

KA LAW LYNGDOH MAWPHLANG MAWPHLANG SACRED GROVE



LOCATION: Mawphlang Sacred Grove Located at Mawphlang Village, covering an area of about 76.8 hectare. It is a Primordial Forest aged more than 700 years old standing aloft through the test of time conserved by local Khasi Community through social fencing. It is just 24 Km from Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya.

Traditional set up: Tradition told us that, the conservation and sanctification of Sacred Grove is to recreate a close link of peaceful harmony between Human and Nature. The unique way of conserving Sacred Groves has been attached with Traditional religion and Culture. This belief and practice is the identity that showcase that Khasi people were great lovers of nature. There is a saying that ***"There can be no Sacred Grove without Hima or Raid"*** and there is no identity/sovereignty of any Raid or Hima without a Sacred Grove. Therefore, Mawphlang Sacred Grove is one of the famous Sacred Grove because the Sanctity is still very much intact through the active preservation of the local community. The Forest is still in its pristine nature.



Formation of a Grove: When "Khmah Nongsai" (Ancestress) of the Lyngdoh Mawphlang Clan was invited to send her son to be the Chief and rule over Hima Mawphlang. She preferred to reject it right away, but will be accepted if and only with the consent of the almighty God (U Blei). So in order to know, whether this is the will of God, she laid down a vow with the existing clans, to give her time to testified this by planting three saplings and waited for three odd years. These saplings are: 1. Dieng Sohma (*Rhus semialata*) 2. Dieng sning (*Castanopsis Indica*) and the third plant is ka Diengdoh (*Ex-bucklandia populnea*) all these were



planted at Phiephandi. Since this is the will of God, it happened that after three years these saplings sprout well. Then Ka Khmah Nongsai and the other clans arrange for the crowning ceremony of the First Chief was done or solemnized at Phiephandi, where the stone staging with five seats were made, the Chief sits in the middle and on both sides sit the Myntri. She also performs rituals inside Phiephandi itself. (Alters were still intact).

It was told that, few years after the Anglo-Khasi War ended in 1839, attempts were made by some people to cut down the trees that grow in the Sacred Grove. The Lyngdoh, his Myntri and the Elders of the Hima tried hard to prevent this and even sent volunteers at night time to prevent people of doing so. It was also told that, once the people of Mawphlang wanted to cut off all the trees from the same grove, but one-brave man, named '**Kun Lyngdoh Mawphlang**' stood alone to protect the Grove by saying defiantly ***"Who dares to take away the clothes of my mother, one tree felled, one head will be chopped off"***.

Due to sporadic attempt to destroy the Sacred Grove, the Chief and his Elders perform certain rituals to invoked the deities "U Ryngkew U Basa" to punish those who dares to violate the taboos

relating the Sacred Grove by cutting trees, plucking flowers etc., or creating nuisance in and around the grove. Actually, all the fruits, nuts, herbs, eatables, honey bees, and water can be consumed freely, but not to be taken outside the grove or to take home for profit making business purposes. Therefore, anyone who violates these rules they were punished by twisting their head back; many have died, and more will die if pardon from the Chief is not done or prayed for if you mistakenly or intentionally do something against the will of the Deities (Leopard & Snake). Many incidents have been experienced, even ten years back we found it happen. So, until today no one ever dare to disturb the grove, therefore it become one of the Nation's pride a home of flora and fauna rarely found in the contemporary world. We all are proud of it.

There are numerous Climate indicator tree species, like *Quercus Glauca*, *Griffitti*; Medicinal plants like *Taxus bacatta* and *Panaxpseudo Ginseng* etc.



The Frog named *Rana mawphlangensis* and migratory birds (Black breasted thrush) and the Flying Squirrels are just to name the few for example. The grove housed more than 450 Plants and herbs Species. With lots of Animals and Birds besides amphibians and reptiles rarely found in the Contemporary temperate rain forest.

The Grove has attracted many visitors, Tourist, Researchers and Picnickers all-round the Globe. Many of them admire the wisdom of our forefathers who possessed this unique concept of conserving nature through the Tradition, Religion and Culture.



As the Children of the present generation we have to take our all-out effort to preserve this kind of forest which is really a treasure house of generations. We have to be taught and spread awareness among ourselves that preservation and conservation of Forest is the need of the hour, for without trees and forest the world and the whole system will melt due to excess heat, lack of water and food.

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