

# Lepcha Folklore and Folk Songs

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Compiled, translated and edited  
by  
Lyangsong Tamsang

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Sahitya Akademi

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## Introduction

The Lepchas are the one and only indigenous race of the Darjeeling District, Sikkim, and Illam Himalayas. They call themselves *Mutanchi Rong Kyp Rum Kyp* meaning the 'Beloved Children of Mother Nature and God' in Lepcha. The name 'Lepchā' used today is, perhaps, derived from a Lepcha word, 'Lāpchao', meaning a resting or waiting place on the wayside or a place on the wayside where stones are heaped up as sign post to direct travellers. When the Nepalese first arrived in the Lepcha land and enquired about their identity at such a waiting place, the Rong people not knowing what the Nepalese were enquiring, replied that it is 'Lāpchao' guessing that they were asking the name of the place. Unable to pronounce the name, 'Lāpchao' correctly, the Nepalese addressed the 'Rong' folk as 'Lāpchā' and later 'Lāpche'. When the British finally arrived in the Lepcha land, they, in turn, anglicized it to 'Lepchā'. The name 'Lāpchā', is still being applied in Illam, Nepal. The Rong people never address among themselves as 'Lepchā'; they address themselves as 'Mutanchi' or simply 'Rong' with pride.

The Lepchas are, basically, nature lovers and worshippers. Their intimate knowledge of all flora and fauna found in Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Illam hills is unsurpassed. A world renowned botanist, J. D. Hooker, the Director of Kew Garden, England, who visited Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Nepal Himalayas in the late 1840s and early 1850s, complemented the Lepchas as pure naturalists and born botanists in his book, *The Himalayan Journals* part I and II. Mother Nature has given the Lepchas plenty. The Lepchas love, respect, and worship Mother Nature as represented by mountains, rivers, clouds, water, stones, earth, soil, trees, rain, sun etc. In their prayers and invocations, the Lepchas call the names of all mountains, peaks, rivers, two medieval trees (Surigli-Songlaok in that order), all other parts comprising nature. Through their various 'Rum Fāt', prayers and offerings to God, like: 'Chu Rum Fāt', prayers and offerings to the Himalayas; 'Lyang Rum Fāt', prayers and offerings to Mother

Illāmmoo (iii) Damsangmoo and (iv) Promoo

(i) *Renjyongmoo*: Renjyongmoo Lepchas are the Lepchas of Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kurseong, and Siliguri areas. Until 1835, these areas came under the direct jurisdiction of Sikkim.

(ii) *Illāmmoo*: Illāmmoo Lepchas are the Lepchas of Illām, east Nepal. Illām was an integral part of Māyel Lyāng and later Sikkim. After the treaty of Sugaoli on 2 December 1815 mediated by the British between Nepal and Sikkim, Illām went under the jurisdiction of Nepal.

(iii) *Dāmsāngmoo*: Dāmsāngmoo Lepchas are the Lepchas of Dāmsāng, today's Kalimpong sub-division. Dāmsāng was an independent country ruled by Pano Gaeboo Āchyok and his forefathers. After the death of Pano Gaeboo Āchyok, Dāmsāng was annexed by Bhutan until 1865 when the British defeated the Bhutanese at Dāling Fort, Dāmsāng, and annexed it into British India.

(iv) *Promoo*: Promoo are the Lepchas of 'Pro' meaning Bhutan in Lepcha.

There is no history of Lepcha migration. The Lepchas are the indigenous, primeval race of Mayel Lyang with uniquely distinctive language, literature, culture, tradition, custom, religion, myths, festivals, civilization, and way of life.

## Lepcha Language

One of the oldest and richest languages of the world, the Lepcha language and literature is found to be in a very neglected state today in Darjeeling District of West Bengal. The Lepcha language was the 'Official Language' of the Darjeeling Hills until 1911? 'The Darjeeling deed of Grant, 1835' written in the Lepcha language with Hindi translation at the bottom and the Royal Seal of the Maharaja of Sikkim on the middle top of the document is an ample, tangible proof, and confirmation of the fact that the Lepcha language was once the lingua franca and official language of the Darjeeling District.

Lieutenant General G. B. Mainwaring, Bengal Staff Corps, the one and only Westerner to thoroughly master the Lepcha language and who, to this day, remains unsurpassed amongst foreigners on

the Lepcha language and literature in his Preface and Introductory remarks to 'A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) Language as it exists in the Dorjeling and Sikkim Hills', 1876, wrote :

'Of the Lepcha language, I cannot speak too highly. The simple and primitive state in which the Lepchas lived is admirably shown by it. Their peaceful and gentle character is evinced by their numerous terms of tenderness and compassion, and by the fact that not one word of abuse exists in their language. Nevertheless the language itself is most copious, abounding in synonyms and possessing words to express every slightest change, every varying shade of meaning, it admits of a flow and power of speech which is wonderful, and which renders it capable of giving expression to the highest degree of eloquence. The language also attests the astonishing knowledge possessed by the Lepchas. Of almost all the inconceivable diversity of trees with which the hills are covered; the incalculable variety of plants and flowers with which the forests are filled; the Lepchas can tell you the names of all, they can distinguish at a glance the difference in the species of each genus of plants, which would require the skill of a practised botanist to perceive; this information and nomenclature extends to beasts, to birds, to insects, and to everything around them, animate and inanimate; without instruction, they seem to acquire their knowledge by intuition alone.'

Rare, unique, and sophisticated features, characteristics of the Lepcha alphabets, scripts and words :

*Lazaong* : The Lepchas are in proud possession of an ancient, unique, and sophisticated book called 'Lazaong'. 'Lazaong', literally, means syllabic scheme; it is also a book of rules. It is based on the fundamental principles of the traditional Lepcha language structure. It can also be described as the 'Power of Words'.

'Lazaong' has the following features and characteristics :

- a) It is the Lepcha alphabetical primer.
- b) It is a book of syllabic scheme of forming mono-syllabic words; a work book having each syllable pronounced with distinct and correct stress, sound, tune, voice, and uniformity. It is a book



of 'tongue twister' also.

c) It is a Lepcha primer of phonetics pertaining to speech sound and their production and phonetic spelling of words.

d) It is a book of Lepcha glossary, lexicon, and a list of words in alphabetical order.

e) 'Lazaong' is a book of Lepchas' weapon of speech; it gives fluency, force, and rhythm in Lepcha speech.

From the letter 'K' alone, the Lepchas produce 540 (five hundred forty) different sounds and words which can be, perfectly, used in sentences to express one's thoughts. If we carry on with other consonants, conjunct consonants, vowels, diacritic marks, signs, and symbols, it will give us 6,660 words which can be used in Lepcha.

*Lathyoo*: Another unique, sophisticated, advanced, cultured and highly developed aspect of the Lepcha scripts, alphabets, and letters is 'Lathyoo'. Lathyoo is a cluster of two consonants sound. A single letter is used to symbolise two consonants linked together in a cluster. There are altogether 7 (seven) 'Lathyoo' in Lepcha.

1.	ᱠ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱠᱢ
	ᱠ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱠᱢ
	ka	+	la	=	Kla
2.	ᱡ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱡᱢ
	ᱡ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱡᱢ
	ga	+	la	=	gla
3.	ᱣ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱣᱢ
	ᱣ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱣᱢ
	pa	+	la	=	pla
4.	ᱤ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱤᱢ
	ᱤ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱤᱢ
	pha	+	la	=	phla
5.	ᱥ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱥᱢ
	ᱥ	+	ᱢ	=	ᱥᱢ
	ba	+	la	=	bla

6.	འ	+	ལ	=	འལ
	མ	+	ལ	=	མལ
	ma	-	la	=	m <sup>h</sup> la
7.	ཡ	-	ལ	=	ཡ
	ཨ	+	ལ	=	ཨལ
	ha	+	la	=	h <sup>h</sup> la

These seven 'Lathyoo', conjoined consonants presented in a single letter, were devised by the ancient Lepchas to bring accurate uniformity and clarity in the pronunciation and spelling of the Lepcha words. It is certainly based on phonetic principles.

It is not too far wrong to state that the Lepchas, probably, are the only people who are in possession of these rare, unique, and sophisticated 'Lathyoo' letters in the world.

*Telboo Thāmbyin or Ming Tyaol*: The Lepchas not only have vowel signs and symbols like in any other language, they have also signs, symbols, and diacritic marks, 9 (nine) of them, for the consonants and use them in their writings to perfect their language. This sophisticated and quite remarkable feature of the Lepcha script is called 'Telboo Thāmbyin or Ming Tyaol' in Lepcha. Telboo Thāmbyin or Ming Tyaol is a set of separate diacritic marks, signs, or symbols for k, m, l, n, p, r, t, and ng. 'Ng' called 'Kang' has complimentary distribution with 'ang' written with 'Nyin Do', Sun-Moon.

འ	=	˙	ཡ	=	˘
མ	=	˙˙	ལ	=	˘˘
ཙ	=	˙˙˙	ཏ	=	˘˘˙
འ	=	˙˙˙˙	ཏ	=	˘˘˙˙
ཡ	=	˙˙˙˙˙			

These consonant signs, symbols, and diacritic marks are written and placed above and before a word when vowel signs occur. The basic aim and objective of inventing and using Telboo Thambyin or Ming Tyaol by the Lepchas is, once again, based on phonetics principles. It curtails, shortens the inherent vowel sound in a word and gives an accurate pronunciation and phonetic spelling.

*Scientific System of Naming in Lepcha* : The Lepcha language is one of the most scientific languages of the world. The naming system in Lepcha is also unique. The Lepchas classify, list things under separate headings and give a distinct, particular letter for naming a particular group. For example, all the river names in Mayel Lyang begin with the letter 'R'; all the names of wild animals, trees, seasons start with the letter 'S'; all the good parts of human or animal anatomy start with the letter 'Ā', and bad and private parts with letter 'T'. The list is by no means exhaustive.

*Infantile Language* : The Lepcha parents or elders use infantile language with their infants.

A few example of infantile language are given below :

<i>Lepcha Infantile Language</i>	<i>English</i>
Mā Mām Chi Chi hām	eat
Tāte tāte lām do lām do	walk
Āji ji āji ji	prohibition
Nye Nye Nye, Ing Mi Krāp, krāp, krāp	go to sleep
Boonge boonge	You may fall etc. etc.

Abusive, derogatory, offensive, insulting, and rude words are totally absent in the Lepcha language.

*Tungbaor Ring', Figurative, Metaphorical Speech or God's Language* : The Lepcha 'Mun', priestess, and 'Boongthing', priest, use figurative or metaphorical speech in their prayers, invocation to Gods, Goddesses, Guardian Deities, and spirits. It is called 'Tungbaor Ring' in Lepcha. As the Lepcha priests and priestesses communicate with their God, Goddesses, and spirits using 'Tongbaor Ring', the Lepchas also call this language as God's language. For example :

<i>Ordinary Lepcha Words</i>	<i>Tongbaor Ring/ God's Language</i>	<i>English</i>
Aoong	Mārtik Moo Nyoo	water
Mee	Tukbyer-Tukkal Moo Nyoo	fire
Sukmut	Sung Doo Sung Ing Moo Nyoo	air/wind

Kumbyaong	Kumboo Kumsho Moo Nyoo	cloud
Sutsuk	Sutsuk-samik	sun
Fāt	Numput Moo Nyoo	soil/earth
Long	Sa Ngoot Moo Nyoo	stone etc.

*Ākep* : Numerous Lepcha words in the Lepcha language are found with a second word attached; the second word often has no relevant meaning, whatsoever, with the first word. The use of two combined words express the same meaning. It is called 'Ākep' in Lepcha. Owing to this unique characteristic, the Lepcha language is capable of composing poems, songs, hymns, rhymes etc. with comparative ease. It also helps to beautify the Lepcha language. A few examples of Ākep are given below :

<i>Ākep</i>	<i>English</i>
Āgo-ānyit	joy, happiness
Vom-dum	song, poem
Nām-toom	A year (time)
Mung-mā	An evil spirit
Sahor-kurdoo	star
Pho-yu	bird
Phung-phing	blue etc. etc.

## Lepcha Folklore

The term folklore, traditional stories of a community or nation, has come to mean myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, ballads, songs, rhymes, riddles etc. whose medium is the spoken words. Folklore is, in fact, verbal art. The Lepchas have a very rich tradition of folklore. To a Lepcha folklore is not only a means of entertainment but it is an education also.

Lepcha myths are connected with the origin of the Lepchas and their country, Mayel Lyang. The origin of the first Lepcha couple Fadongthing and Nuzaongnyoo; the origin of Lepcha clans; the Lepcha marriage; 'Chi', the Lepchas' traditional fermented beer etc. come under this category.

There are Lepcha stories which have common motif with

folktales elsewhere like the European fairy tales, *Aesop's tales*, *Panchatantra* etc. Lastly, there are numerous stories which can be termed, truly, Lepcha with their own flavour. These stories deal with everyday life of the Lepchas and as a result, these stories are the most interesting, colourful, and fascinating ones.

The Lepcha moral stories especially meant for the children are not only enjoyable and entertaining, they also guide the children towards a better path and life. In these stories, humans, animals, insects, birds, trees, etc. speak with each other. They also tell you the ways to deal with situations and problems that may arise in your life.

Economically very backward Lepchas, living in far-off villages, have no electricity; radio is a luxury. Television is out of question. Many of them even do not have sufficient blankets to protect themselves from cold at night. To keep themselves warm, all the family members sit together round the hearth for warmth; the elders still continue to tell interesting, entertaining, informative, and educative Lepcha stories to their children. Thus, the Lepcha traditional folklore, the art of telling stories, is still alive and well, ironically, owing to their poor economical backwardness and conditions.

An attempt has been made for the first time to compile, translate the ancient, colourful, distinctive, interesting and lively oral folk literature of the Lepchas by a native Lepcha into English. Therefore, clear, pure, and original Lepcha folklore and folk songs have been dug out, compiled and presented to the readers. It is a known fact that there will always be slight variations in retelling the oral stories from person to person but the main theme of stories remains steady and unchangeable. Services of interpreters were not needed. It is said that folklore is a window through which a person can look into the culture, custom, tradition, way of life and civilization of a race. I hope *Lepcha Folklore and Folk songs* may be of some interest and use to the discerning readers.

I

Lepcha Folklore

## Lepchas, the Children of Mount Kanchanjunga (A Lepcha myth about their origin)

The Lepchas believe that God created Fadongthing, the first Lepcha male, meaning 'most powerful' in Lepcha and 'Nuzaongnyoo', the first Lepcha female, meaning 'ever fortunate' from the pure and virgin snows of Mt Kanchanjunga's pinnacle. It is related, narrated in the Lepcha mythology.

Fadongthing and Nuzaongnyoo were considered as brother and sister because they were created by God, Itboo-Deboo, Himself with his own hands. When they were growing up the God commanded and said to them, 'My children, you two are brother and sister, therefore, you two should hold on to the excellence of morals' and warned them both of impending disaster, untold misery and misfortune if they cross the limit. God then sent Fadongthing to live at the top of 'Tungseng Nareng Chu' and Nuzaongnyoo was put next to 'Nāho-Nāthār Da', a lake, at the base of the mountain. They were thus separated from each other.

Nuzaongnyoo grew into a beautiful woman. She longed to see and meet Fadongthing. Although she remembered well the God's command and warning not to meet Fadongthing, she was unable to control and resist the temptation, so one day she built a golden ladder and climbed up to 'Tungseng Nareng Chu' and met Fadongthing secretly and became very friendly with Fadongthing against the will of God. The Lepcha meaning of 'Tungseng Nareng Chu' is 'unfortunate mountain peak' because both Fadongthing and Nuzaongnyoo disobeyed the God's command and committed a sin on top of this mountain. In anger, God summoned them both and said, 'You have committed a sin. I cannot allow you two to live in this sacred mountain any longer. As a punishment, both of you, now, must live at the foothills of Mt Kanchanjunga as humans and suffer'.

Fadongthing and Nuzaongnyoo were sent down to the foothills of Mt Kanchanjunga as husband and wife. They gave birth to several

children and these children, in course of time, spread over the foothills of Mt Kanchanjunga. Fadongthing and Nuzaongnyoo are, thus, called 'Poomthing' meaning the first ancestors of the Lepcha race by the Lepchas.

The Lepchas are born and live at the foothills of Mt Kanchanjunga and this land is known as 'Māyel Lyāng' in short to the Lepchas. 'Mā' in Lepcha means hidden, 'yel' means eternal, everlasting; and 'lyāng' means land, country i.e. the hidden eternal country. When the Lepchas die, it is firmly believed that the Lepchas will join their ancestors at 'Poomju'. They enter 'Poomju' through a 'Lep', a door to Poomju, in the Sikkim Himalayas. There is no such thing as heaven and hell in ancient Lepcha belief.

'Kingtshoomzaongboo' meaning the bright auspicious forehead peak in Lepcha i.e. Mount Kanchanjunga is the 'Guardian Deity' of the Lepchas and it is sacred to them. There is a tremendous, great admiration, reverence, love and respect for Mount Kanchanjunga. The indigenous Lepchas offer their prayers and supplications in the form of 'Choo Rum Fāt'. 'Choo' means Himalayan peak, 'Rum' means God and 'Fāt' means prayer, supplication and offering. In short, it is an offering of prayers and supplications to Mt Kanchanjunga and lesser known peaks in the Sikkim Himalayas by the Lepchas.

'Kingtshoomzaongboo' is the Lepchas' protector, benefactor, guardian and life giver. The soils of Mayel Lyang smell of the indigenous Lepchas who have been living at the foothills of Mt Kanchanjunga from time immemorial. The Lepchas are, therefore, also known as the Children of Mt Kanchanjunga.



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## Origin of 'Chi'

'Chi', the Lepchas' traditional drink, beverage, is holy to them. The figurative speech for 'Chi' in Lepcha is 'Num Feng Moo'. 'Chi' is also 'Chhet Syook' or 'Chhet Chhyooko' meaning power, energy, force, potency, strength, vigour to them. From cradle to grave, 'Chi' is extensively used. During 'Tungbaong Fāt', cleansing and naming ceremony, a new born baby is fed with a few drops of 'Chi' by a Boongthing or Lepcha priest. The bride and groom finally become a 'Nabaom', meaning couple, only after drinking and sharing the 'Chi' from the same cup during 'Sung Kyo Fāt', the marriage vows. As a witness to their wedding, the immediate relatives of both the bride and groom and elders present drink and share the same 'Chi' from the same cup and bless the newly married couple. During the burial and death ceremony, the departed soul is offered 'Chi Pathyaot', a bamboo or wooden cylinder, containing 'Chi' with the bamboo pipe or straw placed upside down to mark that the person is dead.

The Lepchas believe that Itboo-Deboo, the Creator, Gods and Goddess, and spirits accept only 'Chi'. 'Chi' is offered to the Guardian Deities of the Lepchas, Mt Kanchanjunga, and to Itboo-Deboo Rum, Creator, Gods and Goddesses and guardian spirits during the following ceremonies of the Lepchas :

Lee Rum Fāt  
Chu Rum Fāt  
Sakyoo Rum Fāt  
Lyāng Rum Fāt  
Tungrong Hlo Rum Fāt  
Muk Zek Ding Rum Fāt  
Pik Sat  
Sungkyo Fāt etc.

Kohom Fo, a partridge bird, saved the Lepchas from drowning and certain death during a great deluge that took place in Mayel Lyang. When the bird drank the 'Chi' offered by the Lepchas at

Tungrong Hlo, a few drops of 'Chi' fell on the chest of Kohom Fo. The bird still smells of 'Chi'. Before drinking 'Chi', a true Lepcha will always, first of all, offer it to God, Guardian Deity and spirits with prayers. It is called 'Chi fāt'. While drinking 'Chi', he or she is very respectful to it; if it overflows from the top of the 'Pathyaot' or cylinder, he/she will, with utmost care, gather the over-flowing 'Chi' grains back into the cylinder.

'Chi' is not only an alcoholic beverage to the Lepchas but it is also food to them, therefore, 'Chi' is also called 'Chi-Zaom' in Lepcha. The final word 'Zaom' is derived from the word, 'Azaom' meaning food. 'Chi' is refreshing as well as nourishing and it contains high vitamin B. The expression, 'Kaot naon', I'm full, is often used by the Lepchas after drinking 'Chi'.

The Lepcha tradition has it that Itboo-Deboo Rum, the Creator, seeing the plight of the Lepchas of Mayel Lyang, created 'Tāmsāngthing' from the pure and virgin snow of Pundim Chu and blessed him with supernatural powers to deliver the Lepchas from the clutches of the devil, Lāso Mung Pano. When Tāmsāngthing arrived in Zaongoo to deliver the Lepchas from the clutches of Lāso Mung Pano, he found that the morale of Lepcha people was too low and sunken to fight against the devil, Lāso Mung Pano. To remove fear from the mind of the Lepchas, Tāmsāngthing consecrated a young Nyolik-Nyosong as the first 'Mun', a Lepcha priestess, to rejuvenate the lost morale of the Lepchas. He gave Nyolik Nyosong Mun supernatural powers by offering her three young shoots of 'Pashyaor', the elephant grass. In the beginning Nyolik Nyosong found it extremely difficult to communicate and express her thoughts and powers to the horror stricken Lepchas. One day she heard and saw a 'Tungbum', bumble bee, humming and moving from flower to flower. Nyolik Nyosong inspired by 'Tungbum' imitated the sound and rhythmic tones of Tungbum in her prayer and ovation to God and very successfully communicated and expressed her thoughts and powers to the Lepchas. The Lepcha 'Muns' still continue to follow and use 'Tungbum's rhythmic tones in their invocations and prayers to God today. 'Va', the Lepcha verb,

means to hum like a humble bee and from 'Va' another Lepcha word, a noun, 'Vom', is derived to mean a song.

Using her supernatural power bestowed upon her by Tāmsāngthing, Nyolik-Nyosong Mun revealed that the medicine for the restoration of lost morale of the Lepchas in the form of a 'Bat' meaning ferment. She knew that 'Matlimanyoo', a sorceress who lived in the netherland was in possession of 'Bat', the power potion. Nyolik Nyosong asked for a volunteer to fetch 'Bat' from Matlimanyoo. 'Tungdyer Palyung', a cockroach (*Blatta Orientalis*) volunteered to fetch the 'Bat'. It successfully brought the 'Bat' with trickery from Matlimanyoo.

While Tungdyer Palyung was resting on the way after its arduous journey from the netherland, 'Pamaol Bu', a pure black cobra (of genus *Naja*) sneaked in and stole a bit of 'Bat' from Tungdyer Palyung and tasted it. As soon as Pamaol Bu tasted the 'Bat', it became mad and very poisonous. Next a 'Hu', honey bee, tasted a tiny bit of 'Bat', it developed a sharp needle to prick with negligible stings. Some of the large birds tasted 'Bat' and became carnivorous and those small birds who didn't taste it remained vegetarians. 'Kuntek', a fig tree, also touched the 'Bat'; as a result it has a sour taste. Finally when 'Kundong Koong', a platan tree, touched the 'Bat', the fruit of 'Kundong Koong' tasted sweet. The Lepchas, believe that the 'Bat' was thus tasted and its poison wiped away and removed this way, for Lepcha's consumption.

Tungdyer Palyeng finally arrived with the 'Bat', a power potion, and handed it over to Nyolik-Nyosong Mun. Nyolik Nyosong Mun in turn cooked millet and applied, mixed, concocted the 'Bat' to prepare 'Chi', fermented beverage, the ultimate power potion, and distributed it among the Lepcha soldiers to raise their morale to fight against Lāso Mung Pano, the devil, in the battle. With their morale high after drinking 'Chi' the Lepchas, at last, killed Lāso Mung Pano.

Thus the Lepchas' 'Chi', fermented beverage, was originated. Even today, before the final assault and attack on the enemy position, the soldiers are issued with a certain amount of (alcohol) rum, to

boost, their morale by their commanding officers in the army.

Meanwhile when Matlimonyoo realised that her precious and rare 'Bat' has been stolen, in anger, she cursed the 'Chi' as well as persons drinking it with these words, 'Chi thong ya gong ney maon, thong ma ya na gong ney nyung', meaning, 'it is a very good medicine if you know how to drink "Chi" properly but if you don't know to drink it then it is like a poison'. The Lepchas believe that because of this curse given by Matlimonyoo, drinking excessive 'Chi' makes one quarrel, lose health, wealth and respect in the society. If one knows how to drink it properly and limits drinking of 'Chi' to the right time and place, it works wonder. One becomes healthy, happy, and lives long. Mark the words of Matlimonyoo.

## Origin of Lepcha Clans

The Lepchas under the leadership of Tāmsāngthing fought and thrashed Lāso Mung Pano at a place called Sukver, valley of death. While Lāso Mung Pano was lying on the ground in defeat, no one was sure if the devil was dead or alive. A brave Lepcha, sword in hand, approached Lāso Mung Pano to check if he was still breathing and whether his heart was still beating. He returned and reported that the devil was not completely dead, he was lying unconscious. Fearing the resurrection of Lāso Mung Pano, the Lepchas promptly agreed to destroy his two eyes. Having agreed to the proposal, a Lepcha moved towards the devil and broke his both eyes and blinded him. Another Lepcha said, 'It is better if we separate his parts of body'. Having said thus he cut and separated Lāso Mung Pano's head and legs. Another Lepcha remarked, 'Who knows, with his magical power, his separated parts of body may rejoin. It is certainly better if these are crushed into tiny pieces and dust and blown away in the air.' Agreeing to the suggestion, a Lepcha stood up and moving toward the devil, 'Banmaok' in his hand, he crushed them into dust and blew them away into the air from the nearby hill top. The Lepchas believe that blood sucking parasites like bed bugs, mosquitoes, leeches etc came into this world from Lāso Mung Pano's powdered dust.

When the devil, Lāso Mung Pano, was finally slain, the Lepchas and Tāmsāngthing moved to a place called 'Tārkaol Tām-E-Tām', meaning the valley of deliverance, and Tāmsāngthing bestowed upon the Lepchas the following clans :

1. The Lepchas who prayed, remembered Itboo-Deboo, the Creator, and requested Him to deliver the Lepchas from the clutches of the devil, Lāso Mung Pano, were given the title of 'Munlaommoo'.
2. Those Lepchas who made and prepared weapons like swords, Banmaok etc to fight against the devil, they were called 'Karvomoo'.
3. Those Lepchas who served Tāmsāngthing, Nyolik Nyosong Mun, Azaor Boongthing, and Lepcha leaders during the battle against

the devil were given the title of 'Adenmoo'.

4. Those Lepchas who helped to make bows and arrows to fight Lāso Mung Pano were called 'Phyoong Tālimmoo'

5. Water, rations and food suppliers were given the title of 'Joriboo'.

6. Those Lepchas who constructed and made bridges, roads, ropes and bow-strings were called 'Brimoo'

7. The Lepcha who dared to check if Lāso Mung Pano's heart was beating and he was breathing was given the title of 'Lutsaom moo'. In Lepcha 'Alut' means heart and 'Āsaom' means breath and if you remove the two common prefixes 'Ā', it becomes 'Lutsaom'.

8. The person who broke the eyes and blinded the devil was called 'Seemickmoo'.

9. The Lepcha who separated Lāso Mung Pano's head and legs with his 'Banmaok' was called 'Sungngootmoo'.

10. The Lepcha who beat up, crushed the body of Lāso Mung Pano into dust and blown them into thin air from a hill top was given the title of 'Sungdyāngmoo'.

Thus the following 'Ten Lepcha Clans' were originated :

1. Munlaommoo 2. Karvomoo 3. Adenmoo 4. Phyoong Tālimmoo 5. Joriboo 6. Brimoo 7. Lutsaommoo 8. Seemickmoo 9. Sungngootmoo 10. Sungdyāngmoo

The Lepcha priest, priestesses, and elders while conducting the Lepcha rituals, rites, tradition still relate the origin of Lepcha clans and the 'Ten Customary Laws of the Lepchas'.

After bestowing the ten clans to his Lepchas, Tāmsāngthing reminding them commanded, 'When you were all in grave danger, you remembered and prayed to Itboo-Deboo Rum, the Creator. As a result, I came in your resque. If you come face to face with any impending situation remember to pray to Itboo-Deboo. He will certainly appear to the aid of the Lepchas in Mayel Lyang.'

Note : According to the Lepcha myth, 'Tāmsāngthing' was created by Itboo-Deboo to deliver the Lepchas from the clutches of Lāso Mung Pano, the devil. Tāmsāngthing has no direct or indirect relation and connection with the Lepcha clan, Tāmsāngmoo or Tāmsāng/Dāmsāng Lyāng at all.

## Origin of the Lepcha Marriage

Thousands of years ago, a young, robust and powerful Lepcha named Tārbongthing after journeying and exploring Māyel Lyāng for many months arrived at a place called 'Pāri Pāgyen'. Very tired, fatigued, and hungry, Tārbongthing looked for a shelter for the night but no village or human settlement was in sight. He saw a fruit tree nearby with hundreds of birds on it. His one thought was to satisfy his hunger and, therefore, he set Radoo Ramyāng, a bamboo trap, to catch birds on the fruit tree. He caught a few birds and satisfied his hunger.

The next day, Tārbongthing set Radoo Ramyāng once again on the same fruit tree and went away to look for a village. When he returned to his shelter in the afternoon, Tārbongthing found, to his annoyance, there were only dry twigs and leaves hanging on his trap instead of birds. Tārbongthing was puzzled, angry as well as curious to find out the person who was perpetrating a mischievous deed on him. The next day once again, he very carefully set Radoo Ramyāng on the same fruit tree and hid himself under the bushes and watched.

In the late afternoon, Tārbongthing saw a young beautiful girl coming out from the wood towards the trap and freeing the birds one after another from the trap and putting dry twigs and leaves on it instead.

On seeing this, Tārbongthing sneaked behind her and caught her very firmly. The young and beautiful girl, although surprised, fought back to free herself from Tārbongthing but Tārbongthing, somehow, overpowered and subdued her at the end.

Tārbongthing asked her, 'Why did you free the birds from the trap?' The young girl replied that she was the guardian, preserver and champion of the birds and asked him, 'What harm did these innocent birds do to you?' She further said that she freed the birds from the trap because they have an equal right to live in this beautiful Mayel Lyang.

Both of them were young, beautiful and handsome. They were



attracted to each other; in fact, it was love at first sight.

When she wanted to go home because it was getting very late, Tārbongthing barring her way asked her name and place of residence. The girl answered that her name was, 'Nārip Naom' and she came from 'Sakyong'. Tārbongthing again asked her if she would run away with him to start a new family life of their own. Hearing his appeal, Nārip Naom replied, 'If you really want my hand in marriage, you must ask my mother's and uncles' permissions. My mother's name is Tae-Tanye Moo-Nyoo. Having said thus, she hurriedly left and disappeared into the woods.

Tārbongthing returned to his mother, Numkoot Āmoo Nyoo and narrated his stories including his meeting with a young and beautiful girl, Narip Naom. He expressed his desire to marry Narip Naom to his mother because he was in love with Nārip Naom. Numkoot Āmoo Nyoo, Tārbongthing's mother, summoned her brothers and sent them to 'Sākyong' to ask for Nārip Naom's hands in marriage to Tārbongthing.

Nārip Naom's mother and uncles were also very happy indeed and welcomed the proposal of a marriage between Nārip Naom and Tārbongthing, however, Nārip Naom's mother and uncles said that Tārbongthing, the groom, his uncles must adhere to and fulfill the marriage conditions.

A meeting of the Lepchas was convened at 'Rungjyeng Purtām' to finalise the Lepcha Marriage Customary Law and the necessary items to be provided and presented as a bride's price during the wedding to the bride's party. Tārbongthing and his uncles agreed to all the conditions of the Lepcha Marriage Customary Law and the bride price. At the end of the meeting, a bamboo was planted to commemorate the occasion. The sacred bamboo grove of the Lepchas called 'Chimoo Aeyong moo pobong' still stands in Zaongoo, North Sikkim.

Tārbongthing and his uncles were able to collect the bride price and placed them in front of the bride's mother, uncles, aunts and relatives during the wedding. And thus the first Lepcha marriage ceremony was solemnised between Nārip Naom and Tārbongthing

and the first Lepcha Marriage Customary Law originated in Mayel Lyang. The die hard Lepchas continue to practise their ancient Lepcha Marriage Customary Law even today. The Lepcha women continue to receive the respect, dignity and honour they so deserve from their Lepcha men even today.

During a Lepcha marriage ceremony, Peeboo or Bekboo, a go-between, or a Boongthing/Mun, or elders, while blessing the newly wedded couple, always narrate the story of Tārbongthing and Nārip Naom and how the Lepcha marriage system originated in the Lepcha world.

Marriage is sacred to Lepchas. A marriage is not only a lasting bond between a Lepcha man and woman, it is a bond between two families, two clans, and two villages. Divorce is almost non-existence in the Lepcha community.

## The Lepcha Earthen Tower

Owing to fear, terror, danger, fright and horror of Lāso Moong Pano, the devil, some Lepchas fled south arriving at 'Toonoo Tungshi Da', the source of 'Romam' river and followed its course and finally arrived at 'Da Raom-dyen' and built the legendary Lepcha Earthen Tower to go to heaven at 'Tāl Laom Purtām'. Fragements of the Lepcha Earthen Tower pottery may still be found at 'Da-Raom-dyen', West Sikkim.

In Lepcha 'Ro' means fear and 'Mām' means hide. Moving with fear from Laso Moong Pano and hiding along the river banks, the Lepchas aptly named the river's name, 'Romām'. Today it is incorrectly pronounced and called 'Ramam' by the non-Lepchas. 'Da' in Lepcha means a lake; 'Raom-dyen' means to be demolished. To build the Earthen Tower at Tal Laom Purtam, the Lepchas of yore demolished the lake and used the mud, clay of the lake to go to heaven and thus, the name 'Da Raom-dyen' in Lepcha. It is erroneously pronounced as 'Darumdin' by the non-Lepchas today. 'Tā-Laom-Purtām' literally means 'up-road-flatland' or metaphorically 'road to heaven'.

The ancient Lepchas were very skilful and expert in making pots from clay. When some Lepchas arrived at 'Da Raom-dyen', they started to build an Earthen Tower to go to heaven at Tāl Laom Purtām. When it was nearing its completion, there was a serious breakdown of communications between the artisans working at the top and bottom of the Earthen Tower.

The artisans at the top of tower when they required a hook, shouted to the Lepcha artisans working below, 'Kaok Vim Yāng Tāl !' meaning to send up a hook. The Lepcha artisans working below heard it, 'Chek Tā' meaning knock it down and shouted back, 'Chek Tā!' The artisans at the top repeated 'Kaok Vim Yāng Tāl' several times but the workers at the bottom, somehow, heard it 'Chek Tā' only. Screaming with frustration, the artisans working at the top shouted back, 'Ak, ak' meaning yes, yes. The Earthen Tower

was thus knocked down, destroyed and many Lepchas were killed.

Many people ridicule and deride the Lepcha myth of the Earthen Tower at Tāl Laom Purtām to go to heaven. The fragments of pottery found in and around Tāl Laom Purtām and Da-Raom-dyen; the Lepchas' proverbial saying 'Kaok Vi Yāng Tāl, and Chek Tā'; the very relevant Lepcha places and river names around it, clearly reflects and substantiates the ancient Lepcha history of Earthen Tower at Tāl-Laom-Purtām to go to heaven. There were no high mountains in a low valley like Tāl Laom Purtām and Da Raom-dyen, therefore, the Lepchas built an Earthen Tower to be near their Itboo-Deboo, the Creator or perhaps it may have been built as an observation post to watch out for Lāso-Moong Pano, the devil.

The Lepcha myth of the Earthen Tower to go to heaven, is one of the oldest traditional accounts of Lepcha history, a reality which no one can easily deny.

## 'Nāraok Rum', God of Lepcha Music

The indigenous Lepchas of Mayel Lyang have their own distinctive folk songs, dances, music, and folk musical instruments from time immemorial. The Lepchas' God of Music is 'Nāraok Rum' and it is firmly believed by the Lepcha tribes that songs, dances, music and musical instruments were conferred on them by 'Nāraok Rum'.

One day, while visiting the earth, Nāraok Rum and his entourage passing by a Lepcha village in Mayel Lyang, saw the Lepchas singing, dancing, and praying and offering their ovation to Mother Nature and God. They appeared and joined the Lepchas in the festive occasion.

On completion of the singing and dancing, Nāraok Rum, the God of Music, pleased with the Lepchas summoned the leader of the dance troupe near him and said, 'I am the God of Music, Nāraok Rum. I am very pleased with the Lepcha people. Now if you wish, you may ask for a boon. I will give it to you'. When the Lepchas heard that the visitor was no other than the God of Music, Nāraok Rum, in person, they were at a complete loss. The leader of dance troupe was non-plussed and could not react. He then saw his friends intently looking with fascination and admiration at the 'Chat', a hat, crown with colourful plumes and tails of birds, on the heads of visitors.

Nāraok Rum's 'Chat' or crown, was made of 'Numbong Ong Pano Fo Takshim', Drongo bird's tail, black, long and beautiful. The rest were wearing 'Chat' with yellow, blue, black and red plumes and tails of birds. He suddenly came to his senses and realised that his friends dearly loved the 'Chat' and he asked for their 'Chat'; the crown decorated with feathers, plumes, and tails of birds. While crowning the 'Chat', Nāraok Rum blessed the Lepchas and said, 'Let the Lepcha people become an absolute maestros on the Lepcha folk songs, dances, music and instruments'. His entourage also happily presented their beautiful 'Chat' to all the Lepchas present on the occasion. They also presented unique musical instruments like

'Pantaong Palit' and 'Neebryaok', bamboo flutes, and suddenly disappeared, from the scene.

The Lepchas firmly believe that the practice of wearing plumes, feathers, and tails of birds on their hats during Lepcha cultural ceremonies, festivals and Rum Fāt, prayers and offering to Mother Nature and God, originated from this time. The indigenous Lepchas take tremendous pride in their 'Chat' because it was, originally, presented to them by the God of Music, Nāraok Rum, himself for the preservation, maintenance and development of the Lepcha cultural heritage in Māyel Lyāng.

The Lepchas' songs, dances, and music truly reflect the old ways of Lepcha life, their tradition, culture, ancient religion, customs, manners, characters, civilization; their joy, sorrow and surrounding environment.

## Nye Māyel Kyong, a Paradise on Earth

In accordance with the Lepcha mythology, there is a Lepcha-village in the Sikkim Himalayas called 'Nye Māyel Kyong'. The Lepcha meaning of Nye Māyel Kyong is as follows: Nye— holy; Mā— hidden; yel—eternal, immortal and Kyong-village; meaning a hidden village that is holy and eternal, a paradise on Earth.

There lived seven Lepcha couples in this village in seven traditional Lepcha houses (Kāden Mo Lee). They wore the traditional Lepcha dresses made of nettle plant threads and hats made of bamboo and cane splits. They were immortal. In the morning they became children, at midday they became youths and in the evening old men and women. It is said that once the road to this holy, hidden village was open but is now closed forever. In Nye Māyel Kyong, crops grew many times bigger than elsewhere and it is from that place that all the seeds of present crops originated. The migratory birds called 'Māyel-Fo' (cuckoo) are sent out by these seven immortal couples to indicate the seasons and the actual time for commencing various agricultural works.

The village is so mysteriously hidden and barred that no one can go there. If by accident, any one reaches there, as soon as he/she leaves the village, the path and the village disappears and to try to reach the village for a second time is futile. About this a Lepcha story runs that once a Lepcha hunter went tracking a wild boar. He tracked on and on and felt that he was always getting closer to the boar. Days and nights passed but he could not reach or catch it. In the night he sheltered in the caves and again in the morning followed the boar. He lost his way so badly that he could not go back, so he thought it would be better to follow the boar. After several days he came to a village where the boar had come and disappeared underneath a house. He marvelled that he had been running behind a tamed pig all this time. He put the arrow back in its quiver and went inside the house to ask shelter for the night as the sun was setting by that time. He found an old couple inside the house and they enquired of him how he had managed to find their house. He

told them about the boar and his tracking etc. The old man said to him, "You have done well because it was our tamed pig and sometime it goes astray. You can stay for the night." They prepared food and 'Chi' for him and a straw bed.

Next morning when he woke, the Lepcha hunter could not find the old couple; when he entered the next room in search of them, to his surprise, he saw and found two small babies lying down on the bed, kicking their two feet and smiling at him. At midday, they turned into beautiful young couple and prepared food, 'Chi' and fed him well. The young couple took the hunter around their village and introduced him to the remaining immortal couples. Nye Māyel Kyong, he found, was incredibly beautiful and emancipated from hunger, desire, greed or sin. It was a land of eternal beauty, peace and prosperity, a heaven on earth. They also gave him different types of grains, fruits, and vegetable seeds to take home and distribute among the Lepchas.

The couple showed him a staircase to go down and told him that he would find his way at the bottom of the staircase. The Lepcha hunter went down to the ground and turned back to see the staircase and the house that he had come from just a moment ago, but to his surprise, the staircase had disappeared from sight and he could not make out the house where he had stayed. He found himself in the middle of a jungle close to where he had first started the tracking of the boar.

Thus the Lepcha hunter came back to his own house and narrated this story to the Lepchas. It is believed that the hunter was no other than Thikoong Men Salaong, a famous Boongthing, wizard, and above all the great Lepcha litterateur.

The Lepchas observe 'Sakyoo Rum Fāt' each year after harvesting. It is a thanksgiving ceremony and prayers and offerings to those seven immortal Lepcha couples of 'Nye Māyel Kyong' who gave them cereals, fruits, vegetable seeds to plant in Mayel Lyang. It is also predicted that these seven immortal Lepcha couples of Nye Mayel Kyong will come to the Lepchas' rescue and save them from a major natural or man made catastrophic disaster in this part of the world in future.



## Tendong Hlo Rum Fāt and Its Significance

Mountain Tendong (8675 feet) is a dominating geographical feature in south Sikkim and the Darjeeling District. The original, correct and appropriate name of this mountain given by the Lepchas, the indigenous race of Sikkim and the Darjeeling District is 'Tungrong' meaning the uplifted horn or ladder. When the British arrived in Mayel Lyang in early 1830s, they unable to pronounce it correctly, anglicized it to 'Tendong' and today this mountain of the Lepchas is popularly known by the name of 'Tendong'.

The Lepchas, the original masters of Mayel Lyang, have a legend of a great deluge of their own that submerged the present day Sikkim and the Darjeeling district. A few people have, unfortunately compared the deluge of the Lepchas with that of Noah's Ark but it is to be noted that the Lepchas' legend of this catastrophic primeval deluge that took place in Mayel Lyang, was in existence well before the arrival of the Christian Missionaries in the Darjeeling district.

The rivers Rāngnyoo and Rāngeet were lovers and they used to meet secretly, but when their love was known and exposed, they decided to leave the place and go down to the plains of India. As they did not know their way, they decided to take guides to lead them. River Rāngeet, the male, was guided by a bird, 'Tut Fo', and river Rāngnyoo, the female, was guided by a snake, 'Paril Bu'. Their guides agreed to take the two lovers to an appointed place at 'Panzaok' meaning dense forest in Lepcha, but now it is incorrectly called 'Pashok' or 'Peshok' near Teesta Bazaar.

As river Rāngeet was led by a bird, it travelled through circuitous routes in search of food; therefore, he arrived at the appointed place, 'Panzaok', late. If you observe this river carefully, it zig-zags, twists and turns and flows slowly up to Peshok. The female river, Rāngnyoo, led by a snake, travelled straight to the appointed place on time and waited for her lover, Rāngeet. Rāngnyoo flows straight like a snake running fast with its head held high. When river Rāngeet finally arrived at the appointed place, he was very, very surprised and shocked to see his lover, Rāngnyoo, already there waiting for

him. In anger he uttered out 'Thi-sa-thā !' meaning, 'when did you arrive !' Unable to pronounce this monosyllabic Lepcha word, 'Thi-sa-thā' properly, the non-Lepchas, today, call it 'Teesta'; therefore, Rāngnyoo is also known by the name of Teesta today. River Rangeet was very, very angry, disappointed, upset and ashamed because, being a male, he should have arrived first at the appointed place. He decides to return to his original place, the Himalaya. As a result, a great deluge occurred in the land of the Lepchas, Māyel Lyāng, the present day Sikkim and the Darjeeling District.

In order to save themselves from drowning, the Lepchas climbed up Mountain Tendong and its sister peak to the north, 'Mānaom', now incorrectly called 'Māinom', by the non-Lepchas. The Lepchas who were on top of Mt. Tendong saw, in the distance, Mt. Mānaom disappearing under water. 'Mānaom' in Lepcha means 'hidden or disappearing sister'. Those Lepchas on top of Mountain Tendong fervently prayed to 'Itboo Debu Rum', the Creator, with 'Chi', fermented beer, to save them from drowning. 'Kohaom Fo', a hill partridge, appeared at the scene and sprinkled the 'Chi', the fermented beer. Miraculously, the water started to subside slowly and thus the Lepchas, animals, birds, insects etc who took shelter on top of Mt. Tendong were saved from drowning. Mayel Lyang became dry; trees and plants started to grow and this region was, once again, repopulated by the Lepchas. While sprinkling 'Chi', some portion of the 'Chi', accidentally fell on Kohaom Fo's breast and as a result, the Lepchas believe that the breast of Kohaom Fo smells of 'Chi'.

Mt. Tendong is sacred and holy to the Lepchas. The Lepchas worship it by offering 'Chi', flowers, vegetables and fruits and pray fervently during the month of August. In their prayers to the Tendong Hlo Rum i.e. God of Mt. Tendong, the Lepchas, invoking their Itbu-Debu Rum ask for His blessings; request Him not to bring forth another deluge of this nature in Mayel Lyang again; the Lepchas request the Almighty God to protect and save mankind, all the people of the Sikkim and Darjeeling hills in particular, irrespective of caste and creed, the animal, insect and vegetation world in the

future. The Lepchas also pray for a harmonious and peaceful existence amongst the different castes and creeds, and safer environmental conditions in this region for our future world.

The ideal of 'live and let live' in its true sense, is not new to the Lepchas. It is true that the Lepchas have always welcomed strangers and immigrants to their Mayel Lyang with open arms and given shelters and lived like brothers and sisters without asking anything in return since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century when the first Tibetan, a migrant, 'Khe Bhumsa', entered Sikkim seeking the blessings from 'Thikoong Tek and Nyekoong Ngyāl', the 32<sup>nd</sup> consecutive High Priest and Priestess of the Lepchas at 'Kāwe', North Sikkim, for the boon of a son. Thikoong Tek and Nyekoong Ngyāl gave him not one but three sons! The Lepchas have always shown and demonstrated, by examples, to others the true meaning of total integration with races big and small, and live in harmony and peace.

The Lepchas are nature lovers and worshippers. They congregate and offer their prayers to God in the open, under the blue sky. The Lepchas are, probably, the only race in this part of the world who have a vision and thought to pray for the well being of the animal, insect and vegetation world also. In Rum Fāt, the usefulness and value of the animal, insect and vegetation world for the human beings have repeatedly been mentioned and the need to protect and save them from being indiscriminately destroyed from Mayel Lyang. This offering of the Lepchas to Mt. Tendong has an universal appeal and truth in it.

The Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association celebrate the 'Tendong Hlo Rum Fāt' ceremony with great pomp and circumstance on 8 August each year in Sikkim. Realising the importance and significance of the Tendong Hlo Rum Fāt, the present Sikkim Democratic Front Government has declared the 8<sup>th</sup> August as a State Public Holiday with effect from the year 1997 in Sikkim. The Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association celebrate it on 22 August each year in Kalimpong. If one joins the Lepchas on 8 and 22 August, he will observe how the educationally, economically and politically backward but culturally very rich Lepchas pray during the Tendong Hlo Rum Fāt for the well being of the human, animal, insect and vegetation world.

## The Two Suns

At the beginning of the world, there were two suns who were sisters. One rose at day break, the other at night, thus darkness was never created. It was very hot, so that all the leaves and the trees of the forest shrivelled up and died and men suffered torments from the heat as it was always light; human beings and creatures could not sleep. So they all took council together, deciding that one of the two sisters should be killed, otherwise the world would be destroyed.

The edible toad, Tun-Blo-Taluk, volunteered to kill one of the sisters. He made an arrow from the red cock's comb plant, Kanum, and shot the younger sister with it. She died at once; her elder sister became very sad and covered herself with a black cloth, 'Chya-look dum', as a result the whole world became very dark; one sun being dead and the other covered. It became so dark that the wooden pestles, 'Taling', turned into snakes, the wooden mortars, 'Tak-chām', became tigers and darkness became the cause of most of the evil in this world. The fire-flies, 'tak pit', tried to lighten the darkeness, but their light was not sufficient. A tree called 'Num-bum', turned its leaves over which were of a white colour underneath, but their light was not sufficient either. Half the human beings and creatures were killed by the snakes and tigers, so they and all the creatures implored the elder sister to take her cloth off, but it was of no avail. Seeing the miseries of the world, even the Rum, Creator, entreated the elder sister to uncover herself but she would not listen to Him either.

Then the bat, 'brain' in Lepcha, volunteered to persuade the elder sister to uncover herself. He armed himself with a bow and arrow, hanging on to one end of the bow by his feet, while he placed the other end in his nose, saying to the elder sister in a nasal tone, 'If you remain covered much longer, through the intense cold, the entire world will perish.'

The elder sister became very anxious to see the speaker for he reflected that out of many who had come to see her, there had been none that had spoken through his nose. She looked down and

saw the bat hanging on his bow upside down, so that she could not help smiling. As she did so, it became so hot that the bat lost his balance and fell down to the earth. He fell on some stones breaking many bones and that is why his feet are so different to any other bird, animal and why his nose is turned up and why he never comes out in day light as he cannot bear the heat of the sun.

From that day, the sun shone. All the creatures took council in order to decide what should be done to the toad. They arranged that they would cut off his thumbs and put him in a cold place. Unless this was done, the sun would not have been pacified and would never have given warmth to the world. If you look carefully at the hands and legs of a toad, you will find that they are just like that of a human excepting the lost thumb. The younger sister (dead sun) became the moon.

In memory of the younger sister (dead sun), names were given to months. The Lepcha months are calculated by moons, of which they allot the usual twelve to the year. The month of moon is called 'Lavo' but the name of the month or period is called 'Nyom'. The Lepcha year is called 'Nām'. The year varies according to the period altered by the addition of an intercalary month called 'Nam chām' which is added once in three years to regulate the lunar month with solar month.

Names of the months are :

1.	Kurnyit	-	January
2.	Kursaong	-	February
3.	Thaon	-	March
4.	Sam	-	April
5.	Taphā/Nam Chām	-	May
6.	Bloong	-	June
7.	Naom kum	-	July
8.	Purvim	-	August
9.	Gloo	-	September
10.	Eet	-	October
11.	Rā	-	November
12.	Mār	-	December