

Tribal Communities of Tripura

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Tripuri Community

The Tripuris constitute the weightiest section of the entire tribal community, representing more than 50% of the total tribal population of the State. They live on the slopes of hills in a group of five to fifty families. Their houses in these areas are built of bamboo and raised to a five-six feet height to save themselves from the dangers of the wild animals. Nowadays a considerable section of this community are living in the plains and erecting houses like the plains' people adopting their methods of cultivation and following them in other aspects of life, such as dress, manners and cosmetics. Tripuri women wear a scarf, called Pachra, which reaches down just below the knee. They weave on their loom a small piece of cloth, which they call Risha, and they use this small piece of cloth as their breast garment.

The life and culture of Tripuris revolve around Jhum (shifting) cultivation. When the sowing of seeds at a plot of land selected for Jhum is over by mid-April, they pray to the God Garia for a happy harvest. The celebrations relating to the Garia Puja continue for seven days when they seek to entertain their beloved deity with song and dance.

After the Garia festival is over, the Tripuris have time to rest awaiting the monsoon. During this period, flocks of charming colourful insects called Lebang visit hill slopes in search of seeds strewn on it. The annual visit of the insects renders the tribal youths to indulge in merry-making. While the menfolk make a peculiar rhythmic sound with the help of two bamboo chips in their hand, the womenfolk run tottering the hill slopes to catch hold of these insects called Lebang. The rhythm of the sound made by the bamboo chips attracts the insects from their hiding places and the women in-groups catch them. With the change of time Jhuming on hill slopes are gradually diminishing. But the cultural life that developed centering round Jhum delved deep into the society. It still exists in the state's hills and dales as a reminiscence of the life which the tribals of today cherish in memory, and preserve as a treasure. In both the dances Tripuris use musical instruments like khamb, flute, sarinda, lebang and cymbal made of bamboo. Tripuri women generally put on indigenous ornaments like chains made of silver with coins, bangles made of silver, ear and nose rings made of bronze. They prefer flower as ornaments.

Reang Community

The Reangs constitute the second biggest group among the tribal population. It is generally believed that this particular community migrated to Tripura from somewhere in the Chittagong hill tracts in the middle part of the fifteenth century. The Reangs are a very disciplined community. The head of the community enjoys the title 'Rai'. His word is supreme in all matters of internal disputes and to be obeyed by all belonging to the said community. They generally avoid normal court for justice. The Reangs are very backward both educationally and economically and, therefore, are still considered to be the primitive group.

While the theme of the dance remains almost the same as of other tribes, the dance form of the Reangs is quite different from others. The movement of hands or even the upper part of the body is somewhat restricted, whereas the movement beginning from their waist down to their feet creates a wonderful wave. Standing on an earthen pitcher with a bottle on the head and a lighted lamp on it, when the Reang belle dance twisting rhythmically the lower part of the body, the dance bewilders the onlookers. The Reangs also use the musical instruments like khamb, flute made of bamboo and bamboo cymbal. Reang women prefer to put on black pachra and rea. They put on coins ring, which generally covers their entire upper region. They also put on rings made of coin in their ears. They are fond of fragrant flowers as ornaments to metal things.

Chakma Community

People of Chakma community in Tripura are found normally in the sub-divisions of Kailashahar, Amarpur, Sabroom, Udaipur, Belonia and Kanchanpur. They are followers of Buddhism. Although the Chakmas are divided into several groups and sub-sections, no major difference is noticed in the manner and customs in different groups. The Chakma chiefs are generally called 'Dewans' and they exercise great authority and influence within the community in all internal matters. The Chakma women, like all other tribal women, are experts in weaving. The Chakmas are very neat and clean in their domestic life.

A popular form of dance is characteristic of the Chakma community. Bizu means 'Chaitra-Sankranti'. 'Chaitra-Sankranti' denotes the end of Bengali calendar year. It is during this period that the Chakmas sing and dance to bid adieu to the year just ending and welcome the new year. The dance is beautifully orchestrated with the rhythm playing of what is known as khenggarang and dhukuk sorts of flutes. The Chakma women are fond of flower, which they often use in their hair. They also use metal ornaments.

Halam (Malsum) community

Malsum is one of the 12 groups belonging to the Halam community of Tripura. Halam, again, originally hailed from one of the branches of Kukis. It is said that Kukis had lived in Tripura even before the Tripuris came in to conquer the land. Those of the Kukis who had submitted to the Tripura 'Raja' came to be known as Halams. Originally, the tribal was divided into 12 sub-groups of 'Dafas', but in course of time these sub-groups have split into sections and now as many as sixteen clans are found to be making up for the whole Halam community. Malsum belongs to one of these 12 groups. The Halams are followers of the 'Saka' cult, but the influence of 'Vaishnavism' is quite marked, particularly, in two sections of the community. They believe in the existence of spirit too. Their worship is solemnized with offerings and sacrifices, so that nothing calamitous befalls the community in the form of crop failure or epidemic or any other natural disaster. During the festival, they sit together to settle all internal disputes, try cases or crime and inflict punishment on the offenders, which make the Puja a useful social gathering in keeping peace and harmony within the community.

Like other tribal community of this State, the social and economic life of the Halam community also revolve, around jhum cultivation. At the end of the harvesting season the Malsum traditionally adore Goddess Laxmi. They enjoy this festive occasion for their famous Hai-Hak dance. It is also a community dance with exquisite beauty. Rhythms of the dance reflect the tradition inherited from distant past.

Garo Community

The people of Garo community live in the South and Dhalai district of Tripura. Originally, they lived in Tong Ghar made of bamboo to save themselves from wild animals like the other tribals of Tripura. But now they prefer houses made of mud wall with 'Chan' grass as roof. They are believed to have migrated to Tripura from Garo Hills. The life style of the Garo living in Tripura is almost like the other tribal. The heads of the community is known as Sangnakma, and the priest of the community is known as Kama. They put on the dress as good as that of the Khasis.

After the happy harvest 'Wangala' (1st rice eating ceremony) is performed in every house. The Sangnakma, head of the community, visits every house and cuts a pumpkin as a part of worship.

This pumpkin is sacrificed on this occasion. After that the women dance to the beat of 'Dama' and 'Aaduri' made of buffalo horn. The dance projects the rehearsal for war.

Lusai Community

The Lusai were originally inhabitant of the hills lying in east and north-east of Tripura and also to the adjoining hilly areas. They have settled down on Jampui Hills situated on the North-east boundary of the state under Kanchanpur subdivision in North Tripura district. Their number is very insignificant to the total population of the state. Their social life and customs have been objects of great attraction to others. The principal means of livelihood of the Lusai still remain to be jhum cultivation. Of course, this can be considered chiefly to the dearth of plain land in the hills. They prefer living in high altitude of the hills.

The Lusai girls are well dressed. They generally wear their colourful cloth. They perform welcome dance whenever any one visits their house. This is very colourful dance in which young girls of the entire community take part. Their dress is so colourful that the ornaments are not very much required except fragrant flowers.

Darlong community

The Darlongs are the sub-caste of the Lusai community. They live mostly in Kailashahar subdivision in North Tripura District. Their main livelihood is cultivation of pineapple, orange and cotton.

The Darlong repose faith in after life. They believe that man is destined to go to Haven after death. Incidentally, they think that if a pregnant woman dies, she feels it very difficult, with all her physical strains, to track the long journey to Heaven. Hence at the last stage of her pregnancy — in fact just at the time or immediately prior to delivery — all her relatives perform this 'Cheraw' dance in group throughout day and night to instill confidence in the mind of that woman. They are firm in their belief that even if the woman dies at this juncture, it will be possible for her to go to Heaven with the courage and confidence together with joy gained through the sound of bamboo and the rhythm of the dance produced till her death.

Mog Community

There is a controversy over the origin of the word 'MOG' or 'MOGH'. In a periodical magazine of the Burmese Research Society, this 'word' has been shown to have originated from Bengali. But in the model Bengali Dictionary of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, the origin of this word is 'unknown'. In another dictionary, this word is claimed to have originated from a Burmese word 'Mogh' which is generally used as an epithet before the name of a gentleman. Some others, of course, referred to the ancient Mogadha Empire for its origin. But it is sad that when the domination of Hindu religion began to thrive in this ancient center of Buddha religion, a branch of Mogadha dynasty left for Chittagong and subsequently settled down in Hill Chittagong. Probably, the word 'Mong' came from 'Mogadhi' (one who hails from Mogadha or one who is a resident of Mogadha). In English dictionary the words Mog, Mogen, Mouge have been shown as surnames to the inhabitants of Arakan in 15th and 16th centuries. Bangalees, of course, refer to the inhabitants of Arakan as 'Mog'. The people of 'Mog' community claimed to have come from Arakan and settled down in Tripura in 957 A.D. Almost all the people belonging to the Mog community are the followers of Buddhism. Sangrai (last day of the month of Chaitra, which is the last month of the Bengali calendar year) is the occasion of special festival. The people of the Mog community in general and the young boys and girls in particular celebrate the day through cultural programmes to invite the new year. Cakes are prepared at every home and denizens move from house to house to take cakes. On this day water is carried through auspicious pitchers and respected persons are allowed to take bath with this water. The young boys and girls indulge in aquatics; traditional Khouyang is played on bet. Paste of fragrant sandalwood and water of green coconuts are sprinkled in every house. There is myrth and merriment everywhere and in the midst of pomp and grandeur fragrant water is poured on the root of 'Bodhi Briksha'. The festival continues for three days. The youths of Mog community on this auspicious occasion move about from house to another dancing and singing with pious 'wish Yielding Tree' (Kalpataru) on head.

The people of Mog community observe austerity from the full moon of Bengali month of Ashad down to the full moon of Bengali month of Ashwin. Generally no auspicious occasion like marriage is celebrated during the period. Even the married women do not go to their parents' house during this time. 'Way' festival is celebrated on the day of full moon of the Bengali month of Ashwin. Lamps dedicated to the Lord Buddha are launched on this day. The young boys and girls stand in rows with lamps in hand to worship Lord Buddha. The youngsters indulge in merriment through songs and dances in the premises of Buddha temple. The traditional dance of the Mog community is known as 'Way Dance' or 'Lamp Dance'.

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Tripura — A Profile

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Tripura is one of the seven states in the North-eastern part of India located between 22 degree and 56 minutes and 24 degree and 32 minutes north latitude and between 90 degree and 09 minutes and 92 degree and 20 minutes east latitude. It is bounded on the north, west, south and south-east by Bangladesh whereas in the east it has a common boundary with Assam and Mizoram.

There is a common belief that the name of the State has originated from "Tripura Sundari" — the presiding deity of the land, which is famous as one of the 51 Pithas of Hindu pilgrims. Apart from this traditional view, it is believed that originally the land was known as "Tuipra" meaning a land adjoining the water. It is fact that in days of yore the boundaries of Tripura was extended up to the Bay of Bengal when its rulers held sway from Garo hills to Arakan.

The history of Tripura as an administrative unit dates back to the days of Maharajas when the territory was a native State. It is significant to note that although Tripura was conquered by force of arms in 1761, no political agent was appointed in the State till 1871 — a gap of 110 years.

The former princely state of Tripura was ruled by Maharajas of Manikya dynasty. It was an independent administrative unit under the Maharaja even during the British rule in India though this independence was qualified, being subject to the recognition of the British, as the paramount power, of each successive ruler. After independence of India, an agreement of merger of Tripura with the Indian Union was signed by the Regent Maharani on September 9, 1947 and the administration of the state was actually taken over by the Government of India on October 15, 1949. Tripura became a Union Territory without legislature with effect from November 1, 1956 and a popular ministry was installed in Tripura on July 1, 1963. On January 21, 1972 Tripura attained statehood. It has, excellent opportunity for tourism. It has many places of interest. Folk dances of Tripura speak of its rich cultural heritage.

The Land

- Location : Remotest in the Northeast
- Land : Total area 10,492 sq. km. 84% international border with Bangladesh (839 Km), 39% reserve forest, 25% net shown area, 30% operational holding, average holding 1.02 Hect. irrigation 13% of cropped area.

Climate : Temperature varies between 10 to 35 Degree Celsius, average annual rainfall 2100 mm, highest rainfall 2855 mm (Kamalpur), lowest rainfall 1811 mm (Sonamura).

The People

Population : Total population 3,191,168 as per 2001 Census,
Rural population 23,35,484, Urban population 4,21,721,
Male 1,636,138 and female 1,555,030.
Population density 304 per square km.
16% schedule caste, 31% schedule tribe (19 tribes).
46% other backward communities (35 in Central list).

Literacy : 73.66% (S.T. 40.37%).
For details on school education please click [here](#).

Major

Language : Bengali and Kokborok.

The Economy

The economy is primarily agrarian. The primary sector (Agricultural) contributes about 64% of total employment in the state and about 48% of the state domestic product (SDP).

A variety of horticultural/plantation crops are produced in Tripura like pineapple, oranges, cashewnut, jackfruit, coconut, tea, rubber, forest, plantations etc. There is ample scope for increasing the area under such plantations as well as the productivity.

As regards animal husbandry and fisheries, the present level of production is not adequate to meet the demand of the state and there is need and scope for considerable development.

The industry sector has also remained undeveloped so far, despite the vast potential. The secondary sector contributes only about 5% of total employment and about 7% of the total income (SDP) of the state at present.

Tourism has been declared as an industry in the state since 1987 also plays an important role in rural industry of Tripura.

Administration

Administratively it is divided into 4 districts, 15 subdivisions, 38 rural development blocks, 31 revenue circles, 183 teshils, 874 revenue moujas, 962 gram panchayats, 3 Jilla Parishads, 18 notified areas, 1 municipal council.

For reference books on Tripura, please click [here](#).

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