many of the deep pools, locally called *waris*, are surrounded by thick vegetation and rocky cliffs (Jacqueline Marak, 2004, 94). The river area is not thickly populated, but the river has importance in the society for trades with Bangladesh (Goswami, 2004, 102).

Many of these *waris* are shrouded with myths and beliefs. It is believed that the *Redingsi wari* is the abode of a spirit with seven hands and seven eyes. People are forbidden to throw stones into the pool for fear of disturbing the spirit (Jacqueline Marak, 2004, 95). *The Redengsi Wari* in the Khakhija Stream, one of the deepest pools and an important tributary of the *Dareng* River, is in the southern foot of the *Meminram* Peak of the *Dura* Range. It is one of the deepest pools in Garo Hills district. A huge fresh-water whale, having a large brilliant diamond on its head, is said to be living in the depth of this pool (Rongmuthu, 2008, 312).

The *Ildek* River is located in the East Garo Hills district. It originates from *Wa·ge Marang* near Papera Hill, bordering Khasi Hills, falling on the *Me·gam* area (a sub-division of
the A·chiks). The gorgeous Ildek River, where the gods and goddesses lived, flows majestically and winds its way through the high mountains towards the north of Garo Hills and enters Assam through Goalpara finally joining the mighty Brahmaputra or Amawari. The Ildek River is considered to be a sacred river for both the A·chiks and the non-tribals (Julius Marak, 2004, 154).

The Ildek River is perennial and not seasonal. It has contributed greatly to the economic activity of the people of the area. The River belt is fertile and the people cultivate beside it for their own sustenance. Besides wet cultivation people also cultivate some vegetables and cash crops either for their own consumption or for selling the surplus in the market.

The river can also be utilized for transporting the products throughout the seasons that cannot be transported through land. Thus cut bamboo, timber, jackfruits, pine-apples etc are transported to Assam by the people of Garo Hills through this river. (Julius Marak, 2004, 157).

The Ildek River serves as a source of income during the dry season. There are plenty of fish in the river. The River serves not only men; it also serves the animals The A·chiks who practise traditional indigenous religion consider the Ildek River as sacred and holy because of its economic contribution to the people and the mythologically important places that are found in it. The
water is fresh and pure and the people try to keep it free from pollution.

**Anang Wari** is in the Ildek River, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills. It is a deep pool surrounded by cliffs. Many deities are believed to have lived in the River. The most powerful deities to live in this River are *Anang* and *Dilkang*. While walking or going along the river bank you are not to utter the name of these two deities lest something happen to you (Julius Marak, 2004, 158).

It has three parts: *Anang Nokpante*, *Anang Nokmong* and *Anang Demechik*. All these pools are deep, *Anang Nokmong* being the deepest, having a depth of 40 feet. According to the divers there is a tunnel inside the *wari*. It is said that only a person who can dive up to 38/39 ft. can see the opening of the tunnel. Unlike the other *waris*, *Anang wari* is the widest and every year it gets silted with sand and at such times the opening of the underwater tunnel gets blocked. The water inside the tunnel is blackish in colour and it takes three pools of *wa'dro* bamboo, each 8 ft. long joined lengthwise to catch the electric eel living inside. Whenever, he dived, he used ‘*dikge*’ (a kind of herb to protect him from electric eel and other dangers) (Fameline Marak, 2004, 192).

In the ancient days, three legendary heroes, *Anang*, *Dilkang* and *Dura* migrated from Salaram Mitechak and before settling down in this area, they consulted the divine oracle by
breaking eggs (*do·chi goa*). The sign of the oracle did not favour *Dura*, who then left that place and went to the south central region to settle. Hence, we have the name *Tura* derived from *Dura*. However, *Anang* and *Dilkang* stayed back as the oracle sign favoured them. *Dilkang* went upstream and *Anang* stayed downstream (Fameline Marak, 2004, 192).

In the olden days the *A·chiks* dreaded this pool believing it to be the abode of a god, *Anang*, and his brother *Dilkang* who used to cause insanity or madness among mankind. It was also believed by the *A·chiks* that *Gonga* (weaver and spinner) (Rongmuthu, 2008, 277) had thrown into this pool the anvil and hammer of the goddess *Dakgipa Rugipa Dingipa Babra*. The best time to visit this pool is in the dry season (Rongmuthu, 2008, 319).

Rivers and streams are priceless gifts of God to man. The beauty and usefulness of rivers has always inspired the imagination of man to weave countless myths, legends and folktales all over the world. Various kinds of legendary and mythical stories abound in the whirlpools formed within the riverine course of *Ildek* in certain pockets. These whirlpools called *wari* in *A·chiks* have their own stories behind their original names, either mythical or legendary, though formed due to its natural course as it flows meandering through the hills, valleys and thick forests. The beliefs in the *waris* or whirlpools of the *Ildek* River have greatly influenced
the cultural practices of the different villages along the banks of the river (Fameline Marak, 2004, 187-188).

*Malcheng Wari* is the biggest and the most famous wari. Many stories are connected to it. The myth of this wari is that if a sacrificial offering of animals and fowl is made at this wari then the A·chiks believe it would propitiate their gods at the time of “A·galmaka” (immediately after the burning of debris for shifting cultivation and before planting seeds), at harvest time and in sickness, etc. There is also a myth that Abet-Rangge made his abode in this wari especially in the capacity of a god of nature.

The name of this wari came from a legendary figure called *Malcheng* who in ancient days, used to cross this wari and practised shifting cultivation on the other side of the river. As the story goes, there was a python, which acted as a bridge across the wari and allowed *Malcheng* to cross over the river on its back. This went on for some time. A river mermaid, fell in love with *Malcheng* at first sight, and noticed his trips across the river. Determined to get him by all means, she requested the python to bring *Malcheng* to her. So, one day, while *Malcheng* was crossing the wari, the python took him on his back and sank down to the mermaid. The mermaid was very happy and married *Malcheng* and kept him with her for seven years. Thus, this wari came to be known as *Malcheng wari* (Fameline Marak, 2004, 188).
**Teemdambil Gure Simram:** This *wari* is located beside the *Te∙dambil* village on the banks of the *Ildek* River. There is a “ghat” or river bank used by the *A∙chiks* who practice the indigenous religion to immerse the image of a horse (*gure mite*), which they worship. The horse god is believed to bestow wealth on whoever worships it and propitiates it with offerings of animals and fowl, but failing to do so may also invite wrath. The worshippers make the horse god idol of bamboo splits and take it around the village in a procession, after which they immersed it in the river. This particular bank of the *wari* was the immersion spot for their idol and so it came to be known as *Gure Simram* (*Gure*=horse, *simram*=immersion place).

**Rongjaleng Wari:** Three streams namely *Jajil chiring, Imbeng chiring, Rongkingkang chiring* (*chiring*=stream) meet together and drain into the *Ildek* River at Aruak village. During the dry season when the depth of the *wari* becomes shallow the protruding stone or ‘*rongjaleng*’ across the river acts as a bridge enabling people to cross to and fro. People believe that there is a ‘*Ku∙gri mite*’ (*ku∙gri*=dumb, *mite*=god) in this *wari* and this particular god has the power to make anyone dumb if it casts a spell. Of these three streams flowing into the *Ildek* River, *Rongkingkang* is famous for its natural endowments. This particular stream is strewn with many stones and boulders which seem to be stacked one over another (Fameline Marak, 2004, 189-190).
**Kimde Wari**: Kimde wari or the pool of the Kimde tree (Mesua ferrea) is also known as Kimdegong wari. An ancient A'chik legend states that in the ancient days, the Kimde wari was a very deep dark pool of water, reputed to be the home of huge black water-serpents, known as sangknis (sea serpents), and that, having shifted from their last homes at Rongro Rongkimjeng Chiancheng Dasreng on the north banks of the Ildek River. The lordly forebears of a once strong and warlike clan called the Rongmuthu chatchi (clan) settled by the side of the Kimde Wari and to its Weston the top of the Weram Jambil Hill. Large Kimde trees were then grow in abundance round about the Kimde Wari (Rongmuthu, 2008, 338).

3. The Kalu River

The Kalu River is called Ganol by the A'chik people. Originating in the Tura range near Tura, it flows towards Westwards in the Garo Hills and enters the Goalpara district of Assam. In the rainy season it is navigable only between the villages of Harigaon and Damalgre (Goswami, 2004, 102).

Describing the Ganol, as one of the largest rivers in the Garo Hills, Carvel Marak says that it had a considerable role in shaping the socio-cultural life of the people living in and around the watershed in particular, and the entire Garo Hills in general. Originating in the central part of Garo Hills, it meanders Westward down the hills and plains and joins the Jinjiram River, a tributary of
the Brahmaputra River, at Mankachar in Assam near the Indo-Bangladesh border (Carvel R Marak, 2004, 59).

The Ganol watershed is of considerable importance because of its strategic location in the extreme west of the state. Its physical features are characterised by steep slopes on the west of the Nokrek and Tura Hills, and narrow valleys along the river and its tributaries as it flows westwards. The area is covered by dense forests, wherever jhum farming and plantations are not practised (Carvel R Marak, 2004, 59).

It is famous for a rich abundance of nature’s gifts of flora and fauna. Some areas, especially at the source of the Ganol River adjoining the Nokrek Peak, are still covered with dense virgin forests. The area also abounds in traditional A’chik folk medicinal plants of which about two hundred plants have been ascertained.

The Ganol watershed has also been supporting veritable human settlements for centuries. The fertile valley in the lower course of the Ganol along the foothills of the Ranggira Range extend from Damalgre as far as the western border of Garo Hills and from Me∙lim to Goramara – Misikona along the course of the Ringgi and Dilni, tributaries of the river Ganol and they constitute nature’s bounty in the watershed. Permanent wet cultivation is practised in these areas of the valley (Carvel R Marak, 2004, 64). Deep pools of the river are usually flanked by huge boulders which can provide
shelter and protection to various aquatic lives especially during the dry season (Carvel R Marak, 2004, 66).

The Bugi or the Bhogai originates near Nokrek, the highest peak in Garo Hills, and flows southward. It passes by the Dalu market and falls into the Brahmaputra (Kanak Chandra Sharma, 2004, 75).

II

Forms relating to Rebirth

The concept of rebirth forms the second category of archetype which has various aspects, and is not always used in the same sense. Jung enumerates five different forms of rebirth namely: Metempsychosis or transmigration of souls; Reincarnations, Resurrection; Rebirth (Renovatio) and Transformation (Jung, 1968, 113-115)

In Balpakram: The Land of the Spirits (Garo Mythology), Julius R. Marak affirms that the A·chiks have a strong belief in the Kingdom of God. The A·chiks believed that in Chitmang Hill lived a god almighty who was the giver of human lives. This god almighty can give life to human beings and cause death to human beings. This god almighty is known as ‘Waimong’ by the Atongs (one of the A·chik division). Chitmang hill is the ‘Me·mang Bugini Ja·nengtakram’ aro Katchini Janepani Kasperam’ (resting
place of Spirit of Bugi and Katchi-Janepa). The Chitlang Hill is also known as ‘Waimong’ (great deity). The A·chiks call the Chitlang Hill also as ‘Chitlang-Tangring-Rema-Bangjang’. Goera, the god of thunder and lightning, as well as the god of health and strength, was born in this place. Hence Chitlang Hill is a sacred hill for the A·chiks (Julius Marak, 2000, 61- 62). In ancient days, when any unnatural calamities or sorrows befell the A·chiks, our grand ancestors, would face towards Chitlang hill and pray saying, ‘Grandmother Norimbi – Dikkimbi save us from sorrow, grandmother look after us, care for us and defend us from all dangers’

It is believed that the spirit of the dead goes through Chitlang and then reaches Balpakram Hill. The Chitlang Hill is considered as the land of happiness being the resting place for the spirits of the dead. After living there for some time, one will be reborn again in one’s own family. Evil persons are reborn as animals. It is the common belief of the A·chiks that the souls of those who commit suicide will not go to Chitlang and Balpakram but will go to the Nokrek Hill. Thus, Chitlang Hill becomes the place of happiness and joy to the A·chik indigenous believers (Julius Marak, 2000, 201).

They also believe that the original dwelling place of the spirits of the dead was Napak. Legend has it that since the day the spirits of the dead had found their new abode somewhere in the
hills of Balpakram, the souls of all men started their journey (Julius Marak, 2000, 37). Balpakram Hill is also known as ‘Mangru-Mangram A·song or More-A·song-Mode-Chiga’. Mangru-Mangram-A·song or More A·song-Mode-Chiga means the land of spirits of the dead, a name given by the A·chiks for Balpakram. Balpakram is now to be the new abode of the spirits of the dead after migration from their original dwelling place ‘Napak’ (Julius Marak, 2000, 65).

Playfair states that the A·chik beliefs on the subject of death and the after-life are among the most interesting of their many beliefs, which Major Playfair called “superstitions”. Their funeral ceremonies are both varied and elaborate. It is believed that in the human body there lives a spirit, which on being released from its mortal covering, wends its way to Mangru-Mangram, the abode of the spirits, to reside for a period of time before being re-incarnated. The spirits are said to have first taken up their abode at Napak, a place in the north-eastern hills between Damra and Cheran. Later, when their numbers increased, they went to two hills, named Balsiri Balpakram, and they now wend their way to Chitmand, an isolated peak in the south-east region of the Garo Hills, not far from the Simsang River. Mangru- Mangram is a kind of purgatory through which all must pass good and the bad alike. The journey to this place is a long one, and the spirit is provided with a guide, the necessary eatables and money as if he were about to set out on a long journey on earth. These requirements are provided by the
sacrifice of the necessary animals, and the offering of food and liquor at the shrines which form the last resting-place of the deceased (Playfair, 1998, 103).

Some A’chiks believe that the common night-jar, ‘Do’uang’, is believed to be the messenger of news to the relatives of the deceased informing that it has seen his spirit on the way to Chitmang. It is most inauspicious for a night-jar to perch on the roof of a house, when this happens; the death of one of its inmates is thought to be imminent. If one of them is lying ill in the house at the time, it is believed that the bird has come to give the message that it is time for the soul of the sick man to start on its long journey (Playfair, 1998, 103). Their journey to this hill however, is not an easy one. It is said to be tiresome and torturous as the ghosts have to cross numerous hills, lakes, streams and bridges before they reach their final abode (Julius Marak, 2000, 65).

On its way to Chitmang, the spirit is by no means free from danger, for at one place, there is the monster, Nawang, lying in wait. He accosts each spirit and demands what it has done on earth, and what property it has brought with it. The demon is covetous of brass earrings, and the spirit which is well supplied with these, throws them on the ground and escapes while the monster is engaged in picking them up. This in theory is the reason why men and women wear bunches of rings in their ears, though in practice, they are
looked upon merely as ornaments, the myth being known to very few. Having arrived at Mangru-Mangram, the spirits reside there for a period of time until the appointed hour arrives for re-incarnation. At the birth of every child, a spirit is said to leave purgatory (Playfair, 1998, 103-104).

On their journey, the spirits rest at a pool of water called Me·mang Mesal Cha·ram – Chidimak Chikong (the place for the spirits to eat their midday meal or the ink-water pool). Here they would refresh themselves and eat the food which had been sent with them and tether the bull which was killed for the dead to a boldak (schima walichii) tree (Julius Marak, 2000, 41).

The god of death comes to fetch every soul before its death and takes him or her to the place of spirits. The king of death is known as “Waimong”. ‘Wai’ means the king of the spirits; ‘Mong’ means important, more than all other spirits. The spirit or the soul of the dead person is being sent off, so that it might reach its destination. It is also believed that the king of death cannot receive the spirits of the dead into the home of the spirits unless the Mangona or Chugan (post funeral ceremony) ceremony is performed before sending the spirits off. Otherwise, he would only be regarded as a sinner. His reward will be in the lowest form of reincarnation, and then such spirits remain simply in the form of spirits. The main objective of the ceremonial function is to send off the spirit of the
dead person so that it might reach its final destination, the home of
the spirits. Only then, will it be received by the king of death and
be allowed to settle there at a suitable place. And through re-
incarnation return to the virtuous life according to the dictation of
the king of the death (Milton Sangma, 1995, 43).

The soul of a person does not perish along with the
dead body. The soul remains and begins the process of forming a
new flesh and body or enters another form of life in the process of
re-incarnation. There are two different traditional practices among
the A·chiks. The spirit of the dead person is said to be just sent off
at the time of cremation, as the Am·beng and Matabeng (sub-division
of the A·chiks) do and this practice is known as “Watpaka”. The
other one is to keep the spirit at home generally for a year until the
next harvesting season which will then be observed as a sending off
ceremony. This is known as “Mangona” and the process of keeping
the spirit at home is called “Memang Ra·rika” (Mihir Sangma, 1994,
50).

At the time of the sending-off, the spirit of a child is
compared to an umbrella which shields them from the elements, and
also to “Bolong” and sal trees. The child is further compared to a
young bull as one who is powerful, strong and resourceful and can
defend the family from all harm and danger or from the storms of
life. The mother bids the spirit to remember its home, so that at the
time of reincarnation it may be born into the same family. The spirit must proceed cheerfully with eyes raised and a pleasant smile upon its lips.

Robbins Burling says that *A·chiks* also display uncertainty as to the fate of the soul after death. It does seem that the mode of death affects the destiny of the soul, for those who die unnaturally in an accident or from an unusual disease, or who are killed by a wild animal, have difficulty in reaching the country of the dead; thus they may stay to haunt the place where they die, apparently as something of a grudge against those who are still living. Even those who die naturally must undergo a perilous journey to get to the land of the dead (Julius Marak, 2000, 67). Side by side with this concept of an after-world is the belief that the soul can somehow be born again into this world, and even into the same family. A soul occasionally deserts a man’s body and enters a woman’s womb to be reborn, without the man actually dying (Burling, 1963, 59-60).

**Metempsychosis or transmigration of souls** indicates that one’s life is prolonged in time by passing through different bodily existences or from another point of view; it is a life-sequence, interrupted by different reincarnations\(^1\).

The *A·chiks* also believe in the **transmigration** of souls. The soul of a man may enter into animals like tigers, snakes,
etc. If a person’s soul has entered a tiger, the *Mahari* will not send information to those *chras* (maternal uncle) and relatives who are in far off places. The reason for not doing so is that they believe tigers also will come along with the *mahari* and relatives to the house of the deceased (Julius Marak, 2000, 202).

They also believe in the transmigration of souls as a state of reward and punishment. By transmigration of souls it means that when a man dies, his soul or his essence leaves the dying body and enters the body of some animal or human being as it comes into the world to begin its career. And the process may be repeated generation after generation (Milton Sangma, 1981, 227-228).

Secondly, **Reincarnation** as a concept of **rebirth** necessarily implies the continuity of a personality. Here the human personality is regarded as continuous and accessible to memory so that when one is re-incarnated or born, one is able, at least potentially; to remember that one has lived through previous existences and these existences were one’s own i.e. they had the same ego-form as the present life. As a rule, reincarnation means rebirth in a human body. Resurrection means a re-establishment of human existence after death. A new element enters here: that of change, transmutation, or transformation of one’s being. **Rebirth** (*Renovatio*), the word suggests the idea of renovatio, renewal, or even of improvement brought about by magical means. **Rebirth** may
be a renewal without any change of being in its essential nature but only in its function. Another aspect is, essential transformation, which is total rebirth of the individual. Participation in the process of transformation is the fifth and the last that implicates indirect rebirth. Here the transformation is brought about not directly, by passing through death and rebirth itself, but indirectly, by participating in a process of transformation which is conceived of as taking place outside the individual (Jung, 1968, 113-15).

According to the commonly accepted doctrine of the preliterate A·chiks of the traditional life spirit, the conception of a happy life and death is to be reborn into the same sacred motherhood. The A·chiks believe in a kind of reincarnation called Atchigittinga. Atchigittinga literally means a conscious psychophysical act of pre-planned reincarnation of the self. It is a secret A·chik doctrine of conscious transincarnation of the human jachri or jabirong. Jabirong literally means self-active, self-mobile, self-projecting. Jachri literally means self-acting, self-propelling. Jabirong and jachri mean the one and the same thing, which is the self-cognitive, self-acting human psyche or human pre-spirit (Rongmithu, 2011, 3).

Atchigittinga proves that one’s existing body, which is like an illusion, exists only due to one’s spirit and when the human spirit consciously and deliberately changes its earthly vestment, the human spirit is undying and permanent in all states. Without the human psyche of the spirit being eternal and imperishable, the psycho-physical doctrine of Atchigitting is unthinkable. Atchigittinga evidently and conclusively proves that the human psyche or spirit naturally belonged to the millennium, when the Earth was a cloud, a breath of fresh air, an embryo in the womb of the Universe (Rongmuthu, 2011, 113).

Conscious projection and engraftment of one’s Jabiron or Jachri in the womb of a woman in any place, near or distant, can also be one’s involuntary but conscious psycho-physical act. It can happen through hereditary transmission to any untrained persons, especially to any child under teens. “The person, whose life becomes psychically bifurcated through such involuntary psycho-physical phenomena inevitably becomes lean, thin, haggard-looking, weak and emanciated, and, if nothing tangible is done by person’s straying, the selfsame person dies after due parturition. The child in whose body the person’s migrated jachri lies, engrafted, lives on and grow into another full-fledged individual human being” (Rongmuthu, 2011, 113). In order to lure back the involuntary but consciously migrated jachri or jabiron of a person to its original niche, the preliterate A·chiks used to perform a solemn rite of
sanctity, known as *Jaoka, Jaringa* or *Chidema*, which literally means ‘retrieving’ the straying human psyche (Rongmuthu, 2011, 114).

The *A·chiks* believe in *rebirth*. The souls of the dead go to a place known to them as *Mangru-Mangram-Chitman-Bri-Balmang-Chiga* (the land of the spirits) along with the things that are given to the dead at the time of death. The souls of the dead are believed to take rest and have their midday meals on their way to the land of the spirits. This very place of resting is called *Me·mang Mesal Cha·ram-Boldak-Matchu-Karam*. It is a common occurrence amongst the *A·chiks* that the relative of the dead becomes unconscious at the time of death. Some persons, either men or woman stay unconscious for about ten to fifteen minutes. These persons testify that they accompanied the soul of the dead half the distance, as far as *Me·mang Mesal Cha·ram Boldak-Matchu-Karam* where they take their midday meals and then proceed to the land of the spirits. The god of death (*Sae-Dina-Mangga-Dine*) comes to fetch every soul before its death and takes him or her to the place of the spirits (Julius Marak, 2000, 200).

At the birth of every child a spirit is said to leave purgatory. A certain conception of punishment and reward hereafter is not wanting in their beliefs, for sin in one’s life affects the form of incarnation in the next. The lowest form of re-incarnation is in the shape of insects and plants. The next higher birth is in the shape
of animals and birds and then in the human form. The greatest reward for a virtuous life is to be born into the same motherhood as before (Playfair, 1998, 80).

Julius Marak states that the dead body of a person is never taken out of the house by taking out the legs first, but by the head first. This is done because of the belief in rebirth. While carrying the dead for cremation, all the streamlets that are crossed are tied across with threads. The tying of thread across the streams is intended to indicate that they have been bridged so that the spirits of the dead may go across. If a thread is tied across the stream, then the departed soul will be able to find its way to the land of the spirits. Therefore, the tying of threads across the streams and rivers is essential (Julius Marak, 2000, 204 - 205).

It is believed that the spirit of the person who commits suicide by hanging will be re-incarnated in the form of a beetle, which is condemned to eat nothing but the sap or gum of the plant which provided the fibre from which the rope was made (Playfair, 1998, 104-105). If the death is caused by an elephant or tiger, the spirit goes to Chit mang, but is re-incarnated in the form of the animal that caused the death (Paulinus Marak, 2005, 103).

Again, any person who has been killed by a tiger, elephant or by falling from a tree, or by drowning or has any other kind of unnatural death will not be taken inside the house. Some
people bury or cremate such people without bringing them back to the village. Even if the corpse is brought to the village, it is laid outside the house or on the verandah. The house or the place where such a corpse is kept is called Manggual (Julius Marak, 2000, 202). In neither of the above cases will the spirit again inhabit a human body. The spirit of a murderer is condemned to reside in Chitman for seven generations before returning to the human form (Playfair 1998, 105).

If a man has committed wrong in his life time, he may, as a punishment, be born again in the form of an animal, but this does not preclude the possibility of the spirit returning to the human shape after the death of the animal and a second sojourn at Chitman (Milton Sangma, 1981, 230).

The duration of probation at Chitman and the manner of the return to earth appear to depend either on the cause of the person’s death, or upon the sins he committed during his life-time (Playfair, 1998, 104-105).

The favourite wood for burning a body is that of the mandal tree (Erythrina Suberosa). It is believed that if the corpse is burned with bad wood, the spirit in its reincarnation will have bad health. The burning of the body with Simul or tree cotton is believed to bring bad luck to the spirit. Boldak tree (Schima Walichii) causes itching and irritation to the spirit; the Agatchi tree (Dilennis
pentazyna) causes sorrow and tears for it is full of water or sap. Hard wood is preferred as it is thought that its flame is of greater help to the spirit than the soft one. In reality however, all wood is used without distinction.

Near the cremation place a bull is kept tethered to a post called Gilmirong (it is also called Kilmrong or Tilta), and when the last part of the body is about to be consumed by the fire, the animal is killed so that its spirit may accompany that of the dead person and be of service to it in the next world (Milton Sangma, 1981, 250).

A dog is sacrificed to be a guide to the departed on his long journey to Chitmang. If the dead be some great one, especially a woman, bullocks must be offered at the moment of the lighting of the pyre, one on the spot, and others by signal at surrounding hamlets (Carey, 1966, 25).

Robbins Burling is also of the opinion that side by side with this concept of an after world is the belief that the soul can somehow be born again into this world, and even into the same family. Occasionally, people recognize a sign such as a birth mark, which shows them that a baby has been reborn from an earlier existence, since someone also, may have had similar marks. A soul occasionally deserts a man’s body and enters a woman’s womb to be reborn, without the first man actually being dead. During this
process the man grows thin and weak and if nothing is done, he or she will die when the baby is born. The belief in the transference of the soul from one person to another also figures in the custom, when a man or a woman dies, of presenting a gift to the house where he or she was raised (Julius Marak, 2000, 68).

It is an age-old belief of the A·chiks that the spirit of a dead individual is not warmly welcomed in the holy and happy regions in the Great Beyond, by the spirits of the relatives and friends of the deceased who had gone there before, if the disembodied spirit of the deceased is not accompanied by the spirit of the cow. Therefore, cows which are fit to accompany the spirits of human beings into the holy and happy spheres of the Great Beyond are sacred to the A·chiks. With such a belief, the A·chiks kill cows at funerals and in the Mangona. This practice of cow-killing at funerals and at post-funeral ceremonies is followed by the A·chiks, only to release the bovine spirit so that it may accompany the spirit of the deceased to the spirit sphere (Rongmuthu, 1996, 6).

The belief of the A·chiks in life after death is so strong that till today, the A·chiks throw or give food and other materials of daily use to the spirits of the dead to carry them along to Balpakram or Napak, the final resting place of the spirits. The A·chiks believe that the body dies but the spirits remain forever and
one will be reborn again as human beings or in some other form (Julius Marak, 2000, 104).

If the funeral rites are not performed the spirit does not go to *Chitmang*, the abode of spirits, instead it wends away on earth and turns into an evil spirit and reincarnation is a remote possibility. Even in the next life it is made a slave of other spirits and if re-incarnated at all, it is born to be poor and has to live a hard life on earth. It is also believed that the spirit loses way to the *Chitmang* and therefore loses its opportunity and the way to return to the same clan, family or relative in the next incarnation (Paulinus Marak, 2005, 104).

In the beginning men and women remained immortal. It was *Me·gam Gairipa Mande Singeripa Me·gam Dimrang Chada Gongman Mande Dimrim Me·gam Dimsim* who first tasted death among human beings. One day *Megam Gairipa* went to the market at *Dimrimpatal Chalongagal* taking with him his daughter, *Gairi Singeri*. On the way *Me·gam Gairipa* captured *Rime-Rinok* and took him as a prisoner. At midnight *Me·gam Gairipa* suddenly fell fatally ill and died. The God, *Misi Saljong*, had scourged him for capturing his servant, *Rime-Rinok*. This is was the first death among mankind since the world began. *Gairi Singeri*, daughter of the deceased man, rent the air with her hysterical cries over the death of her father. She stamped the earth frantically, in great despair. In the meantime the
captive made a good escape. Nobody dared to capture him again. The body of Me·gam Gairipa was taken to his village and cremated on a funeral pyre in front of the courtyard of his house by his fellow-villagers. After cremation, his spirit, having assumed a new appearance as fresh as a newly matured gourd of a newly-kilned earthen pot, came back home bringing back the cow and necklaces which had been given him at his death. At that time Grimchi Bachari, walking along with the matrilineal nephew of her husband, was scouring a stream nearby with her chekke (triangular fishing basket) in search of prawns. The nephew of the deceased was carrying a fish-creel for her. Meanwhile, at home, her children were sitting disconsolately on a raised side porch of the house. When they saw the apparition of their father coming towards them, they skipped about with joy and cried out to their mother that their father has come home. The mother shouted back at them saying that their father is already dead and gone, how could he ever come back?

So saying she solemnly returned to her task of collecting prawns. The spirit felt ashamed of the unmaidenly conduct of his wife in associating with his matrilineal nephew alone. So in anger, he started for Mangru Mangram Chitmang A·song Balmang Chiga, the temporary residence of departed spirits. When Grimchi Bachari returned home, she saw the cow and the necklaces which had been brought and placed there by the spirit. She was now fully convinced of the actual return of her spouse; so she decided to
pursue him. She took the route which the spirit of her husband travelled to the spirit land. She trudged onward through difficult paths. The woman sped up a mountain to the resting place of the Ghost Bhegia and the breathing place of Katchi Chanapa. The wife continued her pursuit to the clearing of Bonepa Janepa. Undismayed and undeterred Grimchi Bachari persistently dragged on her pursuit until she came to the limbo of Mangru Mangram. There she overtook her husband and prayed him to return home with her. But Me·gam Gairipa declined, saying:

You did not welcome me as your husband and your beloved when I last came home. I endorse your choice of my own matrilineal nephew to remarry after me. Let him marry you rightly, and let him preserve all my earthly belongings and heirlooms and faithfully perform every domestic function as a householder and your second husband in my place. Let him complete my unfinished tasks. If you and my matrilineal relations perform all the needful funeral and post funeral rites over me and set up memorial posts for me, I will be reborn into the same motherhood, which is dearer and greater than anything else I had while I was in the land of the living (Rongmuthu, 2008, 252).

Grimchi Bachari wept bitterly for a long time at the thought of having to return home alone, meanwhile she gazed steadfastly at the receding form of her beloved husband’s immortal spirit. Finally she returned home.

In ancient times there lived a man named Rakda in a village who had a son called Dengja. A draught caused a great famine in their village, so one day, both father and son went to a
distant place, taking a couple of baskets with them, in order to do manual labour there for something to buy rice. Whole day the two worked hard under the scorching heat of the sun in the field of a rich man and managed to fill their baskets with paddy in return for their earnest labours.

On their way back, father and son took a short rest under the cool shade of a peepul tree. Dengja, feeling very thirsty, went in search of water to drink and asked his father to wait for him. While he was away, Rakda wished to have more paddy in his basket and thus the he took three helpings with both hands from his son’s basket. Then he smoothed the paddy so that no trace of theft was noticeable. When Dengja returned, he was totally ignorant of what his father had done. So they continued their journey and reached their native village.

Some months later, Rakda fell seriously ill and died. As a conscientious and obedient son, Dengja performed the necessary funeral rites and set up a Kima (memorial post) in front of his father’s house.

In the sight of the Mother Goddess Dingipa Babra, nothing is lost, nothing is overlooked or forgotten, but every action, thought and feeling is taken into account and recorded in a way not discernible to mortal eyes. So, in his rebirth Rakda, because of the theft he had committed in the land of the living, was reborn as a
cow. The self same cow was made to plough his son’s paddy fields. For five years the cow laboured hard and eventually died. Dengja, who had a vegetable garden near his house, put up the skull of the cow to be used as a scare crow.

Once in the evening a woman from Dengja’s village entered his garden to steal some vegetables. Strangely enough the skull of the cow began to address her in the following words:

Beware, O woman, do not steal. As a man I was Rakda, the father of Dengja. I once stole some paddy from my son’s basket during the last famine. For that foul deed Dingipa Babra made me reborn as a cow to plough the fields of my son for full five years. As a cow I am dead now; but the debt incurred through my commission of theft is not yet fully repaid. I am still compelled to watch my son’s garden like this (Rongmuthu, 2008, 87-88).

The woman ran off to Dengja almost frightened out of her wits, and told him how the skull had spoken to her. Dengja had a troubled mind. He went to his vegetable garden, took the skull and burned it ritually (forgave his father). Next night in a dream he heard his father asking him: if he had really forgiven him. Dengja assured his father that he had done so. “Then let me depart in peace”, answered Rakda. After his dream Dengja felt at ease. He felt that the spirit of his father had already passed completely beyond the chains and limitations of mortal life into the blissful spirit land, there to remain for a time until it is commanded by the higher spirits to be reborn as a human being into this world.
The phenomenology of the spirit involves the third category of Jungian archetype. The word “spirit” possesses such a wide range of applications that it requires considerable effort to make a comprehensive understanding of the various meanings it denotes. A very widespread view conceives the Spirit as a higher and psyche as a lower principle of activity. Wundt takes spirit as “the inner being, regardless of any connection with an outer being”. It also means “the sum-total of all the phenomena of rational thought, or of the intellect, including the will, memory, imagination, creative power, and aspirations motivated by ideals” (Jung, 1968, 208). Spirit has the further connotation of sprightliness, as when we say that a person is ‘spirited’, meaning that he is versatile and full of ideas, with a brilliant, witty, and surprising turn of mind.

William Carey in The Garo Jungle Book (1993, first published in 1966) states that spirits form a major body of myths and archetypes in A·chik narratives. They believed in a multitude of benevolent and malevolent spirits. Each spirit is known by several names. The spirits are collectively referred to as ‘mite’ (mif7-e) which are everywhere such as above the sky, on the earth beneath, in the depths of the waters, in the dark caverns, in the recesses of mysterious mountains and hills, trees and bamboo groves, rivers and
lakes, mountains and hills, trees and shrubs, sticks and stones, all these are the dwelling places of some spirits. Similarly, the stars, the sun and the moon are associated with some spirits or mites and all these mites are considered as immortal beings (Milton Sangma, 1981, 220). The destiny of man, from birth to death, is governed by a host of such spirits who must be duly propitiated, by sacrifices of varied nature and at various occasions of their life time (Thomas, 1995, 208). They attach much importance to the worship of the spirits which rule the seasons, to maintain harmony with the spirits and thus obtain their blessings in the form of good harvests. Certain mountains are feared as the special abode of departed spirits. Deep waters are similarly regarded with superstitious dread because of the demon which is believed to be at the bottom in a golden boat. Moreover, the stars, the sun and the moon are associated with some spirits and all these spirits are considered immortal by the A·chiks (Thomas, 1995, 203). The numbers of mites are gradually increasing just as the number of septs or sub clans are increasing amongst the A·chiks. The same mite may be known by different names in different clans. There are as many as 230 names of mites from the different clans (Sinha, 1966, 48).

Some names of mites or spirits are as follows: A·tila mite, Susime mite, Chura mite, Jang·kepang mite, Sildam mite, Salbamon mite, Udim mite, Joga A·ding mite, Bang mite, Arata mite, Risi mite, Rangsan mite, Sangprong or Galapa nagande mite,
A∙song mite, Kram mite, Rongdik mite, Wa∙ge mite, Darechik mite, Bangkni mite, Skal mite, Goera wa∙kep mite, Chual mite, Saljong mite, Tongrengma mite, Ro∙ong mite, A∙ni mati mite, Brara mite, Lengra Basali mite, Rakwa mite, Chendi Chakinga mite, Bilwatok mite, Do∙chi gitok mite, Rama E∙sumu mite, Choro Chong∙kampek mite, Songading mite, A∙se mite, Bidawe mite, Jaropak mite, Skaldu mite, Pakmasam mite, Ganna mite, Kram mite. etc (Mihir Sangma, 1994, 54).

Several peaks are the abodes of deities. In their pantheon diverse spirits exist such as the gods of wind and storm, gods of rain, serpent spirits in great rivers, rock and cave spirits, water nymphs and fairies, fiends and ghosts and other images of nature. Sacred places and groves, haunted by the spirits, are marked. Some spirits are considered to be the originators of cultivation and wood-craft, musical arts and dance, medical and medicinal formulae and war and peace. Such techniques and arts were learned from their gods by their forefathers. Headhunting, renowned in the past, was a religious institution connected with fertility rites. Other deities of hunting, fertility, wealth and wisdom receive appropriate offerings (Joshi, 2004, 150).

Their knowledge and technological skills enable the A∙chiks to draw sustenance from the natural environment in which they live. They are also surrounded by a spiritual environment.
Though the A·chiks are remarkably uncertain of the nature of spirits, they know that they must behave in appropriate ways if the disaster is not to overtake them. Other than me·mang (ghost), the A·chiks have only one general term ‘mite’ for supernatural beings; but this covers both beings whom we would call gods and certain lesser, quite different nuisances, which hardly deserve to be known by any term more dignified than spirit. The latter, distinguished from the gods as “the mite that bite”, are numerous and ubiquitous, and when they bite they cause disease (Burling, 1963, 54).

They have an idea of a supernatural world that consists of the deities and spirits (mite) and the spirit of the dead – ‘me·mang’. ‘Mite’, when pleased, showers blessings and benefits on people, whereas when they are displeased or enraged, they cause illness, failure of crops, and damage to houses or village by storms, lightning or other natural calamities. When the ‘spirit bites’, the A·chiks say ‘mite chika’, which is a symptom of diseases or calamities indicating the spirit that causes them and the kind of actions or sacrifices to be performed for propitiating the concerned ‘mite’- Spirit (Paulinus Marak, 2005, 70). The A·chiks must behave appropriately to pre-empt any disaster by the enraged mite.

Indigenous people maintain that innumerable deities (mite) inhabit the earth. The deities are normally invisible. Occasionally they appear in people’s dreams and at times even in
real life. Dakkara, the deity of creation, manifests himself as a man with a long beard. Risi, the deity who is associated with a particular kram (a kind of drum) can show up as a woman. Other deities appear as animals. Some of these animals are vicious (tigers, electric eels, monster lizards), others benign (goats, peacocks). There are also deities that relate to plants. An example is the deity Goera, who is associated with the sleep inducing dikge (herb). Again other deities manifest themselves in phenomena such as lightning and thunder, earthquakes, gales or the raging fire that burns the newly cleared swiddens (Paulinus Marak, 2005, 47).

The vast majority of deities are not known by name. They are referred to in relation to the object that such a deity is believed to be associated with for example, the deity of the rice storage vessel, ‘rong·dikni mite’ or the place that a deity is thought to reside in ‘deities of the house ‘nokni mite’, ‘the deities of the jungle ‘burungni mite’ (Paulinus Marak, 2005, 48).

As Burling mentions, these mites live in many places. Some dwell in villages, others in the jungle, near a tree, or by the stream or a waterfall. A fork in a road is a favourite place for deities. The powerful mites are said to live on mountain tops (Burling, 1963, 55). All are dealt with in the same general fashion, though the details of the sacrifices differ. Several men usually spend two hours building an altar. Most altars are built of bamboo and
leaves, but the precise form depends upon the particular spirit to whom the sacrifice is directed (1963, 55).

Not all the supernatural beings are as uniformly malignant as the biting *mite*. Most of the others, the “creating” *mites* as they are occasionally called, are more or less neutral if not positively friendly. They are a bit more remote from daily life, but harmony between men and these gods, as they can appropriately called, must be maintained by several annual sacrifices (See Burling, 1963, 58).

Milton Sangma mentions how the *A·chiks* fear the occurrence of natural phenomena like thunder, lightning, earthquake, eclipse, wind, rain and shooting stars. They believe that each of these natural forces is controlled by a spirit. These natural phenomena are not, in themselves, the objects of their worship or sacrifice, but since each of these events is controlled by a spirit, sacrifices must be offered to these spirits and their favour gained. Thus sacrifices are offered to the rain-god when rain is required and to sun-god when sunshine is needed.

The *A·chiks* are very religious and god-fearing people. They believe that all physical ailments, accidents and unnatural deaths are due to the wrath of one or the other malevolent spirit. Therefore, sacrifices of animals and birds must be offered to
the deities to appease them as well as to invoke their blessings (Milton Sangma, 1981, 233).

**The Supreme Deity:** The *A·chiks* believe in the existence of a Supreme Deity who is sometimes identified as *Tatara Rabuga*. He is the greatest of all the deities and spirits of the *A·chik* pantheon. *Dakgipa Rugipa Stugipa Pantugipa*, is the supreme Creator. The *A·chiks* believe in creation of heaven and the earth and all living beings. According to stages of creation of different objects which was completed within eight days, the Creator was named by eight different names. On the first day *A·gilbo chigilboko dakchengo* (Creation of the Universe), God was known as *Tatara Rabuga Stura Pantura* or *Dakgipa Rugipa Stugipa Pantugipa*. The second day, *A·ko bisil kao, chiko waring dako* (Separated the land from water); God was called *Nostu Nopantu Misi Siste*. On the third day, *A·ni prem chin jinjemko* (Creation of all living beings on earth and the ocean, except man), God was known as *Norebak Norekdim and Jipjini Japjana*. On the fourth day God was called as *Aijangga Reding Banda* or *Norimjak Nosiksak* for He created *Sal ja aro askirangko* (Creation of all heavenly bodies). God was known as *Asima Dingsima Drama Chisama Dempema Demjima* on the fifth day for He created *Sam-bolko* (Creation of plants and vegetation). On the sixth day God created *Mandeko* (man) so He was known as *Ba·bra or Rabuga Ranaga*. On the seventh day God created the lesser god and goddess of wealth, food crops – *Patigpa Ra·rongipa Ruragipa*
Kontogipa miterangko – so He was known as Susimema Sangkildoma’a. God was known as Rekroni Rekrona on the eighth day for he created the supernatural powers of dread, fear and misfortunes – Bon-atgipa Chon-atgipa skalrang. The Creator, Dakgipa Rugipa Stugipa Pantugipa ended the work which He had done, and rested on the ninth day from all His works and blessed and sanctified it in the form of a festival, known as “Drua Wanbola or Wangala” it is believed (see Mihir Sangma, 1994, 48-49).

Tatara-Rabuga is the creator at whose command the world was made by two lesser spirits, Nostu-Nopantu and Machi (Thomas, 1995, 203). He is looked upon as the greatest of the spirits, and his own special mission with regard to the welfare of man, is the curing of wasting diseases such as Kala-azar and other persistent fevers. He is known by eight other names, namely Stura-Pantura, Jipjini-Jipjana, Kuradok-Kurapin, Chandasi-Gongongrigipa, Bulgipa-Imbanggipa, Ajanjan-Buljanjan, Sekira-Balira and Jamanokgipa-Janganibambi (Playfair, 1998, 81). The A·chiks call him by about one hundred and sixty names in total, of which the following are some: Tatara-Rabuga, Bisikrom Bidatare, Rabugama, Ranagama, Stura Pantura, A·ning Randinima, Ambi Mori, Dakdame, Rurime, Dakgipa Rugipa, Aiti, Biati, Korabok Kosapin, Maresu Marebok, Dingipa, Babra, Ba·rangipa, Chitragipa, Nirikgipa, Sandigipa, Ja·rikgipa, Ja·sangipa, Janggini Nokgipa, Jamani Biambi, Pattigipa, Ra·rongipa, Sualgipa, Imbagipa,
Mikbegipa, Mitdakgipa, Ja·ragipa, Ja·chitgipa, Rakkigipa Nirokgipa, Chichrigipa Rakkigipa, Chijanggiko Ripinggipa, Chichrigipa Rakkigipa, Chijanggiko Kangipa, Chichriko On·gipa, Jikmite Gosai, Ma·gipa Jagring (Paulinus Marak, 2005, 28-29).

Rabuga, Ranaga, Tatara or Dakgipa are the used as names for the god who is believed to have made the world and man. Dakgipa, in fact, means quite literally “the one who makes” (Burling, 1963, 58). The A·chiks believe in the Supreme Being, Tatara-Rabuga. In addition to this deity they also believe in numerous Mites attributing each one of them to some specific work. There is a multiple number of beneficent and malevolent Mite. The anger of any Mite must be appeased by offering a sacrifice (Julius Marak, 2000, 53). An expensive sacrifice is offered to him by killing a bull, goat and a fowl. Rice beer and rice are also provided for the people during the ceremony which lasts for two days (Milton Sangma, 2002-2003, V. Pg 1).

Besides Tatara-Rabuga, there are other principal deities and spirits who are of great significance to the religious-minded A·chiks:

Saljong was supreme among the gods under whom there were other gods and goddesses entrusted with specific functions. The heavenly bodies like the Sun, the Moon and the Stars were believed to preside over the hills and were considered as the
agents of *Saljong* to manage the affairs of the world (Bhattacharjee, 1978, 5). He is the giver of all materials to human beings and all other living beings on earth, in the water and above the earth (Paulinus Marak, 2005, 29). He is represented by the sun. He is responsible for the germination and growth of all crops, trees and bamboo and for the ripening of all fruits and grains. He is the Lord of the Harvest, and the greatest *A·chik* festival, *Wangala*, is celebrated in his honour after the harvest (Thomas, 1995, 204). The actual sacrifice is offered to him in the fields before the village festival begins. On the sacrificial altar liquor is poured out on the ground in front of it and the worshippers then return to the village for the festival rejoicing (Rana, 1989, 217). The spirit is also known by the names *Tengsugipa*-Tengtotgipa, *Salgira*, *Salgra* and *Rengra*-Balsa (Playfair, 1998, 81). *Saljong* controls the water and the rain and the growth of all things. When the dried fields are burned before planting, *Saljong* sees the smoke of the fire and comes to join the people as they worship him in their fields. *Saljong* is not an ordinary biting spirit. The blindness which he causes is incurable, but he is more intimately concerned with the daily affairs of the *A·chiks* than the somewhat more remote, if abstractly speaking, but no less powerful, *Rabuga* (Burling 1963, 58).

*Nostu-Nopantu* is the deity, who at the command of *Tatara-Rabuga*, fashioned the earth with the help of another spirit, named *Machi* (Playfair, 1998, 81). But no sacrifice is offered to
them as they do not harm any man (Milton Sangma, 2002-2003, Vol. V. 1).

**Chorabudi** is a benign spirit and is the protector of crops. He is invoked against pains in the ears and boils. He is the servant of *Tatara-Rabuga* (Thomas, 1995, 204). Before partaking of the first fruits of the season, such as Indian corn, millet and melons, a small quantity of some of these is always presented as an offering to him. Sacrifices are offered to him for curing the diseases of the ears, and of boils (Milton Sangma, 2002-2003, Vol. V. 1).

**Goera** is the spirit of strength and the cause of thunder and lightning. He is prayed to, for health and strength after long illness (Playfair, 1998, 81). He destroys man, trees and animals by causing lightning in the open fields. Sacrifices are offered to Him with pig; fowl or duck which is offered to him at the foot of a tree. According to the belief of the *A·chiks*, lightning and thunder is caused by the spirit of *Goera*. Lightning is caused by the flashing of *Goera’s* sword. *Goera* formerly lived on earth and slew a monster pig as big as a mountain. Afterwards however he ascended to the skies and now amuses himself from time to time in martial exercises with the sword. Thunder is the noise he makes while taking exercise with his sword (Milton Sangma, 1981, 235).

**Kalkame** is the elder brother of *Goera* and is entrusted with the care of the lives of all men on earth. He
guarantees safety from dangers from wild animals, aquatic animals and all kinds of dangers and diseases. The A∙song or the sacrificial stones are erected in his honour (Thomas, 1995, 204). They pray to him in the A∙songtata or A∙songroka ceremony, and is entreated to keep the people of the village safe from all dangers of the forest during the coming year. The a∙song or sacrificial stones are erected in his honour, and devil-driving is done in his name. The offering is made on sacrificial stones which are smeared with the blood of the victim (Playfair, 1998, 82). This deity is entrusted with certain power that enables it to cause some misfortunes upon a person in order to draw him closer towards him. However, if this fails, death is the only penalty for that person. This same God is also locally known as Gana mite or simply Gana for whom they perform the sacrificial offering and prayer with certain rites, rituals and divine services. This ceremony is locally known as Gana ceremony which is the only means of saving one from misfortune or death penalty (Mihir Sangma 2004, 166).

Susime, a female deity, is the giver of both good and bad things to mankind. She is believed to cause and cure blindness, lameness, deafness and other diseases. She is represented by the moon (Thomas, 1995, 204). Susime mite causes alternate chills and fever. To drive it away, an altar of bamboo and leaves must be built in the yard in front of the house. A pig or chicken is sacrificed at this altar and the animal is eaten. When a spirit, known as ‘but’
(bot), causes an attack of dysentery, a small boat is built of bamboo, dabbed with the blood of a sacrificial animal, and floated down the river; and the spirit is supposed to follow it. Other mites are held responsible for paleness, lassitude, skin diseases and all the other aches and pains which plague the A·chiks. Each can be pacified with a special form of sacrifice. Susime is associated with the moon, and, may blind people or lame them, but the disease caused by this god can be cured by sacrifice (Burling, 1963, 59). She is an also expert in instigating people to quarrel and fight among themselves (Milton Sangma 2002-2003, Vol.V.1).

Asima-Dingsima is the mother of Susime. She does not possess any power and no sacrifice is, therefore, offered to her (Thomas, 1995, 204). The other names for this spirit are Norekbak-Norekdim, Sonakale-Kaburanche and Mikrongitok-Kisangsitok (Playfair, 1998, 82). It is believed that it is inauspicious to pronounce her name and also that it is taboo. However, she is regarded as a famous goddess as the constellation of heaven and stars had attended her funeral ceremony which lasted for many days (Milton Sangma 2002-2003, Vol.V.1-2).

Tongrengma, a female deity, has the power to cause ailment to human lives. When she causes ailment, a sphincter is formed and the sick patient suffers from unbearable pain. A cock is
offered to appease her near a river or a stream (Milton Sangma 2002-2003, Vol.V.2).

Nawang is an evil spirit who devours the souls of human beings on the way to the purgatory of the A·chiks just after death. When a person dies, it is customary for the A·chiks to throw the dead, ornaments and money along with the deceased, so that the deceased man can proceed easily to purgatory, while the Nawang spirit is busy collecting those materials. This evil spirit roams about the earth trying to devour souls whenever any soul comes across him. Sometimes he is in human form and he comes sometimes in the form of Maldengong, a mythical animal. He also causes pain in the stomach, vomiting, diarrhoea and is believed to be at a man’s death bed, ready to devour him when he dies (Playfair, 1998, 82).

Salgira is associated with the sun and is less troublesome than his brother, and so he receives no sacrifices (Burling, 1963, 59).

The A·chiks believe that the destiny of every human being has been preordained by the Divine Mother Dingipa Babra Mugipa Jaring, and the great mathematical thinker, who has also fashioned the size, height, looks and constitution of each living person. At the birth of every child the spirits of the elemental world and the spirits of all living beings muster under Dingipa Babra. They spread out their mysteriously woven webs to ascertain whose
lot it shall be to cut off the life of the new born babe. This mysteriously woven web is known as Rechu or Amrechu that is, the Web of Destiny. At the birth of every human being a spirit called Kalkame Kalgra takes charge of the child. It is he who protects the child throughout its life. At the time of death, Kalkame Kalgra gives the person over to whosoever's lots it, to cut off may be to the life of the person (Rongmuthu, 2008, 115).

IV

Trickster

The trickster is an object of study in mythology, religion, anthropology, psychology, and recently in film as well. The trickster is a divinity or semi-divine creature that pops up in almost every mythology or folklore of the world. It is the god of the crossroads, or of trade, of mischief, the physical representation of randomness, and an agent of chaos. At the same time, as being short-sighted, impulse-driven, and an instigator of disorder, he often plays tricks on other Gods or nature. He is also a bringer of knowledge, steals fire from the gods, and is someone who, by breaking the rules, creates new ones. Paul Radin explains that the “Trickster is at one and the same time a creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself” (Flam, 2011, 4).
Jung studied the trickster as a basic human archetype. He believed that it was part of a collective unconscious shared by the human race. He surmised that the trickster represented our own basic nature, the animal in us that we had left behind, as we learned to master tools and fire. In psychology the trickster has been referred to as a sort of id, a shadow of our true nature (Flam, 2011, 5).

The myth of the trickster is the story of a man trapped by, and incapable of dealing with, the circumstances of his surroundings. During his travels he meets tricksters that trick him, because he lacks the necessary knowledge to see through their deceptions, until he has learned sufficiently to turn the con on his assailants, cause upheaval in the normal order of things, and be recognized as the legendary fool he is. The development of the trickster through the narrative is the story of an animal that is driven by his impulses, troubled by them, learns from them and can use them in dealing with the world, rather than being used by them and having the world to deal with him (Flam, 2011, 13).

The Trickster-Figure, which is the fourth category of archetype in Jung’s analysis, is a clown, a mischief maker. He provides the comic relief that a story often needs to offset heavy dramatic tension. The trickster can be an ally or companion of the hero, or may work for the villain. In some instances the trickster
may even be the hero or villain. In any role, the trickster usually represents the cunning forces, and is pitied against the opponents who are stronger or more powerful. According to Jung:

The typical trickster motifs are his fondness for sly jokes and malicious pranks, his power as a shape-shifter, his dual nature, half-animal, half divine, his exposure to all kinds of torture, and last but not the least – his approximation of the figure of a saviour (Jung, 1968, 264).

The trickster is a primitive “cosmic” being of divine-animal nature, on the one hand, superior to man because of his superhuman qualities, and, on the other, inferior to him because of his irrational and unconscientiousness.

In A·chik folk narratives, one finds a human and animal trickster who deceives others for his own benefit. For instance Simison Sangma speaks of Gangbo Nokma (a rich man named Gangbo) who deceives his neighbours through sly ways and becomes rich, while the neighbours get tricked and lose everything they have. There are also instances of animal tricksters such as the ‘Mikkol’ (monkey) trying to entice young girls Nose and Dimse (Simison Sangma, 1984, 14). And it also deceives people as well as animals like Matchadu (tigerman) and Mongma (elephant) (Dhoronsing Sangma, 1984, 72).

Dewangsing Rongmuthu in The Epiclore of the Garos (2008) narrates various episodes to illustrate the different activities
of the tricksters through different stories. Stories are an important aspect of culture. Many works of art and most works of literature tell stories. Stories are of ancient origin, existing in ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, Chinese, and Indian cultures. Stories are also a ubiquitous component of human communication, used as parables and examples used to illustrate points. Story telling was probably one of the earliest forms of entertainment.

_Gangbo Nokma_ is the story of a man who tricks his fellow beings and becomes wealthy through his cunning and tricky ways.

_Gangbo nokma_ was very wealthy and powerful; he was a quick-witted, crafty, pragmatic and proud individual. Because of his haughty domineering ways, he was extremely unpopular with his neighbours. Though outwardly they feared him, inwardly they wished his ruin. One day all the elders of the village held a secret meeting in which a plan was hatched to burn Gangbo Nokma’s house with himself and his whole family in it. The imminent victim of this sinister design got scent of it and secretly removed all his money, jewels and riches and buried them in a nearby forest. All valuable articles were quietly removed to convenient places. And the man went about as if he were wholly ignorant of the intrigue against him.

The next night the enemies of Gangbo Nokma fastened the doors of his house from outside and set it on fire.
However, Gangbo and his family escaped unscathed through an opening in the back wall which he had previously prepared. The next morning he assumed the role of a completely ruined man. He told the villagers that the ashes of his house were all that he could call his own. He filled up a dozen or more sacks with the ashes of his and carried them in the direction of the market. The villagers had seen him carry away the ashes; but they were not interested in what he would do with them. Gangbo himself dug up all his money and precious jewels and proudly marched into the village with them in broad daylight. He began to count all his coins and proudly displayed his jewels in the sight of all the villagers. The villagers were surprised at his sudden acquisition of wealth and they eagerly asked him how he came by it. He replied:

The ashes of our dwellings are in great demand by some foreign merchants in the market town. It was very fortunate that my house was burnt. Its ashes brought me more money than I ever had before. You should remember that what seem apparently to be calamities are often blessings in disguise (Rongmuthu, 2008, 12).

Gangbo argued with the villagers in such a convincing manner that they at once burnt up their own dwellings with all they had in them and filled sacks with the ashes. Then they marched together to the market and offered the ashes for sale. The market people laughed derisively at the villagers and looked upon them as lunatics for wanting to sell such useless things as ashes. At this the villagers were enraged at Gangbo. They returned home
empty handed and were determined to kill Gangbo’s cattle and eat them up. Gangbo himself met the villagers and politely expressed sorrow that the foreign merchants who dealt in ashes had departed from the locality, and asked the villagers not to think of him as someone who thought of doing wrong to them… “Pray do not think of doing any wrong to me or else something may happen to you in the long run” (Rongmuthu, 2008, 12).

The villagers would not listen to his entreaty, but forcibly took away all his cattle and slaughtered them. Gangbo implored them to be merciful enough to spare him the skins of the slain animals. They granted his request, since they had no use for the skins. Gangbo took the skins of his slain cattle, dried them in the sun, punctured some of them so that they might appear more useless than ever, made strong bags out of the remaining ones and marched out of the village. Gangbo came upon a rich cultivator who was ploughing his field. Gangbo introduced himself as a travelling leather merchant who was ready to buy good and bad skins alike, and asked the man for a drink of water. The farmer directed him to his house saying that his children were there and would give him a drink. Gangbo went to the farmer’s house and told the man’s children that their father had sent him for his money and jewels. The children refused to show the stranger the place where his father’s wealth was stored. Gangbo then yelled out to the farmer saying: “They say they will not give it”. The farmer, busy as he was with his
ploughing, did not bother about what his children were really refusing to give the stranger. He simply surmised that they were denying the man a mere drink of water. So he brandished the stick with which he had been goading the animals and cried out angrily at the children, ‘If you don’t give it to him, I’ll use this stick on you!’ (Rongmuthu 2008, 13).

The children obediently showed Gangbo a big earthen pitcher filled to the brim with money, but sealed at the mouth. Gangbo speedily broke the seal, poured out all the shining coins into his crude bags, rolled these inside the pieces of punctured hides and marched off towards the cultivator to allay the suspicion of the children. He thanked the man for the drink of water which in reality he had not taken, and joyfully made his way back home to his native village, now a richer man than ever.

Gangbo eventually reached his village, poured out all his coins from the leather bag in the presence of the villagers and began to count before their eyes. The onlookers were amazed at the immense money he exhibited and asked him how he acquired such a huge fortune. He replied that if they wanted to become rich, they should kill their cattle, skin the slain beasts, puncture the skins, go and sell them in the market.

The credulous villagers straight away killed all their cattle, dried their skins, bored them through and through and took
them to the market but nobody there wanted to buy the skins. The villagers were taken to be crazy fools for attempting to sell such useless punctured skins.

While the villagers were at the market, Gangbo set out towards the same place, to enjoy their embarrassment. On the outskirts of the market he met a travelling cloth merchant who sold rare and precious cloth on credit, if he felt satisfied with the house of the purchaser. Now, near the wayside was a cluster of well-built houses, whose owners were all in the market. Gangbo entered one of these houses and asked some small children for a drink of water. He seated himself on the porch while the children fetched water. As he drank Gangbo talked freely with the children as if they were his own. The cloth seller approached Gangbo for making a sale. Gangbo said that he was really in need of cloth, but at that moment he had no cash to make the purchase. Thereupon the merchant graciously offered to let hims have some valuable cloth on credit. He asked Gangbo to show him his house and to give his name as well as the name of his father. So Gangbo politely showed the house where he happened to be and said that his name was ‘On·jawa’ (will not give) and that his father’s name was ‘Man·jawa’ (will not get). The merchant took the names and said that he would return in a year for payment (Rongmuthu, 2008, 14). After twelve month, the merchant did return to the place for the payment of the house-owner, when the latter not only denied all knowledge of On·jawa and Man·jawa, but
became angry with the insistent merchant, belaboured with the help of the neighbours and left him half-dead.

*Gangbo* dressed himself in the rarest clothes and appeared like a man about to be married. In the meantime, his co-villagers, who had been ridiculed at the market place for attempting to sell punctured cattle skins, were returning to the village with unbridled wrath. On the way they solemnly vowed that they would straight away put the deceitful man to death in the cruellest possible way. They decided to bind him up and put in a bamboo basket and drown him in a pond far away from their village.

When the angry villagers arrived home, they saw *Gangbo* attired in his new clothes. Wasting no words, they seized him, tied him up and thrust him into the basket and carried it away to a distant pond. When they reached the spot, they were very tired and hungry, so they decided to eat. So they put down the basket on the bank and walked a few yards away to take their meal. As soon as the villagers were out of sight a young cowherd came along and curiously examined the strange basket and found *Gangbo* inside and asked him what he was doing. The artful captive replied in a mournful voice that he was being taken by force under the orders of the king to be the bridegroom of a beautiful princess. The boy listened with open mouth. *Gangbo* added that he was in love with a poor peasant girl and he did not think of encumbering himself with
power and riches by marrying king’s daughter. This cowherd had been leading a very hard life, minding a large number of cows and calves every day. He was amazed at the wonderful things Gangbo revealed to him and thought that the man was a fool to decline marrying a princess merely for sentimental reasons. So the boy said “Were I in your place, I would fly like a bird to the palace even now. Why not send me as a substitute?” (Rongmuthu 2008, 16).

Gangbo expressed willingness and asked the boy to untie him and the boy exchanged his tattered clothes for the gorgeous wedding apparel. Put him in the basket and asked the boy to remain silent if they asked him any question. Gangbo went away with the cattle towards his village. After finishing their repast the villagers returned to the spot where they had left the basket. Without examining the basket they kicked the basket into the pond, watched the bubbles rising in the spot where it went down, and danced with savage joy at the thought that at last they had got rid of their intrepid foe.

The wonderment of the villagers knew no bounds, however, when, on reaching home, they discovered Gangbo in possession of fine cows, bulls and calves. They were stupefied at the sight and could not utter a word. Gangbo, perceiving their thoughts said:
I thank you heartily for putting me in possession of this herd. Under the charmed pond, there lies a wonderful village where there are such fine cows, bullocks and calves a galore. Their owners are all anxious to exchange them for bamboo-threads which they highly prized. If any one of you dare go down deep into the pool, securely bound in the bamboo-baskets so that no aquatic animal may harm you on the way, you will certainly obtain a similar herd of cattle (Rongmuthu, 2008, 16).

The villagers’ nodded assent and commenced to make big bamboo baskets for themselves. With their own hands they carried the completed baskets to the spot where they had kicked Gangbo into the water. They brought a lot of food and rice-beer and made merry in anticipation of the huge herd of cows which would soon be theirs. With glad hearts they got into the baskets and boisterously bade Gangbo tie them up securely and kick them into the water. Gangbo tied up the baskets one by one firmly and finally rolled them all into the water. Gangbo went back to the village and took possession of the villagers’ land and property and made their wives and children his subjects. He grew rich and powerful and lived happily afterwards.

Awat and Matchadus

Rongmuthu cites examples to show how Awat a young man tricks the matchadu or dudurong (a tiger man; a creature that is man during the day and a tiger at night).
There is a division of hill tribe people, known as *Matchadu* or *Dudurong*, in the north-eastern region of India, who have in their long-guarded possession their own distinct anciently-inherited Psycho-Physical Secrets. The anciently-inherited primitive secret psycho-physical culture, whereby one is physically transformed into a tiger at dusk, when the shade of night falls is a distinctive prorogation of a Segment of the Hill People, known as *Matchadus* or *Dudurongs*. Every day, as the shades of night fall, each Matchadu gets ready to undergo the routine ordeal of physical metamorphosis into a tiger (Rongmuthu, 2011, 118).

Once in very ancient days, there was a little colony of *Matchadus*, a race of black mop-headed cannibals, who were half-men and half-tigers. The *Matchadus* generally assumed the shapes of men and dressed themselves in clothing like human beings. By this means they used to decoy men and women and devour them. One day, intrepid *Awat* filled a large basket with sweet scented *monaretchi* or *sobri* banana and carried them to sell at the colony of *Matchadus*. On his arrival, *Awat* generously distributed the sweet bananas free to all *Matchadus*. After they had eaten, *Awat* asked them fearlessly how they liked the bananas. They discourteously ignored his question instead they asked *Awat* ‘Where does the fruit which you have brought grow? On a vine or a tree?’ *Awat* answered that it grew on a big tall tree. Then the *Matchadus* forced *Awat* to show them the coveted tree. But before leading them away, the
adventurous young man warned them of an impending attack and told them to bring out all their money, valuable gongs, precious beads and clothes from their homes and conceal them in a cave near their colony. Then, after removing their valuables, *Awat* asked them to put their wives and children inside their houses and fasten the doors from outside. So when the thieves come to their colony, they would hear the voices from within the houses and run away. The *Matchadus* did exactly as advised by *Awat*. Then the grown up male members of the *Matchadus* joyfully ambled after *Awat* in blissful anticipation of the fruit which would soon be theirs. *Awat* led them to a gigantic *simul* cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*), the circumference of which was fifty cubits and the branches of which were heavily laden with half-ripening bolls of cotton. *Awat* said to them, “Now squat together on the ground near the tree and wait while I cut it down for you with my axe”.

*Awat* cut the tree in such a way as to let it fall on them all. When it was about to topple, he shouted aloud, “Now look up at the tree and stretch your hands aloft to get the fruits” (Rongmuthu, 2008, 97 - 98). All the *Matchadus* in close concourse raised their outstretched hands towards the falling tree. When it fell with a tremendous crash, the tree instantaneously killed all the assembled *Matchadus*. *Awat* speedily returned to their colony and set their houses on fire. All the female *Matchadus* with their young children were burnt alive. After this, *Awat* returned to his own
village bringing with him all the money, valuable gongs, precious beads and clothes. He made himself the sole possessor of the Matchadus’ wealth.

Jereng, the orphan

This is the story of how animal tricksters deceive a boy but in turn get deceived themselves.

Jereng an orphan boy, lived in a village, he was about five summers old. He had no other relations to turn to for help; and as no one in the village could look after him or give him food, he decided to enter the forest himself in search of wild fruits and edible roots. While Jereng was on the tree eating and enjoying himself, a pair of terrible cannibals, half men and half tigers, known as Matchadus, came by. They espied the orphan high up on the tree and begged him for some of the luscious fruits which he was eating. Obligingly their request, Jereng vigourously shook the tree, causing a shower of fruit to descend near the couple. But they failed to partake of it. Instead, they complained that the fruit had fallen on dirty ground and was polluted. They now asked him to pluck some fruit with his own hands and lower it to them by means of his toes. At first Jereng was suspicious of the terrible two and would not listen to their request. However, when they assured him that no harm
would come to him, the orphan half reluctantly let down some fruits with his toes. Promptly the Matchadus seized him by the feet, pulled him down off the tree, tied him up in a cage and carried him to their home. There they had a young son of their own who was about the same age as Jereng. The following day, the Matchadus said to their own child: “We are going to cultivate the fields. Kill this boy and cook him well for our evening meal”.

When his parents had departed, the young Matchadu, looking at the orphan said: “We Matchadus are all dark-skinned. You men are fair skinned. Pray tell me how you become so” (Rongmuthu, 2008, 100).

Jereng answered,

When we bathe, we do so in boiling water. If you want to be as fair as man, loosen me and I will boil water and bathe you (Rongmuthu, 2008, 100).

The young Matchadu eagerly freed the captured boy and Jereng promptly began to heat some water. When it had reached the boiling point, he said to the young Matchadu to take off his clothes and go down to the pig-sty under the house, sit still there till Jereng poured water upon you. The unsuspecting Matchadu youngster did as he was told. Jereng speedily poured the boiling water upon him, and the Matchadu soon died of the burns which he received.
_Jereng_ hastily clad himself in his victim’s clothes, and smeared dirty, black soot all over his body until he exactly resembled the dead boy. He then cooked his body well for the parent’s meal. At dusk the mother and father returned from the fields and, without squeamishness, began to eat their evening meal which was elaborately served. After a while they remarked idly that the meat smells like the flesh of their own child. The orphan promptly replied:

Dear parents, I killed the boy and cooked his body as you told me. Perhaps in the midst of toil in dressing the meat, a few drops of my perspiration fell into it (Rongmuthu, 2008, 101).

This silenced the hungry couple and they finished their repast without further comment. Sometime later, _Jereng_ pretended to be sad. When the _Matchadus_ questioned him concerning his sadness, the boy said to them:

I am your only child; you are getting old. Who knows when you will die? Yet, you have not shown me any of your wealth. Therefore, it is clear that you do not love me! (Rongmuthu, 2008, 101).

The parents, to remove his anxiety, promptly revealed to him all their possessions. The following day, when the _Matchadus_ left the house, the orphan hid all their money, jewels and clothes on the opposite bank of the river.
A few days later Jereng begged the couple to take him to the river to bathe. When they arrived there, he asked them to let him learn to swim, though in truth, the orphan was an excellent swimmer. The parents flatly refused to grant his request telling him that he would certainly be drowned. The boy would not listen to their pleas, but cried out more, until finally the Matchadus reluctantly gave him permission to try. Whereupon the orphan adroitly leaped into the water and swam swiftly to the other side. There he divested himself of the clothes of the dead young Matchadu and shouted triumphantly to the parents of the dead boy:

You Matchadus, have devoured your own child. Look, I am the child of man whom you seized by treachery. See, I have all your wealth and precious clothes. Your own iniquity overwhelms you now (Rongmuthu, 2008, 102).

The Matchadus were beside themselves with rage against the insolent boy; but they could do nothing about it, since neither of them knew how to swim. The orphan cried out to them once more:

If you want to cross the river over here, sit on the backs of earthen pitchers and row them on. If you want to cross quickly, punch holes in the pitchers (Rongmuthu, 2008, 102).

The gullible Matchadus followed his advice and were consequently drowned. Jereng gathered up the possessions and went away from the river side.
The Monkey and the Tortoise

In A·chik Golporang D. K. Sangma narrates through various incidents how animals trick one another.

A common short-tailed monkey and a tortoise were once great friends. One day they started out together with conical-shaped fishing baskets made of bamboo for fishing. The monkey, being cleverer than the tortoise, reserved all the best fishing places for himself and set his baskets in them. The tortoise, being unable to secure suitable spots, took his chance and set only one single trap and that too, in a small, muddy lake where wild boars were accustomed to come and wallow. The next day a large number of fish got entrapped in the monkey’s baskets; but he would not give even a small portion to the tortoise.

On a later date the tortoise went to see his basket and found a big, wild pig caught in it. He speared it and squealed loud and long. The monkey hearing the shrill squeals of the wild pig came running to the spot, and found the pig at the point of death. He helped the tortoise kill it, keeping himself at a safe distance from the wild pig and all along merely tapping it with the tip of a long bamboo pole. The tortoise was about to take the body of the wild pig in a lump to the house. But the monkey suggested to cut the body into pieces and to take only the good portions of the flesh. The
monkey also said that they better cook the meat there itself and take it home later.

The simple tortoise assented to his proposal. So they cut the meat into joints and steaks, dried and smoked them and cooked the best pieces on the spot. Then the monkey said:

Let us enjoy this cooked meat together on the top of a big tree on yonder hill. From there we can get a wonderful view of our motherland while we are eating (Rongmuthu, 2008, 138).

The tortoise said that he could not climb trees. Together they carried the cooked meat to the foot of a big tree on a hill. The monkey said, “Let me first take our meat up the tree. When it is all up, I shall hoist you” (Rongmuthu, 2008, 138). Again the poor tortoise consented and they work together to get the cooked meat to the top of the tall tree. When it was all there, the monkey told the tortoise to catch hold of his tail with his mouth. The tortoise did so. The monkey then assayed to carry him to the top; but when they were half way up the first branch, he cried out: “Alas, my tail is becoming detached. Let free your grip or we shall both die” (Rongmuthu, 2008, 139). The tortoise loosened his hold and fell heavily to the ground. Three times more the monkey tried to hoist the tortoise up the tree, but each time he pretended that his tail was coming off and the simple tortoise fell to the ground with a heavy
thud. At last the monkey told the tortoise to remain at the foot of the
tree and that he would toss down the tortoise’s share.

The tortoise stayed at the foot of the tree and the
monkey scrambled up the tree and threw down only the bones from
which he had already cleaned the meat. In anger the duped tortoise
went to the river and meditated revenge and waited for his deceitful
friend. In the evening the monkey came down to the river for a
drink. As he was bending over the water, the tortoise grabbed the
lower portion of his buttocks with his strong jaws. The monkey
screamed in excruciating pain and implored the tortoise to set him
free; but the later would not listen. So, wherever he went, the
monkey had to carry the tortoise with him.

Mikkol

(Mikkol - name of a monkey. His name is suggestive of his
physiological simian heritage. ‘Mik’ stands for eye and kol for hole
or depression. Evidently it suggests the depression-like eye sockets
of the monkey)

In a certain village there lived two beautiful sisters
named Nose and Dimse. One day they took their koksi (woven
bamboo basket to fish, prawns, crabs, cockles and small fish etc)
and chekke (coop-like nets made from slit bamboo especially meant
fro catching prawns, crabs and small fish) and went upstream looking for small fry and prawns. Mikkol a short tailed monkey spotted them and fell in love instantly. Immediately he began to look for ways to make the maidens reciprocate his feelings. Upstream, a group of young men were cutting bamboo to build a bachelor’s dormitory; they were at the same time competing with each other as to carve the bamboo in the most artistic way. Very soon they floated down the stream several pieces of artistically cut and carved bamboo and returned home.

Mikkol spotted the carved bamboo and thought that they could be his chance. He thought that perhaps Nose and Dimse would like them and he schemed and waited. It did not take long for the sisters to catch sight of the wonderfully carved bamboo and to fall in love with them. They began to urge each other to pick them up, saying that the bamboos were beautifully and wonderfully carved”. They wanted to take them for their younger siblings at home. As they were competing with each other to pick them up, they heard a voice saying:

Take them if you mean to take me as your husband; take it, if you intend to bed with me (Dhoronsing Sangma, 1988, 33).

The sisters at once directed their gaze towards the voice coming to them and realised that their object of desire was Mikkol’s handiwork, “Tuai! Tuai! (Act and sound of spitting to show
one’s contempt) We will neither take your cut bamboos nor take you for a husband”, they spat their rejection outright, crying that it was only Mikkol, Mikkol was ashamed and was left alone by the sisters.

Mikkol was not one to give up. He followed them unashamedly close on their heels. The sisters continued to fish and look for prawns upstream and covered one pool after the other. As they continued, Dimse caught sight of a nest full of salchame (a kind of wild bird) chicks in the hollow of a tree. She expressed great desire to have the chicks, saying they must be lovely. The older sibling agreed that they must be lovely indeed. It would be a nice pet for the brothers and sisters back home. Nose, then declared that she would marry anyone if he is able to bring down the birds for them, even if he happened to be a lean-legged banggal or sharp nosed rori (a term used by A·chiks to refer to non-tribals). When Mikkol heard the declaration his joy knew no bounds. He began to pat his bottom and hop around and asked. “If I bring down the chicks, would you both take me as your husband?” “Yes”, they replied “We would consider you as our beau even if you were a monkey. We would take you for a husband even if you were an ape” (Dhoronsing Sangma, 1988, 33).

No sooner had they said ‘yes’, he whipped into the tree and pushed his right-hand into the nest through the hollow. However, even before he could grasp any of the chicks, his hand got
stuck in the hollow. He could neither push his hand in nor pull it out. "How many chicks are there, darling Mikkol?" asked Nose. "Enough for you and me and for your brothers and sisters". Then Dimse urged him to count and say the exact number.

He began to count the chicks saying 'One, two, three, four, five, six...' The sisters below were anxious for a glimpse of the young birds. But the monkey was not able to pull out his hand, and to hide his embarrassment he pretended to count over and over again. The sisters strained their necks and waited patiently, but in vain! Ultimately they saw what had happened and cried out that Mikkol's hand had got caught in the tree-hollow.

Yet Mikkol would not concede defeat – he held out his left hand, waved it gloriously and declared: "See, its here!" In the meantime Mikkol's right hand had swelled badly. Nose, once again declared that Mikkol's hand was stuck; and once again Mikkol denied it and showed off his left hand. The sisters waited patiently till the sun was beginning to sink in the west. Ultimately the sisters refused to be taken for a ride any longer. They informed and left him with his right hand stuck in the hollow of the tree. Mikkol was ashamed and helplessly watched them leave. Now Mikkol came to realise his own mistake and began to weep for it.

Mikkol's hand was caught in the tree-hollow. With no help coming from any quarter, Mikkol bore the agony. Then on the
third day a pair of cannibals, half men and half tigers, known as Matchadus came by the spot, very close to where Mikkol was stuck. They had come to clear a small opening in their intended jhum-field to see if it augured well. As was the custom among A·chik jhum cultivators, the old matchadu had come to perform the o·pata ritual (Ritual performed to appeal to Abet Rangge to vacate particular spot for cultivation). He cried out thus: “Abet Rangge (God of forests and springs) we are about to cut down the forest and disturb your dwelling; hold the blind by the hand, bear the lame in the kok (bamboo basket) and cross over to the other side”. Hearing this Mikkol answered: “I will not give up my motherland. I will not leave the orchard and my ancestral property”. The old matchadu wondered if the speaker was a man or a spirit. He then trailed the sound of the voice and further down found Mikkol hugging the tree-trunk. “O, its you, ape; I will take you home and cook a dish out of you”, said the matchadu and climbed the tree to the spot where Mikkol was stuck.

Seeing the matchadu, Mikkol quickly tried to negotiate his way out: “It’s grandpa and Grandma! I was joking, as I thought you to be someone else. Please forgive me. Please do not eat me up”. The monkey then begged them to save him from his sorry plight and assured them that he would toil and look after them as their own son. Seeing the state that Mikkol was in and considering their own childlessness, the matchadu manoeuvred the tree-hollow with his axe and put an end to the monkey’s sufferings. Thus freed,
Mikkol now followed his just adopted grandparents to their home, where his injured hand was tended to and cared for in the best possible way.

Mikkol’s swollen hand improved and one day Mikkol told his grandparents:

Grandpa, Grandma, it’s you who are my parents, for; had you not rescued me I was as good as dead. Seeing that you have saved me from death I am greatly indebted to you. Now, I will do all the work for you; you sit, eat and live as kings and queens do. I will clear the land, do the farming, build houses for you; you just relax, I will even fetch water for you to wash yourselves at home. I will look after you and provide for you till you die. Tomorrow I mean to start clearing the land for cultivation like everyone else. Do prepare a midday meal for me (Sangma Dhoronsing, 1988, 35).

Morning came and the old matchadu wife gave Mikkol a food packet for his midday meal. Mikkol started alone for the jhum-field with his headgear well-placed and the machete sticking out from his armpit. However, on reaching the hill intended to be the jhum-field, he chose a comfortable branch and settled down there and intoned: “Let the young bamboo from the jhum fringe bend over, bend over; and let this hand of mine, grow anew, grow anew” for his hand had decomposed and fallen off. When he was hungry he ate the food that he carried and whiled away his time. It was only when evening set in that he jumped from tree to tree and worked himself up to sweat and tiredness and went back home. Once home, after supper Mikkol informed his grandparents that his farm was going to
be better than anyone else’s. The Matchadu couples were happy thinking that Mikkol was dedicating himself to work with all his might.

When the time came for the burning of the jhum-field, Mikkol reminded his grandparents to get the seeds ready. He then pretended to proceed towards the jhum field when in reality he only whiled away his time watching the others burning their jhum fields. In the evening he worked himself up to a sweat by hopping from one tree to another and returned home. He told the grandparents that in his village, they planted boiled corn, yam and all the seeds all night before planting.

The grandma thought this to be true and boiled the seeds the whole night. Mikkol got up early in the morning, placed his midday meal and the boiled seeds in the basket and went to the field. The old couple wanted to go and help Mikkol with the sowing. But Mikkol declined their help. He went alone, and as he was far off, intending a great leisure, he looked for a breezy spot under a tree and ate the boiled seeds. He even slept just wherever he wanted to. Only when the evening set, he covered himself with soot and returned home. In this way Mikkol continued to deceive the old couple every day.

However, a day came when the matchadu and his wife would no longer be denied a glimpse of their jhum field. Finding no
way out Mikkol assured them to take them the next day. That day, reaching the jhum area, Mikkol selected the spot that was best-scorched by the flames and did a little more of clearing and planted wild grasses, wild oats and yams.

Back home in the evening Mikkol boasted that his grandparents had done well by listening to him when he told them about sowing seeds pre-boiled. He, then proudly informed them that his rice, corn, yam and other plants have grown better and faster than those in other fields. Mikkol had a particular view-point in mind and thither he took the old couple. From a vantage point on a rock he told them to look yonder towards the hill that he had earlier filled with wild plants. The couple looked and found that their jhum field appeared to be more luxuriant than those others around it. They were satisfied for the time being. Mikkol urged them to go on their own to the jhum field. They moved on and reached the indicated spot. Soon they realised that the field was but filled with wild grass, wild oats and wild yams.

At last it dawned on the old couple that they had been tricked! And when Mikkol realised that he had been exposed, he clambered onto a tree. From the safety of the tree-top Mikkol cried out that the old couple was such helplessly gullible creatures! He also confessed to them that he had eaten away the boiled seeds all
day long, sitting on a rock. He then laughed at them. The old matchadu couple was very angry yet helpless and returned home.

The old matchadu and his wife, then, began to think of ways of paying back mikkol with the same coin. Before long they had a plan. They conferred with the villagers and asked them to help catch mikkol. They consented to help.

One day the matchadu and his wife pretended to be dead and the whole village played along and mourned for them. The do·mesal (a wild fowl) was sent to convey the sad news to mikkol. Do·mesal went to the dwelling place of mikkol and told him that his grandfather and grandmother had stopped eating and drinking since he left them. They got sick due to lack of food and eventually had died. And the villagers had sent the Do·mesal to fetch him thinking that he may wish to see their faces for one last time. But mikkol replied: “I know you are lying. They mean to eat me up”. The do·mesal tried to convince the monkey saying: “No I am not lying to you. You should see how everyone in the village is crying and mourning for them. You can come and see at least from the tree-top”. But mikkol would not be convinced and saying that he could detect no sign of grief in the do·mesal, he ran away. The do·mesal returned unsuccessful.

After this, the do·grik (black pheasant) was sent to convey the sad news to mikkol. The bird flew up to the monkey and
tried to make him believe that his grandparents had died by telling him a good number of things. But mikkol would not believe him also. At last the pheasant said: “I’ve just come from mourning for them – look at my eyes: they’re swollen”. It proved very convenient that the do·grik had eyes that were naturally red in colour. Mikkol looked at the bird’s eyes and believed it. Mikkol began to cry exclaiming: “O Grandpa, O Grandma, you died because you could not live without me”. The do·grik then pointed out that it was no use crying far away in the forest, but that he should go and show his sorrow in their house. Mikkol complied.

As he neared the village mikkol was filled with mixed feelings of fear and boldness. From a distance mikkol saw that the matchadu’s house was crowded with people and did not doubt any longer. With renewed courage he walked into the yard, squatted on the ground and began to cry calling out for his grandparents. Then the crowd reprimanded him saying: “If you really loved your grandparents you should enter the house and mourn there” (Dhoronsing Sangma, 1988, 40).

So mikkol ventured as far as the verandah. As mikkol entered the house, the drummers and other musicians began to beat the drums to indicate: “Shut the door, lock the back door, block the holes, and block the holes”. Then again the crowd said: “If you
really love your grandparents, go and sit by their head and cry for them” (Dhoronsing Sangma, 1988, 41).

Accordingly Mikkol rose and began to caress his grandparents and cry for them. As Mikkol was crying in this manner, the Matchadu and his wife caught Mikkol by his wrist and said: “Ha, now, we got you. You have deceived us greatly and now you will have to die”. Mikkol begged for forgiveness but the old couple did not relent. Thus Mikkol died (Dhoronsing Sangma, 1988, 41).

The above examples show some of the common characteristic of trickster figure such as the trickster is ambiguous and anomalous. They are tricky mythical beings likely enough to entice any human mind. They are performers of heroic acts on behalf of men, yet in their original form, or in some later form, foolish, obscene, laughable yet indomitable. He is incarnated as a clever, mischievous man or creature who tries to survive the dangers and challenges of the world using trickery and deceit as a defence.

The Trickster is a deceiver and trick-player such as Gangbo nokma, Jereng, Mikkol and the Matchadu. The trickster uses trickery to bring about the change he is targeting. He gets tricked by his own nature. It is his misguided ambitions, his poor control of himself and his desires that lead him into situations where his lacks of control continually make him fail or become duped himself. He possesses no values, moral or social; he is at the mercy of his
passions and appetites. The *mikkol* (monkey) is the example of such traits.

The trickster is a shape-shifter. The trickster can alter his shape of bodily appearance in order to facilitate deception. The trickster may change forms, sex, and so forth as an element of surprise to his victim. Trickster is amoral and likes change; he does not care what effect it has or what consequences follow in its wake. *Gangbo nokma*’s trickery caused the death of the villagers, *Awat* and *Jereng* showed similar cruelty.

Like *Gangbo nokma* the trickster is a situation inventor – he can turn a bad situation into a good one, and then back into a bad one. The trickster can often turn any situation to his advantage, despite the odds against him.

The trickster is a sacred and lewd bricoleur – he manifests a distinctive transformative ability: he can find the lewd in the sacred and the sacred in the lewd and new life from both.

The trickster may be idealized as a cultural hero when, as the agent of transformation, he overturns a cruel or unfair leader or political/social system or reverses the fortunes of the more powerful party. For example Prometheus, Raven, and Maui steal fire from the gods and give it to humans. In that the *A·chik* trickster too are often cited as examples of social ethics and survival propriety.
The trickster is often portrayed as a much weaker character than his prey such as Gangbo nokma, or Jereng or Awat, and yet through cleverness and trickery, he is able to overcome all obstacles and prevail. In some cases the trickster may appear to be physically weaker, in order to confuse his prey (false frailty).

End Notes

1 Dhoronsing Sangma in his book, A·chik Golporang Bak I (1988) mentions a man named Pekda, who stole rice from his son Gongsa. The former died after a brief illness. Gongsa made a vegetable garden on the banks of the river and placed the skull of a dead cow in front of his garden, as was the custom. Early one morning, a woman came to steal some brinjal from his garden. As she was about to touch the vegetable, a voice was heard coming from the skull: “Hey, what are you doing? … Look at me! While alive, I stole two handful of rice from my son’s basket. For this act I was made to be born as a calf of his cow (Dhoronsingh Sangma, 1988, 20-24).

Works cited


