

Close to nature at Jeypore



My love for nature and wildlife took me to the rainforest of Jeypore off Namrup, some 500 km from Guwahati. My friend Peimthi came to pick me up from Namrup bus-stand. He hails from Namphake village near Namrup inhabited by the Taiphake people. I had the privilege of seeing the Buddhist monastery there. The Taiphake tribe entered Assam centuries back, migrating from the far east. The traditional life style of the people attracted me as I had lunch in Peimthi's house.

Having lunch, cooked and served in Thai style, was really a privilege for me. The Princess of Thailand in her recent tour to Assam visited the village spending some time in the same house. Knowing this from Peimthi's I just got carried away and almost forgot to

leave for my next destination. The driver reminded me and we hurried back to Namrup amidst the fading light.

Early next morning, I got ready after a quick breakfast with my friend Bipul to visit the Jeypore rainforest. Jeypore range officer KK Deka helped us with necessary information along with a car and a forest guard. The roadsides were covered with dense forest. Though Deka had joined there recently he knew many things about the rainforest. It is a very nice and peaceful place to live with the Buri Dehing river flowing by quietly. He told me about a few more places having huge tourism potential.

The Dehing Patkai rainforest, a wildlife sanctuary, has a rich biodiversity that is comparable to the rainforest of Amazon basin. This is arguably the only forest in India where the habitat of three big cats -- tiger, leopard and clouded leopard -- and three cats -- morbeed cat, golden cat and leopard cat - are found and their existence have been confirmed using camera traps in 2007-2008. About 40 species of mammals have been recorded in Jeypore rainforest. It also shelters nearly 38 family groups of western hoolock gibbon. Jeypore is also part of the Dehing Pataki elephant reserve.

A portion of the forest was recently declared protected area -- the Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary. This includes parts of Upper Dehing West reserve forest, Dirok rainforest and part of Jeypore. Among different bird species, several species of hornbill, the highly endangered white-winged wood duck (deohanh) and the critically endangered long billed

vulture are found in Jeypore rainforest. It is also home to the poisonous snakes like king cobra and banded krait as well as python and monitor lizard. Endangered tree species like *Vatica lanceaefolia* (morhal) and *Dipterocarpus* (holong) are found here. Other flora and fauna species found in the rainforest are mekai, nahar, borpat, sam and varieties of orchids and Royal Bengal tiger, slow loris, etc.



We also visited Namsang, a scenic spot to the eastern side of Jeypore rainforest bordering Arunachal Pradesh. It took us nearly an hour to reach Namsang from Joypur town by car. The natural beauty prompted us to

track a further nine kilometer from Namsang to Kathalguri. From there we started off to Sitakunda on the bank of Buri Dehing. At Nagakhat we had to cross the Buri Dehing to get to Sitakunda. The legend has it that Sita during her vanavas with Lord Rama and Laxmana rested here. Now there stands a temple dedicated to Sita. As we cruised over the clear waters of Buri Dehing, I was thinking how one could think of destroying nature by cutting trees, killing animals for their own benefit. I wish people would learn to respect Mother Nature who never fails to shower us all her gifts unconditionally.

We also took a trip to Deomali, a small town in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh where we met one Natong, a Nishi tribesman. He invited us for a cup of tea in their bamboo-make tree house. On the way back I had a close look at the vanaspati tree, cultivated in Tirap. It is the very tree from where vanaspati ghee is made. It took me down memory lane when my mother used to cook food with 'Tripti Vanaspati Ghee'.

I also saw the coffee plantation in Tirap. We crossed a small factory where coffee seeds were being readied for dispatch to markets around the globe. It was pity that the old man, who was drying up coffee seeds under the sun outside the factory, did not have any idea how much does a cup of good coffee like Coppaccino cost. He just cannot manage to have a cup of coffee because it is too costly for a man like him who has to work the entire day to take care of his family. I could feel the pain the man went through; I wish I could do something for the poor man.

While returning to Guwahati the next day, I was reminiscing my stay at the beautiful Joypur inspection bungalow, constructed by the British. The pictures of the big windows and the wooden balcony where I stood enjoying the sunset and Nature around sipping a hot cup of coffee, went fleeting over my mind as I recalled the wonderful tour just gone by.

Rashmi Das