



e-ISSN: 2319-8753 | p-ISSN: 2347-6710

IJIRSET

International Journal of Innovative Research in
SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

Volume 13, Issue 12, December 2024

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.524

The Socio-Economic Life of the Tipra (Tripuri) Tribe: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT: The paper describes in detail about the socio-economic life of the Tripuri or Tipra tribe. As we know that the Tripuri tribe is the largest tribal community of Tripura, having distinct feature of mongoloid origin. They speak kokborok language like the other tribes of Tripura which is a language of Tibeto-Burman family. Being the largest community in the state, the Tripuri tribe arrayed in almost all the districts such as Sepahijala, West Tripura, Unokoti, Teliamura, Noth Tripura, Dhalai, Khowai, Gomati, South Tripura, and in some other parts outside the Tripura.

Different scholars have different views about the origin of Tripura. According to Kailas Chandra Sinha the name of Tripura was derived from the Tipra word. (In Tripuri dialects "Tui" means water, Phra-pha God). And from Triphra the people have known as Tiphra¹.

Another view is that, "Tripura is the land of the God Shiva who is also known as Tripurari or Tripuresha. The people who settled in the land of Tripuresha Shiva came to be known as Tripuri and the land as Tripura².

Tripura tribe originated from greater Bodo tribe. And there is no room for controversy or ambiguity over it. Because number of reputed ethnographers namely N. Vasu (Social History of Kamrup), Capt. Pemberton (Jalpaiguri District Handbook), Hooker (Himalayan Journal), Beverly (Census Report), Dalton (Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal 1872), Hadgson (Miscellaneous Essays 1880), Gait (Census of India 1891), Grieson (Linguistic Survey, 1903), Sunder (Survey and Settlement of Western Duars, 1895), Buchanon, F. Hermans and Anderson studied and discussed about it. According to them "The Bodos are known with different generic names at different places. And therefore the present ethnic groups have known as Cacharis, Dimasas, Koches, Rajbansis, Meches and Tripuras living in different regions though possess some variation of socio-cultural and socio-linguistic traits they all belong to one race-the Bodos³.

In fact, this research paper will represent the indigenous Tripuri's social and economic life. As per Cambridge Dictionary, the social life is the realm of organized social life and network of institutions by which citizens represent themselves. Tripuri community is patriarchal in nature where the father is deemed to be the head of the family and he held the full responsibility to look after the family. The Tripuri tribe is living in a particular region and the main deity of Tripuri tribe is Mwtai Kotor (Similar to Lord Shiva). Therefore, dress and ornament, family, kinship, marriage etc. are the social life of Tripuri tribe. On the other hand, economic life of the Tripuri tribe is mainly dependent on agriculture since the long past and it is the main source of livelihood for them. Prior to the plough cultivation, the Tipra or Tripuri tribe society was characterized by the primitive subsistence farming – called slash and burn agriculture. This paper makes a critical analysis on the socio-economic life of the Tripuris in day-to-day life.

KEYWORDS: Family and Kinship, Dress, Ornament, Shifting cultivation, Plough cultivation.

Tripura is a small hilly state which is situated in the northeast zone of India where 19 tribes and non-tribal communities are residing simultaneously. Tripuri tribe is another important tribal group of Tripura and their socio-economic life constituted the unique characteristics to a greater extent. Therefore, social and economic life of the indigenous Tripuris are discussed in below-

I. SOCIAL LIFE OF THE TRIPURI TRIBE

The social structure is the patterned social arrangements in society that are both emergent from a determinant of actions of individuals. Likewise, society is believed to be grouped into structurally-related groups, or sets of role, with different functions, meaning and purposes. For instance, the social structure includes family, religion, law, economy and class. The Tripuri tribe have their own community living in a particular region, their relations are direct and familiar. In fact

the Tripuris are patriarchal in nature where father is the head of the family. Therefore, the family, kinship, marriage, dress and ornament which comprises the social structure of the Tripuris tribe are discussed below-

- 1. Family:** The family is the basic social unit and it known as Nukhung among the Tripuri tribe. The Tripuri family usually comprises of a man and his wife with their sons and daughter. The family system of Tripuri society is of simpler nature. Both joint family and extended family are prevalent in Tripuri society. It refers to a universal, permanent, well- disciplined characterized by socially approved sexual access and reproduction, common residence, and economic co-operation. Thus the family structure of Tripuri tribe also is similar to that of the common Indian family structure based on the joint families. This system of joint families is old and perhaps began with the emergence of the human society. According to socio-anthropologists Indian family system is composed of two categories. The distinction is made between nuclear and extended family. Nuclear family consists of small unit with a married couple and their children. An extended family, on the other hand, is a large group composed of more than one generation of lineally related numbers, their spouses and children. In Tripuri society joint family was much needed till recent past to carry out economic pursuits as togetherness strengthens manpower to produce more Jhum products. At present joint family in the Tripuri Society is found very rare barring some well-to-do families sharing same house and dining. Sometimes domestic discord is also responsible to split the Joint or Living is responsible to bring about change on the mental makeup of the Tripuris to form nuclear family unit instead of Joint or extended family. Besides, insolvency and landlessness more often stand out lead nuclear family. Tripuri family types may be classified on the basis of the number of mates. If we view the Tripuri family type from the overview of Indian family system Tripuri family type of a component unit of the latter. The present Indian family system has direct link with the ancient and epic era. Especially in polyandry system one wife belongs to more than one husband. The best example was Draupadi, the daughter of Drupada king who was married to five brothers, Pancha Pandavas. This system is still prevalent in some clans of Himachal Pradesh. Polygamy system is found gain great momentum in the Indian Hindu kings and Muslim Nawabs. Both of them have the fashion to take a large number of wives. The erstwhile rajas of Tripura were not exception. Apart from rajas and Nawabs, common people who are well-to-do also take fancy to have several wives. In Tripura society, polyandry is not all practiced. But polygamy is practiced though very significant number. Endogenous system of marriage is prevalent in Tripuri society and their family is mainly composed of monogamy where in an individual can have only one spouse at a time. Till recently exogamy was thinly practiced in the Tripuri society. But due to culture contact with different ethnic groups of both tribal and non tribal communities the rigid customary law in terms of restriction to matrimonial alliance with the community is conspicuously on the wane.
- 2. Kingship:** The present Tripuri society is following the norm of both monogamy and exogamy to keep pace with the modern Socio-economic trend kinship is grown either through a blood relationship or through marriage. The two means technically and sociologically consanguinity and affinity respectively. In Tripuri society basic kinship groups are the patrilineal kula /Vansha, Gotra and Jati. The Kula is called 'Sandai' in Tripuri language (Kokborok) marriage is restricted among the Sandai groups as they belong to patrilineal. Pedigree, status and property are transmitted in the male lines. Marriage is also restricted among those who are closely related either from father or mother line. Marriage between uncle and niece even of distant relations having no blood connection is also restricted in the Tripuri Society. Even a man is not supposed to marry his friend's sister on a moral ground. It is a fine specimen of moral code of conduct of the Tripuri society. The universal kinship or relation is established in the Tripuri Society. But this kind of utopian atmosphere has gone into oblivion now-a-days. It is certainly a national anathema of the present day socio-cultural life of Tripura as a whole nay in the whole gamut of Indian society.
- 3. Avoidance:** The role of avoidance is found in Tripuri society like the other society. In Tripuri society, the wife of a person is called a 'bihik' (wife) traditionally is addressed as a mother of so and so, e.g. 'Chandrama'. And husband is addressed traditionally as a father of so and so. The parents-in-law also hardly call their bahanjwk (daughter-in-law) and Chamiri (son-in-law) by name, rather they are addressed as 'Hansa' (daughter-in-law) and 'Chamwruisa' (son-in-law). Such teknonymies, of late, however, due to impact of sanskritisation and westernization, are not strictly followed⁴.
- 4. Marriage:** Marriage is a domestic institution. It is an important part of a man or woman life. So in Tripuri tribe, marriage is considered as Holy Task.' The marriage is categorised into three significant events that is birth, marriage death of a man which are discussed below-

- **Birth-** The born of child is the important part of life. It is believe that the saint priest (Ochai) perform a puja for the saking of the baby before its birth. After the birth kumajwk(A woman who cuts the omthai or umbilical cord) cut the navel string of the new born baby and handed over to Lumajwk(A lady who plays the main role to make a delivery successful) for hygiene. And later a secret name was given to new born baby by the kumajwk. For the sake of the baby, Ochai performs the Lampra Owathop puja. After the completion of the puja the name of the baby announced before people. Both kumajok and Lumajok wearing the new clothes to the new born baby and bring the baby outside the house. After that arrow is thrown in every direction so that they can oust the evil spirit. The baby is the sun, moon and made touch to the earth. At last all the invitees giving blessing to the new born baby. Beside name giving ceremony, Tripuri tribe also observes rice feeding ceremony for new born baby. They call the rice feeding ceremony in kokborok as 'Mai Tugu or Abul Chao.' Another important puja i.e. Khumchakkra mwta (Jangali puja) is observed by the tripuris specially in Sadar north for the welfare of the new born child after nine days from the day of birth.
- **Marriage** – The marriage ceremony is the significant event in the Tripuri tribe like other tribes of Tripura. Different system of marriages is observed in Tripuris society. Hamjwk phaimani (Negotiated Marriage), Chamari Kamani/Chamari Omor(fetching bride family) and Twikharlaimani (Marriage by Elopement), Hamjaklaywi Kaijakmani(Marriage by ove) are the most prevalent form of marriage among Tripuri Tribe. In fact nuclear family is the ideal rule of marriage in Tripuri tribe. Dowry system is punishable offence in the earlier. Now a day dowry system is prevalent due to acculturation. The marriage is performed by the Ochai(Priest) as per the norms of the Tripuri tribe. To accomplish the task of marriage the following pujas are performed-erection of alter, worship of 'Tokchamai', 'Kathe Rimani', 'Fara Tanmani'and 'Lampra Wathop'. These pujas are usually performed for the well-being of the married life of bride and groom. Both bride and groom take the bath with holy water which is collected by Aiya. Bride and groom are leads by Ochai in the Haya(Platform), both bride and groom have to round the Haya(Platform) at least five or seven times whichever necessary. Following the norms, Ochai ties the clothes of bride and groom and the parents and also other relatives sprinkles the holy water of the puja of Kathe Rimani on the heads of the bride and groom in the Haya(Platform). After the completion of sprinkles of holy water on the heads of bride and groom, the marriage is considered to be completed. Divorce is also a part of life. It is permitted in Tripuri society which leads to the end of all obligations and allowed them to separate. After all, they can start a new life. Divorce is possible when two parties are agreed. But in present days, we found many cases of divorce due to some reasons such as child marriage, dowry system, domestic violence, marital affairs etc. It is very interesting to mention here that in Tripuri community the newly married couple used to clean the foot of the people with the holy water while welcoming the guests (senior persons) during the social occasion. But now- a- days the influence of hindu Brahmm in is prevalent among the urbanised Tripuris due to acculturation.

Long ago, the Brahmin priests were not engaged in the marriage ceremony by the Tripuris. In their traditional marriage they only dependent upon their 'Ochai' who performed the 'Lampra' worship and other rites related with marriage. Till now the worship of 'Lampra' is performed by the Ochai as usual of a marriage but a Bengali Brahmm in priest is also engaged. At the time of marriage the inclusion of Bengali Brahmm in priest might have been introduced by the Maharaja of Tripura. There after the Tripuri subjects of the king have followed suit to engage the Bengali brahmm in priest during the marriage ceremony. It is evident in the history that the brahmm in priests were brought to the kingdom with a view to perform the religious rites of the royal family. So, gradually the engagement of Bengali brahmm in at the time of marriage ceremony or in any other religious activities might have become prestigious and later common⁵.

- **Death-** Of course, death is common to all the people. No one is immortal everyone has to die sooner or later everything living behind. Both burial and cremation is prevalent among Tripuris. In Tripuris, the burial custom is practised the dead body of the Apsakwlwi (Children) below the age of 18 months. But cremation practice is the predominant custom in Tripuri society. In the event of the death, all relatives of the deceased and the villagers are informed quickly. And after the arrival of the relatives and the villagers used to take bath the deceased with warm water and turmeric. After that the deceased was dressed with new cloth and placed it on the 'Khamjang or Talai' (decorated bier-made up of bamboo) with the head of the dead towards north. Later on mustard oil and tulsi leaves are put on the eyes and honey is also put in the mouth. Money is placed on the chest with the left hand. The relatives put sesame, paddy, cotton etc. A cock is sacrificed at the feet of the deceased by striking it against the ground with the left hand and rice is also cooked in a bamboo-pipe or an earthen utensil. This rice and the sacrificed cock are offered to the dead putting them in a bamboo basket. In another basket some other things are

kept. Then the body is tied with a thread in seven coils at the leg side. Following the rites, the 'Talai or Khamjang was lift up by the relatives on their shoulders and turned round seven times starting from left to right. At last all the sons and daughters of the deceased have to roll on the ground under the Talai before the death body was taken to cremation ground (simalang). But it is interested to mention here that except pregnant mother, both men and women are allowed to go to the cremation ground. At the crematorium, the relatives and villagers have to keep the Balrung (funeral pyre) surrounded the death body. The death body head was keeping on the north side of the Balrung and burned by the deceased children's. All the death body is burned with naked which is passed from generation to generation because it believed that the people born with naked. It is traditional custom of Tripuri tribe. After the burn, a small hut was installed for the rest of departed soul and white flag was put on the hut with bamboo. All the relative and villager tying the knot of the creeper and grass before they returned from Simalang. After that they took a bath and returned to the house of the bereaved family where they applied turmeric, touching the iron with their teeth and sprinkle the holy water with the tulusi leaf rendered by holy Ochai or respected person. On regular basis, praying and agharbati at the simalwng performed by the childrens at least once in a day till the Sradha from the date of death and collected Asthi or bekreng (residual bones)and put it on bamboo pipes by covering the clothes. Until or unless the completion of funeral ceremony deceased son's is not allowed to take food except fruits. In those days, some of the elders of the village including male and female sing a song and played instruments at night of the deceased home. And even all the relative of the deceased observing the Neramsi for man only 13 days and for women 3 days. At the funeral ceremony, they break their Neramsi by having the bitter vegetables with dried fish. During this occasion some kinds of gift offered to the ochai who is performing all the rites including poor families of the village in the honor of deceased. For the welfare of the deceased annual ceremony is performed on the particular lunar day. On the day of Hari bwishu -principal festival of chaitra, bwisu maikholai is offered to the departed soul.

But now a day the mix cultured is found in tripuri tribe, obviously due to the non-tribal Hindu influence. The period of mourning lasts twelve days and the sraddha ceremony is held on the thirteenth day. A Brahman Priest is engaged to officiate and everything is performed according to his directions and in accordance with the Hindu Sraddha rules. So it may be said that this is practically adopted from the Bengalee society⁶.

5. Dress and ornament: Tipra or Tripuri have their own traditional dress and ornaments like other tribe of Tripura. The pattern and design of each tribes dress is different and look colourful. Normally the traditional dress of women folk consists of two pieces of unstitched cloth. These two pieces of cloth make complete garments. The complete garments are divided into upper and lower dress .The upper dress is called 'Risa' and the lower known as 'Rignai or Rinai'. All these are woven with primitive technology. These garments were used by the ladies. In fact, the threads are bought from the different market. The Rignai are hand spun thread of different colours. It is widely used by the Tipra tribes in their villages. People love their traditional costume and are proud to wear traditional attire in different occasions. It is very unfortunate to say that the traditional attire is rarely used by the youngster of Tripuri by following the western dresses and styles. Risa, Rignai and Rikutok are the traditional attire of Tripuri tribe. Therefore, the Tripuri or Tipra women weave the designs of Rignai (Pachra) such as Chamathwibar, Khumtaibar, Amingyapai, Toksamokol, Kuaifang, Thaipalabar, Hingrabar, Mayung makal bumul etc. The traditional dress of the Tripuri male is Kamchului /Kutaiborok(upper garments), Kanborok/Mikhomchok (lower garments)) and khorog risa made of coarse home woven fabric. They also used Ritrakborok and Dulai in winter season and it is also made of coarse home woven fabric. It is very good in quality and protects the body from coldness.

Tipras have their own traditional culture. These can be express through ornament. The Tripuri woman is very fond of jewellery and ornaments.The ornaments used by the Tripuri women are Mathia, Rangbwatang,Wakhum, khaisama, Ganthimala, Parbamala, Baliya and Sanggeyang. String of beads in different colours is also worn and wears very much in common. They also wear Nakfu(Nose ring) and Bali including Yastam (finger ring). One more interesting ornament used by the Tripuri damsels is Chhurang'. It is made of animal horn or bone by the lover for gift to the lady. But the new generation people are not paying heed towards their traditional dress and ornaments due to their modernization. This is why it can be seem that the traditional attire of Tripuri tribe is declining day by day. This will hamper the traditional dress and identity in future. Mr.Binoy Debbarma stated that for the last fifty years the Tripuris have used the same pattern of cloth.Khool (cotton extracted from the tree) was their main source of weaving. The Tripuri women were best known by their Bothai(design), some of those are like Lakhapati Rignai, Chamathwi Bar, ThaipologBar, Sai Rongkho, Hengra Bar, Rignai Khamjang etc.The Lakhapati Rignai had 26 pola (steps of design). The Lakhapati Rignai

was waved by those who were expert in Bothai. The Tripuri tribe uses takborok (indigenous garments) for agricultural purpose. He had also mentioned that the Tripuri women uses colourful dresses on joyful days⁷.

6. **Language:** language is an integral part of a social life. It is the most obvious emblem of social identity from the perspective of a speaker. Kok-Borok is the main native language of Tripuris like other seven ethnic groups namely Noatia, Jamatia, Uchai, Reang, Murasing, Koloï and Rupini. Tripura is the small states of India and sharing the largest boundary with Bangladesh. Generally, the roots of Kok-Borok come from Kok meaning verbal and borok meaning people which means people language. The erstwhile of the Kok-Borok is tripuri and tipra kok. But with the passage of time the tripuri or tipra came to be known as Kok-Borok. Kok-Borok is the official language of Tripura which got its recognition in 1979. The Kok-Borok is the mother tongue of Tripura after Bengali. Kokborok is one of the Tibeto-burman language widely spoken in northeastern part of Indian state, Tripura and the neighboring state of Bangladesh. Every year on 19th January a kokborok day is observed. This day is the important day for the state of Tripura. It is one of the ancient language and the fastest growing and developing Tibeto-burman language in the region. Therefore, Tipra community who speaks the Kok-Borok came to be known as Tripuris. Like any other language there are many proverbs and sayings in the Kok-Borok language which are quite suggestive in their purport, yet elegant but simple in style. Some Kok-Borok sayings and proverbs along with literal and suggestive meanings are given below:

1. Twima Bo Naitwi

Rignai Bo Sutwi;

(I took an eyeful of the river; I took a bath in it too)

Purport: The emphasis is on the alertness of mind or the resourcefulness needed to make the most of an occasion or opportunity.

2. Takhuk Sinini Buma Achukna Khampwlai Manya

Kaisani Buma Chai Pai-ya;

(The mother of ten sons does not get space enough to sit in, the mother claiming only one son gets more than she wants.)

Purport: When there are too many hands to do a thing, nothing gets done and there is chaos.

But it is unfortunate that the script of Kok-Borok is not finalized due to some debates. There are some groups who are trying their level best in promoting the Kok-Borok language, art, literature, folklore and folktale, film, songs etc. through Cultural Revolution. Yet, many steps have been taken to improve and promoting Kok-Borok language in the national level because it is not included in the Eighth schedule of the Indian constitution.

7. **Religion:** Religion is considered as social festival in the Tipra or Tripuri community. It is played a significant role for the upliftment of the society. Tripuris were previously animist. But Tripuris are under Hindu inspiration. Tripuri have embrace Sakti-cult and Vaishnavism. Tripuri tribe worshipped the different type of Gods such as Mailuma (Goddess of corn), Lampra Mwtai/Akhatra and Bikhitra (The twin deity of sky and sea), Twima/Twibukma (Goddess of water), ker puja, Garia puja, Durga puja and Bishwakarma. Among these, the principal deity of the Tripuri is Mwtai Kotor. Mwtai Kotorma is the consort of Mwtai Kotor. These deities are worshipped for the enhancement of prosperity and security. They are worshipped house hold wise or community wise. In Tripuri community, the religious activities are started with Lampra Owathop puja. The worship of Akhatra and Bkhitra jointly called as Lampra puja. Like other tribes of Tripura, Tripuras also celebrated the Garia puja on the seven day of month of April by both men and women to perpetrate the deity for blessing. Garia is the natural benevolent spirit of the house hold who looks after the increase of production. Garia is called "Garia raja" who always prefers welfare of his inmates by giving the wealth, peace and children. On the whole, Garia represents the character of our benign nature and he always does good to us. The rites and rituals of the Garia puja seem to have peculiar blending of naturism, animism, fertility cult and animatism. In the anthropological point of view, the tribal religion consists of beliefs and rituals, the beliefs are static while the rituals are dynamic⁸. Baba Garia is adorable male deities of Tripuris. Garia dance is performed while Garia worship is performed. Chibwrwi Mwtai (Kharchi puja) is one of the most important deities of Tripuris. This puja is held in the month of June/July on the Suklastami day which lasts for seven days. Malevolent deities namely Burasa, Chhakaaljook, Haichukma, Thoomnairok and Bonirok are also worshipped in Tripuri society. All these deities are worshipped as household deities related with the persons concerned. The Tripuras give respect and worship to their ancestors' spirits. It is believed that the spirits

of the ancestors never depart from family members but continue to live with family in the form of a spirit. They are often invoked for help and for the welfare of the living members of the family and clan. In all major festivals, a portion of food is offered to them. It is believed that the ancestor's spirits come and help and also share in all difficult moments in the life of the living members of the family. Kharchi puja and Ker puja both are important traditional festivals of Tripuris as well as other communities of Tripura. This Kharchi puja also known as fourteen deities celebrated with great enthusiasm in July each year in the temple of fourteen gods at old Agartala. The original names of the fourteen deities are suggested by several authorities. Dr. Jagadish Gan Choudhuri is of opinion that the tribal names of the deities consist of MATAI KATAR, MATAI KATARMA, MAILOOMA, KHOLOOMA, AKHTRA, BIKBITRA, TUIMA, SANGRANG, KALIA, GARIA, NAKCHU MATAI, BICHUKMA, SIRIJEMDU and THOUMNAIROG⁹. The Ker puja is celebrated two weeks after Kharchi puja. It is performed within fortified area. Nobody is allowed to go out or enter during the worship for the period of one day and two nights. Absolute tranquillity and solitude are must to be maintained for the worship. It brings well-being and prosperity for the whole community of Tripura. Both this traditional pujas are performed by traditional ochai(priest) known as Chontai and his assistant called as Galim. It is mentionable here that the Ker puja is not only celebrated by kings of Tripura, it is also celebrated in every village of Tripuri community.

II. ECONOMIC LIFE OF TRIPURI TRIBE

Tipras or Tripuris is an agriculturist tribe. Jhum or shifting cultivation is the main source of livelihood for Tripuris. The economic life of the Tipra tribe is completely different that of the non tribal people of Tripura. For Tripuri society, family is the basic unit of production and they followed the system of division of labour according to age and sex. Their economic life is traditional, indigenous and culturally pre dominant. As a matter of the fact that early tribal society is characterize by primitive subsistence farming-slash and burn agriculture. This system of farming cleared patch of land with digging stick and the hoe. Primitive subsistence farming is widely practice in the Tipra community like other tribes of Tripura since the long past. All family members are engaged in this activity according to their capability of work. No doubt the rural economy of the Tripuris is a combination of plough cultivation and Jhuming cultivation. Jhuming is the principal source of income for Tripuris. The economic life of the Tipra tribe can be divided into two categories- Jhuming cultivation and plough cultivation. Jhuming – it is commonly practiced in the 19th tribe of Tripura as Jhuming cultivation. Among these tribes, Tripuri tribe is also another tribal group which practised jhum cultivation. Locally shifting cultivation is term as Hokchalaima. It is an integral part of the economic life of Tripuris. There are some steps to practice the jhuming cultivation are as follows:

- 1) **Findings the plot:** The first and foremost step of the jhuming is the selection of the plot location. Generally they find the location which is untouched/left for the long past. And after they clear a patch of land with the help of tools and implements such as dao, digging stick and other equipments whichever necessary. In this process they cleared and left it un-burn, waiting for the onset monsoon. They burn it when the rain is about to happen. It is believe that the rain fall helps the Jhoom cultivation to gain the manures of land while it ashes mixed with the water.
- 2) **Beliefs and practice:** Generally the task of the selection of the land is done in the month of November and December. The selection of the place for Jhomming is done through a magico-religious function. In this process, the land for Jhooming is finalized by the Ochai(traditional priest) . It is proved that the magico-religious function is the indispensable part of Jhomming cultivation. But there are some conditions that if Ochai rejects the land then cultivation can't be done in the previous chosen land. It could be done only after the assurance of the Ochai (tradional priest).
- 3) **Dropping of seeds by loosening the land:** The dropping of seed starts from April month. After the rainfall, dry soil become wet and it helps to restore the soil fertility. All the family members are participated in the Jhoom cultivation. Shifting cultivation is done substantially to collect higher productivity from their Jhoom. Different kinds of seeds are showing in the field such as paddy, maize, chilies, pumpkin, ladies finger, and many other vegetables. All the crops which are grown in their Jhoom are fully natural because there is no use of fertilizers, chemicals and pesticides. In other words it is called organic farming. It is very much helpful for our health which leads the healthy and longetivity of life. While doing the task of Jhumming cultivation some tools are implements are used for cleaning such as Daborok and Seni, both are iron chopper. Here, Daborok is used to cleaning the forest, felling the branches of trees, slaughtering the animals. Another tool is Daseni used for cleaning the bushes and it is very sharp. In fact the women were carried the Langa on their back from their head with the help of fiber string. All the crops of the jhums are harvested in between September to October and those crops are carried with

Langa. They installed Gairing (hut) proximity to the Jhum field. The purpose of the Gairing is to look after the Jhum field from the wild elephants, monkeys and many other animals. Some tactics are used to driven out the wild animals. While they giving the duty of their field, they bring the maicho (readymade food) along with them.

Festivities and worshipping: The shifting cultivation is the part and parcel of the Tripuri tribe and has deeply rooted connection with their cultural life. They performed many celebrations, festivities and merry making around the Jhomming cultivation. Besides they give a revere to the fertile soil to whom they slaughter not only flower and food and but also many animals which are domesticated by them at their home. Goats, pigs and chicken are the animals which has domesticated on a gigantic scale. It is evident that the activities of romances have been found frequently between the boys and girls. During this occasion many romantic songs have been sung by them. It is worth to mention here that the Tripuri showing a fond of entertainment and love towards the cultural activity rather than a means of food production. After the beginning of harvesting in the month of Ashwin, Tripura tribe is performing their two traditional puja-Mailuma(Goddess of paddy) and Khuluma(Goddess of cotton). ‘Observing by their religious beliefs, the Tipras have to be said the worshipper of natural Forces as the God and Goddesses like the other tribal communities of the North East India. The earth is the mother Goddess throughout the primitive world. She is the giver of blessing for increasing the productivity of paddy and crops. The Goddesses Milooma commonly is known as the Goddess of Paddy but anthropologically she is the mother Goddess “Earth” no doubt. The deity Kholooma is the mother Goddess mixed with the earth who is worshipped for abundant supply of cotton crops. These two deities are extremely related with the fertility cult. In most of the cases the deity Mailooma and Kholooma are paid reverence jointly¹⁰. And in the month of Aগ্রহায়ান, the winter paddy was collected and in the honor of new paddy (Maikwtal) a festival is celebrated to a greater extent. During celebration, Maikwtal (New rice) is eaten and also offered to the deities in the hope of more productivity in the coming year. ‘Tipra community is one of the ancient tribes of Tripura. Tripurians are the first largest tribe of the state comprise about 60% of the tribal population. They belong to the Kokborok linguistic groups. The origin of the cultural explosion among the Tripurians can be traced from the court of the Tripuri Kings. As this group of tribe is based on Agriculture they are expert in "Jhum" cultivation. With the Jhum based cultivation they observe religious function which is the feature of their lifestyle and socio-economic pattern celebrate with famous traditional dances like Jhum, Garia, Lebang Bumani, Mamita, and Mosok sumani etc. all these dances have significance. For example, at the time of harvesting paddy in the month of September- October, 1st week in fact after prolong time they spent in Jhum Cultivation which brings joy and pleasure in every Tripuri families. New rice then becomes a part of festival following their music and dances in all Tripuri villages. Irrespective of age group Tripurians then involve in Puja's, offering the new rice to appease "Naksu Matai Randuk" deity for family welfare, peace and prosperities. Young boys and girls in group enjoy with music and dance which is commonly known as Mamita dance. Again after the Garia festival is over the Tripurians have a time to rest awaiting the monsoon. During these period flocks of charming colourful insects called "Lebang" often visit hill slopes in search of seeds scowl on it. The Annual visit of the insects render the tribal youths to indulge in merry making while the male folk make a peculiar rhythmic sound with the help of two bamboo clips in their hand, the women folk run the hill slopes to catch hold of these insects called "lebang". The rhythm of sound made by the bamboo clips attracts the insects from their hiding places and in the women in groups catch them. In this dance Tripuri women generally put on indigenous ornaments like chain made of silver with coin, bangle made of silver, ear and nose rings made of bronze. They also prefer flower as ornaments. The life and culture of Tripurians revolve around Jhum (shifting) cultivation. When the sowing of seeds at a plot of land selected for Jhum is over by middle of April, they pray to the god ‘Garia’ for a happy harvest. The celebrations attached to the Garia puja continue for seven days when they seek to entertain their beloved deity with song and dance. Garia is the deity and spirit of household Tripurians believe that Garia gives wealth, livestock, peace and children. The worship of Gariai is performed according to the instruction of the “Ochai”. A bamboo pole symbolizes the god Garia. Among other ingredients of worship flower, garland, cotton, thread, paddy, rice, richa, small earthen pot, eggs, fowls chick, rice, beer, wine etc. are used¹¹.

Threshing of the paddy: Threshing of the paddy is carried out by both men and women especially with their ‘Langa’ which is made of bamboo. After harvesting the paddy, it was putting on the ground and beat them, with the aid of thick wood. In this process, corn was collected by both male and female. Later on, the winnowing task of paddy is accomplished by the female with Bailing - a round shaped hand- made tray. Therefore, consecutively after the completion of winnowing, it was boiling about one and half hour for making the cakes. Besides, Dingi (wooden made husking pedal) is also used for husking the corn properly in the final stage.

Food Habits:The food habit of Tripuri tribe is similar to other tribe. They prepare various tasty dishes in a healthy and hygienic way. Some of the popular dishes of Tripurians are –Gudok, Awandru, Berma Bwtwi, Chakhwi, Chakhwtwi,

Chakhwtwi Kwthang, Chatang, Deng, Mosodeng, Hang, Ik, Muitru, Hontali, Mwkhwai, Peng, Rabra, Sok, Yohk and Yaksapik.Chuak (Rice Beer) is prepared by fermenting rice in water which was drunk in several occasions and ceremonies that came across. Some of the food habits of the Tripuri tribe are discussed below-

- a) Rice, Pork, Chichen-- staple food of Tripuri tribe. Maisa, Mami and Guriya are the three varieties of rice they use for cooking.
- b) Dried fish and vegetables are their main subsidiary food.
- c) Berma- it is a fermented and dried form of a puthi(fish), is frequently used by the Tripuris while preparing foods like Gudok, Bwtwi, Chakhwi, Awandru, Mosedeng etc.
- d) Miya (Bamboo shoots) awandro---made of Berma and Rice flour.
- e) Miya chakhwi -- made of Berma or pork, rice flour and soda. Besides, Lemon leaves are also given to produce a pleasant smell and make the mouth watering.
- f) Wak-han dish is made of pork.
- g) Tok-han dish is made of chicken.
- h) Mos-deng-- made of Berma and dried chillies.
- i) Berma bwtwi (boiled) of Kosoi, Thalwi Mwikhomo, Mwikhun dwichok, Therai, Sasita, Khokleng, Sikabuk, Orai bwlai, Sejna bwtha and many others.
- j) Having various kinds of tubes such as Tha, Thama, and Batema.
- k) Different kinds of fruit such as Goyam,Thaichok, Jabok, Amlai, Attaphol, Khwichang ,Deruk, jackfruit etc. have been eaten.

Plough Cultivation: Plough cultivation is known as settled agriculture. Prior to the plough cultivation, Tipra tribe is mainly depends on primitive subsistence farming (Labor Intensive Farming).The plough cultivation was probably introduced in Tripura during 15th century A.D. when the plain land cultivators from adjoining districts of Bengal came to this State. The Jhumias coming in contacts with immigrants learnt the benefits of plough cultivation and became interested in owning land for cultivation. This was evident from a step taken by the then Maharaja of this State in 1913 T.E. (1930 A.D.) that he kept 28,490 hectares in Khowai Sub-Division called "Kalyanpur Reserve" for settlement of Jhumias. Subsequently the reserved areas for Jhumia settlement was increased substantially in 1941¹². Originally, jhooming cultivation of the Tripuri began to disintegrate from the latter part of the 19th century. There are various factors contributed to decline of Tipra tribe towards jhomming –

- 1) Transfer of capital from Udaipur to Agartala which left vast areas of land for the plough cultivation of Tripuri tribe.
- 2) Immigrants Bengali Muslims posed the Tipra tribe to begin plough cultivation.
- 3) Department of Forest led them to adopt plough cultivation after the introduction of Forest Law.
- 4) Government introduced various rehabilitation programmes to manage the jhum cultivation.
Now-a-days it seems that some of the people engaged in different economic activities to enhance their economy.

Fish breeding, Rubber plantation, Horticulture, Pig farm and Poultry farm are various examples of economic activities. This type of economic activity gained popularity among them. Therefore, the activity of Jhomming is also continued along with the plough cultivation by the Tripuri tribe to a lesser extent.

Problem findings:

- 1) There is lacking preferences of indigenous food habits. These day most of the people eating the fast food and oil things which increases the chances of severe disease.
- 2) Following the western way of life by replacing the traditional customs.
- 3) Tipra customary law act is not strictly followed so far.
- 4) Tipras rarely practice the shifting cultivation. Now it is practiced to supplement their economic conditions. 5. Negligence of mother tongue- kokborok language those who are living in towns by birth.

III. CONCLUSION

From the above facts it can be justify that Tipra tribe is the most important tribal group of Tripura. Initially, Tipra tribe depends on shifting cultivation but now they shifted to settled agriculture to a greater extent. Besides, there are some people who tried to building their economic activities by engaging with different agricultural activities such as poultry farming, fish breeding, rubber plantation and many others. However, there are few people who benefitted in these

activities. Indeed, there are many people who lagging behind to be benefitted from other economic activities rather than settle agriculture. So this wide gap can be eradicate if the government is taking necessary steps to enhance their economic activities then people have the better opportunities to improve their economic to some extent. And also, negligence of the social practices of the Tipra can be promoted by giving attention to their social activities. We must protect, preserve and promote our identity because this gave a pride and recognition of true colours.

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