

MOGER MULUK

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It's real story, heard from the horse's mouth. Little less than twenty-five years back, one day a police team led by a newly appointed SDPO went to a tribal village to meet with a tribal leader, an MLA. The village was a constituent part of the Assembly Constituency which he was representing. It was a remote village. Our police team covered some great distance on foot. Just when they reached the outskirts of the village, the police party had to stop on the bank of a rivulet. They were removing their shoes to cross the stream. An elderly but stoutly built tribal gentleman was taking bath on the opposite bank of the rivulet. They ascertained the house of the MLA from that gentleman, standing at that location. When the SDPO was removing his shoes, the gentleman asked him not to remove his shoes. He then crossed the river and carried the SDPO on his shoulder to the other side.

It was a beautiful house. The police team received warm hospitality, even in his absence. The house inmates told SDPO to wait as the house owner was expected to return soon. He was sitting alone in the big drawing room while his escort was in the verandah. Suddenly, a gentleman entered into the room from inside the house through another room. The MLA introduced himself before the new SDPO. He was none other than the person who helped him in crossing the rivulet a short while before. The young SDPO could realize why Anju Mog was so popular in entire Sabroom Sub-Division. The gentleman is no more in this world.

Whenever I visit Sabroom, this story invariably comes in my mind. Recently, I have been to Sabroom for a day. Sabroom is still an interior place in our state. It's after a gap of more than a decade I put my step to that place. The Sub-Divisional Headquarters is now a Nagar Panchayat. I notice lots of

development all around. I spent the night at a new Circuit House. I was alone this time. At night I went down my memory lanes.

First time I visited Sabroom, exactly fourteen years back. It appeared to me as mini Africa, the place for punishment posting of government employees. I usually preferred to travel through a long route, Udaipur-Amarpur-Nutanbazar-Karbook-Silachari-Ghorakappa-Magroom-Sabroom. Many a times, our vehicles struck up in muddy soil and danda-soiling (carpeted with tree-branches) road. I also availed alternative roads via Manubankul from Silacheri, apart from using NH-44 via Udaipur-Santirbazar-Baikhora-Manu Bazar-Sabroom. I had been to the interior places on foot in search of insurgents, and investigation.

Sabroom is basically a land of the Buddhist Mog and Hindu Tripuri. Perhaps, the ethnic and religious diversity is the least in this area. The non-tribal population is dominated by people from the labour and business class. There is proverb in Bengali : Moger muluk...the land ruled by Mogs. It means anarchy. To assess an area we should look for the epitomology of its name. The names like Manu Bankul, Chalita Bankul have arrived from the existence of Reserve Forest. Forest means 'ban' in Bengali and 'kul' means boundary. A forest which does not have a boundary is 'Bankul'. It's needless to mention there is vast forest in Sabroom, extended upto Chitagong Hill Tract in Bangladesh, and then to Aracan and other provinces of Myanmar. Sabroom is still sparsely populated. It was once frequented by deer, bears and even tigers. It has scores of charas or rivulet. So, there are places like Silachari (the stream carrying stones), Shuknachari (dry rivulet), Chalitachri (the river bank where 'chalita fruit' grows, Chatakchari (may be there was abundance of the bird 'chatak' or swallow), and so on. The name of Rupaichari has probably come from another eminent tribal personality Rupai Choudhury. Like late Anju Mog, and another gentleman Madhu Mog, he was popular for the height of hospitality. The name of village Harina arrived from the liking of the place by deer or 'harin'. Long back plenty of chan-grass used to grow in the area. So, deer preferred the area. 'Thaipong' is jackfruit in kok-borok. The name of village 'Thaibong' has arrived from this word, as plenty of jack-fruits grow at this place.

So far I recollected, the father of late Anju Mog was Dhan Mog. He was really a 'dhani' or rich man. He had business connection with Chitagong. One of their family members reportedly married a princess of king Man of Chottogram. During Bangladesh liberation, the royal family alleged to have taken shelter in the house of Dhan Mog. The river Feni demarcates the international boundary with Bangladesh for a major portion of the periphery. Population of both the countries use this water way for transportation of forest products like bamboo and firewood. Sometimes, they use their national flags. One can cross the border swimming.

The Mogs and Chakmas are peace loving people. They keep dry sweets and water for the pedestrian by the side of the road. In the evening, they offer candles in bamboo-made miniature hut or temple for their ancestors. But, I have seen brutal murders and dacoity in these villages. The motive used to be wrongful gain. On the contrary, in Tripuri village witch-hunt is a common cause of murders. The assailants generally attack the upper parts of the body and deface the body beyond recognition. Crime against persons is perhaps more in Tripuri villages. Sometimes, it continues for generation together between families which I feel, an outcome of feudal mentality. Both the communities are worst sufferer of malaria. Apart from the mosquito, a very very small insect termed as 'ulani' is the deadly carrier of Plasmodium Falciparum, but probably it's a misconception. The fever left indelible marks, especially upon the children who could survive the deadly attack. I find the children malnourished with enlarged livers, as they suffer from Plasmodium Vivax.
