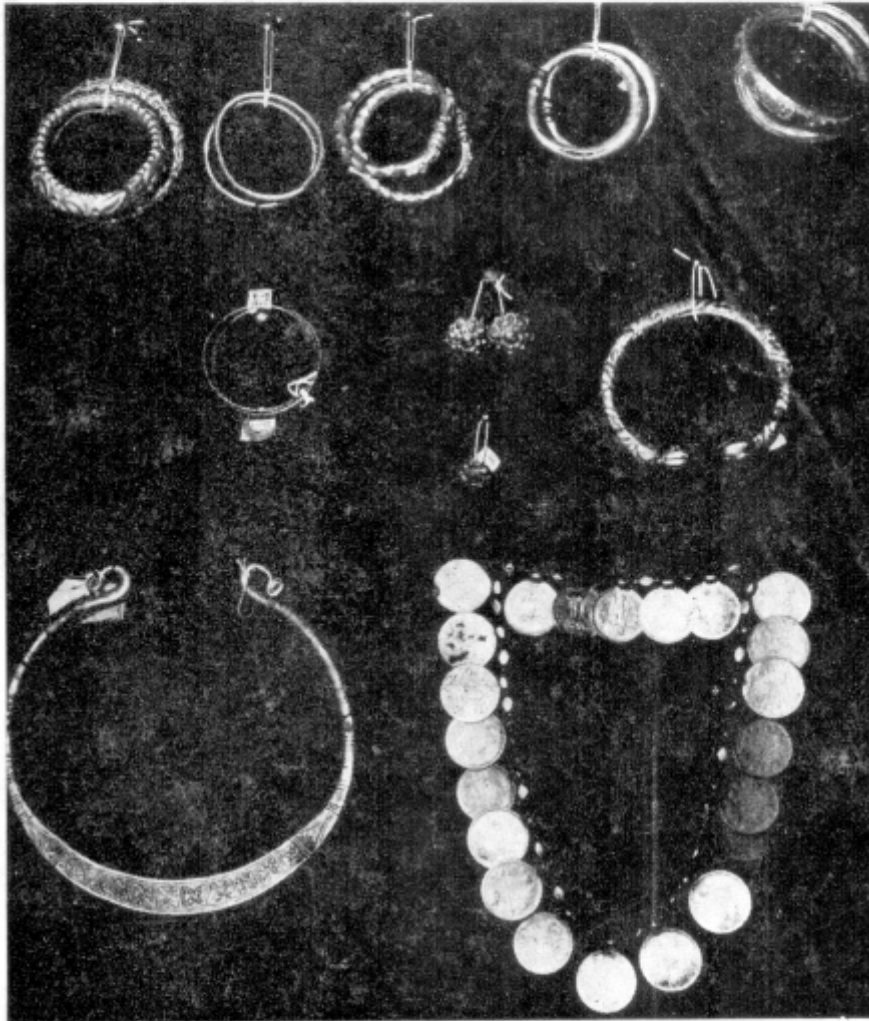


**TREATISE ON
TRADITIONAL SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS
OF THE
TRIPURI COMMUNITY**



BY

Shri Debapriya Deb Barman

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH
DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE FOR SCH. TRIBES & SCH. CASTES,
GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA.

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FOREWORD

In every developmental effort of the tribals, special attention needs to be paid to the study of the people as a whole especially of the tribes, their ethnic groups, culture, social structure, economy and political organisation. Preparation of monographs on different tribes had been taken up with the aforesaid purpose in view. "Treatise on traditional social institutions of the Tripuri Community" is one more addition in the series of monographs on different tribes, which have been published by the Directorate of Research, Government of Tripura.

2. This monograph envisages a clear picture of modes, moods and manners of the Tripuri Community which forms 55.57% of the tribal population in the state. The study is based on various datas collected from field studies with a view to apprise others about this important component of state population. We are thankful to Shri Debapriya Deb Barman, Linguistic Officer for having completed the study in addition to his duties in the Research Directorate.

3. In fine this is a commendable effort for a monograph and would surely be of considerable use to all those, who are interested to know about the Tripuris, who are largest in number among the tribals in the state.

Agartala, the
11th October, 1983.

S. R. NANDY
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH,
GOVT. OF TRIPURA.

Treatise on Traditional Social Institutions of the Tripuri Community

CONTENTS	PAGES
Introduction	I—II
1) History and Origin	1—6
2) Division or subgroups in the community and salient features of each group.	7—10
3) Characteristics of social organisation (lineage, property ownership, rituals of house building/inauguration etc.	11—16
4) Marriage system as a whole	17—33
5) Birth and death rituals	34—45
6) Place of Old and Women in the community	46—50
7) Religious beliefs and superstitions,	51—60
8) Village Administrative Organisation	61—65
9) Folk Sports	66—72
10) Folk Songs/Folk Lores	73—96
11) Folk Medicine.	97—102
12) Impact of modern social organisation on Tripuri Society (Culture, Religion, Language etc.)	103—106
15) Bibliography	107—108
13) Maps	
14) Plates	

INTRODUCTION

The North Eastern region of India is composed of seven hilly states. Tripura is one of them. It is in the farthest corner of the country and three fourths of its boundary has run contiguous with Bangladesh. Its total area is 10,477 sq. km.

Here in Tripura, 19 (nineteen) scheduled tribes are found to dwell. Among all the tribal communities the Tripuri is the largest in number. I myself belong to this community. Being born and brought up in a contrastive environment (Tribal and non-Tribal) of this town, I have been inquisitive since boyhood about my community and cherished always a desire to know its origin, history, development and socio-religious cultures. That dream or rather a desire-long cherished in mind-suddenly met with the opportunity to materialise when, after my joining in the Directorate of Research under the Government of Tripura, Sri C. S. Chattopadhyaya, former Tribal Welfare Officer, invited me to work on the subject.

"Treatise on traditional social institutions of the Tripuri Community" is an attempt to provide with an account of the Tripuris. Their traditional social institutions and their implication are focussed on. In this study, it has also been mentioned where they have accepted the customs, rites and rituals of other races alongwith their own traditional ones. Some striking differences are also noticed between the rural and urban Tripuris in observing their rites and rituals.

Different methods, viz. interview, sampling, observation etc. have been taken to collect data and information. The Tripuris residing in all the three districts have come under this study through sampling. It has to be mentioned that no inhibition or difficulty was faced in collecting the data and other information. Notwithstanding the wide scope, many aspects, specially the economic condition, political attitude, and educational status have remained out of the perview of this discussion for many limitations.

Economy plays the key role in a society or community which is true for the Tripuris also. In the past, their economy was based on shifting or jhum cultivation. Today it has taken a new dimension due to shortage of arable land, increase of population and with the advent of various modern implements of settled cultivation. As a result, landless hill people have come to the plains in search of livelihood. Diversity of occupation for the survival is found common to them now. Some of the Tripuris are found to earn their livelihood by pulling rickshaw at Agartala town. Even some are earning by rowing boats at Dumbur water reservoir. Such adoption of diversity in occupation may be considered as epoch-making revolution in the tribal economy of Tripura.

The people of this small state in the remote corner was not outside the national mainstream of political struggle. Their political life has also undergone changes since monarchical period. Though the common people had no political conception and their chieftain or sardar was their

representative in the royal court, many of them were politically conscious of the system and organised themselves to revolt or fight against the authority. The Jamatia revolt of 1863, the Rieng unrest of 1942-43 and few more such incidents testify it. With the progress of time, monarchy has gone off to make room for democracy.

The educational status of the Trpuris has gone up in comparison with the early days but even then it is not significant enough. The dropout percentage of the students in the primary level is very high. The guardians in most cases, cannot afford to send the children to school for their poverty. When their parents remain busy in cultivation or earning, their children collect fire wood, fetch water, graze the cows or look-after the little brothers or sisters.

The above cited aspects which I could not bring under this study may encourage and inspire many researchers to come forward to work on them to highlight the aspects of the community. Over and above, I must confess that there have been many deficiencies due to limited scope and preoccupation with other activities. I expect the indulgence of readers in this regard. Any suggestion will thankfully be accepted and acknowledged.

To complete this monograph I have been indebted to Sri C. S. Chattopadhyaya for his initial guidance. I must thank Capt. N. C. Deb Barma, P. N. Bhattacharya and N. C. Deb Barma of Agartala for their hearty inspiration and cooperation. I would also like to thank T. Deb Barma of Khowai, S. Deb Barma of Chowmanu and Aswini Deb Barma of Kanchanmala for their cooperation. I am grateful to my teacher Shri P. C. Dhar of M.B.B. College, who has spared his valuable time in going through the manuscript and offered me valuable suggestion. I also express my sense of gratitude to Shri R. G. Singh for his cooperation and inspiration. Special thanks are due to Dipak Kumar Dutta who helped me with his knowledge and valuable guidance. Last but not the least is the help from Smti. Kaberi Deb Barma whose unfailing encouragement and painstaking efforts to type the whole lot of study papers expedited its entrance into the press. My thanks are due to her too.

D. P. Deb Barman.

CHAPTER—I

HISTORY AND ORIGIN

Myth, legends and anecdotes left by the courtiers shroud the Origin of the Tripuris. Administrators and scholars of various hues and shades have made attempts to explore the past and to decipher the unknown about Tripura and her people. The span of knowledge has been expanded but no conclusive evidences to identify the origin of the Tripuris could be ascertained. The search is on.

The Tipprahs or the Tipperahs came originally from the Bodo home in Central Asia and are said to have first settled in India in a place near present Allahabad. They preferred to call themselves the 'Children of Water Goddess' and were therefore known as the Tiphras or the Tippras; and in later time they became known as the Tipperahs (Twi—water, phra=pha=god).

Here, within the limited scope an attempt has been made to touch the main currents of views on the origin of the Tripuris. One of the interpretations, on the origin of the Tripuri communities held by a school of scholars is that "..... The Bodos migrated from Central Asia and settled in the vast plain area comprising of the present North Bengal, and this was probably the first area of wide and vast plain land that they settled in. They therefore, perhaps, called the country Ha (land), Bang (plenty), La (big, wide) meaning plenty and wide land. "It is very probable", says R. M. Nath in his book, *The Background of Assamese Culture*, "that the present name of the country—Bangla (Bengal) is derived from its ancient Bodo name". (*The Background of Assamese Culture*, by R. M. Nath, pp 17).

↘A similar name was given to the plain area in the North West part of Assam in the present North Lakhimpur district where the country was known as Ha-Bang even in the historical period. "Mai-Bang (Mai—paddy) is the name given to the plain portion of the North Cachar Hills in a much later date. (*The Background of Assamese Culture* by R. M. Nath, pp 73).

It is also held by Shri R. M. Nath that "the Bodos in the western area, north of the United Provinces and the Central Provinces, had physical relationship with the Aryans when they later settled in India and thus racially present a mixed origin".

According to Rajmala, king Druhya, the youngest son of Yayati of Lunar dynasty married a Bodo princess and for that reason he was disinherited. He set up a new dynasty in the North Eastern India defeating the king of the Kiratas. And his progeny became a ruling race.

It is traditionally believed that one Pratardon came over to Assam and established a kingdom named Trivega in about 1900 B.C. with his

headquarter on the bank of the river Kapila in the present Nowgong district and the dynasty ruled for full fourteen generations.

Daitya, the 13th descendant of Pratardon ascended the throne and enlarged the kingdom.

Tripur, the son of Daitya and 46th descendant of lunar race was unpopular for his arrogant nature and administrative managements. His subjects were unhappy with him. Their dislike for him was so much that on his death people said that he was assassinated by God Siva. Tripur named his territory after him and the lineage claim their identity similar to this name. His son Trilochan became king and married the daughter of the neighbouring Kachari king Heramba. Trilochan had twelve sons. Drikpati, the eldest son of Trilochan, was adopted by his maternal grandfather—the ruler of Heramba country who was without any heir. Dakshin, the younger brother of Drikpati, became king of his father's state. But Drikpati, king of the state Heramba, claimed his father's state on legal grounds. As a result a war broke out between the two brothers on this issue. In this war Dakshin was defeated and he left Tribeg. He established a new kingdom in the Barabakra valley with his headquarters at Kholongma.

Kumar, the son of king Bihar and the 101st descendant of lunar race was a devotee of Siva. Once he went out on a pilgrimage and halted at Chambal after having seen the God Siva. Later on he shifted his capital from Kholongma to Chambal (present Kailashahar) on the bank of the river Manu. Kholongma witnessed reign of 52 kings (Dakshin to Kumar).

Several generations ruled in this happy valley, but in about 490 A. D. the then ruling king Pratita picked up a quarrel with the Kachari king over a hill damsel and was compelled to shift his headquarters to Dharmanagar on the bank of the Juri River. The next king of great valour was Jujarupha who ascended the throne in 590 A.D. and after a successful battle with the Lika King of the hilly tract of Chittagong extended his kingdom to that area and established his headquarters first at Rangamati and then at Bishalgarh in the hilly Tipperah area. The latter place was subsequently named Tripura. Jujarupha is said to have introduced the Tirpura era which dates from 590 A.D. This date is said to have been counted from the date of his ascension to the throne.

After that another king of Tripura named Sudharmapha got a religious rite performed by a Brahmin named Nidhipati whose original home was in Kanauj. The king allotted "Ita pargana" in the name of the said Brahmin which name still clings to the place in the Sylhet district of Bangladesh.

During the reign of Singha—Tunga 140th descendant of lunar race, Hirabanta Khan, a wealthy zamindar, lived at the adjacent area of Tripura kingdom. He collected a boatfull of worthy gifts to present to the Nawab of Gour after receiving sanad of Meherkul. The gift was presented in

lieu of tax for the area. King Singha Tunga learnt that the valuable gifts were collected from the area of his kingdom. He took it as an act of audacity. So with the conspiracy of Hirabanta, the Nawab of Gour invaded the boundary of Tripura King. Singha Tunga wanted to reach an amicable settlement but his wife strongly protested against his decision and herself led the Tripuri forces against the soldiers of the Nawab of Gour and ultimately routed them. Since then Meherkul, now in Bangladesh, was under the custody of Tripura King till the partition of India.

According to Kailas Chandra Sinha the name of Tripura was formed from the Tipra word. (In Tripuri dialects "Tui" means water, Phra-pha God). And from Triphra the people were known as Tiphra.

Shri Kailash Chandra Sinha however gives a different opinion about the origin of the Tripura dynasty. In Rajmala he mentioned that "One branch of the Shan dynasty of Burma established a kingdom on the eastern part of Kamrup. In course of time, the youngest son of the king was defeated by the tribals and due to that he was compelled to shift his kingdom to the northern part of Cachar. "Cachar" he narrates "was the place from where the ancient Tripura dynasty was formed".

According to some writers, the name Tripura is derived from the goddess Tripura Sundari. Hunter remarks, "the name Tripura was probably given to the country in honour of the temple at Udaipur, which still exists. This temple now ranks as the second tirtha, or sacred shrine. It was dedicated either to Tripurdana, the Sun God, or to Tripureswari, the mistress of the three worlds".

Mr. Browne thinks that "there can be doubt that the district, which at one time was limited to the country situated in the neighbourhood of the Udaipur Temple, took its name from the goddess. The appellation was given by the Aryan speaking immigrants, or by the adjacent Aryan settlers of lower Bengal".

"The Tepperah tribes" says Captain Lewin. "recognise no generic term by which their race may be distinguished. If you ask a man of what race he is, he will tell you the name of his clan, Puran, osuie or whatever it may be; but if he is speaking Bengali, he will use the generic term Tipperah.

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

Many scholars have also given their views about the origin of the Tripuri. Dr. B. K. Barua says "the original home of these speakers, were western China near the Yang-Tse-Kiang and the Hwang ho rivers. From there they went down the course of the Brahmaputra and the Chindwin and the Irrawady and entered India and Burma. The swarm which came to Assam proceeded down to the great bend of the river Brahmaputra near Dhubri. From there, some of them went to the south and occupied first the Garo hills and the state of Hill Tippera".

According to Hunter "The rulers of Tripura were Tibeto—Burmese in origin". Major Fisher has opined that "the Tipperas and the Cacharis are of the same origin and their customs, religion, appearance are also probably same". In Rajmala also it is mentioned that "there was connection between the Tripuris and the Cacharis". Sidney Endle says that "in feature and general appearance they approximate very closely to the Mongolian type, and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race".

In Alexandar Mackenzie's book it is written that "the inhabitants were of two very distinct classes, one of which, doubtless, originally came from China, but was now of the Hindoo persuasion; the other, a people called Kookies or Coocis". (the North East Frontier of India, A Mackenzie, Reprint 1979/PP275).

He further says "there would seem to be good reason for believing that the Kachari (Bada) race is a much more widely distributed one than it was at one time supposed to be. They are undoubtedly found well outside the limits of modern (political) Assam, i.e. in North East Bengal Koch—Behar, & also in Hill Tippera where the language of the people gives decisive evidence that they are of the Bada stock".

The Bodos who live in Tripura near the southern boundary of Assam are known as Tripuris. It is assumed that according to the name of Tirpura state, they are named Tripuris.

With reference to the above it is estimated that with the changing of places and time the Bodos have been given different names in different areas. In some provinces the Tirpuri, the Mechaci or the Dimachas belonged to the stock of Bodo and it is corroborated by their language, appearance, dress and customs etc. Of course because of the lack of communications and distance between habitations, at present their languages or customs are bound to be dissimilar a little bit.

Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee classified the Tripura tribes under the Indo-Mongoloids or Kiratas. Linguistically the Tripura tribes are Bodos. The Bodo, who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming a solid block in North Eastern India, were the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in Eastern India and they form one of the main bases of the present day population of those tracts. Judging from the wide range of extension of their language, the Bodos appear first to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley, and extended to west into North Bengal (in Kochbihar, Rangpur and Dinajpur district). They might have pushed into North Bihar also and the Indo Mongoloids who penetrated into North Bihar might equally have been either Bodos or 'Himalayan' tribes allied to the Newars. They skirted the southern bend of the Brahmaputra and occupied the Garo Hills, where as Garos they form a block of Bodo speech. South of the Garo hills they spread in northern Mymensingh, where the semi Bengali Hajong tribe is of Bodo origin. From Nowgong District in Assam their area of

occupation extended to Cachar district (particularly in the North Cachar Hills) and into Sylhet, and from Cachar and Sylhet they moved further to the south, to Tripura state, where there is still a Bodo-speaking block in the shape of the Tipra tribe which bounded the state, and from Tripura they spread into Comilla and possibly also to Noakhali district, and thus they occupied the mouth of the Ganges by the eastern sea".

During interviews with older generation Tripuris it has been noticed that they share a belief that in the ancient time three families (i.e. TRI-PARA) settled themselves somewhere in the present day Tripura. To these three families the Tripura tribe and the name of this state owe their origin.

It is quite impossible to draw a clear picture about the origin of the Tripuris. However from the brief outline in the foregoing pages it may be suggested that the ancient kingdom of Tirpura in her heydays spread its supremacy to the Sundarbans in the west, Burma in the east, Kamrup in the north to again Burma in the south.

It is mentioned in "Joshohar Khulnar Itihas" (History of Jashohar & Khulna) that in the month of December 1868 A.D., a conference of the Asiatic Society was held in Calcutta. In that conference H. J. Rainey the son of Rany Saheeb of Khulna, read an article on Sundarban and Pratapaditya. When asked by the president to make comments regarding that article Rev. James Long referred to a Portuguese map of India, which he had seen in Paris in 1848. In this map, the Sundarbans and Sagar-dwip had been exhibited as fertile land in which five villages were shown. The maps of De Barros and Dan Dran Broke also proved this. From these maps it is known that the oceanbay of Sundarban had five famous ports named Paccaculi, Cuipitavas, Naldy, Dapara and Tiparia. Moreover, in page 86 of that book it is mentioned that Tiparia port seems to be the corrupted name of Tripura. (Saradia Gana Abhijan—1374 B.S. pp 28).

Sommerset Playne opines that, "In ancient time, there was a famous Tol of Sanskrit College in Sagar Island for Pandits and a shrine of Siva was erected there by the Raja of Tipperah when their dominions spread further westward than they do now" (Saradia Gana Abhijan, 1374 B.S. pp 28).

Once upon a time the Tripura dynasty spread upto Bengal. Ralph Fich wrote about Tripura state, in "Pioneers of India"—"In the delta of the Ganges on the verge of the Tipperah District he found the people not yet subdued by the Mugal Emperors".

East Bengal which is at present Bangladesh also was within the domination of Tripura during the glorious days of Tripura. In 1002 Tripura, (1592 A.D.) the king of Tirpura named Amar Manikya established a victory pillar "Minar" in Sreehatta after the conquest of it. (At present Sylhet is in Bangladesh). The pillar is situated on a high hill adjacent to Sreehatta and the name of that hill is 'Munara'. Even in Rajmala it is noted that

Meharkul was under the control of the Tripura King. The then Meharkul is known to us now as Comilla which is in present day Bangladesh.

Besides these, it is recorded and acknowledged that in early periods of Tripura dynasty there was marital relation between the royal families of Tripura and Bodo. The Tripura king had also established his kingdom in Kiratadesh by defeating the Kirata king, Kiratadesh is at present under the province of Assam.

Regarding the origin of the Tripuris it may be opined that the Tepperas belong to the Tibeto Burmese origin. Many scholars and authors have given similar and contradictory opinions about the history and origin of the Tripuris. However it is assumed that the Tripperas and the Bodos belong to the same racial stock.

Moreover, if we examine the nature of the language, even their dialects are numerically and grammatically similar. A few words are given below which are found similar in both the dialects spoken by the Bodos and the Tripuris.

Bini (His), Faiaoi (coming), Thangoi (going), Ang. (I), Sung (ask), Slai (exchange), Kharang (voice).

In few cases words differ in pronunciation though the meaning stands same, such as in Bodo Kachari—Una (after), Nama (road), Assi (Finger), Musu (Bullock), Thaine (two) Gami (village) etc. In Tripuri it stands as Lama (Road), Iasi (finger), Musuk (Bullock) Thainui (two), Kami (village) etc. So it may be guessed that the Bodo Kacharis and the Tripuris belong to the same stock and origin. In ancient era due to the lack of communication and change of place they adopted slightly different customs and cultures. It happened due to the impact of assimilation and acculturation of their concerning places.

CHAPTER—II

DIVISION OR SUB-GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY AND SALIENT FEATURES OF EACH GROUP

According to 1971 Census out of 19 Tribal communities in Tripura, the total Tripuri population is 2,50,382. Within the entire tribal population of Tripura the percentage of the Tripuri population stands as 55.57%.

The pocket areas of the Tripuri population are in Kamalpur sub-division (under North Tripura District), Khowai and Sadar Sub-division (under West Tripura District). Besides these areas they are found to live scatteredly in small groups in other places also.

The Deshi Tripuri and the Noatia community are not accounted here as they have separate identity. The common surname of the Puratan Tripura, Tripuri or Tipperah is Deb Barman or Deb Barma. The 'Thakur' and Karta sub-group are within the Puratan Tripura community. They belong to the royal family of Tripura.

The Puratan Tripuras were sub-divided generally into different groups according to their assignment in the royal court. The sub-divisions are as :—

(1) Bachal, (2) Siuk, (3) Kuatia, (4) Daityasingh, (5) Hujurja, (6) Siltia, (7) Apaia, (8) Chatratuia or chatradharia, (9) Deurai, (10) Subenarayan, (11) Sena, (12) Julai.

Their duties in the royal court were as follows :—

Bachal :—The Bachal group of the Tripuri Community had to discharge the following works in the royal court.

(a) In the royal court or at the time of expedition of the king, they held the betal leaf and panja.

(b) They made the structure for the images of the gods and goddesses with bamboo and worship—dias at the time of worship in the royal palace. They also carried the water which was to be required for the worship.

(c) At the time of marriage of some member of the royal family they performed the task of planting the bamboo alongwith branches and leaves on all sides of the marriage pulpit.

(d) The very next day of 'Bijoya Dasami' a feast named 'Hasam' was arranged by the king. For this occasion it was their duty to make a lamp stand with bamboo.

2. **Siuk** :—'Siuk' means hunter. For royal diet, their duty was to hunt animals and birds. During the title giving ceremony in the royal court their duty was to hold the pot of sandal wood paste. When a marriage took place in the royal family the siuks shouldered the collection of married women for performing the auspicious deeds. Besides they carried the water for the brides party.

3. **Kuatia** :—In Kok-Borok Kuai means betal nut. Kuatia meant who carried betal leaf and nut. They had other assignment in the royal court as :—

(a) At the time of title-giving ceremony in the royal court they used to give flower garland,

(b) To give incense and light daily in the throne house was their duty. Moreover in the case of special worship they polished the royal throne.

(c) The 'Prasad' of worship observed in the royal court was also distributed by the 'Kuatia' group.

(d) It was their duty to arrange the place and bed for the families of the Maharaja and Thakurs during the time of worship observed in the palace.

(e) At the time of marriage the 'Kuatia' performed the task of carrying water for the bridegroom's party.

(f) During the marriage ceremony they took part in decorating the marriage pulpit with the Siuks.

4. **Daityaslogh or Duising** :— They were the bearers of the royal flag. During war, Darbar, expedition of the king and worship they bore the white flag. Besides these they made the structure for the image of the god and dressed the meat for the 'Hasam feast'.

5. **Hujuria and Chiltia** :—They were two branches of the same group (hada). They remained present all the time in the royal court. That was why they were called 'Hujuria'. They did various types of deeds according to the necessity. One of the main duties was to carry articles of prasad and different birds and animals for sacrifice from the royal palace to the temple or worship area.

6. **Apala** :—Apala meant fish purchaser. They performed the deed of purchasing fish for king and his family. Besides they collected firewood for the royal palace.

7. **Chatra Tuia or Chakak Tuia** :—(Chatra Dharaia) The word chatra Tuia meant umbrella bearer. During Raj Darbar they held the royal symbol **na med Chand raban, Suryaban, Mahimurat, Chatra, Arangi** etc.

8. **Deorai or Ghalim** :- They were god worshippers. They were priest at 'Kharchi' and 'Kerpuja.' They performed the puja of the fourteen gods.

9. **Subenarayan** : On the occasion of worship and 'Hasam' feast they remained engaged in dressing the fish.

10. **Sena** :- Among the foregoing ten groups if anybody did any adulterous deed the society then excommunicated him from the society with the order of the Darbar. The offenders of this class got their identity in 'Sena' group. Their sons enjoyed the advantage to re-enter in their own respective caste after offering feast to their caste. The Senas performed the duties of making oven for cooking 'Hasam' feast. Even more they washed the utensils and cleared the offal rejected by the Thakurs. They invited the invitees by beating large kettle drum when the cooking of 'Hasam' feast was over. During 'Kharchi' puja also drum beating was their duty.

11. **Julai** :- The Julai group was engaged to discharge all sorts of works for the queen and the members of the royal family. They were as slaves. The poverty stricken people who took shelter of others for food and clothes were also called Julai in course of time. They performed their duties in their master's house and lived there with their family. They departed from their masters house only when their family members increased in number.

According to the division of labour a number of sub groups were also formed within the Julai group. The sub-groups were as :—(a) Daspaia, Vegetable seller (b) Manarav-Mayna bird collector and protector. (c) Totaray :— Parrot bird collector and protector. (d) Mami plukcha-Mami (a kind of paddy) collector. (e) Maicha plukcha-Maicha (jhum paddy) collector. (f) Gulchari-Planters of young plant of black pepper. (g) Challengrai-Maker of soda water. (h) Macharai : Chilly grinder.

- | | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| i) Adrai | | Now it cannot be |
| j) Jitrai | | ascertained what was their actual duty. |
| k) Simkacha | | Only the names exist. |

The aforesaid sub-groups of the Tripuri community have assimilated each other generally.

On the basis of linguistic characteristic and socio-economic and cultural distinctiveness the Tripuri population can also be sub divided into three groups. These groups are generally known as Beri, Dona and Daspa.

The Beri groups are mainly concentrated in the entire Kamalpur sub-division including north eastern part of Khowai sub-division, the revenue villages of Behala Bari, Bachai Bari and Asharam Bari areas i. e. across the Atharamura range up to the eastern bank of Khowai river.

The Daspa groups are inhabiting the rest of the Khowai sub-division including the revenue villages of Sadar sub-division under the Mohanpur and Jirania Blocks.

The Dona's are mainly concentrated in the revenue villages under Bishalgarh Block area specially in the southern part of Sadar Division.

Some specific cultural distinctiveness of the aforesaid three groups are also found. These are as follows :— The Beris are expert in weaving while the Daspas are famous for their skill in handicrafts. The Donas possess closer affinity with the royal family of Agartala.

Among the three groups some distinct regional characteristics in pronunciation of colloquial dialect are also found.

Some specific characteristics in Beri pronunciation :—

“৩” pronounced as ‘O’ “ও” ভাই (twoi)→তুই (toi)=Water.

“R” Pronounced as “L” & vice-versa রি (Ri)—(Li) লি=cloth
রিতুকু (Rituku)—লিতুকু (Lituku) etc.

খোলায় (Khowlai)—খোরায় (Khowrai) (what do you do)

Addition of Swarai (সোরায়) at the ending of sentences.

নৌং আরঅ তাম খোলায় (Nung Arao Tama khowlai ?) (What are you doing there ?).

নৌং আরঅ তাম খোরায় সোরায় (Nung Arao tama khwrai swarai ?) What are you doing there ?).

The Donas are generally using ‘Ba’ in place of ‘Swarai’.

নৌং আরঅ তাম খোলায় ?

নৌং আরঅ তাম খোলায় তংবা ?

(Nung Arao tama khowlai tang ba ? (What are you doing there ?).

Some other specific wordings used by Donas are :—

লুঙ্গা (Lunga) ছুং (Dhung), মাসী (Masi—Aunt) ময় (Mai), মামা (Mama—maternal uncle) মোয়া (Moa).

The Daspas are habituated to use ‘ছিদা’ (Chida), ‘ছিয়া’ (Chia) (Not know) at the ending of the sentences.

“ব” (Bo Arao tama khowlai tang chida ?) What he is doing there I do not know).

or

(Bo Arao tama Khowlai tang chia ?) What he is doing there I dont know).

Besides the aforesaid distinctive characteristics there are differences in style of folk songs, design in handloom and weaving of costumes etc.

CHAPTER—III

Characteristics of Social Organisation (Lineage, Property Ownership, Rituals of house building/inauguration etc.)

LINEAGE :—

1) The Tripuri term 'Sandai' or 'Vasam' literally means lineage. Like most of the groups or subgroups of the KokBorok speaking tribals of Tripura, the Tripuris are also named after some animals, birds etc. But each group or subgroup of the Tripuri has gradually lost their specific totemic characteristics.

2) The Tripuri lineages are patriarchal. The members of the different lineages are known according to their respective ancestors. As the members of a lineage are related, their behaviour pattern is also similar to certain extent.

3) At the birth of a child, the members of a lineage become 'impure' for a specific period. During the period of pollution all the members are tabooed from attending any socio-religious ceremony.

4) Whenever a death takes place within a family, the members of a lineage are strictly prohibited from taking fish, meat, egg etc. during the mourning period.

5) The adopted son bears the lineage identity of his foster parent. The unmarried daughters belong to the lineage of their fathers or brothers. Whenever an unmarried girl gets married she adopts the lineage of her husband.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP :—

1) Since time immemorial the Tripuris are accustomed to jhum cultivation. For centuries they were quite unacquainted with plough cultivation. They did not have any permanent residence. For jhuming they had roamed from place to place and corner to corner. As years passed by the growth of population, shortage of jhum land and deforestation have caused jhum cultivation impossible and it resulted in a wasteful and most uneconomic method of cultivation. This disastrous result of the cultivation has turned their motivation to the plough cultivation. So, gradually they had headed towards a settled life. Naturally, with the introduction of plough cultivation the claim of property ownership was established.

2) The property of the Tripuris may be categorised into two heads :—

(a) Ancestral property which is inherited from the ancestors (b) and the property acquired by self during his life time.

The movable and immovable properties are to be included in the first category. Movable property includes plough and other agricultural implements, domestic animals, domestic articles like furniture, ornaments, clothing, utensils, baskets and cash money etc. Immovable property includes agricultural land, homestead land, house and the like.

3) Individual or private ownership is not generally seen in the case of immovable property. Amongst the movable properties jhum field is also included. In respect of jhum cultivation the common ownership of the family is found. Whenever a Tipra family cultivates jhum, all the members share the yields of it. And when they discard the jhum field, another family may have the right to cultivate the same field after a reasonable period.

THE RIGHT TO PROPERTY IN EARLY ERA :—

4) The right of inheritance among the Tripuris is from father to sons. Actually, the daughters have also the right of equal shares of their father's property. But the eldest son generally gets the major share than his other brothers. The head of the family gives a particular share to his wife. If the wife of the deceased stays with one of her sons, he who looks after his mother. He will have the right of inheritance of his mother's property. If the son of a deceased mother wants to share his mother's property with his other brothers he can easily do it. The married or unmarried daughters or sisters of a person are only entitled to get property if their fathers or brothers desire to give them willingly. Otherwise they do not have the right of inheritance. If a widow possess property and gets married again her second husband will not be empowered to get his wife's property.

THE RIGHT TO PROPERTY IN PRESENT DAYS :—

5) In present days, after the death of a person his son or sons get two third share of the father's property. And the rest one third is shared equally by the mother and her daughters. If the wife of a deceased person stays with one of her sons or daughters that very son or daughter is entitled to get this property after the mother's death or if the mother desires to give her property to a particular son or daughter she can easily do this. If any property is registered against the mother, then the daughter is the legal successor to her mother's property. The parents who keep their married daughter and her bridegroom in their own house and who possess sufficient land are found to offer some landed property to the girl.

6) Within the Tripuri community the father generally divides his property during his life time. In many occasions the division of property also takes place after the death of the father. Normally the father divides his property among the sons in the later part of his life. Otherwise various factors constrain to divide the property during the life time of a father. Sometimes a father divide his property to avoid the hitch among the sons which may take place after his death in the distant future. In some occasions the father is forced to divide the property by the pressure and disturbances created by the adult sons. Moreover, sometimes due to the inability of the father to look after his property he divides his property among his grown up sons. When a father gets married for the second time, the sons of the two mothers, the wives of the sons quarrel over the inheritance of the property and chaos prevails within the family. As a result the father divides his property earlier among his sons.

7) During the life time of a father if he divides his property he keeps a particular share for himself, for unmarried daughters and for minor sons. If a father has more than one wife, the sons of the second wife also get equal share of his property.

8) The adopted son of a childless person bears the right to inherit the property of his foster father. In absence of sons or adopted son the property of a person goes to his brother or brother's sons. Though the daughters are not generally entitled to inherit the property, in absence of their brother they possess the right to inherit their father's property. But of course they are to look after their mother after their father's death.

9) In the Tripuri society if a person dies without having any children his widow is entitled to inherit the deceased husband's property. If she gets married again or dies, the property of her husband is inherited by her deceased husband's brother or brother's sons respectively. The dress, ornaments etc are shared by the daughters of the mother,

10) During the life time of a father, if a son separates himself from the family he is generally debarred from the inheritance of his father's property. As a matter of fact in such an occasion he gets a little less than his legitimate share. But of course, after the death of his father he can establish his legitimate demand. And finally he can have it.

11) If any person manages to acquire property on his own the other persons of the family do not have any right to claim a share of that acquired property.

12) The mode of inheritance of property of the Tripuri has taken a new direction. Now-a-days the Tripuris, particularly who are staying in the urban or semi urban areas, are generally impressed and influenced by the Hindu succession Act. As a result the women folk are also entitled to inherit equal share with their counterparts.

RITUALS OF HOUSE BUILDING :—

1) The constructions of house-buildings within the Tripuri community is performed through rituals. The person who wants to build a house on a new site brings some soil from that site and puts it at night under the pillow. By night he dreams a dream. On the next day he describes the dream to an old person or to the 'ochai', the village priest. After listening to the facts of the dream, the old person or the 'ochai' gives his views whether this site is perfect for house building or not. Moreover the house owner wants to know from the 'ochai' whether the site is good for building a house or not. To be sure of that, the ochai performs some rituals. This is called 'Semanaoi'. A bamboo post of an arm's length approximately and a bamboo cane are planted side by side. A banana leaf is kept in front of the planted bamboo and a handful of rice is put on the banana leaf. Thereafter the ochai cuts partially the throat of a chicken and ho'ds it on the rice to pour the blood. Now the ochai completely severs the head of the chicken and then puts the head of the chicken on the banana leaf. This chicken is sacrificed to the 'Nakchumatai' the guardian deity of the house.

2) Now the ochai examines the entrails of the sacrificed chicken for confirmation of the site selection—whether it has been good or not. The practice of examining the entrails is called 'Semanaoi'. After cutting the ractum of the chicken the entrails are checked.

If the entrails are found in a good condition then it bespeaks the selection of the site for house building as right. If the entrails are found torn or defective, then it is thought that the site selection has not been good. Ofcourse, sometimes after the performance of some puja by the village priest, the defect of the site may be rectified or removed,

3) With the permission of the Ochai, the house owner plants a post in the north east corner of the site. Inside the hole some mustard seeds are given before placing the pole. At that time some spells are chanted by the Ochai. Now-a-days alongwith the mustard seeds they place other things also like undried turmeric, undried rice, mango leaf, tulsi leaf, a piece of gold and silver or its washing water etc. in the hole before fixing the post.

Besides, at the top of the post they tie a packet of banana leaf containing the same materials that are placed inside the hole of the post. A bow is also tied at the top of the bamboo post.

HOUSE INAUGURATION :—

1) Within the Tripuri society a ritual is observed when they enter into a newly constructed house. A day before entering into a newly constructed house, the house owner performs a puja of the goddess 'Mailoma' (goddess of paddy) and 'Khuluma' (goddess of cotton) in the old house. A banana leaf is placed in front of each of the goddesses. On each of the banana leaves some undried rice is placed separately. Thereafter cutting the throat partially of two cocks, the blood is given on the rice which are placed on the two banana leaves separately. Afterwards beheading the two cocks, the two heads are placed separately on the undried rice. Now two boiled eggs, boiled meat of the two cocks and some rice are given to the concerned deities. After giving of the eggs, meat etc. they light a lamp, burn incense etc. Two women utter 'ulu' sound three times. The 'ulu' sound is uttered only by women who have not entered their puberty stage or have reached their menopause stage. After making the 'ulu' sound one bottle of rice beer is offered to each of the deities. The inaugural house ritual is performed in this way. When the house entrance ritual is finished the Ochai first takes wine from a pot which is kept separately for him. After him other persons who are present there will take the wine serially. The two bottles of rice beer which are offered to the respective deities are taken first by a person who is senior most in age among the attendants of the ceremony.

2) On the very day the house owner invites the Ochai (the village priest) to perform a puja to the newly constructed house. Next day, on the day of entrance to the new house, the Ochai performs a puja to the god 'Lampra'. They plant four bamboo pieces of an arm's length. Each piece contains two joints. Two bamboo pieces are planted in each of the two sides in a parallel way. On these four bamboo pieces they tie a pair of bamboo pieces horizontally. With the Lampra deity they worship the deity 'Tuisangrama' also. 'Tuisangrama' is the goddess of the Ganges. In between the two deities, there remain two more deities. The deities are 'Akhata' and 'Bikhata'. They are two brothers. Afterwards they place banana leaves in front of both the 'Lampra' and Tuisangrama and keep undried rice on them. Now the Ochai gives the blood of a cock on the rice which has been placed on the two banana leaves separately. Two cocks are cut separately for the two deities. The blood of one cock cannot be given to the both deities. After performing this puja the Ochai examines the entrails of the cocks. After performing the

puja in this way, they take rice beer, betal leaf, rice etc. The Ochai, the invitees and the house owner along with family members join this feast.

3) Before performing the worship to the 'Lampra' in connection with the house-entrance ceremony the house owner performs a puja to the deity 'Mailooma' 'Khuluma' in his old house and then brings the deities to his new house and place them in proper place.

4) Particularly in the urban area now a-days the Tripuris have started to engage Brahmin priest to perform the rituals of house inauguration ceremony. Even in the house building ceremony they follow the rituals of other Hindus.

CHAPTER—IV

MARRIAGE SYSTEM AS A WHOLE

Hamjuk Tubui Kaimani :

In this system of marriage, the negotiation between two families is made by a marriage broker. In finalising or settling up a marriage the guardian of the either side plays the sole role. The bride or the groom has no choice. This type of marriage always takes place in the house of the bridegroom. Here the matrimonial rites and rituals which are mainly observed by the Tripuris of the Sadar South are mentioned.

The parents of the boy accompanied by the 'Raibai' (marriage broker) go to the girl's house to choose and select her as the bride. But there are some prejudicial conventions which they abide by in cases of an auspicious matter such as selecting the bride. If they hear any bleat of deer or see any corpse on that day or dream in the previous night any dream of falling down of their hut by cyclone, they do not set out on that day for the girl's house.

If the girl be chosen by the parents of the boy, the guardians of the daughter demand dowry of an amount of money, ornaments etc. Among the Tripuris the bride did not bring any dowry to her father in law's house. The bridegroom's father had to give a price to get the daughter for his son. So in the Tripuri society the dowry was otherway round Things have changed. If the bridegroom party agrees to pay the dowry, then both the party fix the date of 'Mangalacharan' (Kaksunga) through the Raibai. On the day of Mangala Charan (Kaksunga) the party of the would be groom assemble in the house of the would be bride. The guardians of both the sides sit side by side and two pots of rice beer are kept before them. Two earthen oil lamps are also put beside the two beer pots. A bell-metal plate containing some cotton, durba, copper coin, til, soil etc. is put in front of them to perform the rituals of "Dangdua". Each person performs this ritual three times.

Thereafter, both the parties take the rice beer. The father of the bride offers some money for meat to be arranged for the feast of that day.

The 'would be bride' then comes in front of the assembled persons and bow before her parents, to the bride-groom's parents and then to all other senior persons. The elderly persons bless the bride with money, coins etc. which are put in the bell metal plate. After that the bride has to bathe her parents and 'would be parents in law'. The custom also says that the bride has to wash the hands of all the elderly persons after they have finished the feast. These rituals are performed in finalising or settling the marriage and is known as "Kak Sunga".

After the 'Kak Sunga' the father of the bridegroom alongwith the 'Raibai' go on a prefixed day to the bride's house to offer the dowry. Both the parties now sit together and in presence of 'Raibai' fix the date of marriage.

On the day before the marriage, the bridegroom party invites the 'Aiajuk'. Aia and two boys for carrying water, by offering a betal, to come and discharge their duties in the marriage ceremony. A few married women of the neighbourhood also assemble there on that day and cut betal leaf and nut in the name of the bride and her groom. This ceremony is called 'Kwaitano'. At the time of cutting the betal leaves and nut in the name of the bride 'ulu' sound is made thrice, while in the case of bridegroom it is done seventimes.

Now, some flowers and betal leaves and nuts are put separately in two metal plates made of bell metal. The plates are then wrapped with new cloth and carried by two boys to convey the invitation to every family in the village to make a 'Bedi' (platform) on behalf of the bridegroom's party. These two boys convey the invitation to the Choudhury (village headman) in a different manner. The Choudhury is offered a whole betal leaf and a nut and the plate is now wrapped with banana leaf instead of cloth. The 'Bedi' of this marriage is made in a similar way as that of "Chamari Kaimani Marriage".

On the morning of the marriage ceremony the "Lampra owathap" deity is worshipped alongwith "Tuisangamma". In this system of marriage, the 'Owathap' is worshipped in same manner as the "Chamari Kaimani". The "Takchamai' puja is totally absent here.

On that day, the two Aiajunks take two Jharis (water pot) and start with palanquin, a musical party etc. for the bride's house to bring her. On the eve of departure for the bride's house, the 'Dangdua' rites are observed on the two jharis (water pot) and on the ornaments taken for the bride. Two earthen pitchers filled with water and mango twigs in them are placed on two sides of the front door of the bridegroom's house. Two earthen oil lamps are also kept by their side. After performing the 'Dangdua' rituals the bridegroom party starts for the bride's house.

In the bride's house also this 'Dangdua' rite is observed on the bridegroom party's arrival. Two earthen pitchers and oil lamps are similarly placed on two sides of the front door of the bride's house and on their arrival, the 'Dangdua' rite is observed on the musical instruments, the palanquin, two jharis (water pot) etc.

Now, after arrival of the bridegroom's party to the house of the bride the ritual of invitation by offering betal leaf to every family in the village and to the Choudhury starts. This ritual is called 'Khum Phunuga'.

After the formalities and rituals, the bride has to depart for the bridegroom's house. She adorns herself with the ornaments sent from the bridegroom's house and bow down to her parents. She then steps into the palanquin for the bridegroom's house. There is a taboo in vogue that the mother of the bride cannot accompany her daughter and witness the daughter's marriage. The father and other relatives attend the marriage.

The 'Dangdua' ritual is again observed when the bride arrives at bridegroom's house. After the rite, one person takes the bride on his back and carry her into the room specified for the bride.

Thereafter, water is brought for bath of the bride and bridegroom. The ritual observed at this time is same as 'Chamari Kaimani'. But in addition to it, something more is observed. During the course of water drawing procession, an unmarried girl is chosen to carry a basket containing a new cooking pot in which some Sukui (bean), undried turmeric, haritaki, vermilion etc. are kept. The cooking pot remains covered with a piece of cloth. The water has to be cut with a sword or chopper, and the articles in the cooking pot in the basket are to be dissipated in the water before cutting the water. Among the Tripuris, this ritual is known as 'Hajlai'.

An earthen lamp is lighted at the place where the bride's bath is arranged. The barber then attend the bride to manicure her. The bride then sits on a wooden seat (pidi) facing the east. Her head then remains covered with cloth. An 'Aiajuk' now pours water three times on her head. Each time, before pouring the water, the Aiajuk gives a circle around the bride and 'ulu' sound is made everytime while pouring the water. After this rite, the bride takes the bath of her own. The same rite is followed at the time of bridegroom's bath.

Now, the 'Aia' Aiajuk and the party move in and around the village carrying the bridegroom in a palanquin. In this procession a barber has also to remain present. He takes some parched paddy in a new earthen pot and sprinkles these on the palanquin. This ritual is known as 'Gajafiraga' among the Tripuri community. Giving a round in the village, the party comes back to the house with the bridegroom.

The "Khupang Subaio" which is observed at the time of "Chamari Kaimani" is also observed in this system of marriage before the bride proceeds towards the "Bedi". But this "Khupang Subaio" rite is followed here with and bit of difference. As for instance, when a man carries the bride for observing this rite, a reed made basket which looks like a winnowing fan is held over the bride by an 'Aiajuk'. This basket is tied with a piece of new cloth measuring equal to the diameter of the basket. Small moons, stars etc., made of metal etc., are pasted on the basket. They call it "Tala".

The bride and the bridegroom are brought to the "Bedi" in the same manner as "Chamari Kaimani" and the marriage is performed like that. The "Khiri Bhojan" ritual is also observed in this marriage. After the marriage the couple and the 'Aia' 'Aiajuk' take their feast collectively. When the Aia and Aiajuk take their meal one and a half bottle of wine are offered to them on behalf of the bridegroom. When the 'Aia' and 'Aiajuk' finish their meal, the newly weded couple wash their hands with due obeisance. The feast of the 'Aia' and 'Aiajuk' is completed ceremoniously and it is known as 'Aiajuk' Aia Maichamani". After dinner the couple gets separated.

Next day the bridegroom brings the bride to his own house. The bride on arriving at the door of the house, washes the feet of her husband three times with the water of the Jhari (pot) and then wipes the feet with her hair. Thereafter an obstruction is raised at the door with a

bamboo. The husband then lifts her holding at her waist over the bamboo and puts her inside the house. Following the ritual of "Chamari Kaimani" "Dangdua" is offered. After the "Dangdua" the couple bow down before all elderly persons and the aged persons bless them with gifts.

Following this ceremony, on the same day, a grand feast is arranged for the marriage. At the time of the feast, the guardians of both the sides take their meal first and the bride and groom have to serve everyone a curry specially prepared with dried fish. As the elderly persons finish their meal, it is customary for the couple to wash their hands.

At dawn on the third day after marriage the couple go out with the crowns and dig the earth (outside the house) and put the crowns under the ground with their feet. The marriage ceremony is practically over on that day with the putting of the crown under the earth.

In this system of marriage, one additional ritual is observed—after the marriage ceremony. If the bride's menstruation has not started before her marriage, then a special rite is observed when the menstruation starts after the marriage. On a particular day, the guardians of the bride and bridegroom along with other elderly persons assemble at the bridegroom's house to attend the rituals. The ceremony is arranged on any day within a month from the day of first menstruation.

On the day, a miniature pond is dug in the courtyard in order to play the mud game. Every body participates in the game and rejoices. After the game, they take bath and gather around for the drinks.

After the drinks, a cradle is hung inside the hut. A grind stone washed with water is put by its side. A lamp is also lighted and the "Dangdua" rituals is observed on the grind stone. Now a piece of new cloth is stretched on the cradle and the grind stone is tied in the cloth. At one side of the grind stone a pillow is kept. A piece of cloth is then spread over the grind stone as a cover.

The bride now swings the cradle three times and then the bridegroom follows it. The parents of the bride and bridegroom and also the other elderly attendants swing it serially. As soon as the swinging is over, the father-in-law of the bride takes the grind stone and gives it to the daughter in law's lap. The other attendants then take the grind stone one by one. This ritual is known as "Harpek Thunga"—(mud game).

The grind stone here symbolises a newborn baby and with it the newly married lady is blessed by all elderly persons, specially the parents of the couple to have a baby. It is already mentioned above that the aforesaid ritual is connected with the bride having her first menstruation only after marriage. Besides this, the ritual is observed mainly by the rural Tripuris of the Sadar South. At present, the ritual is losing popularity.

Marriage by Exchange :

(Nakkaisa Kaimung).

Sometimes marriage is arranged between two families by exchanging a boy and a girl and thus avoiding the payment of dowry or bride-price. This type of marriage is, of course, rare among the Tripuris. The rites and

rituals observed in such type of marriage are almost similar to the marriage by service (Chamari Kaimani).

Marriage by elopement :

(Kharlaioi Kaijakmani).

This type of marriage occurs by mutual contact between two individuals when they become fond of each other. A boy and a girl fall in love in the ignorance of their guardians and eventually do not get the approval of their guardians to get married. The boy elopes with the girl to certain place and marry her. In such a case, the boy generally takes the initiative. This form of marriage takes place through the performance of "Owathap" worship. In performing this worship or puja four fowls are sacrificed and the couple bowdown in front of the Owathap deity. After the puja, the sanctified water of Owathap is sprinkled upon the couple. The bridegroom then puts vermilion on the bride's forehead. Sometimes, the bridegroom has to pay a compensation to the village council if he re-settles in the village.

Marriage by Purchase :

(Fuisai Tooboa).

In this form of marriage the bridegroom or his parents pay certain amount of money in cash to the bride's family as her price. All sorts of matrimonial rituals are observed in this marriage.

Marriage by Capture :

(Kaklam Kuruini Kaimung).

This form of marriage is not very common among the Tripuris. In rare occasion, a boy captures a girl of his choice on her way to any place or from her home and forcibly marries her. No wedding rites and rituals are observed in such marriage except the Owathap worship. Here also four fowls are required to be sacrificed in the puja and the couple takes the sanctified water of 'Owathap'.

Marriage by love :

(Hamjak laiai Kailaimani).

This form of marriage among the Tripuri community is now very common and in the increase. When a boy and a girl fall in love with each other and decide to marry, they bring it to their guardian's knowledge and the marriage takes place with the guardian's initiative. The procedures of rituals performances in such marriage are same as those in normal social marriages. The marriage does not take place if the guardians of both sides do not agree. And in such cases, the boy and girl may not obey their guardian's decision and run away from their house or village and get married.

Chamari Amar :

This type of marriage is also prevalent in Tripuri society. In this form of marriage the bridegroom leaves his house and settles down in his father-in-law's house for life. He owns some paddy land from his father-in-law and stays with them. All sorts of normal matrimonial rituals are observed here.

Chamari Ampa :

This form of marriage is identical in nature with the marriage of service. Only difference between the two types of marriage is duration to serve. It is noticed in this form of marriage that the bridegroom is to serve in his future father-in-law's house for a short period in comparison with the bridegroom of 'Chamari Kaimani' marriage.

Marriage by insistance :

(Burui Hamjagai Kaijakmani).

In rare occasions, this form of marriage also occurs. Sometimes a girl stands against the decision of her parent's to marry the boy of their choice and pleads for negotiating with the guardian of a boy whom she likes much or loves. As a result the guardians are left with no other alternative than to settle the daughter's marriage with the boy she is inclined to.

Child marriage : (Sikla Sagya Chini Kaimung).

This type of marriage was in vogue long ago among the Tripuris. A girl, before she reaches puberty, was generally married to a boy. Now-a-days, this form of marriage is no longer prevalent.

Widow marriage : (Sindoor phoolna).

Widow marriage is prevalent in the Tripuri society. A widow, widower, divorcee or a deserted woman is allowed to remarry. Though there is no practical inhibitions in such cases and the widow marriage is common in the Tripuris, the parents of a girl do not earnestly desire to marry their maiden daughter with a widow or a divorcee. The widower or divorcee person is allowed to remarry with usual observation of the rituals but when a widow or divorcee likes to remarry, she is debarred from observing the rituals which she had once observed in her previous marriage. Moreover, a widower or a divorcee enjoys freedom to choose a maiden girl as his wife where as the widow or the divorcee lady is restricted to select a bachelor for husband. If a divorcee lady or a widow likes to re-enter into the conjugal life, she has to do it with a divorced person or a widower only.

This type of marriage is also settled or arranged through 'Raibai'. The guardians of both parties settle the marriage in presence of 'Raibai' and fix the date of marriage. The bridegroom party starts for the bride's house on the marriage day. On that day, the worship of "Owathap" deity and 'Tuisangamma' are performed. Ten fowls are sacrificed to the deities. 'Takchamai' deity is not worshipped in this form of marriage. The presence of 'Aia' and 'Aiajuk' are not required in this marriage.

The bridegroom puts on dhuti and shirt and the bride wears sari and different traditional ornaments. The bride and the groom are then brought in front of the 'Owathap' deity. The Ochai now takes some soil from the deity's side and with this he sprinkles the sanctified water of Owathap deity thrice upon the couple. The couple then pays homage to the deity three times. Thereafter the aged attendants in the ceremony sprinkle the sanctified water upon the bride and the groom.

The couple is now brought into the house. A mat is spread for the couple to sit on. An earthen lamp and a disc with cotton, til, durba, soil etc. in it are put in front of them. The "Dangdua" rituals is then observed on the bride and the groom for three times.

After "Dangdua," the ochai takes a chopper and a stone and strikes the stone three times with the chopper on each of the couples head. While striking the stone he utters few spells as:—"Tuibuluk Tui, Augolagai Tandi, Halangni Auo manay Tandi". (As the stream is unending, so be their lives. As the stone is not decayed so also their life be not affected by time).

The Ochai then blesses the couple. Some tulusi leaves, water of the Ganges, a copper coin etc. are kept in a pot before the couple. In presence of the Ochai, the couple touches these articles and promises to each other to remain for long as true husband and true wife. The 'Ochai' now takes a little vermilion and puts it on the forehead of the bride and bridegroom. The other married women then follow the suit. The bride and the bridegroom then exchange garlands between them. Two pieces of betel leaves are offered then to chew reciprocally. The bridegroom first takes a pan and after a bite, offers it to the bride.

Next, the new couple is offered to take little honey and Ganges water. Taking of this honey and Ganges water by the couple is significant and symbolic. It is believed that if the honey and Ganges water are taken, their conjugal life will ever be as sweet and sacred as the honey and water.

The couple has now to bow before their parents and guardians. With this, the formal ceremony comes to an end. A feast is arranged on the occasion and a chicken curry with the chickens sacrificed to the Owathap deity is compulsarily prepared to be served to every invitee. This specific curry is known as 'Mailaisak'.

This 'Sindoor phoolna' in some areas is observed in different ways. The ceremony takes place at the bride's house instead of the bridegroom. The Owathap deity is worshipped by sacrificing four fowls.

When the puja ends, the bridegroom puts vermilion at the lower part of his right leg. A married woman then takes a little sindoor from the bridegroom's leg and smears it on the bride's forehead and on the head. In this form of marriage, the unmarried male and female generally do not take part.

The above cited form of marriage is known as 'Sindoor phoolna' in South Sadar sub-division whereas the same type of marriage is known in North sub-division as 'Maicharuo'.

Halukchalani: (Marriage within the relative).

It is not at all a common type of marriage among the Tripuris. A marriage generally does not take place within the relatives unless three generations are over between the bride and bridegroom.

Sometimes marriage takes place also between niece and nephew, maternal brother and sister. This type of marriage is not accepted by the society. In this case, both the boy and the girl and their parents appear in front of the village council for justice and acceptance of the marriage. The village council imposes fine on the concerned boy and girl. Both the parties jointly have to offer a grand feast to the villagers who thereafter acknowledge their marriage. But the couple are not allowed to marry performing the rites and rituals of the normal marriage. Even they are not permitted to marry by observing the worship of "Lampra Owathap".

But this type of marriage is not accepted as quite normal by the society. That is why this type of marriage as a matter of fact, takes place very seldom.

Chamari Kamani: (Marriage by Service).

This form of marriage to procure a bride by offering services had been in practice among the Tripuris till recent past. Marriage by service is known to them as 'Chamari Kamani'. The tenure or period of services by the bridegroom at the bride's house is generally fixed by the bride's side and the tenure varies from one to three years or even more. Now-a-days this system is going out of fashion. Even when it does take place the period of service is reduced to one to fifteen months or like.

The negotiation between the families is initiated by a marriage broker (Raibai) and the premarital terms and conditions and tentative date of engagements of the boy at the bride's house are settled through the 'Raibai'. On that particular day the 'would be bridegroom' dressed in Tripuri dhuti (Rai-barak) and shirt (Kamchului), takes a towel (Rituku), a chopper, bedding, a disc (for eating rice), lota, garments, hukha made of coconut shell etc. with him and starts for the "would be father in law's" house alongwith a few relatives and friends.

The 'would be bridegroom' with his people is welcomed by the bride's family. Next day, the bridegroom with his companions make a partition by bamboo to be placed in the bride's main house to make a room for him. Inside that room, he makes a platform (sapang) with bamboo to place his bedding and to keep the garments. After arranging his accomodation, the relatives and friends go back home and from that very day the 'would be groom' begins to work at his future father in law's house.

He does all sorts of work such as fetching of water, firewoods, jhum cutting, sowing, harvesting and such other work which are required. Such a bridegroom is known as 'Chamari' among the Tripuris. The services of the groom during the period is always watched by the bride's guardians to ascertain his capability, deligence etc. and also his nature, dealings etc. are observed. Till the expiry of the period and before ceremonial

marriage the 'would be bridegroom' and bride are not permitted to sleep together.

On completion of the tenure of service by the bridegroom, both the parties resume formal talk regarding the ceremony of marriage. The bridegroom's party goes to the bride's house to finalise the marriage. Here too some prejudicial beliefs work. If anyone of the bridegroom, bride, either of their parents dream a tortoise, deer etc. on the night before their journey or during the course of the journey if anybody observes a dead body or hears a bleat, they do not proceed for the bride's house and postpone the journey for the day.

For confirmation of the marriage, the bridegroom's party alongwith the marriage broker (Raibai) arrives at the house of the bride's father. Two pots of rice beer are kept in front of them on behalf of the bride's father.

The two pots of rice beer are given in the name of the 'would be bridegroom' and bride. Two earthen lamps are lighted and placed by the side of the two pots of rice beer. Now the marriage confirmation talks begin. The parents of the bride demand some amount of money from the parents of the bridegroom. If the groom's parents agree to give the amount demanded by the bride's party or parents, the talks advance further for finalisation of marriage. It is to be noted that there is no fixed amount of money demanded as dowry by the parents of their daughters. The dowry which the Tripuris call 'Pawn' are demanded according to the condition and capacities of the concerned families. As for instance a father of a bride may demand one hundred and one rupee and six annas alongwith a pig as dowry from the parents of the bridegroom.

When the groom party agrees to pay the amount of money and other articles as per the demand of the bride's party, then it is confirmed that the marriage will take place.

The 'would be bride' bows before every elderly persons of both the parties. At the time, every person blesses the bride. The elderly participants are bathed by the bride.

On the appointed day, the boy's party again visits the house of the girl's father along with the 'Raibai' for the payment of the bride price. A pot of rice-beer is kept in the house of the bride. An earthen lamp is lighted near the rice beer pot and on a brass plate some soil, cotton, paddy, Durba, Til etc. are kept. In front of both the parties the father of the boy keeps the prefixed bride price on the brass plate. The ceremonial offering of bride price is known as "Lokmachamani". On the same day after the payment of bride price both the parties fix up the wedding date.

On the same day the bride party invites the 'Ochai' (village priest) by offering betal leaf and nut to perform the puja on the wedding day. In this connexion it is to be noted that the 'Ochai' who performs the puja has to be a married person. Moreover, he must possess the first wife and his marriage must have taken place properly.

The wedding procession advances from the house of the groom for the village of the bride on the day of the marriage. The procession generally consists of groom's father, relatives and friends. Along with the party the village drummers play the drums and play a flute. During the course of the journey if the procession crosses over any village, then the "Dangdua" ritual is to be observed at the Choudhury's house of the concerning village. The 'Dangdua' is to be given on behalf of the villagers on the dress, ornaments and other articles taken for the bride. The 'Dangdua' is offered thrice. Everytime of giving "Dangdua" the 'ulu' sound is made three times.

On the day of wedding, four number of bamboos are planted in front of the bride's house. Along with these four bamboos four banana leaves are tied. On the top of the four bamboos eight bamboo splits are tied in length breadth and cross wise. Thereafter on the splits a piece of cloth is fastened. The particular place where the bamboos are planted and tied with banana leaf and cloth is named 'Thalipang Kaimani Jaga'. The same thing is to be done before the door of the groom's house at the bride's residence.

In the spot of 'Thalipang' a banana leaf is laid. When the wedding procession reaches at the bride's house, the dress, ornaments, and other articles which are taken for the bride and groom are to be kept on the banana leaf of the 'Thalipang' Kaimani Jaga'. Two earthen lamps are lighted at the foot of the two bamboos which are planted in the front row of the "Thalipang". The two 'Aiajuks' now pour water before the place of "Thalipang", from the jars in their hands. The two 'Aiajuks' pour water seven times on the spot anti clockwise. At the time of pouring water 'ulu' sound is made. Thereafter 'Dangdua' is observed on the presentations kept on the 'thalipang' for the couple.

The 'Lampra Owathap' worship is to be observed at the bride's house on the wedding day. This puja is performed by the 'Ochai'. One helper (barua) remains with the 'Ochai' to help him. Fourteen fowls are sacrificed in connection with this puja. Out of fourteen fowls, ten are given from the groom's house and the rest are given from the bride's house. Two state of Owathaps are made and placed properly. Before the 'Owathap' a banana leaf is to be placed. On that leaf eight little pieces of banana leaves are kept. Some rice washed with water are kept on the leaves. A new towel (rituku) is given to the 'Ochai' on behalf of the groom's party. The 'Ochai' now having taken his bath performs the puja. At the time of performing puja he wears the new towel given from the groom's house. This puja is performed for the welfare of the couple. The 'Ochai' now pours blood on the undried rice placed before the 'Owathap' by sacrificing eight fowls. Thereafter, two fowls are sacrificed and their blood is poured on the undried rice for the goddess 'Tui Sangramma'. During this puja the 'Ochai' spells mantras—"Hengnai dangnai Nachiri Chiri adung," balae Akhata bala Bikhata tuituibu elakhkhiraja dung balae Nusa Kamalapati Nusa Jaduram, hamaychai tangnai tuibuk laktai aiugalagay, tangnani halangni aiugamanay tangthun dangnay". The inner meaning of the mantras is as follows—Let the couple Jaduram

and Kamalapati be laborious and happy in their married life. Let their life be as long as a river and unaffected by any thing like an undecaying stone.

The entrails of the sacrificed fowls are also given on the offerings of the worship by the 'Ochai' after a thorough check up. The 'Ochai' thereafter performs a worship in the bride's room just before the door. This puja is performed in the name of 'Langtharai' deity for the welfare of the couples. Two matured cocks are sacrificed before this deity. The 'Ochai' now performs another puja at the corner of the bride's house for the sake of goddess 'Mailooma' Khoolooma'. Two fowls are sacrificed to this deity. The worship of Langtharai and Mailooma Khoolooma is collectively termed 'Takchamai'.

The 'Ochai' now observes some rites in the bride's room. On behalf of the bridegroom one bottle of wine is given to the 'Ochai'. And from the bride's party half a bottle is given. Thereafter two pots filled up with wine and covering them up and down are offered to the priest. The priest drinks it. The person who offers the drink now bow before the priest and ask the result of the aforesaid worship. The Ochai then tells the results.

To perform the marriage properly and to render services for various auspicious deeds related to marriage a man and a woman are to be employed by the groom's party. The bride's party also engages same number of persons. The man and the woman who perform this sort of work are called 'Aya' and 'Ayajuk'. Along with them two boys are to be engaged to bring water in earthen pitchers for the bath of the couple. The 'Aiajuk' wears a new sari and ornaments such as golden necklace called "ganthi", Baju made of silver at her arm and silver rings in legs.

The 'Aya' wears new cloth (dhuti) and put on a turban on the head. He also puts on a garland of flower. The 'Aya' and 'Ayajuk' get the invitation before the marriage to perform their duties in the wedding. At the time of the invitation they are offered betal leaf and nut.

On wedding day the 'Aya' and 'Ayajuk' arrive at the bride's house. They are offered wine and rice beer from both the parties. Thereafter some banana, khai, sweets etc. are moulded together and distributed to all participants of both the parties. This ceremonial eating is known as 'Kalamalachao'. Scented oil is provided to rub on the head for all the participants.

Now the procession of ceremonial cutting and bringing of water starts. The procession consists, of 'Aya', 'Ayajuk', two boys for water carrying and a few persons. The 'Ayas' are accustomed to take a chopper wrapped with a new towel in their hands. Each of them take a silver pot for bringing water. The two boys who bring water by the earthen pitchers wear new clothes. The mouths of the pitchers are also fastened with new cloths. The 'Aya' also takes some wine in three bamboo pipes and a few betal leaves and nuts to the place from where the water is to be brought. An earthen lamp is kept there. An 'Ayajuk' floats two betal leaves and nuts

on the water in the name of the couple. Thereafter two 'Ayas' cut water with sword or chopper. The bearer of pitchers take their bath and fill their pitchers with water. The Ayajuks also fill their pots.

At the time of bringing water the 'Aya' and 'Ayajuks' face a hurdle created by a group of people. The motto of resistance is to force them to dance and sing.

When the 'Aya' and Ayajuks' fulfil the demand of the people, the restriction is withdrawn. Among the two water-filled pitchers one is provided to the bride and the other to the groom to take their bath.

As soon as the bath is completed the couple is dressed up for the wedding. The groom wears dhuti, punjabi and puts a turban on the head. He also wears a ring in a finger and carries a chaddar on his shoulder.

The bride wears sari, puts ornaments called 'baju' in her two hands and puts 'kharu' made of silver in the legs. The bride wears a ring in her finger and also puts a cap made by chaddar on her head.

When the dressing up is finished, the bride is carried by a man on his back and is brought before the tree of a flower which is planted in front of the 'Bedi' (wedding platform). From the back of the man the bride breaks a branch of the tree and comes back to the house. This ritual is known among the Tripuri community as 'Khubang Subaio'. Now the groom accompanied by 'Aya' and 'Ayajuk' goes to the wedding platform. At the time of the groom's proceeding towards the platform 'ulu' sound is made three times. The groom remains standing before the western gate of the 'Bedi' directing his head towards the east. An 'Aya' keeps her right hand on the shoulders of the groom. A piece of new cloth is rounded and placed under the right leg of the groom. An 'Ayajuk' now rounds the thread seven times from the brides toe of the right leg to the fore-finger of the hand of 'Aya' which is already placed on the shoulder of the groom. The 'Aya' and 'Ayajuk' now demand money from the party of the bride and groom. If both the parties agree to fulfil their demand then an 'Ayajuk' cuts the thread. This rite is called 'Khutung Alua-Sasuowa'.

The wedding platform or pavilion is constructed in the courtyard with bamboo and bamboo splits. The size of the pavilion in length and breadth is eight and six cubits approximately. Two openings are kept in the pavilion one on the northern and the other on the western side. The western opening is used for the entrance of the bride and groom and the northern opening is for their exit. In the centre of the pavilion a small altar is made with soil and it is decorated nicely. Four small trees named 'Laisarak' according to Tripuris, are planted in the four corners of the altar. Near the 'Laisarak' trees four bamboos are planted for hanging 'Chandua' made of cloth. The 'Chanduas' are hung one above one. The four 'Laisarak' trees and the four bamboos are decorated with garlands of earthen lamps and mango twigs. On the other hand another platform is made by bamboo in the north-west corner of the pavilion for keeping bedding and other presentations which are given as gifts to the bride on this occasion. This sort of platform made by bamboo is called

'Sapang'. As soon as the thread is torn the groom enters inside the 'Bedi' and takes his seat on a platform. Now a man brings the bride carrying her on his back and lets her sit by the side of the groom. A piece of new cloth is kept on the lap of the bride and some flowers are given on the new cloth for her to sprinkle them on the groom. The couple now is brought outside the 'Bedi' and carried on wooden seats.

Now the bride moves round the groom seven times. After each revolution the bride makes obeisance to the groom and sprinkles the flower towards him.

At least one of the flowers that fall on the ground from the bride's first sprinkle towards the groom, is to be swallowed by the mother of the groom. The convention behind the swallowing of flower is nothing but to avoid any mischievous deeds done by anyone against the couple. Both the groom and bride party try to lift their concerned candidate higher than the opponent. After the rounds the bride and the groom exchange garlands. The exchange of garlands is called 'Khumtrang Salaio'.

The bride and groom are then brought again inside the pavilion for performing the gift of the girl by her father or any elderly guardian to the groom. When the performance of the sampradan is finished then the ends of the cloth of the bride and groom are knotted together. Then the bride and the groom are brought in front of the benevolent deities 'Lampra Owathap' and the couple bow before the deities. Then the 'Ochai' sprinkles some soil that remains under the seat of the 'Lampra Owathap' deities and sprays a little sacred water of the 'Lampra Owathap' puja on the heads of the couple. At the time of spraying water the 'Ochai' blesses the couple to lead a happy conjugal life. After this, the elderly guardians and relatives sprinkle the sacred water on the heads of the couple and bless them. The couple then are brought inside the bride's home accompanied by the 'Aya' and Ayajuk. Inside the home the couple is seated on a new mat. Before the couple an earthen lamp is lighted with mustard oil. Now on a silver dish some soil, durba, stone, cotton, paddy etc. are kept. The 'Ochai' takes these articles and whirl these around the heads of the couple three times and throw them away. The 'Ochai' observes this rite three times. They call this rite 'Dangduaruo'.

After this, an undried turmeric, a bean (Sukui), a silver ring, a haritaki etc. are kept in a new earthen pot for playing dice by the bride and the groom. The couple put their right hands in the earthen pot at a time to take these articles. This play is to be performed three times. According to the Tripuris this rite is termed as 'Sukui bakla Seklaio'.

After the performance of this rite the newly wedded couple and the 'Ayas' and Ayajuks eat a sort of cake prepared at home. Along with the cakes the 'Aya and Ayajuks' are offered wine from both the parties. The groom party offers one bottle of wine and half a bottle is offered by the bride party. On the occasion of marriage, the ceremony of cake eating is known among the Tripuris as 'Khirbhojan Khalaio'.

The groom and bride are brought by the 'Aya and Ayajuk' and they bow before the parents and other elderly guardians. After this the knot

of their cloth is freed. Then the couple and other participants of the marriage sit for the feast. At that night the bride and groom are not permitted to sleep together.

On the very next day at dawn a rite is to be observed. The 'Thali-pang' which is already cited earlier is to be thrown in the water by the groom. The couple thereafter washes their wedding dress and take their bath. The rite of 'Thalipong' throwing is called 'Thalipong Khibio'.

Another rite is observed in the morning at the courtyard. Few persons assemble on behalf of the bride and the groom. Before the assembled public two pots of rice beer are kept on behalf of the groom's party. The same number of rice beer pot is also given from the bride's side. The earthen pots of the rice beer are coloured with turmeric juice and the glue of rice. In this connection the rice beer which is offered is named as 'Chukba'. Some restrictions are imposed upon the assembled persons to take this sort of rice beer. Particularly the un-married persons and the persons among the married whose parents are alive are not allowed to drink this rice beer.

Thereafter two bottles of wine each from the bride and the groom, are offered. With this wine the 'Ochai' observes the rites of 'Sema'. A person gives wine to the 'Ochai' in two pots covering them with lids. The 'Ochai' drinks the wine. Next time also he is offered wine in the same manner. At the time of offering wine the person who offers it, asks the 'Ochai' about the result of the worship which is mainly related with marriage. Having finished the offered wine, the 'Ochai' expresses his views about the worship performed. If anything goes wrong in the worship, the 'Ochai' performs another puja for the welfare of the newly wedded couple.

The Tripuris call this puja 'Theka Subaio'. This puja is performed in the name of a benevolent deity called 'Banirog' to overcome any kind of danger.

After performing this rite another rite is observed. A curry is prepared with the meat of the fowls offered in the worship of the deities 'Lampra Owathap' and 'Takchamai'. The 'Ochai' now distributes this meat curry among the parents of the bride and groom and other relatives. The observance of this rite is termed "Semakatar Sungmani." The parents of the bride and groom are to be bathed by the newly wedded couple. Now some paddy, durba, cotton, til, soil etc. are kept in a brass plate. The couple then bows before the elderly persons, who in return bless them with these articles.

A feast is arranged now. Though in this feast different types of curry are prepared, a 'common' curry prepared with dried fish is of course kept. The newly wedded couple distributes this particular item to all the guests at the feast. The couple also washes the hands of the guests after their meal.

Thereafter the 'Suaris' (cooks) take their meal. At the time of taking meal they are offered wine on behalf of the bride and groom party.

During their meal they are also offered the particular curry of dry fish by the couple. When the 'Suaris' finish their meal, the couple washes their hands.

On the third day after the wedding or on the seventh day the groom brings the bride to his own house. As soon as the bride and bride groom arrive at the house they are given a hearty welcome by the parents, relatives and the villagers. The couple is then taken into a room. Then the couple salutes the parents and other elderly guardians and relatives by touching their feet and the elderly persons in return bless the couple with cotton, paddy, til, durba, etc. This time the groom cannot reside at his own house with the bride more than two and a half days. After staying for two and a half days the groom has to return to the bride's house together. This particular period of staying at the groom's house is called 'Araia' by the Tripuris. In this way the major part of the Tripuri marriage ends.

Among the urbanised Tripuris a trend is observed to be popular now-a-days. For fixation of marriage they consult the astrologer. After examination of the horoscopes of the bride and groom by the astrologer when they become certain about their adjustment and suitability of their conjugal life, then only they settle a marriage.

Long ago, the brahmmin priests were not engaged in the marriage ceremony by the Tripuris. In their traditional marriage they only depended 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 brahmmin priest is also engaged. At the time of marriage the inclusion of Bengali brahmmin priest might have been introduced by the Maharajas of Tripura. There after the Tripuri subjects of the king have followed suit to engage the Bengali brahmmin priest during the marriage ceremony. It is evident in the history that the Brahmmin priests were brought to the kingdom with a view to perform the religious airtes of the royal family. So, gradually the engagement of Bengali brahmmin at the time of marriage ceremony or in any other religious activities might have become prestigious and later common.

Though, during the marriage they have a trend to engage Bengali brahmmin, a section of the Tripuri community, particularly in rural area is content enough to follow their traditional system and to depend fully upon the 'Ochai' who regulates the marital rites and rituals solely.

Previously marriage among the Tripuris was endogamous in nature. Now-a-days inter caste marriages are taking place within the Tripuri community. The matrimonial relation with other caste has been introduced long ago among the advanced and urban Tripuris. The inter-caste marriage among the Tripuris in remote corners is a common affair now-a-days.

Education, urbanisation and communication are helping the people to come closer with each other in and outside the community and inter-caste marriage is a resultant of that.

Child marriage is very rarely found among the Tripuris. When a boy and a girl become mature then they get married. The average marriageable age of the present day Tripuris of interior places varies from 20 to 25 years in case of males and 16 to 20 years for females. At present, in a few cases, marriages at a higher age are also noticed among the Tripuris due to wretched economic condition or some other unavoidable circumstances. In general the age of the groom is higher than the bride. No definite age limit is imposed upon the bride and the groom. Generally the age gap between the groom and bride varies from 5 to 7 years.

In the earlier days, in the interior, the Tripuris in a few cases, instead of rendering physical service at the bride's house the groom used to pay some amount of money to the bride's father as per-prefixed conditions.

Now-a-days in most of the cases the groom's party demand cash or kind from the bride's party opposite from what had prevailed earlier. This is found more in town areas. The practice of demanding cash or kind as dowry from the bride's father may be due to neighbouring caste's influence. Though this sort of practice is now in vogue, it has not yet become menacing.

Divorce :—

Divorce known as 'Kaklaimani' is permissible among the Tripuris on various grounds. Both the husband and the wife are allowed to seek divorce. The wife or husband who seeks divorce, stays away from each other. Thereafter on a prefixed day the guardians of both the sides and the village headman assemble in the house of the husband or in the house of the parents of the wife who seeks divorce. In front of the assembled persons both the husband and the wife are permitted to express their views and grievances in favour of divorce. After hearing the facts and opinion of the husband and wife, the guardians of both sides and the village headman come to the conclusion and pass the judgement.

Between the husband and the wife who seeks divorce, one has to pay back the marriage expenses to his or her counterpart as penalty.

Apart from this traditional procedure now-a-days the husband can put his signature on a sheet of paper called 'Kaksen' stating his positive views in favour of divorce.

It is to be mentioned here that after dissolution of their marriage if the husband and the wife agree to lead their conjugal life again they can do it easily. In this case they are to perform the worship of 'Owathap' with the 'Ochai' and take the sanctified water of 'Owathap'. The sheet (Kaksen) is to be torn out.

Some of the main causes of divorce are :—

- 1) that the wife is barren or the husband is impotent.
- 2) that either the husband or the wife is incurably diseased.
- 3) that the wife possesses the witchcraft.
- 4) that the wife has illicit relation with another man.

- 5) that the husband has extra marital relations with another woman.
- 6) that the husband and the wife quarrel frequently.
- 7) that either the husband or the wife is ill tempered.
- 8) In some cases religion also grants divorce.
- 9) If the wife or husband is habitually indolent or neglects the household duties or is incapable to perform them properly.

Effects of divorce :—

Divorce has both good and bad effects. The negative effect is that after the separation of the parents the children who remain along with either their mother or father do not get always proper care. Though the separation or divorce is permitted among the Tripuris it is a fact that in the community divorce is not a socially respected institution as yet.

The positive effect is that divorce is some how able to put a brake on the cases of attempted suicides and corruption which otherwise shall stain the fair name of the society. Of course, divorce relieves the dissatisfied and maladjusted couples and lets them to lead a new life of their own choice.

As the divorce is permitted among the Tirpuris so also remarriage is allowed. The widow, widower, divorcee and divorced can select their life partner again. Among the Tripuris remarriage is called 'Sindoor phoolna' which has been stated earlier.

In conclusion it is to be noted that though divorce is permitted among the Tripuris, it is still believed to some extent as a stigma within the Tripuri society. The provision is in vogue, but it is not as yet socially respected. As a result it is not welcome at all.

CHAPTER—V BIRTH AND DEATH RITUALS

Pregnancy :

When a married woman conceives for the first time, then in some cases, for the welfare of the pregnant woman, 'Kebengbuo' and 'Faratano' are worshipped in the fifth or seventh month of pregnancy.

Determination of Pregnancy :

When menstruation stops a woman becomes pregnant. Moreover, when the outer surface of the belly gradually changes, the woman becomes certain of her pregnancy.

Counting of months :

A Tripuri woman generally counts the months of her pregnancy from the date when the monthly course stops.

Prohibition during pregnancy :

Generally from the fifth month of pregnancy a woman does not cohabit with her husband. It is believed that copulation in the advanced stage of pregnancy is dangerous for the mother and the baby in the womb.

Restriction on food :

No specific restriction on food is imposed during the period of pregnancy. Many expectant mothers do not eat Mrigal fish during their pregnancy. It is believed that if they take Mrigal fish during pregnancy then the baby in the womb, after its birth, will suffer from epilepsy. Many urban Tirpuri women observe this taboo even to the present days.

Restriction of work :

A pregnant woman refrains from lifting load and doing other hard work at the advanced stage of pregnancy. This prohibition is imposed for the welfare of the mother and the baby in her womb.

Protection during pregnancy :

A few Tripuris, like many other tribals, believe in the necessity of keeping an amulet in the body. This amulet is prepared with roots, barks, leaves etc. of particular plant alongwith other things. This amulet is given by the 'Ochai' (village priest) after a performance of magical rites. This amulet is given to protect the expectant mother and the unborn baby from the evil spirits, or evil eyes, and to obtain security against any mischievous deeds done by the enemy.

Determination of the sex of the unborn baby :

Actually there is no practical device to determine the sex of the unborn baby. Sometimes, the 'Ochai' or an experienced person determines the sex of the unborn baby by assumption. This assumption is always not accurate.

Difficult labour :

At the time of a difficult labour a little water with a performance of magical rites by the 'Ochai' is given to the pregnant woman for normal delivery. Sometimes, mustard oil sanctified with mantras is also given to the pregnant woman for rubbing it on the belly for a normal delivery. It is also learnt that during difficult labour the husband rubs his leg three times on the belly of his wife by stopping his breath. Sometimes a 'Risa' (breast fastener) is tied to the upper belly of the pregnant woman just to check the upward movement of the baby. If performance of all these rites or customs fail to make the delivery of the child safe and proper then they worship, the malevolent deity (Thumnairag), the deity of death news messenger. This worship is performed by the 'Ochai'. In this worship sacrifice of a goat or she goat is essentially required.

Observance during Delivery :

When labour pain begins the woman is allowed to lie in a separate room—or in a portion of the main room. If it is possible they build a temporary hut or lying room. For parturition they engage midwife and other elderly women of the family and the neighbourhood. The lady who plays the main role to make a delivery successful is called 'Lumajuk'. And the lady who cuts the umbilical cord is 'Kumajuk'. Generally during delivery only females are allowed to stay inside the lying room. The males are permitted to enter only when any great difficulty arises.

Position of the expectant mother during delivery :

When the labour pain begins the woman sits by spreading her legs. She stakes her legs on a piece of bamboo three to four cubits in length (Iyakhata) for support and holds a hanging rope (Risinduk) by both hands. Both the articles 'Iyakhata' and 'Risinduk' are needed during cloth weaving. As soon as the child is delivered the Kumajuk cuts the umbilical cord by a sharp edged little piece of bamboo slide (Owamtha) and tie the umbilical cord with a thread in three knots. The placenta and umbilical cord is cast away by the 'Kumajuk'. The kumajuk is accompanied by the father of the new born baby or in his absence, another person. They have a belief that the far the placenta and the umbilical cord are scattered the farther will be the next issue. Instead of throwing the placenta and umbilical cord they scatter it properly on the basis of belief that if they throw it away the child will be scared of wind, cyclone etc. in his life time.

Cleaning of mother and new born baby :

After delivery the new born baby and the mother are cleaned with tepid water and are wiped with dry cloth by the midwife or by attendant elderly women.

Rites on the day of birth :

On the first day of birth no special rite is performed. Only the 'Lumajuk' and 'Kumajuk' give a nick name to the new born baby according to the name of the day of birth. Besides, wine and food are offered

to the 'Lumajuk' and Kumajuk'. The practice of name giving on the first day by Lumajuk and Kumajuk is totally uncommon among the urban Tripuris. In the interior area on the fifth or seventh day after the birth of a baby the fallen umbilical cord along with ash of the oven used in the lying room is buried under the earth in the north or west side of the house. By the side of it a place is cleaned to keep some mustard, undried turmeric etc. They call it 'Thapla khibio'.

Period of unholiness :

The period of unholiness among the Tripuris is fixed for eight days. On the ninth day, they become holy again. But among the Tripuris in urban areas the period of unholiness fixed for the relatives of the new born baby is a period of twelve days except the mother and her new born baby. In the case of male child the mother and her son will remain in unholiness upto twenty days. In the case of female issue the period is extended upto twenty-nine days.

In remote places the observation of 'Suryadarsan' takes place on the ninth day from the day of birth irrespective of sex. In urban areas the foregoing observation has to be done on twenty first day from the day of birth in the case of male issue. Whereas the same observation takes place in the case of female issue on the thirtieth day from the day of birth.

Prohibitions and Taboos during the period of unholiness :

During the period of unholiness the mother is tabooed to do any household work. The whole family is prohibited to join any socio-religious ceremonies. Even at home they are not permitted to observe any worship or any religious festivities. The community worship or village worship is strictly prohibited during such unholiness in any family in the village due to birth of a child.

Treatment :

The mother and her new born baby are massaged with tepid mustard oil by the midwife or by any elderly woman. If any ulcer is found inside the mouth of a new born child a little sanctified honey is fed. For any trouble of the child at time a little water sanctified by the 'Ochai' with mantras is given to the baby.

Food :

On the day of delivery of the child the mother is offered to eat cooked rice with two types of curry i.e. chicken or fish and a bitter curry. This practice is absolutely found absent among the Tripuris who have become urbanised. In urban areas they are not allowed to eat cooked rice, meat, fish etc. at least for three days. Instead they are offered milk, bread, grain etc.

Purification :

When the period of unholiness is over the barber shaves the beard and cuts the nails of the relatives of the family. He shaves the hair of the new born baby or sometimes touches the hair with the razor. Thereafter the

child and the mother are given a bath. During the bath the mother washes her head with a combination of dust, mustard seeds, undried turmeric, gila (bean) and water of ashes etc. On this day after the worship of 'Owathap' deity, the drinking water offered to the aforesaid deity in a bamboo pipe is also sprinkled on the mother, the child, and the 'Kumajuk' for purification. The holy water is also sprayed in and outside the dwelling house for purification of the residential quarters.

On the ninth day, the Tripuris in the rural area observe the 'Surya Darsan' and 'Rice feeding' ceremony collectively. On that very day first of all they worship the deity 'Owathap'. In this worship four roosters, undried rice, tulsi leaf, banana leaf and two eggs are required. The water which is offered to the deity 'Owathap' in a bamboo pipe is sprinkled by the 'Ochai' over the houses of that family. After the worship of the 'Owathap' they observe another puja at the bathing place in the name of the river deity. In this puja undried rice, tulsi leaf, and banana leaf are required. If possible, the blood of a he-goat is required to be poured on the undried rice and the head of the sacrificed he-goat is offered to the deity.

Thereafter another puja is performed on the piece of a tree (Khamplai) where the clothes are washed. On that piece of the tree a banana leaf is placed. The 'Ochai' keeps some undried rice on the leaf and gives the white portion of an egg by breaking it with enchanting spells. Afterwards an egg is offered in the name of the sun and the moon. In all the foregoing worships a little fermented rice (by which liquor is prepared) along with water is offered to the deities in a bamboo pipe. And a bottle of liquor is offered to the deities. The 'Ochai' returns to the house and keeps two pots of rice beer (chandari) by enchanting spells. Afterwards, two pots filled with wine is presented to the priest. The priest (Ochai) drinks it. In the second time two pots of drink are offered by the father of the child to the 'Ochai' with salutation and he enquires of the 'Ochai' about the future of the child and the puja that has to be performed. If anything is found wrong with the puja or any defect of the child which may appear in the distant future the 'Ochai' advises courses to be adopted. Now the (Ochai) drinks half of the offered wine and distributes the rest among the participants who are younger in age than he. In the third case, the drink is to be had by the 'Sardar' or 'Choudhuri' (Village headman). In this occasion if the Choudhuri happens to be younger than others that would not matter. After him other participants will drink serially according to age. After wine, begins the drinkings of rice beer (Langi). In this occasion also the senior most person will take first, then the others who attend the occasion.

By then, a woman brings the new born baby from the house to the courtyard covering it with a piece of new cloth. Another woman holds an umbrella over the new born baby. On this occasion both the women wear new clothes. The woman who holds umbrella utter 'Ulu' sound. Now the new born baby is to salute the 'Owathap' deity i.e. he is shown to the deity and afterwards some earth is to be dug with a chopper by the hand

of the new born baby. In this occasion the chopper is just touched by the hand of the baby. The woman who carries the baby comes to the door of the house with the baby. The mother of the child then washes the feet of that woman who carries the child and lets her sit on a mat with the child. The 'Ochai' takes some earth, paddy, durba, cotton etc. and throws them in the western side after revolving them three times around the head of the child. In the second time the 'Ochai' observes the same thing in similar way. In the third time he takes an egg, some earth, paddy, durba, cotton etc. and do the same. In the last and fourth time the 'Ochai', taking paddy, burba, earth, and a little water from a vessel gives them to the head of the child as a sort of blessings. The Ochai afterwards warms up his hand in the flame of the lighted lamp and touches the face of the child with that hand. Belief goes that the future of the child will be as bright as the flame of the light. The 'Ochai' files a stone with a chopper over the head of the child and blesses the minor to live as long as the stone.

Name giving ceremony :

When the blessings by the 'Ochai' is over, the name giving ceremony takes place. The persons who are interested to give name to the new born child, individually light a lamp in the name of their personal choice. The name associated with the lamp that burns to the last is selected for the child. The rites of this name giving ceremonies are also observed in remote places even in the present days. In the early days the name of a new born baby used to be given according to the guardians' choice. This name giving ceremony is observed on the ninth day i. e. on the day of 'Surya Darsan'.

But this name giving custom is no longer in vogue among the urban Tirpuris. The rites which is observed by the urban Tripuris is quite different. Here, on the sixth day from the day of the birth they observe the name giving rituals. In the evening a seat is arranged in the name of the god 'Chitrangupta'. In front of that seat a vessel is kept along with mango leaves. An ink pot filled with milk is placed there and a pen made of reed is kept by its side. A white khata is also placed. Now the names are written on banyan leaf. Only name is to be written on a single leaf. The names which are given must consist of odd numbers of letter i.e. five, seven or nine letters. On that occasion the child wears new cloth. In-sense, oil lamp, with as many wicks as the names are proposed, are kept there. The lamp burns with ghee or mustard oil.

The names which are written in the banyan leaves are placed under the burning lamp in a cyclic way. The wicks of the lighted lamps and the tips of the leaves are placed in such a way that the tip of a leaf and a wick of the lamp coincide. Thereafter the lamp is to be lighted. An offering is offered for the sake of the god 'Chitrangupta'. A banyan leaf written with sanskrit sloka is given in the offering by a brahmmin belonging to the Acharya community. The wicks are to be burnt through out the night. Among the lighted wicks the one which flames very bright, shows that, its corollary name is selected. Another name is taken from the wick which burns to the last. The brightest and the longest are chosen.

Rice feeding ceremony :

Though the child is completely incapable of eating rice on the ninth day yet the rural Tripuris observe the rice feeding ceremony on that very day. On that very day five types of curry are prepared. The curries are of fish, dry fish, chicken, a sort of arum and a boiled egg. Rice with those curries is offered to the child three times. In each time of offering they utter 'Mai Chakrak'. As a matter of fact when the child is able to eat rice they do not observe any special rice feeding ceremony. They call the rice feeding ceremony in their dialect as 'Abul Chuo'.

The urban Tripuris actually observe the rice feeding ceremony in the sixth or eighth month in the case of male child. It is observed in the seventh or ninth month in the case of a female child.

Among the rural Tripuris, after the rice feeding ceremony another rite is performed. In the case of female child, the child is to touch weaving instruments, spud etc. In the case of a male child, the child is to touch chopper, musical instruments etc. Now-a-days instead of these articles they give book, pen, khata, etc. to touch. Thereafter, a little mustard oil is rubbed on the child and the mother. After then, other assembled members rub the mustard oil.

Khumchakkara (Jangali Puja):

A special puja is held for the welfare of the child after nine days from the day of birth according to their suitable time and scope. This puja is mainly observed by the Tripuris of the Sadar North. Four number of chickens are sacrificed in this puja. The blood of three sacrificed chickens is poured on the undried rice offered in front of the 'Jangali' deity. The blood of the other sacrificed chicken is poured on the undried rice kept for the 'Burasu' matai (deity).

Now, a curry is prepared with water filtered from ash in a bamboo pipe.

Rice is cooked in another bamboo pipe. A special curry is prepared with a combination of 'Kauo' leaf (a kind of tree leaf), twig of 6 matha' leaf tree, leaf of Barabati (sabai in Kok Borok) and prawn etc. within a bamboo pipe. These three bamboo pipes with cooked rice and curries are kept along with the three sacrificed chickens.

Afterwards, the 'Ochai' without looking back takes a bamboo pipe filled with cooked articles. He touches it first and then breaks it open to keep it with the rice besmeared with the blood of the sacrificed chickens where the three sacrificed chickens are lying. The same manner is followed for all the rest of the bamboo pipes filled up with different cooked articles. Through this aforesaid way the 'Ochai' understands the future nature and character of the child.

Further more, two vessels of rice beer and wine are given with the offering of the worship. Before offering the wine and rice beer to the deities they tie a piece of cloth on the tip of the bamboo splits planted in

four corners. On that cloth a thread ball and a gilla (a kind of wild seed) are kept and the Ochai chants a spell by stirring them.

The 'Ochai', after completing the worship, comes back to the house of the child's father and pours water on the rice beer vessel. After pouring water on the rice beer vessel the 'Ochai' examines the perfection of the worship. Then a feast or drink is arranged for the assembled persons.

Death Rituals : (Thuilai Thanglai).

Now-a-days among the Tripuris the practice of disposal of the dead body is by burning. In early days in a few cases, particularly in cases of abnormal deaths, such as cholera etc., they used to bury the dead bodies. Now, except the new born baby the Tripuris generally cremate the dead bodies. Of course the Tripuris who have turned christian follow the practice of burial.

2. Though majority of the Tripuris are in the practice of cremation and their death rituals follow the same manner, some regional differences in performing the rituals are noticed to remain among them. The funeral rites of the Tirpuris are as follows :—

3. Washing and dressing of the dead body :

When a death occurs in a Tirpuri family, the relatives are first informed by the family members of the deceased person. If a person dies at dead of night the funeral rites are generally not performed in the same night. They wait for the dawn. First of all they wash the dead body with hot water and then dress it up.

4. Preparation of Funeral bier :

The bier (Talai) of the dead body is made of bamboo. Two bamboo poles nine to ten feet (approximate) in length are placed paralel to each other. A number of bamboo splits are placed crosswise on the two poles and are tied to them with ropes.

Provision is kept at both the ends of the two poles for placing the bier on the shoulders of the carriers. The body is kept on the newly made bamboo platform. The head of the deadbody is directed towards North. Mustard Oil and Tulsi leaves are also given on the eyes of the dead. The relatives and other persons who come to pay homage to the deadbody give paddy, cotton, sesame etc. at the feet of the deadbody. Some persons give money according to their capacity on the chest of the deadbody with their left hand. Honey is also given in the mouth of the deadbody. After that, a cock is killed at the feet of the deadbody by striking it on the ground with the left hand.

5. Thereafter, rice is cooked in a bamboo pipe or in an earthen pot. The cooked rice and that chicken is offered in a newly made bamboo basket for the deadbody. In that particular busket four doves are made with bamboo in a manner that two doves are, as it were eating and the

other two are in a position to fly away. Red and black thread are tied to the wings of the doves. Another bamboo basket is made to carry the cotton, paddy, sesame etc. which are collected on behalf of the deceased person, given to him by the relatives and other persons attending the funeral ceremony. A gila, (sukui) one kind of jungle bean, is tied with a piece of new cotton and is kept on the chest of the deadbody. Thereafter, on the legside of the deadbody a piece of thread is tied to a small bamboo cane and it is rounded seven times over the deadbody.

6. Funeral Procession :

Now the funeral procession proceeds towards the burning ghat. Generally the adult sons, son-in-laws, nephews and in absence of them the family friends of the deceased lift the bier (Talai) up on their shoulders uttering 'Hari Hari Bol' three times and start for the cremation ground. A person carries the basket containing the paddy, cotton, sesame an used chopper and a ripen pumpkin etc. Except the chopper and the pumpkin, the other articles are sprinkled on the road ahead of the procession. If a channel or river is faced during the course of the procession a thread is tied on both sides of the river or channel. Just after crossing the deadbody over the river or channel, the thread is broken positively. During the funeral procession the carrier of the bier of the deadbody and other members of the funeral procession utter 'Hari Hari Bol' 'Bol Hari'.

7. Buying of Earth :

After reaching the cremation ground the members of the funeral procession keep the bier on the ground in a manner that the head of the deadbody directs towards the north. Now they purchase land for the deceased by shooting off four copper coins with the fingers in four directions.

8. Digging of the oven :

When the purchase of land is over they dig the oven with spade in the direction of North South. In the western part of the oven two bamboo poles are planted, one by the leg and the other one by the head. Similarly two bamboos are planted in the eastern side also. Throughout the length of the oven firewoods are placed on it. Afterwards the deadbody is placed on the firewood again some firewoods are placed on the deadbody. A piece of new cloth equal to the length of the body is to be hung over the deadbody. Each of the members who attends the cremation gives some sandal wood in the pyre. The son of the deceased brings water in a new earthen pot after taking bath. A mould is prepared by kneading the soaked rice and banana. Ghee, honey, sesame, incense, haritaki, durba etc. are given on the mould. This mould is offered to the mouth of the deceased. (Many years back this rituals was performed by Ochai—the village priest. Now-a-days it is performed by a brahmmin priest).

9. Touching fire to the mouth of the Deceased :

The eldest son of the deceased person reserves the right of touching fire to the mouth (Hartanlaio). The eldest son takes a bamboo stick, the top of which he wrapped with a piece of new cloth and dipped in

ghee, and lights it. He moves three to seven times around the deadbody taking the fire by his left hand and carries water in the earthen pitcher by his right hand. Every time, after he completes a circle, he touches the mouth of the dead with the burning end of the bamboo stick. When the rites of touching fire to the mouth is over the new earthen pitcher of water is to be broken by the leg side of the dead. After 'Mukhagnee' all the relatives and other members who remain present in the cremation set fire to the pyre individually. During the course of burning the dead, he is to be offered water seven times by an old pumpkin of the jhum. As soon as the burning of the dead is finished, they make a small boat with bamboo, with two boatmen in it. One boatman is wrapped with red thread and the other boatman is wrapped with black thread. After that a small piece of skull of the dead along with incense, lamp etc. are kept in the boat. Afterwards the skull carrier boat is floated in the river. A small hut is built near the funeral pyre. Inside the small hut the offering of cooked rice, meat etc. which were offered in his house by the side of the dead are to be placed again along with an old chopper, thread, tobacco etc. for the sake of the departed soul. A little water is poured on the funeral pyre on the belief that the departed soul will drink water. A piece of white cloth taken out from the deadbody prior to setting fire is hoisted as flag in the burial spot.

As soon as this rite is over all the participants of the cremation ground return to the deceased's house. On their way back they tie a knot in the tree, leaf or in any plant by stopping the breath. Everybody is strictly prohibited to look back.

10. Purificatory Bath :

The participants return to the deceased's house after taking bath in the nearby water sources. Then the other relatives of the deceased who remain in house take their bath. When the members of the funeral ghat return after the purification bath to the deceased's house they take the sanctified water of Tulsi leaf on their head and touch fire.

The participants of the cremation ground eat soaked grain, fried rice, not boiled rice etc. The participants will take rice only after observing the stars in the evening.

When the star is seen in the evening rice and a curry of seven items are prepared collectively in the bamboo pipe and it is offered to the departed soul.

rites and rituals observed during the mourning period.

During the first three days of the mourning period the offerings of the foregoing system along with a new white cloth is offered to the departed soul before the sun rises. This same cloth is offered repeatedly for consecutive three days.

On the fourth day, the son who performed the rite of touching fire to the mouth of the deceased father goes to the cremation ground along

with a few persons to collect the skull of the dead. On the cremation ground they offer cooked rice, curry etc. to the 'Owathap'—deity. The Tripuris call this occasion 'Maithaka'. In the cremation ground a chicken is set free. After observing these rites they bring the skull putting it in a bamboo pipe and keep it in the bamboo on the nearby water sources of the house.

12. Duration of Mourning Period :

The duration of mourning period among the Tripuris lasts for twelve days. On the thirteenth day they perform the 'Sradha' ceremony and 'Maikhalai' ceremony—the offering of food and drink to the departed soul.

The married daughter of the deceased observes the rite 'Maikhalai' ceremony on the fourth day after eating vegetarian food for three days. It is called 'Hartham Maikhalai'. The Hartham Maikhalai ceremony also takes place in the case of a child death whose age is less than 18 (eighteen) months. In some areas the Hartham Maikhalai ceremony takes place in the case of unnatural death. Among the Tripuris a few persons observe the rite of 'Maikhalai' ceremony on the sixth day. This is observed particularly in the case of boyhood death.

PROHIBITION AND TABOOS OBSERVED DURING MOURNING PERIOD.

The family members and relatives of the deceased do not take fish, meat, onion, boiled rice etc. for twelve days. Only after the observation of 'Maikhalai' ceremony on the thirteenth day the family members and relatives break the norms of taking vegetarian food and touch fish, meat etc. During the mourning period no socio-religious activities can be performed at the house of the mourners. During the mourning period they do not cut their hair, nail and shave beard, moustache etc. Only on the twelfth day the mourners shave off hair, moustache and cut the nails.

In the next morning i.e. on thirteenth day the 'Sradha' ceremony is observed. On the 'Sradha' ceremony of the Tripuris the Brahmin priest is engaged. Many years back this custom was not prevalent among the Tripuris. In this case they are greatly influenced by other castes' rites and rituals. This 'Sradha' ceremony is observed under the instruction of the Brahmin priest. And in this ceremony the rites and rituals of the other caste are followed in all details.

14. Offering of food and drinks to the departed soul :

After observing the Sradha ceremony they offer food and drinks to the departed soul. They call it 'Maikhalai'. A place is cleaned and an umbrella is tied to a bamboo pole with five bamboo canes. Under the umbrella a turban is placed on a wooden platform and cooked rice, meat, fish, egg, sweet, fruits, etc. are offered before the turban. If the deceased was a vegetarian person then non-vegetarian food is not offered to him. A pumpkin curry mixed with a scale fish, a boiled egg, a bitter curry,

two kinds of cake, one cake prepared with sweet and the other one prepared without sweet, two kinds of liquor, one wine another rice beer, are compulsorily to be offered along with other offerings to the departed soul.

The person who offers the offering, takes all the items three times with his left hand and keeps it on a winnowing fan. A lighted lamp, incense etc. are kept in front of the offerings. Drink is offered in a pot made with banana leaf. A leaf called 'Laidram' is to be given with the drink and with that water is sprinkled on the offerings. A half burnt bamboo piece or a firewood is to be given on the offerings with left hand. In this way they offer the offerings to the departed soul. Afterwards the person who offers food and drinks to the departed soul takes bath and pays homage to the sun.

15. When the 'Maikhalai' offering of food and drinks to the departed soul is finished the 'Ochai' (village priest) or any one among the relatives of the deceased observes another ritual. He gives some paddy, cotton, durba etc. to the relatives' head. The 'Ochai' after that honds a piece of stone by one hand over the head of a relative and strikes it with a chopper two to three times. This is practiced serially to all the relatives of the deceased who attend the 'Maikhalai' ceremony.

By observing this ritual they are said to have overcome the barriers of pollution. They call it 'Falasataba'. As soon as this ritual is observed, all the family members, relatives and invitees eat bitter curry, cake, and other food and drinks. The sons of the deceased are not allowed even after the finishing of 'Maikhalai' ceremony to take rice, meat, fish etc. until they observe the moon at night.

16. The skull of the deceased is to be immersed in the river Ganges or in any river. There is no stipulated period for immersion of the skull. An offering of a funeral cake to the deceased's forefathers takes place in the river 'Phalgu' at 'Gaya'. The persons who are not able to visit Gaya perform the offering of a funeral cake to the deceased's forefathers in the river Dumbur during the 'Paus Parban' festival. At the time of offering of a funeral cake to the deceased's forefathers they engage a brahmmin priest.

Before immersing the skull some people keep it in the water within a bamboo pole. Others keep it in the courtyard in a very small hut made of bamboo. Until and unless the skull of the deceased is immersed, drinks, betal leaf, tobacco etc. are offered to the skull of the deceased two times on a day, morning and evening.

17. Though the practice of the disposal of the deadbody is by cremation, the system of burial is also prevalent, particularly in a few cases. The rites observed in connection with such deaths are as follows :—

(a) In the case of the death of a child whose age is not more than eighteen months, the body of the child is buried. In this case the offering of food and drinks (Maikhalai) to the departed soul is to be observed on the third day.

(b) Long back if a person died suffering from the disease of Leprosy, his deadbody was not cremated but burried. Now-a-days this custom is not in vogue.

(c) If a pregnant woman dies, the baby of her womb is taken out and burried. The mother of the baby is cremated. The 'Maikhalai' ceremony of that deadbody is to be observed on the scheduled day.

(d) If a person dies suffering from a sore and worm is found in that sore, an operation is to be performed first and then the cremation of the deadbody takes place.

In the cases of unnatural deaths, the 'Maikhalai' ceremony is observed in some areas on the third day and that is called 'Hartham'. In some areas in the case of unnatural death, the 'Maikhalai' ceremony takes place on the day of the new moon or on the day of the full moon.

18. From investigation it is evident that the rites and rituals of the deaths observed by the Tripuris differ to some extent according to their regional differences. But it is also evident that the main observation of the rituals are maintained and followed almost in the same way.

Regarding the death rituals, the rites observed by the urbanised Tripuris are a bit different from the Tripuris of the rural areas.

CHAPTER—VI

PLACE OF OLD AND WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

To discuss about the role and place of the old and the woman in a Tripuri society, one should first cast his eye in a family consisting of the old and woman together with other members. Theirs being the patriarchal family, the father (in his absence the next elderly male person) controls and directs the family members. He has to look after the family and reserves sole right to punish or rebuke anyone doing anything against the norm and discipline of the family.

The workload in a family is shared equally by the male and female members. Hard work such as construction of house, ploughing of paddy land, cutting of jungles for jum, felling of trees etc. are the works of the male persons. Besides rearing the children, the women folk are engaged in planting, harvesting, paddy husking, collection of firewoods, fetching of water, preparation of rice beer, cooking and other such domestic or house hold works.

The father being the head or all in all in a family, controls the family in all matters and his decision in any matter is supreme and final. The female counter parts, as a matter of fact, has no voice in such decisions though they are consulted usually.

In early days the daughters were treated a bit differently from the boys because of the prevailing matrimonial system. Previously the bridegroom had to go to the bride's home before their marriage. This system now-a-days is no longer in vogue. Notwithstanding the reforms in the system, a few bridegrooms in remote areas have to go to the bride's home just for the custom's sake and for a very short period. It is, however, worth mentioning here that this distinction in matrimonial affair has practically no bearing upon the relation of the sons and daughters with their parents. Both the sons and the daughters are affectionate and dear to their parents and never treated with any partiality.

The elderly woman in the family is respected and honoured equally with the elderly male members by the juniors of either sex. In matters of a girl's marriage in a family the decision of the oldest male member is supreme and final. The daughter has to entirely depend upon the decision of the father and in his absence, the other elderly male members in the family. But with the advent of time, due to the impact of modernisation and acculturation, cases of personal choice or selection is now threatening the age old traditional custom and they occur particularly among the urban and literate groups.

As regards their sex life, a woman in her conjugal life is supposed to satisfy the sex urges of her husband. The Tripuris are mostly monogamous and very few of them are married to more than one wife at a time. On the contrary the woman never gets married to more than one person at a time.

Respects to the seniors by the juniors in the Tripuri family is strictly adhered to. The elder sister in a family is respected by all the young male and female members and in case of the mother's absence or death, she takes up the mother's responsibility and brings up the young brothers and sisters. While the mother is alive the elder sister helps her mother at her best in domestic and other family affairs.

Smoking is entirely free in the Tripuri family in rural areas. The parents and their sons and daughters smoke freely in the family. But now-a-days with the touch of education some restrictions in smoking behaviour have crept into their family life. Liquor is permitted in the Tripuri society and the country beer is taken by them off and on. The female members who are habituated to the drink, take it only after the elderly male members have taken it and before giving a sip to the wine, they have to salute the elderly persons present serially according to their seniority.

Position of Woman in a hamlet :

Women are always debarred from taking any active part in village administration. They are never selected nor chosen for the village council. It is a clear sign of male dominance in their society. The woman is treated as intellectually inferior and incapable of taking wise decisions. Still it is evident that the wife of a village headman gets to some extent the regard from womanfolk as the wife of a "Sardar". Whenever any meeting of the village council is held, the woman can attend it as a listener but cannot raise any objection, make any comments or pass any opinion, since their comments are not entertained. This inhibition or hurdle can only be overcome by the woman folk only when their educational standard is geared up.

In a village feast, puja or any ceremonies the womanfolk cannot take any active part. They always are confined to the kitchen, cooking for the guests and invitees. The old woman of course, sits with the oldman to gossip for long and takes rice beer with them with an exchange of enchanting words.

Woman and property :

Among the Tripuris the woman folk can have a share of their parents property if they demand it or they derive a share of the property as per their parents desire. But this share or portion of inheritance is not equal. The brother is always the greater beneficiary. After the marriage of a daughter, the father hands over a part of landed property, if he owns enough landed property to his daughter. If he brings a boy as "Ghar Jamai" it is mandatory to share a part of his landed property with the daughter.

The wife of the deceased husband generally looks after the property with the help of menfolk related to her husband till her children are grown up. In case of death of the father, the mother derives a share of her husband's property while it is distributed among the children. However, the property is managed and looked after by the menfolk,

women can make some earning by selling rice beer and by selling reared goats, hens, and pigs which makes up the deficit in family budget. Sometimes this money is spent by the womanfolk for their personal or private needs.

Women and Religion :

The religious beliefs and practices of the Tripuris of Tripura depend almost entirely on the Hindu mythology. They worship different Hindu Gods and Goddesses such as Kali, Laxmi, Lord Krishna, Mahadeva, etc. But in worshipping these Gods they follow their own rites and rituals which are a bit different from those of caste Hindus. Besides, these common deities, the Tripuris have some of their own traditional deities and majority of them are male in character. Among the male deities, Garia, Lampra, Owathap, etc. are the principal deities. Female deities are very few in number and the chief among them are 'Naksumatai' etc.

The Tripuri tribal priest who is called 'Ochai' is a male. The women are debarred from active participation in any religious ceremonies except the 'Randhakmatai', 'Chaklakmatai' etc. Therefore, on investigation, it appears that the male in Tripuri society dominates even in the religious circle. The Women can participate or perform the rites in very few religious ceremonies. In matrimonial ceremonies, two women called 'Aiajuk' and two males named 'Aia' are required to be present to perform the rites.

The case is different now-a-days with the urban Tripuri women and they are involved in various religious activities. In most cases, household goddess like 'Laxmi' is worshipped by the women. Only worship of 'Laxmi' in 'Laxmi' Purnima during the full moon in Aswin/Kartika (Just after the Durga Puja) needs to be performed by a brahmin priest. In many pujas or religious festivals, the women take active part or extend their helping hand to their male counterparts in performing the worships according to the shastra.

Women & Adultery :

Free mixing of grown up boys and girls is not permitted in Tripuri society, especially in interior regions. This inhibition, of course, is disappearing by degrees particularly among the educated mass and in urban areas. Since free mixing is not allowed between the sexes, a few cases of clandestine sex relation in adultery happen in the society. Although they are very conservative in respect of young boys and girls, they are liberal towards offenders of these social taboos.

If an unmarried girl gets pregnant by a boy due to illicit sex relation, the boy remains bound to marry that girl, otherwise, after the birth of the baby, the man in fault has to bear the expenses of the child for a period decided by the society. The unmarried mother in subsequent time can marry a person of her choice or marry anybody who comes forward to take her as a wife. There is not much restrictions in such cases.

On the contrary the society is very liberal towards the male members in the cases of adultery. If a husband commits any adultery, voluntary or accidental, his wife is supposed not to mind that. The wife and the society look at it with mercy. But the illicit or clandestine sex relation of a woman is never treated with such mercy, rather treated as a sin and crime.

In order to maintain discipline in the society some definite norms and ideals are adhered to. The eldest male in a family is always regarded as the chief and he is the only authority who controls its members and protects them as well. In any domestic matters his consent is imperative. He represents the family in village meetings and all such village gatherings. He being the sole authority of the family arranges the major family earnings and has to bear the burden of marriage expenses of sons and daughters and other family members and also the expenditure of religious ceremonies, birth and death rituals etc.

The women, generally do not argue with the head of the family even if he directs them wrongly. It is indecent according to the community decorum. The women are expected to behave with the elder male in keeping with their age and relation. When a man in a heated moment or in an agitated mood utters any filthy words, the women are to remain silent. It is even so found that some husbands sometimes beat their wives and in those cases also the wives remain subdued. All these expose the monopoly of dominance of the male over the female, specially of the husbands over their wives in the Tripuri community.

The male member in charge (headman) of the family may be an old infirm or idle man but he commands the respect and obedience in all domestic affairs.

It is observed in a few families that some members, particularly the mother bereft of the supreme power of the father, give their rational views regarding family administration. Though the honour and supreme power of the family headman is widely accepted in their society, a different attitude among the young members in some families in recent days are also noticeable. If the headman in the family lacks personality and ability, it is seen that their sons and daughters dare disobey them. Of the young boys who have come to urban contract and have been influenced by the urban manners, a section of them go back to their village and show their disregard towards the old custom.

In the old times, the place of the old, irrespective of sex, in the Tripuri community, was great indeed. In all social as well as domestic matters their consent and counsel would be sought. The judgement or opinion passed by them were followed with respect. With the advent of modernisation the role and importance of the old in the community is gradually diminishing. However, till date, wherever a ceremony takes place the oldmen of the villages are invited to participate and their seats are arranged separately. When the country beer is offered to them in any ceremonial gathering or in any meeting, the senior most old man takes it first, and then the other old members take the beer serially accord-

ing to their age. This rule of course does not always hold good. It is observed that in a group of old persons if an old man is older than the oldest man by any relation he will take the rice beer first. It is also observed, that if an old person is not habituated to such drinks he would at least touch the bottle or glass of wine and then the remaining persons will take it.

Though a trend of defying the status of the old by the young generations, especially by the urban and modernised group is evident, the importance and powerful status of the old is still prevalent. On festival and ceremonial occasions the juniors bow down and touch the feet of the seniors to show respect. There's no denying of it that the tribal community has also undergone a change and its customs and rules have been modified a great deal. The village-wise respect for the old is no longer found now. The village wise homage to the old is now narrowed to family and relatives. On the occasion of Pous Parban (Hangrai) the juniors are seen to show their respects to the seniors by the tradition bound system. First of all the juniors drink the feet washing water of the old and then bow down to touch the feet of the seniors irrespective of sex. The old in return bless the young.

This custom cited above, is not practised now in urban and semi-urban areas of the Tripuri community. Here the juniors simply bow down and touch the feet of the old to show their regard. With the introduction of the village panchayat system by the Government the status and importance of the old in the village administration has decreased to a greater degree.

CHAPTER—VII

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS

The religious outlook of the Tripuris is centred round ceremonies and worship of the god and goddesses and spirits. The Tripuris maintain a distinguished code of rites and rituals, beliefs and superstitions. Their religious beliefs and outlook are based on tradition. Like most of the tribals in other parts of the country their religious belief concerns with the supernatural world. Particularly, to overcome calamity or sufferings, they bank upon the deities or spirits with the observance of worship.

The religious beliefs are influenced to some extent by the Hindu mythology. The concept of supernatural being is also similar to a certain extent. As for instance the soul or Atma and its appearance, shape etc. cannot be distinguished. Among them the magical or tantric activities are prevalent. In this present era of science also many of the Tripuris possess the superstitious outlook.

Though the Tripuris maintain a distinguished code of rites and rituals as their own tradition bound system, a little bit of deviations from the tradition bound customs are noticed among the urban Tripuris. The urbanised Tripuris are to some extent influenced by their neighbouring Bengalee Hindus specially in religious outlook. Again, now-a-days it is noticed that a section of the Tripuris have leaned forward towards Christianity with great enthusiasm. However, the basic structural system of the religious and superstitious outlook of the Tripuris are cited below.

Deities of the Tripuri community.

Among innumeral deities of the Tripuri community few principal names are mentioned here. The deities can be grouped as per the mode and purpose of the worship. These are as follows :—

(1) Matai Katar and Matai Katarma :—

Matai Katar is the supreme deity and Matai Katarma is his consort. These deities are worshipped for the enhancement of prosperity and security. They are worshipped house hold wise or community wise. For these deities a goose is required to be offered ; sometimes a he-goat is also offered in case of a promise. Along with this offering, banana, undried rice, vermilion, betel leaf and nut etc, are required. This puja takes place outside the house.

(2) Akhatra and Bikhitra :—

They are the sons of the Matai Katar and Matai Katarma. The two deities are jointly named as Lampra. These two deities are worshipped in Tripuri community in the beginning of all social and religious ceremonies.

(3) Tooima :—

Goddess of water. This deity is worshipped as a household goddess as well as village goddess as a precautionary measure against the attack of pox, cholera etc. They worship the Tooima deity on the river. As the water helps to spread the disease so they worship the goddess of the river not to contain the disease. To worship the deity one he-goat or one buffalo is needed as offering.

(4) Sangram :—

Husband of Tooima. Sangram is the god of wealth and prosperity. If any member of a family suffers very frequently from diseases and illness then the worship of the Sangram deity takes place to overcome the sufferings. It is a household deity. At the courtyard of the house the Sangram deity is worshipped. For this deity two fowls are required as offerings. In want of fowls, this puja can be performed with two eggs also.

(5) Majooma :—

Goddess of paddy and other crops.

(6) Khoooma :—

Goddess of cotton. Majooma and Khoooma are worshipped jointly for wealth and prosperity. These two deities are household deities. Two fowls are sacrificed for these two deities as offering during this puja. Inside the house the deities are worshipped.

(7) Nakchumatai :—

The guardian of homestead. A female deity. Nakchumatai is to be worshipped at homestead to recover from illness. To worship this deity a fowl or a pig of any size is needed. After the worship, the cooked meat is offered to the deity. There after, the meat is eaten by the 'Ochai' and his helper 'Barua' along with the family members of the household.

(8) Kalia and Garia :—

Gods of success. Every year in the first week of Vaisakha these two deities are worshipped individually or collectively.

(9) Saklakmatai :-

God of health. In the last part of 'Magh' or in 'Falgun' this deity is worshipped. Saklakmatai is a household deity and it is worshipped in the courtyard with different types of cakes prepared with oil and without oil along with other offerings. In the evening a he-goat is sacrificed inside the house to the deity.

The following deities are named as malevolent in the Tripuri society. All these deities are worshipped as household deities related with the persons concerned.

(1) Thoomnairok and Banirok :-

As these two deities are called the messengers of death news, they are worshipped to keep them in good humour. A he or she goat along with two chickens or two eggs are required as offerings in the courtyard. For Banirok two fowls or two geese are needed to offer. The Banirok deity is worshipped in the Jungle.

(2) Chhakal jook :-

The guardian deity of witches. To be cured from the illness caused by the witches the Chhakal jook deity is worshipped. Cooked meat of the tortoise and pork are offered to this deity as offering. The Chhakal jook is worshipped outside the village.

(3) Burasa :-

A male deity stands for diseases. When a household member, especially the children cry incessantly from severe pain or fever it is believed that the 'Burasa' Matai has caused this disease. In order to cure the patient they worship this Matai (deity) with two black fowls along with two eggs. The worship of this deity takes place outside the village.

(4) Haichukma :-

A female deity. She is the wife of 'Burasa'. She rules over animals and forests. The Tripuris believe that when any domesticated animal is lost they pray to this deity to get back the animal and promise a worship to this deity. If this deity is promised a worship, she gives back the domestic animal lost. The deity is worshipped in the jungles with two black fowls or a pig of any size.

(5) Siri Jamdu and Siri Jadu :-

The doers of barrenness of the woman. It is noticed that these deities are not worshipped separately. At the time of worshipping other malevolent deities these two deities are also offered offerings.

Besides the names of the deities mentioned above, the Tripuris have other deities also which cannot be mentioned here for lack of space. But it is worth mentioning here about their religious belief of the 'Langtharai' matai (deity). The Tripuris, specially those who are the residents of the North Tripura district possess great regard and belief upon the Langtharai 'matai'. They believe that this matai can harm the people if they disobey him. In order to get rid of any sort of trouble or suffering they promise mentally to the deity to offer offerings. Besides the 'Langtharai' matai they have great religious regard upon the 'Dumbur'. The Dumbur waterfall is situated under the Amarpur Sub-Division and every year at the time of 'Pous Sankranti' they visit the place and worship the deity of the Dumbur. Otherwise during 'Pous Sankranti' they immerse a piece of the skull of the dead ancestors to the river Gomati at Dumbur.

Priesthood :—

The priest is known as 'Ochai'. The Ochai is selected by the villager and the profession is not hereditary. The women are not permitted to become a priest. In some religious occasions the priest needs a helper. The helper of the priest is called 'Barua'. In some occasions another man helps the 'Ochai' and 'Barua' whom they call 'Khandal'.

It deserves mentioning here that among the Tripuris no specific form or shape of the deities is found. In most of the cases the structure of the deities are made with bamboo poles or stone. The altar of the deity is made with two bamboo poles which are erected on the ground. The length of the bamboo poles varies from one and a half cubits to three cubits approximately as per category of the deity. Along with these two planted bamboo poles two other bamboos are tied to each other horizontally for specific deities. To make the structure of the deities only the specific green bamboo called 'Muli' variety is needed. Sometimes the stone is also worshipped.

The procedure of the offerings to the deities also have different styles. The wine, water etc. are offered to the deities in the bamboo pipes. Along with the flowers, paddy, sun dried rice, cotton, incense, lamp of mustard oil etc. are used. In most of the worships animal sacrifice takes place as offerings. For animal sacrifice some specific rules are maintained. At the time of animal sacrifice they do not completely sever the head of the neck of the fowls and pigs. But the goat is beheaded completely. The sacrifice of animals to the deities is made in a distinctive pattern. In most of the worships, the Tripuris first offer the blood to the deities and in many occasions they even offer the cooked meat to the deities.

In the present days, it is noticed that like many urban Tripuris, a few Tripuris of the rural area are also accustomed to worship some of the deities with the image similar to other Hindu castes. In this way they worship Laxmi deity at the time of full moon (Laxmi Purnima). But this custom has not spread enough in the interior. Sometimes, goddess Kali is also worshipped now-a-days with image in the rural area. Besides, the Tripuri students now possess great regard and belief in the goddess 'Saraswati'. They participate in the puja in large numbers. Moreover, they pay homage to the goddess 'Durga' (Aosa matai) also. During the festival like Durga Puja they take part with great enthusiasm and courage. The most popular of the Tribal gods are the fourteen Gods of Old Agartala, they have now become the Gods of every Hindu whether tribal or non-tribal.

At present during the worship of the deities in their old traditional pattern some of them offer ingredients similar to those of Hindu castes along with their traditional ingredients. This adaptation or reformation might have taken place due to the influence of their neighbouring other Hindu castes.

Dain or witch (Chhakal) :—

The Tripuris are in belief that the female who has a control of magic spell is a witch. The witches are able to cause harm to any human being or animal whenever they desire. They possess the idea that the witches are bound to offer human life or animal blood to their guardian deity. If the witches are not successful to offer human life or animal's blood then they are punished by their guardian deity. It is a general belief among the Tripuris that if the witch fails to offer any human life or blood of animal then she is bound to offer her own children. In most of the cases they regard the witches to be childless and the aforesaid superstitious outlook of the Tripuris regarding witchcraft can be identified.

Many Tripuris like other primitive people believe that at dead of night the witch comes out of her hut by practising some spells to her husband to do harm to other. Whenever a man suffers from severe disease or dies suddenly then it is believed that the harm is done by the Chhakal. More than that sometimes in the case of destructions of crops or plants also some of the Tripuris believe that the damage is done by the witch. The Tripuris also possess the familiar idea like other primitive people that the witches are able to convert themselves into other forms like animals etc.

In course of time with the golden touch of education a section of the younger generation of the Tripuri community has attained different opinion. They do no longer believe in the witch craft and its evil doings.

Spirits :

Among the Tripuris many people have a belief in spirits. Even some of the Tripuris express their idea about the abode of the spirits. The deserted homestead of a person is invariably an abode of the spirits. It is believed that on the 'Cherua'—bufang' (a kind of tree) the spirits remain. The joining of the paths or the road crossing which they call 'Lampra' is supposed to be hunted by evil spirits. Some of them are in belief that very old pond is also an abode of the evil spirits. The dominating belief is that if a particular plot of land be an abode of evil spirits then it is very harmful to cultivate the land. They can not cultivate the land. Even more, some of the hills and big trees are indicated to them as the dwellings of the evil spirits.

Magical Beliefs :

The Tripuris like other primitives are believers of magical rites. They believe that whichever is harmful to man is caused by the evil spirits or it is due to the action of witches or any one like that who are guided by the evil spirits. To overcome the sufferings caused by the evil spirits they depend upon the 'Ochai'—the village priest or medicineman. The 'Ochai' performs some magical rites to drive away the evil spirits which causes harm to the human being and thereby cure the person from his sufferings.

Evil Eye :

It is said that if these people ever cast any look on a growing crop the result becomes worst and if the look is cast on a baby—the baby is exposed to various diseases. They believe that only the 'Ochai' the village priest cum medical practitioner can undo these bad effects and cure from the suffering.

Concept of Soul :

The concept of soul among the Tripuris is similar to a certain extent like many other primitive people. The soul according to the Tripuris is uncombustible, invisible, untouchable, undestroyable and can have any form, colour etc. The Tripuris call the soul of humans body 'Fala'. They believe that when a man falls asleep the soul goes out from the body temporarily and re enters into the body. At the time of death the soul leaves the body permanently. In most of the cases of unnatural deaths by accidents, snake bites, suicide etc. the Tripuris, specially the older generation believe that the soul may convert into an evil spirit. The custom of offering food and drinks to the soul of dead is another indication about their conception of soul.

Life after death :

The concept of life after death among the Tripuris is almost similar with other tribal people. They are in belief that after death the soul of the human body goes to heaven if he performed good deeds and religious activities during his life time. On the other hand if a person leads evil and

nasty life in this world his soul goes to hell—which is situated beneath the earth. From this view it can be assessed that they believe in the perpetuality of life even after the death.

With the march of time a section among the Tripuris is not ready to accept the aforesaid view. According to them a person is to get the result of his/her deeds whatever bad or good during his/her life time.

Rebirth :

Belief in rebirth also exists among the Tripuris. They believe that a man after his death takes birth again. But re-birth takes place in different manner. If a person during his life time performs good deeds and leads a pious life then his next birth would be human. On the other hand if a man does bad deeds during his life time then after death he would take birth as a beast or animal.

SUPERSTITION

Even in the last part of the twentieth century, it is observed that a good number of Tripuris of the interior are having superstitious outlook. A few instances are given below :

i) If sometimes a hen lays an egg of very small size then it is treated as a bad symptom for the family. The house owner then rounds the egg three times around his body and throws it out in the western direction to avoid any inauspicious happening which is considered harmful for the family.

ii) When any domesticated pig or goat sits in a straight way then it is treated as inauspicious for the family. In such cases they never keep the pig or goat alive. They kill the animal and eat its meat or sell it out.

iii) The Tripuris are in belief that whenever a hen crows like a cock any type of danger may take place within the family in the near or distant future.

iv) The Tripuris, particularly the aged fellows, believe that if any corner of the granary cracks then any person of the family will die.

v) Some of them are in belief that whenever a Feoung (a kind of fox) looking towards a house wails on tuesday or saturday then any person of that particular house may die.

vi) In the forest where the deer eats soil the Tripuris never cultivate 'jhum' there, since they believe that if anybody cultivates 'jhum' in that place any untowards incidents may take place in the family. According to them any deer having received any injury in its body if somehow can reach that place then it is able to heal its injury by eating the soil.

vii) Many of the Tripuris suspend an earthen pot with some symbolic signs on it over the main door. The pot is first sanctified with mantras by the 'Ochai'. It is done with a view to keep away the evil spirits or to protect them from the evil sign of the spirit.

viii) For protection of the household in many occasions many Tripuris prefer to drive a sanctified nail with mantras by the 'Ochai' in each of the four corners of the house. Thereafter the 'Ochai' lays stone on the nails in the four corners with spells of some mantras and covers the nail and stone with soil. The driving of sanctified nail with mantras is nothing but a protective device from any kind of harm done by the enemy. It is believed that the duration of this protective device stands for a span of twelve years. On expiry of that period this type of procedure may have to be repeated by the 'Ochai'.

ix) It is also noticed that some of the Tripuris prefer amulets to hangup in the four corners of the house and at top of the main door as a precautionary measure against the harm caused by the enemy.

x) If in the evening of any rare occasion a cock crows on the top of the house facing the west, it bespeaks a danger in the near or distant future for the family.

xi) Whenever the dove coos on top of the house specially in the morning then it is believed by the Tripuris that any member of the family may fall sick or any bad news from the relatives will come.

xii) At the time of going out if anybody sees a naked boy or a girl they take that the journey will be unsuccessful.

xiii) Early in the morning if anybody sees a married man or woman who has no issue then it is taken as an inauspicious day for the man who has seen it.

xiv) If any passer by sees a snake at the right side of the path then it is taken as a bad symptom.

xv) On the first day of paddy plantation many Tripuris till this day maintain some superstitious out look. On that day they do not eat 'Chakui' (a kind of curry prepared by the water filtered from ash) and any sour thing. Soap is also not used on that day. The aforesaid prohibition is observed on the basis of the belief that the paddy will be less productive if they do not follow it. Moreover, on that day they plant a plant of an esculent root in the belief that the paddy will grow as hale and healthy as like the esculent root.

xvi) On the first day of the harvesting the householder, in empty stomach, cuts a few bunches of paddy plant and hang it in the corner of the house and worship it by showing incense.

xvii) In the interior, most of the aged Tripuris believe in mantras. They believe that the man who possesses this craft can kill man, animal and living trees etc. by the power of his mantra.

xviii) Among the rural Tripuris major section gives its verdict on the power of mantra. They still depend on 'Ochai' the village priest, who performs medical treatment also to get rid of any disease or illness.

xix) During the investigation some of the Tripuris have opined on the power of mantras. Some of them tell that the man who possesses this craft, is able to put a piece of meat into the stomach of another man. According to them the sanctified piece of meat after entering in to the stomach begins to enlarge day by day. Thereafter the pain begins in the stomach and the man dies someday. It is noticed that the sanctified piece of meat spreads roots in the stomach and even after the death if the belly of the dead is cut open the existence of the piece of meat is found.

xx) It is learnt from the investigation that a tortoise was found alive in the stomach of a buffalo after the sudden death of the animal. They believe that this mischievous death was done by mantras.

xxi) At the time of cooking if by chance the spud slips down from the hand then they expect some guest to arrive at the house.

xxii) When a hen lays a labby egg then it is apprehended that some danger or sufferings may come for the family.

xxiii) Whenever an owl enters inside the house in the evening they take it as a bad omen for the family.

xxiv) Within the family, if anybody dreams any person to sleep nakedly, then it is believed that financial loss may take place in the family.

xxv) If a person dreams to drown anybody in the water some of them believe that member of the family may die or some other loss may come.

xxvi) If anybody dreams elephant approaching the house then it is believed that paddy cultivation will be much better this year.

xxvii) Some of them believe that if in the dream he walks with an umbrella his honour and prestige will increase.

xxviii) Some of them are in the belief that dreaming of the rising sun or moon is a good sign for strengthening prosperity and wealth.

xxix) It is also believed that a dream of sunset or moonset augers something bad for the family.

xxx) To dream to extort a cow or a buffalo is believed to be a good omen for the family.

xxxi) Among the Tripuris some have superstitions regarding the delivery of the pig. When a female pig delivers two male issues and a female issue at her first delivery they take it as bad omen for the family.

xxxii) The Tripuris, specially the women never like to take any twin fruit. They believe that eating a twin fruit is a sin. The twin fruits are believed to have been twin in their early life whatever that might be.

xxxiii) If the stack of straw of a householder gets burnt, the Tripuris believe that any type of harm may occur in the family of the householder in that year.

xxxiv) If the platform which is made on the oven of the kitchen room to keep utensils and other things, breaks down then it is believed that any danger or loss may occur in the family.

xxxv) Some Tripuri people believe that when the platform, where the firewoods are kept, breaks down automatically then either any member of the family may die or any danger or loss may occur.

xxxvi) At the time of departure from the house, if somebody sees an empty pitcher then it is believed that his journey will be abortive.

xxxvii) During the course of journey if anybody hears the bleat of a deer it is treated as bad omen.

CHAPTER—VIII

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The Tripuris are the widely populated tribe of Tripura. In population they comprise the largest number among other tribes. Gregarious as they are in nature, they live in a place mostly dominated by their own people. Therefore, where ever they resided, a system of self government evolved in their society.

In order to look after the collective interest, solve the individual problems and to perform community worship and to solve village disputes a council was usually formed. The council consisted of a few members chosen or selected by the villagers. The Chief of the council was called the "Sardar" or "Choudhuri"—varying from place to place. The council had its chief (Sardar or Choudhuri), Secretary to the Chief (Karbari) messenger (Khandal) and members. Women were debarred from participating in the council.

The assignments of the council members were as given below
(a) Choudhuri:—The village head. He was empowered to make norms and rules in consultation with the members and he controlled the activities of the council. The residence of the Choudhuri was treated as the office of the council
(b) Karbari:—The Secretary to the Chief of the village council who maintained the records and collected information to brief the Chief.
(c) Khandal:—The messenger who circulated the council's judgement or decision among the villagers.

The village council was formed in a meeting attended by all the adult villagers. Through discussion an old and efficient man of good reputation and dynamic personality was selected for the honourable post of Chief or village headman.

The other members were similarly selected through discussion. The tenure of the council was stipulated for a period of one year. If the council functioned smoothly and satisfactorily the term of the council could be extended to any number of years. In case of irregular and illegal activity, the villagers had the right to dissolve the council at any moment or expel any member thereof if his conduct or activity was found to be wrong. When a member was expelled, a new member was recruited to fill up the vacant post.

At present there is no scheduled time for forming the council body as they do it as and when convenient on their part. But in early days it was customary to form the council body in a gathering on the eve of 'Jhum' cultivation.

The council's decision was final and supreme in every matter. It decided the time and place of worship and in some cases dictated the procedures in any conventional matters. When any such occasions arose the members sat together in the Choudhuri's house to discuss the result

in the village. Besides the usual session of the council, whenever the council members sat together for any emergent issue the date and subject of the meeting was circulated beforehand among the villagers.

The council had to solve many problems of different categories, viz.

- 1) Land dispute between individuals.
- 2) Breach of village customs and norms.
- 3) Harasment of women by Romeos.
- 4) Disputes on marriage.
- 5) Cases of personal choice of boys and girls.
- 6) Quarrel between villagers on any issue.
- 7) Mode and date of any worship.

When any of the foregoing complains or disputes came up to the village council, the members assembled in the Choudhuri's house to exchange their views and to finalise a date for an open session of the council attended by the involved parties or persons and elder villagers. The 'Khandal' accordingly circulated the message in the village in general and to the involved parties and persons in particular. On the scheduled date at the mentioned place all assembled to hear the final hearing and judgement.

In the meeting the persons who were involved in the diputes expressed their views and put up witness in their support. The village headman or chief then consulted his members on the basis of individual delivery and witness and passed the verdict.

The village council would solve the problem or decide the disputes through bilateral discussions. Sometimes the offenders were penalised with economic fine. The fine could be realised either in cash or kind. The degree of fine varied on the basis of the offence. In rare occasions, the council would go to the extent of flogging the offenders for a serious offence or defying the rule. The fine, in most cases was confinded to few bottles of rice-beer which were to be distributed among the council members.

An example of village council's judgement learnt to have been done by the council is given here. When a girl became pregnant before her marriage the case was forwarded to the council. The council identified the boy and arranged their ceremonial marriage. In similar cases if the boy and girl bore any blood relation the boy and the girl were convicted and excommunicated. In such case, the boy and the girl would come back to the village if they agreed to offer a feast to the villagers. Then their marriage would become legal and the couple got social acceptance.

Till today, in some pockets of the tribal areas, the village administrative system is found to have remained active to some extent. It will not be out of place to mention the modification the village administrative

system has undergone. In place of the traditional village council, the Gaon Panchayat has occupied the place as the most useful and active administrative machinery.

The traditional village council system prevails even to this day in some areas within the present Gaon Panchayat system. All the problems and disputes initially tried in the village council as the villagers approach the council at first. If the council fails to satisfy the persons or give any favourable decision in the issue—it is then forwarded by the council or taken by the persons involved in the dispute to the Gaon Panchayat which tries to decide the dispute wisely. Sometimes after the Gaon Panchayat settles a case, and if the decision does not satisfy any of the concerned persons they move up to the court for a wise and right settlement of the dispute.

Though the introduction of the present Gaon Panchayat system has been wise and practical to circumstances and the system is functioning popularly and perfectly to a great extent, it has some drawbacks. The election is made in the political line and members elected are biased or committed to a particular group. For this judgements are not always impartial and fair and vindictiveness sometimes motivates the judgement. As a result, confusion and chaos are not uncommon in Gaon Panchayats of present day.

But in early days, generally the villagers were not dissatisfied with the decision of the village council. If there were any also, it was of very low degree and never put them in any position to defy the decision. The council members also remained impartial and never imposed any severe punishment. And to surpass all, the selection was made through discussion.

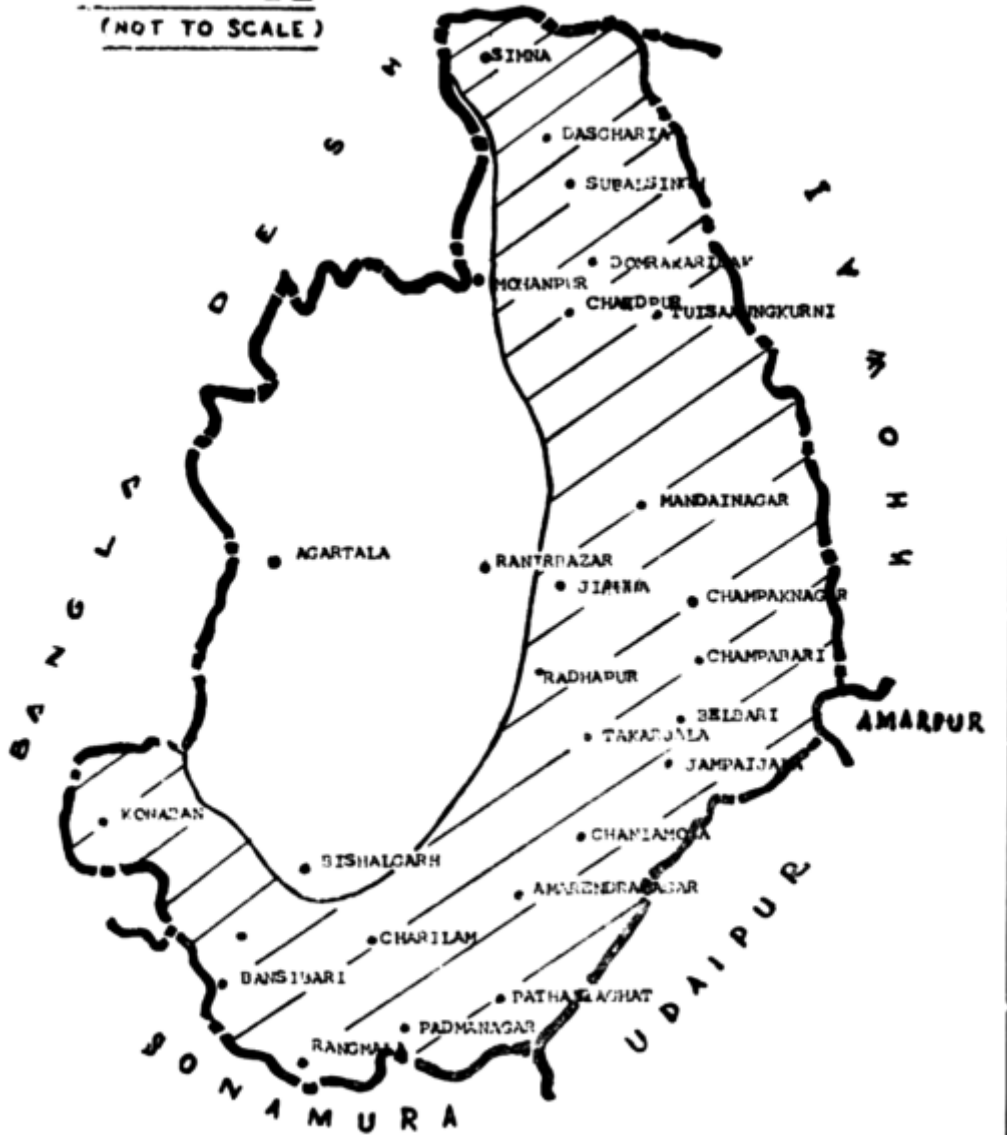
The members were acceptable to all, not to a portion only.

According to the opinion of few old Tripuri villagers it is noticed that the traditional administrative system would have been an useful device at least for the villagers who are staying in remote corners of the country—for having justice and amity.

But in the villages, where education, modernization and the political consciousness have electrified and animated the villagers; the traditional village council will not longer be an active machinery to administer the people properly.

SADAR

(NOT TO SCALE)



TRIPURI CONCENTRATED AREA
IN SADAR SUB-DIVISION

1-



CHAPTER—IX
FOLK SPORTS

Like many other tribes the Tripuri children and youths have their traditional games and sports. But it deserves mention here that the traditional sports of the Tripuris are almost in common with other Kok Borok speaking tribes of Tripura. Now-a-days though the Tirpuri children have adopted the other castes' games and sports they, till in this last part of the twentieth century, play their traditional sports and games at least once in a blue moon. Out of many traditional sports and games of the Tripuri community, some are detailed here. The Tripuris call the games as 'Thoonga'.

1) Mufuk Saganang :

This game is played to test the strength of a young man. A child clings to the chest of a man whose waist is tied with one end of a rope. Another man, holding the other end of the rope firmly stands at his back. As the game begins, the man with the child on his chest forces to move forward while the player who stands at the back tries to draw back his opponent by pulling the rope. The one who succeeds in his efforts wins the game.

2) Ramtan Lairu :

Two posts of bamboo are placed on the ground. On these two bamboos two udukhals (a large wooden mortar used for husking grains) are kept. Two individuals sit on either sides facing each other and join the two udukhals at a time. An individual passes through the udukhals before they are joined by the two persons sitting on either side. This tries the ability of an individual.

3) Owabai Fan Salaio :

This is a pole wrestling played by two individuals. A bamboo pole is taken to play this game. The players stand at a specific distance from each other. A mark is put in their middle. The two ends of the bamboo pole are then placed under their right armpit and each grasps it firmly by both hands. Now-both the players try to cross over the marking between them by pushing back each other.

4) Musta Seglaio :

This game is played between two individuals to test their strength of wrist. A stake of the diameter of a grip is fixed on the ground keeping the length above the ground just to provide two grips of the two hands of the contenders. Each contender grips the stake firmly by his right hand and while one tries to pull out the stake, the other presses it down to keep the status quo of the stake. The one who succeeds in his efforts wins the trial.

5) Owachago :

A long bamboo is placed on the ground horizontally. Apart from the bamboo seven pieces of bamboo slits are taken. A person takes up

the bamboo slits in his hand and jumps around the bamboo and drops the slits after a jump, Likewise, he has to pick up the slits going on jumping around the bamboo. But it needs to be mentioned here that this game is not popular and not common among all the Tripuris.

6) **Longgai Chakmani :**

The swinging game is played by the Tripuri children. Two long ropes are hung from a strong branch of a tree and a short bamboo or a wooden log is tied with the two ends of the ropes to make a seat. The children sit on the wood holding the ropes by their hands and push forward with a stroke of the leg to swing front and back. Sometimes one friend helps the swing by pushing it forward.

7) **Kaldang :**

This is a pleasure game of the Tripuri children. Two muli bamboos are taken and in their lower parts about 2 ft. above the ground two small pieces of bamboo are tied tightly to place the feet on them. Then the children climb on the knots holding the bamboo with their hands and walk or run fast the road.

8) **Cooking game :**

Like the children of other castes the Tripuri children are also fond of cooking game. By collecting different leaves, roots, mud, sand, water etc. they pretend to prepare different curry and rice with water. Bamboo slits, little pieces of tree roots etc. they use as fire wood. When the pretended preparation is over, they pretend to serve it among others or to eat it by themselves.

9) **Achugoi phan Solaimani :**

A type of wrestling. It is played by the two youngmen to test their strength. The two youngmen sit on the ground facing each other and spread their legs. A thin bamboo or a piece of tree is placed between them for staking their legs. The two contenders hold horizontally a piece of bamboo, two and a half cubits in length approximately which remain high above the ground between them. When the pulling is begun, each contender tries to pull it towards his own side. He who is able to pull the bamboo piece on his side wins the game.

10) **Solaimani :**

According to Tripuris 'Solaimani' means wrestling. This free hand wrestling, which is common to all other community, also exists among the Tripuris. The object of this wrestling is to subdue or turndown the opponent by grasping each others chest with their hands.

11) **Bumanikatar :**

This game is also prevalent among the Tripuri children as among the children of other castes. They call it Bumanikatar. Children play this game collectively. The children hide in different places according to their scope and one among the players remains as seeker, who tries to find

out the hider one. Another remains as referee to control the game. The referee covers the eyes of the seeker with his hands for a while, by which time the players manage to hide themselves. After the referee sets the seeker free he starts searching to find out the hider ones. The hider who is traced out first by the seeker turns to be seeker himself next. As a result, the game is started afresh. By rotation each and everyone is likely to become a seeker.

12) Dukhai Satana :

Among the Tripuris both the children and youths are habituated to this game. According to them 'Dukhai Satana' means tug of war. It is played with pleasure for trial of strength. In an open field or in the courtyard they lay this game. The boys divide themselves into two groups. A long rope is taken and each party stands in a line one after another by holding the rope firmly at their respective side. The group which can pull their opponent towards them across a particular mark lying between the parties wins the game.

13) Nailya Oasa :

Nailya Oasa means a toy gun. It is made by a little thin green bamboo. A green thin bamboo consisting of a narrow hollow is required to make this toy gun. The length of the gun is hardly eight to nine inches and its diameter is a bit larger than half inch. They use a small rounded wild fruit called 'pichla' as a bullet.

A "pichla" bullet is put in the open end of this gun barrel and another at the back end of the gun barrel. A bamboo slit of same length as the barrel or half an inch shorter than it is sized with a handle and polished to act as a trigger in the gun. If a push is given to the bullet by the bamboo slit which is put inside the barrel, the front bullet of the barrel gets fired off and the rear bullet comes to the front of the barrel. The gun firing is continued with a load of another bullet at the back side of the barrel.

14) Kabang Tisao :

Two youngmen stand back to back by inter locking each other's hand. Then between the two youngmen one tries to lift the other from the ground.

15) Yangla Baharu :

This is a game which follows the pattern of frog leaping. This game is played mainly by the children. The children sit on the ground and hold their ankles with hands behind their calves. Then they start leaping like the frog.

16) Khulpali Tisamani :

A boy lying on his chest bends his legs at the knee and holds the ankles by arms. Another man lies cross wise on his back near the chest of the first man who lies on his chest. Now, the second man tries to lift

the first man by his hands straight above the ground. He is declared to be the man of strength if he is successful in lifting up the man and can get to his foot.

17) **Takla Tan Laio** (Cock fighting)

The Tripuri children call this game 'Takla Tan Laio'. They pretend to fight each other as cocks. The members of this game are of even number. They make a boundary in the courtyard or in the plain land and all participants assemble in that arena. Every contender holds his ankles by bending one leg at the knee and holds an ear by another hand. Thereafter, one dashes another by jumping on a single leg. At the time of dashing, if any body's leg or ear slips from the grip or if he crosses the boundary he is declared out or disqualified.

18) **Khailaio** :

Sometimes, the Tripuri boys play a game of bull fight. Two boys facing each other kneel down on the ground and put their hands in front like forelegs of the bull. From a certain distance both of them move slowly ahead aiming at each other. As they come closer, a head to head collision takes place. The Tripuris call this game 'Khailaio'. In this game though they act as bulls and fight each other they never take a deadly challenge as the bulls do.

19) **Milok Sanlaimani Thungmung** :

This game is played mainly by the little children. At first one sits on the ground holding a tree or a pole. Behind him other participants sit in queue holding each other. In the group, one remain separated. He does not join the line. That desolate man goes to the man sitting in front of the queue holding the tree or the pole and ask him to give a pumpkin. He then replies that the seed of pumpkin is not available to anybody. Next time the man comes again and wants a pumpkin. Then he assures the availability of pumpkin seeds. Next time when the man wants a pumpkin, he tells that the pumpkin seed has been sown. Next time when the man comes for a pumpkin he then says that the plant is growing. After a while the man comes and wants the pumpkin and gets the reply that the pumpkin plant has crept up on scaffold. That man comes again and on asking for the pumpkin knows that the flowers of pumpkin plant are abloom. Next time the man arrives and wants to take the pumpkin. This time the man gets the reply that the pumpkin fruits are born in the plant. Thereafter when the man comes for the pumpkin, he gets the answer that the pumpkin is growing gradually. After a while when the man comes again and wants to get a pumpkin then he is said that if he possesses the capacity then he can gather one. This time the man tries to get one by pulling any one from the queue holding each other. If the man is capable to draw one ultimately from the queue, he credits the win.

20) **Badul Thungmung** :

The Tripuri boys play this game collectively dividing themselves into two teams. In each team the number of players remain equal. They are

used to play this game in the open field. At the time of play a mark is given between the two parties. No player is allowed to cross over this marking by any means. Even when the game starts, everybody is restricted to go outside the field. They make a bundle of cloth. As the play begins, one person from either of the group throws the bundle to his opposite group. In the opposite group an effort is made by everybody to catch hold of the bundle, and the one who can catch the bundle gives bite to it and strikes immediately another by it. After the strike he throws it into the opposite team. The man who gets the strike of this bundle is declared dead, means not effective or qualified in the game. He gets back life again if he is able to strike anybody by grasping the bundle, otherwise not.

When a member of the party throws the bundle to the opposite side by striking one in his side, the rival members are to follow the same regulations. In this way, the team the person, from any team, who scores highest number of points by striking others through the bundle, are declared the winners.

21. **Sukui Thungmani :**

Both the Tripuri children and youths are very fond of this game. They used to play this game with the seeds of a wild creeper bean (sukui). The seeds are flat and of round shape. The colour of the seed is brown with a patch of black. To play this game, a cleaned, plane land is required. A line parallel with the side line of the field drawn on one side of the field. Within this line the Sukui (seeds) are set in vertical position maintaining distance of 2 inches between them. Another parallel line is drawn at a distance of six to seven cubits from the previously drawn line. They call this line 'Damcha'. From the line 'Damcha' another line is drawn, they call it 'Damnui'. The normal distance between the 'Damcha and Damnui' is about three steps.

The number of players of this game is not fixed. This game can be played between two to three groups or more. The number of players or groups depend upon the numbers of the 'Sukui'. As for example if four number of Sukui are taken, two number of sukui are to be set on the line, the other two then remain. In this case if the number of players are four they divide themselves into two groups. Among the four players, two are put into each groups with this two beans. The players of the both side are to strike the beans kept erect on the line. Five steps are required to complete this 'Sukui' game. The steps are as (1) Damcha (2) Damnui (3) Sukumurku (4) Yachap and (5) Karai Kahang.

At the line of the play the player is to grip the bean (sukui) with his thumb and forefinger. To strike the target by throwing sukui with right hand through the gap created by holding the toe of the lifted right leg with the left hand, bending down his body. Here, a restriction is imposed. if the player is able to strike the sukui (bean) set erect on the line by the bean held in his hand he will only be accepted when the bean of the line comes to a stop at least at a particular distance. This initial stage of the game is called 'Damcha'. If the game takes place between two individuals,

if a player fails to strike the beans kept on the line, then his opponent's turn comes. Or if the game is played between two or three parties, and if a player of a party fails to strike the bean the other players of the same group attempt serially to strike the bean.

After getting over of the 'Damcha' stage the second stage of the game i. e. 'Damnui' begins, Like Damcha the 'Damuni' stage is also played in the same manner. If a player or party is able to overcome the barrier of the 'Damcha' stage then the third stage is to begin. It is to be mentioned that in every stage, the style of the striking a bean is the same, though, a bit different system is also added from the stage of 'Sukumurku'.

In the third stage (sukumurku) of the game the player is to roll the sukui (bean) on the ground standing on the last line of the field. At the time of rolling of the sukui the player runs after the sukui uttering 'sukumurku' and stops the sukui by the leg at a suitable place where he feels so. Then he strikes the bean from a place where he stops the striker bean. If the target is struck successfully then the player continues to strike the other beans on the line. In these ways if he can strike the beans one after another without miss he gets qualified for the next stage.

In the fourth stage of the game i. e. in "Iyachap" the player keeps the sukui on the back side of the knee and turns his back. Now he throws the sukui (bean) to the playing spot by the leg from where the sukui is kept and then runs after the sukui and stops it. Thereafter he hits the bean of the line by the striker bean held by him. If the player is able to hit the beans one after another successfully then he continues for the fifth and final round.

For the final round which they call 'Karaikahang' the player keeps the sukui in the gap of the thumb and forefinger of the right leg and turns towards the playing arena. Now the player bends forward and rests his hands on the ground raising his right leg on his shoulder and throws the sukui. Thereafter, he tries to stop the sukui running after it. If he fails to stop it then he has to strike the sukui from the place where the sukui stops normally. If the target is struck then the particular player wins the game. It deserves mentioning here that the style of striking the beans with the striker bean is same in every stage of play i. e. from 'Damcha' to Karaikahang'. In this game when it is played between two individuals and if a player misses the attempt then his opponent begins his turn. The player continues to play from the stage where he finishes earlier.

In many occasions they play this game dividing themselves into different groups. If any member of the group fails then his partners are to strike the bean serially. The foregoing game (sukui thung mani) most probably could not be described properly as this particular game is not played by the young generations. On the other hand the older generations have almost forgotten this game due to the lack of practice and its complexity. It is worth mentioning here that many of the games mentioned above are disappearing fast.

It is learnt from investigation that a few games are quite uncommon to the present generation of the Tripuri community though once upon a time these games were played by their fathers and forefathers.

Due to free mixing with other neighbouring castes and because of the impact of urbanisation, the traditional sports of the Tripuri community are losing popularity.

Though the present Tripuri boys and girls are not totally in touch with their traditional sports they have got attachment with modern sports and games. The schools, the local clubs and the neighbours of the Tripuri community are extending their helping hand to make the Tripuri children familiar with the modern sports world.

It is encouraging that many Tripuri children who remain half fed most of the time are making their foot prints prominent in the sports arena with great enthusiasm.

In many faculties of the sports they are recording high progress and skill.

CHAPTER—X
FOLKSONG/FOLKLORES
(FOLKSONGS)

The Tripuri folk songs are as old as the tribe and they have survived through the ages as a tradition. The Tripuri folk songs are widely spread over the entire community like all other folk songs of other regions. These songs were composed in the early days of their collective living by individuals whose identity is irrecongnisable and ignored. The folk songs are based on old traditions, thoughts, desires, love, jhum cultivation, harvesting, festivals, beliefs and superstitions etc. The theme of the songs has outlived the time without any deviations and till today the folksongs are sung in original form or with slight variations, spontaneously and enthusiastically by the people.

In Tripuri language, song means 'Rwochamung', the tune of Tripuri songs maintain the respective style in rythm which is entirely based on their tradition.

Now-a-days, many Tripuris sing the 'Kok Borok' songs imitating the tune of other modern classical songs, especially the Hindi and Bengali songs. This trend is found since the inception of Kok Borok programme in the All India Radio Centre at Agartala. Apart from it, the music director of the present days, out of their artistic talent and capability compose new tunes. Notwithstanding the recent trend to imitate the tune of songs belonging to other communities, the original Tripuri songs are very much popular among the Tripuri people for their melodious tune and lyrical composition.

It is really impossible to identify the individuals connected with the composition of these traditional folksongs. From these songs, one can have a glimpse of the ancient constitution of the society, its environment and livelihood. These folksongs also throw light on their desire, achievements, sorrow, happiness and also their short comings.

Modern Tripuri songs are composed with new words and tunes. But it cannot be denied that sometimes we find more pleasure in old rhymes in old tune.

The folksongs are classified according to the subject or contents it conveys. Due to lack of space only a few folksongs of different variety are cited below with illustrations :-

1. Jadukalija or Sarbang :-

This type of song is based on love affairs. All types of songs are used to be sung with the same musical voice.

2. Resekhagra :-

This type of song is usually sung with a plaintive tune for commemorating a person after his death. It is very pathetic and heart throbbing.

3. Chamaritunmani :-

This song is usually sung on behalf of the bride's party to the groom on his arrival for marriage. The song is sung on the basis of the tune called chamaritunmani.

4. Hamjuk Rahamani :-

After the marriage when the bride gets ready for departure for her husband's house at that moment this song is sung. The bride is the 'hamjuk'. The tune of the 'hamjuk rahamani' is melancholy.

5. Hachwog Kamani :-

At the time of passing through the hill tracts with loads of luggage they sing these songs to get relief from the fatigue caused by long walk. The tune they follow for singing such songs is called Hachwog Kamani.

6. Kuchung ha Sikam :-

It is noticed that during the reign of king Dhanya Manikya, it was ordered to conscript at least one male person from each family to fight against the Kukis. Accordingly, his messenger came and forcibly took away a male from each family to join the royal force. A folksong was composed on that background. This folksong is usually sung on a tune which is called 'Kuchung ha Sikam'. The tune is very heart touching.

7. Owaing Khilimani :-

Owaing Khilimani is a song of lullaby. At the time of lulling a child the song is sung. The tune is named 'Owaing Khilimani'.

8. Mamita :-

After keeping the new crops in the granary a ceremony is celebrated which is called 'Mamita'. The tune of the song which is usually sung during 'Mamita' festival is called Mamita tune.

9. Garia Rumani :-

During the 'Garia Puja' festival the song is sung on a tune which is called 'Garia Rumani',

10. Langai Chabmani :-

The little children make a cradle to play with each other. On this cradle one child sits and the other one pushes it from the rear to make it swing. At the time of wevering the cradle, the child who pushes it sings a song. And this type of song is usually sung on a tune which is called 'Langai Chabmani'.

1. The song :-

Aichug da bagkha tagle kochegekha
 thuma sichana Nangkha
 Maio babu song chamalai hanta
 Bana khibina Aoungkha,
 Babu tui Nungma dama tui bukcha
 bana tui khogna Nankha
 Kalam farjagyea Ligilagayana
 banaba farna Nangkha,
 Mairang hantao mishrum Pungai
 thangara malbai Naikha
 Tagma saganang mishrum)arkhai
 tagcharag pungbai Naikha
 ganing Nugulo Owakmachaganang
 Owar jagai kengai Naikha,
 Aaichug bachadi gatio thundi
 dama tui kowthat khagdi
 Mai bai mui kowthar sangdi,
 khowma fung Awaoi sala paiasani
 tagcha tagtuirag bachaiasani
 hugnailainani himdi,
 Maio babuni tangbitiragna
 bana chung tangna Nanga
 Maio kak sama kakbitiragna
 khownaoi kha chabna Nanga,

(It is dawn : The cock is crowing : It is time to get up from the sleep, The stale dishes of last night's dinner are to be washed or ants will gather around the dish. The water vessel of my father is to be filled up. The dirt in the house, it is to be broomed. Otherwise, the house will become unclean. If the ants bite the chickens they will begin to clamour.

Under the veranda of the 'tang' (hut, made by bamboo) the pigs are kept and they will cry out loudly if the ants bite. Get up quickly. Go and

bring water from the bathing ghat. Cook rice and curry. Let's go to see 'jhum' (shifting cultivation) before the beasts and birds awake. We have also to do the work of the parents. You have to carry out the advice of the mother whole heartedly.)

The significance of this song :

Previously the Tripuri tribals were mainly dependent upon the 'jhum' cultivation to maintain their livelihood. They worked hard at their 'jhum' since early morning to noon. That is why they would take cooked rice and curry along with them to their 'jhum' for meal. Here the husband draws her wife's attention to her works and duties through this song.

The song :—

'Aichug bachanai tagjwala chana
twama kak bai labna
hara chamani lai hantoragna
thangara hanta kawlai tangmana
thangara farjagiyea ligilagyana
Nukhungni samung thangthai tangmana
tangai ang paikha bana'
Mai kowthar sangoi thapao tangai
Anglac owansaga mogai'
k'owna fungawoi hug nainafano
tawma mui mungna sangna
Swaoi Rowjadi anaw
Hugni mui kowthang sangnani khaiba
mui kuthung daragaia foon
Laifung boogli tawnai sangnaba
maifung chamrakti foon
muia kowranna chakhowi sangnaba
chakhowi chamaiati foon
chakhowitui kowthung sangoi tuinaba
mai chu kowchaiati foon
tawma mui mungna sangna''

How shall I thank the cock, who helps me to get up from the sleep at dawn with his crowing. I have finished all household works. I have cleaned the rubbish and washed the stale dishes of last night's meal. After cooking rice I am now thinking what curry, I shall cook. If I cook 'jhum' products the cultivation would be abortive. If I prepare a curry with banana tree, the 'jhum' paddy would be shedding off. If I prepare chawkhoi (a type of curry prepared with filtered water of the ash) with young bamboo it will

not be taken. If I cook chawkhoi tui kuthung (a curry which is similar to chawkhoi prepared as soup type) it will not remain on the leaf. Alas ! what curry shall I prepare ?

The significance of the song :—

The wife here relates her duties to her husband through this song. A traditional restriction was imposed on Tripuri jhum cultivators that at the time of searching land for jhum any vegetables could not be prepared. The intrinsic meaning is that, the vegetables they cook for their meal at jhum, will not grow in jhum. The wife knows well what curry she has to prepare, but it is customary to ask her husband and ascertain what curry she has to prepare.

The song :—

Balang kowchangoi tatha
 Hachuga hulaksa pungkha
 Nabar hai bwalai Narjagma Nwogoi
 Khapangba Narjag hangkha"
 Balang Mwokhra pung
 Mwoi ha-forwoi pung
 Balangni tagsa sagfang chikansa
 khapangni kakmung sao"
 khawnaoi khapanga chudi
 khawnaoi kha owansagoi Naidi
 Ma Fa talangma tangbitiragna
 tangoi chalangna fano
 Owansagoi Naidi bana"

The forest is looking so peaceful and beautiful in all dimensions. On the hill the owl is hooting. The tree leaves are shivering in the air. My mind is also dancing with joy at this sight. The wild monkeys are chattering. The deer is barking and striking his hooves on the ground. The little birds of the jungle are exchanging their hearty talks with each other. Listen with heart and think thereafter. Think, the work of the parents and how they worked to maintain their livelihood.

Significance :—

The husband through this song expresses his great delight on seeing the natural beauties around his new jhum field. Along with his expressing the beauty of the jhum field he reminds his wife again of her duties.

The Song :—

Thadug dugkalag basagong babaikha
 Bisi thangiyeada Nwong hinn ?
 Ma-Fa feworwongma kakbitiragna
 tama tentaio ma hinn ?
 chwongna fworwongoi tentaima naba
 toma khontai rwoma hinn ?
 Ma-Fa talangma tangbitiragna
 chwonglae tangnani nanga
 Ma-Fa chanani chabitiragna
 chwongna chanani Nango
 Ma-Fa tangmani tangthag tangmano
 chwongba tangnani nanga ?

(The potato creeper is not growing well. Do you not know the year is almost over ? Why do you think the advice of the parents as scolding ? Why do you think their advice with a little bit of scolding a poke ? The way father and mother work, we too have to work in similar ways. The way father and mother eats. we too have to eat in that way. The way father and mother maintain the family with joy and sorrow. we also have to maintain the family in the same way.)

Significance :—

The inner significance of this song is the desire of a newly wedded husband to get his wife's warm company. But he cannot do so as his parents remain present along with them at the time of working in the jhum. When he goes to work in the jhum field then the parents and other guardians remain with them.

The song :—

Harung ha kwochang Badia maitang
 Saichung rwaoi dae mwochang ?
 Khownoikha baksa khapongkha thansa
 Thanwoi chamani kisa
 Owanswagoi anglae khatang
 Katag rang bwotang bukcha ani tatang
 Achai tangwoi dae mwochang
 Owanswagoi anglae khatang "

(Is it pleasurable to harvest alone the badia paddy of the lunga ? It pleases me to think to work and live with the beloved. Is it nice to look at the naked neck ever without the chain of coins ? The mind becomes restless if it is thought.

Significance :—

It is a love song sung by a girl for her dear. They love each other deeply. But there is no scope to come openly into contact with each other. In this situation, the girl at the time of working on jhum field expresses her desire to her beloved.

The song :—

Ani huchunga saba hug hagnai
 Owathwoi Kwolaio Rai Rai,
 khani barakna saba kak rwofai
 Muktwoi Kwolaio rai rai,
 Hapung har thwoia muktworwoi maia
 Owansagmang bwokha paia,
 knapangni barak bwokha p jagiyea
 Saichung anaima thagiyea,
 iyeagni badukhung twonani bwoia
 Taksa ranggini tagiyea
 khogoi tubna bwoia
 Swaoi dae hamlang Liea,

(Who is working near my jhum, I see the muli bamboos (a kind of bamboo) bend down one after the other. Some one negotiates with my beloved for which my chest is filled with tears. Sleep hunts my eyes day and night, but I cannot close the eyes, I cannot think out any solution for it. It is not a bow used for shooting small pebbles that I will carry in hand. It is not a wild cock either that I will hunt. I get no pleasure to say more.

Significance :—

Here the boy expresses through this song his mental agony related with the hurdles in his love affairs. Somebody has negotiated with his beloved for marriage for which his heart is beating. He cannot sleep throughout the day and night thinking of probable separation with his beloved and unable to reach any conclusive decision. The problems that developed before his love affairs still remains unsolved. He suffers mentally. To expose his mental agony he opines that it is not a bow that he will bear in hand or a cock that he will hunt.

The song :—

Kuchug kheregbar bubar matamna
 Bahaike khollangnani
 Balang baltuku nana faijagoi
 jwongjalo kwolaimani,
 kuchug kherengbar ganda iyeasugoa

gantabai khalna booia
 Matamtwoi Lwoulwouk bahaina manwoi
 Khapangkha tangthaglia,
 Duksa duktwoirak aoungmani twolai
 Buduk satara khamun
 Bufang chikantae aoungmani twolai
 Tanfaoui khalang khamun,

(How shall I pluck the khe:engbar flower (a kind of flower) which has bloomed so high. After coming to the forest for collection of firewoods, what a danger I have fallen in : It has bloomed so high that I cannot reach it even with a stick. My mind is pleased highly with the fragrance of that flower. If it were the flower of a creeper, I could have plucked the flower by pulling the creeper. If it were a little tree, I could have plucked the flower by cutting the tree with a chopper.

Significance :—

It is also a love song. Both the boy and the girl love each other but they cannot come closer due to some inhibitions. Here the boy expresses his fascination for the girl and frustration of his love. He loves her so much but cannot bring his lady love to him as so many hurdles are raising their heads. To make one understand his delicate problem he compares it with a flower that bloomed so high that cannot be plucked as it is out of reach. He also confesses his incapability to overcome the hurdles. He remarks that if it were within his control he would have solved it,

The song :—

Nagrabari muflae owasung
 Nwongbai ang ba tangma saichung
 Ninibai ani chini hug ari
 Malaina jaga huchung.
 Faidi Nwong ara saichung
 Angba thanganoi saichung,
 Khaphangni kakna swoubai salaina
 Ninikha muda muchang,
 Angbai malaina ninikha tangkhai
 Kiria, faidi saichung.

(As the bamboo pipes used for cooking the curry are thrown helter skelter by the house so I and you are also remaining alone in the jhum. The jungle which stands on the boundary line of your jhum and mine, we will meet in. You go there alone, I will also. Don't you want to make me know your hearty talks ? You shall go there, if you wish to meet me, Don't be afraid.

Significance :—

Here the two lovers are willing to meet each other. But they cannot do so openly. Here through a song one hints the other about the particular spot where they will meet.

The song :—

Hadudu Kalak Budak Babaikha
 Saba hagjanani Nounkha ?
 Lama kufunggoi balangkha Naikha
 Saba hajaknai aounkha ?
 Kharagni Nokhai kichigna naikha
 Sabo owai-rownai aounkha ?
 Khapang ownsogoi akmani owaisa
 Kasam palini risa sartiroi
 Thaipala boroni nakhai hartiroi
 Himna ang muchunmani
 Sabawa salagani ?

(All the road is covered with creeper plant. Who will clear it ? The Jungle spreads all over the road, who will clear ? The langa (a type of basket) of the head will tear, who will join it : Yesterday I wove a 'risa' (breast fastener) with great care. Fastening the 'risa' on my breasts along with the 'langa' made with the design of chalita fruit I want to walk with him, whom I have offered my mind).

Significance :—

Here the girl conveys her thoughts to her dear through this song. When she crosses her old jhum to find a place for new jhum, she sings for her dear and her lover hears it. She expresses her desire to walk with him fastening breast fastener alongwith the langa made by her with the design of chalita fruit. But she cannot do so as all the road is covered with bushes.

The song :—

(Owaingkhilimani—Lullaby)
 Manai ta kabdi owainga thudi
 Manai ko Manai Manai,
 Mowkhang batasa satung kaganwo
 fairangni sati hoongdi
 Manai ko Manai Manai,
 Yieakworai kwochak simuknangganaow
 Rangchakni yieaklabb kadi Manai
 Manai ko Manai Manai,
 Nwofabo thanga rajani sebak

Nwomabo thanga rajani daijuk
 Nakhworai ta aoungdi Manai
 Manaiko Manai Manai,
 Rangchakni budug rwofaini owaing
 Owaingo thujadi Manai,

(Manai don't cry ; sleep on the swing. Your face looks round like batasa (a type of sweet), sunlight will fall upon that face, so you open your rainbow type umbrella which is painted with different colours. The soles of the feet are red, the dust and sand may fall on them, so put on golden shoes. Your father has gone to attend king's work, your mother also has gone for the same. Now without being obstinate, you go to sleep. There is the Golden rope in the silver swing, you go to sleep on that swing.

Significance :-

Generally the aunts of the kids sing this type of lullaby by swinging the cradle after keeping the child on the hammock with a view to lull the baby.

Mamita :-

Chalai sagbaksa khapangkha thansa
 chowngle kha thalai faio,
 Nagfang Nagswokang kham tenggwoi Naio,
 Bufang tangoisae buthaiba thaio,
 bufang kworwoio thaio,
 Baia tanggwoisae chwonglae habpaio
 kubun jagao habia.
 Nagfang Nagswokang swokal thurifang
 Nagada tanja Nagfang,
 Kissib banghabb daggar chwongnuga
 hatina bogwoi nagsingga haba
 Thanggar fuppla baio,
 Maigwola sangwoi Maigwola sangwoi
 Nagfangkha tangthag Naio,
 Nagbrabari swokal thurifang
 dagar fiogdi Nagfang,
 Satagna faia pitagna faia
 sagchalai Naga faio,
 Bachwoi katarda kumui katarda
 halog kusuda halog chaiada
 sabotang nagni nagfang,
 Nagtrabari swokal thurifang
 dagar fiogdi nagfang,

(We, the brethren and friends have to come to your house. We shall test the house owner. Where there are trees, there is fruit, without a tree there can be no fruit. So we have come as brethren and friends'. We do not go to other places. The witches are in the front of and near the house. Is the owner in the house? The door of the house is looking like a fan. Shall we enter the house by digging the foundation. If so, the entire house will collapse. The granary is full of paddy, that is why the house owner remains in pleasure. The witches are in the front of and near the house. The owner of the house opens the door. We have not come to do any harm. We have come to the mates who remain within the house-elder sister-in-law or younger sister-in-law brother in law or younger brother in law or anybody else either senior or junior in relation. The witches are in front of or near the house. Oh; house owner, please open the door of the house.

Significance :-

After the new crops of the year are kept in the granary this ceremony is celebrated. The boys of the village participate collectively in this occasion. In this occasion they visit to a resident's house collectively. There they sing and take meal and drink collectively along with owner of that house and come back. But sometimes, the house owner, is not at all interested to open the door on such occasion. Then the party tries to compel the house owner to open the door with this type of song which is mixed with jokes. In some cases if the house owner is determined not to open the door then the party forcibly enters the house by breaking the door. They take meal and wine collectively and sing songs and dance thereafter in that house. Of course, the party thereafter has to repair the house.

FOLK LORES

The Naoi birds and the two sisters

There lived a 'jhum' cultivator. His family consisted of his old parents, his wife and a daughter. The girl was still a very little one-not yet left her mother's lap. In such a state the wife of the cultivator left for her next world-the heaven. She was survived by her husband and the little daughter 'Kasamti'.

The cultivator was compelled to marry for the second time. There came another daughter in the cultivators family after one year. She was born with yellow complexion and, so, she was named Lajanti. Now Kasamti and Lajanti were two young sisters. They grew up and stepped to the age of marriage. The two had a hearty love for each other. They together worked in the house and in the 'jhum' fields.

The elder sister, Kasamti, was destined with black complexion. Her mentality was also not good. So, she being unable to stand herself against Lajanti, either in the work of 'Jhum' cultivation or in the household activities, became very jealous of Lajanti.

It was then harvesting time of 'Jhum' crops. The crops were to be brought into house. The two sisters, one day went out to the 'Jhum' field with 'Langa' (a kind of basket to be carried on head) on their heads. The younger sister, going to the 'Jhum' field, began to gather vegetables and fill her 'Langa'. On the other hand, the elder sister Kasamti, collected those special vegetables that drew her attention and cutting them with her 'bill hook' she began to eat them, and those which she could not eat were left scattered here and there. She did not keep any vegetable in her 'Langa'. But the 'langa' of Lajanti, became filled up in a short time. Now it was time to return home wards. Lajanti asked her elder sister, "Sister" my langa is filled up. "What's about your's ? Lets go home". Kasamti replied "Sister" you see. I am not getting any vegetable over here. How can I fill up my Langa ? Your Langa, I see is over flowing. Do one thing, sister, you better give me some of your vegetables from your Langa. If not, so, what shall I show in the house sister ? Lajanti became very displeased with the reply of her elder sister, "No, sister I am not going to give you even a single vegetable, you've swallowed whatever you have found before your hand either green or ripen. Those, which you could not eat, left rejected. How can your Langa be filled up in this way. I want to eat with all the members of the house together and so I haven't eaten even one of the vegetables."

Kasamti said "Why do you become angry? The load on your shoulder will be lighter if you give me a portion of vegetables from your Langa- You will practically not feel your Langa as troublesome as you feel now". Lajanti said -"Let it be so, I am always in the habit of carrying such load, I will carry it today too and I will not give you even a bit of vegetable. You have now been in the habit of taking vegetable from my collection and you don't fill your Langa, Truly I am saying, I am not giving you a single vegetable today.

Kasamti became very angry at the words of her younger sister, but restrained herself from talking anymore. The two sisters proceeded instantly towards their house. There flew a river a little ahead of their jhum land. They were to cross the river to reach their house. Coming to the bank of the river Kasamti said to Lajanti "Let's Lajanti, have a rest here for a while". Their house was situated not so far off from the river. They used to bathe in that river every day—and carried drinking water from it. Lajanti too, agreed to her sister's proposal. Keeping their Langas under the shade of a tree, they set down to rest. It was a banyan tree under which Lajanti and Kasamti set. The tree stood very close to the river bank and its branches were stretched over the river. Suddenly Kasamti, pointing out to a branch hung down over the river, said, "Look, Look at it, Lajanti—how beautifully, the branch swings over the river. It will be pleasant to swing from it. Let's go to fetch a creeper." Lajanti collected a long creeper from the forest nearby, fastened it down very swiftly from the swinging branch and made a fine cradle. Now it was the turn of swinging. At first, Kasamti sat on the cradle and asked her sister, "Swing me Lajanti, but do it slowly, please. Be careful, otherwise, I may fall down". Kasamti went on swinging.

From beneath the tree Lajanti once said, "Sister, you have swung very much. Now you get down and let me swing. I wish to swing for a while." Kasamti came down. Lajanti got into it and Kasamti began to swing her. Lajanti, being afraid of falling down, said to her elder sister "sister, sister, swing me slowly, or else I may fall down". Kasamti was swinging the cradle and thinking within herself "I asked you to give me some vegetables, but you did not give. Now I will teach you a good lesson." Kasamti began to swing her violently. Lajanti, being too much afraid, cried out—"sister, don't swing me so violently, I am about to fall down". Kasamti did not pay heed to her sister's appeal, rather she pushed her away abruptly and violently. Lajanti having failed to control herself fell down into the river. A very big sheat fish lay there in the river water. It took her for a food and caught her in mouth. Lajanti did not have the time to try for an escape.

The river being aglow with the deep yellow complexion of Lajanti, turned into yellow colour. Kasamti, too could not think of such a happening, She became puzzled in the first instance. The next moment she managed to control herself and then she filled up her Langa with all the vegetables from that of Lajanti and came back home. Her mother, seeing her alone, asked "you've returned alone. Where's Lajan?" "Kasamti replied in an indifferent mood, she's coming behind slowly. I've come fast for I am very hungry." Placing the Langa in one corner of the house, Kasamti quickly sat down to eat.

Kasamti's old grandmother went out to bathe in the river. Stepping into the water, she wondered! "How strange, the water looks yellow today! I've never seen it before! Perhaps, somebody has mixed turmeric in the water?" The old lady took up some water on her hand. "No, nothing so yellow is left on my hand. Then where does so much colour in the water come from?" The old lady didn't worry further about it. She took her bath and began to wash her clothes. But, strange it was; whenever the old woman beat her clothes against the wharfwood, a tone like that of Lajanti was heard saying "Oh, grandmother, your beating hits me on leg". The grandmother looked around for a while. No one came to her sight. She again began to beat her clothes heavily against the wharfwood. Somebody was again heard saying, "Oh, grandmother, your beating hurts me on my chest." The grandmother stopped in wonder. Now she moved at a little distance and began to beat her clothes. This time too, someone was heard saying in a pitiful voice. "Oh grandmother, now your beating hits me on the head." Once-twice-thrice someone was heard saying the same again and again in the same voice. The grandmother moved her eyes all around, but she found none. Yet the grandmother doubted, "It's none but Lajanti." She asked in a hurry, Lajanti, where are you talking from? I can't make out anything". "Lajanti replied in low voice, "Here grandmother, I am here. I am talking from inside a sheat fish laying under the wharf." No sooner had the grandmother heard it then she removed the wood of the wharf and a large sheat came to her sight. The fish swallowed up Lajanti but her head was still outside. The fish was unable to move after swallowing the human body. The old woman, with all her efforts pulled the fish up on the bank.

Now, Lajanti might die soon if she was not removed from the fish's belly. The old woman called out the old man loudly from the river bank to come with a bill hook. The old man hurried to the spot with the bill hook, and the old man with great care made an operation in the belly of the fish and took Lajanti out. Lajanti, laying in the fish belly, was about to die. After a little while, Lajanti recovered her sense and told her grandmother weeping all that happened to her. The grandmother's anger then showered upon

Kasamti. "This devil should be punished severely. She intended to kill Lajanti today. Luckily, I came here this time to bathe or else Lajanti must have died in the belly of the fish". The grandmother catching hold of her grand daughter's hand walked slowly towards the house.

Stepping into the house, the oldwoman started calling her son and Kasamti. She called her son and said, "Ask your vagabond daughter Kasamti to tell you what she has done today. Fortunately I went to bathe at that moment, otherwise Lajanti might have died today. The lady narrated to her son all that happened. Everybody then began to scold Kasamti who being afraid of all the inmates, took shelter in one corner of the house and began to weep.

Kasamti's father was very angry with his daughter for what she had done. At that time he, without saying any word to her, promised within to punish her severely. He even forbade all others to tell her anything.

Nextday, before it was dawn, Kasamti's father collected a bundle of bamboos and built up a big cage. The cage was so strong and so big that a person could stand within it upright at ease. When the cage was ready to serve its purpose, Kasamti's father sent for her and when she came, he said "Kasamti, go inside the cage and see if you can stand upright". Kasamti could not make out the plan behind it and no sooner did she enter the cage than her father shut the cage door. Horrified at it, Kasamti cried out and wept. But this could not soften her father's mind to the least. The cage door was tied up more tightly with a rope and hung from a branch of the big tree standing in their courtyard. From inside the cage, Kasamti, weeping, entreated her father to free her from it. The father did not pay any heed to her daughter's entreaties. He rather began to scold, "Vagabond, the devil, you conspired to kill Lajanti. Now, you've to get the punishment. I shall let you die bit by bit of starvation. Let me see, who comes forward to save you" Nobody responded to her pathetic weeping.

Kasamti went on spending her days in the cage. She was to endure all, such as, the sun rays of the day time and unbearable cold in the nights. Lajanti requested her mother, grandmother and all, one by one to free Kasamti. But none, afraid of her father, came forward to free her from the cage, Kasamti was denied even a drop of water in her thirst and food in her severe hunger. As days passed on, she became weaker and more hungry and thirsty than before. One day as it dawned, all the inmates of the house set out for their individual work in the jhumland, only Lajanti, was left alone to look after the house. Kasamti, having such an opportunity called Lajanti and said "Lajanti, bring me some water, sister, I am going to die without it, I might have committed an offence to you. Please pardon me for it.

Lajanti loved her elder sister very earnestly. She shed tears for her elder sister. Hiding herself away from her parents, she dared not do anything for the fear of her father. That day, as she had an opportunity she fastened some rice and little water in a pot at the top of a long bamboo and passed them to Kasamti. While giving those Lajanti said, "sister, you must not tell anybody that I have given you food. Then I shall be thrown to my fate as yours now. Kasamti responded "How can it be sister, I had ill fate and that is why, I am suffering so much and I shall by no means, lead you to similar fate." After many days Kasamti got her throat wet and she seemed to have regained her life. Lajanti kept her elder sister alive giving her food and water off and on in such a way that none could see. No one in the house could know of it.

At noon, when all the members of the house left for jhum field, Kasamti then looked forwards to the remote blue sky. She could hardly turn her sight forward to the sky in the sun rays. Yet, she gazing at the "Naoi birds," flying in one corner of the sky would think in herself if she could fly in the blue sky like those birds, "My god, thou bestowest me the wings & strength to fly high up in the sky like those birds."

Kasamti was sitting in her cage one day. Accidentally a pitiful tune of a song came out from her lips in her ignorance. She told the birds flying in the remote sky in a rhythmic tune—

- i) Oh, my naoi birds
Look at me.
Bring me feathers,
For, in the blue sky
I intend to flee,

The hearts of the naoi birds melt, as they heard the tragic song of Kasamti. They came down in group and each of them gave her a single feather. Kasamti thus got a lot of feathers and kept them arranged in order in one corner of the cage.

At a silent noon, next day, Kasamti again implored the naoi birds in her pitiful tune—

- ii) Oh my naoi birds,
Pick me up.
Bring me some beaks
For a naoi bird
I wish to be.

The naoi birds responded to her song today also. They came down and each of them gave her a single beak, Kasamti collected them and kept them in order.

Next noon—Kasamti again implored the naoi birds—

iii) Oh my dear, my naoi birds,
Pick me up
Bring me some nails,
For, up high in the blue sky
I wish to fly.

That day each of the naoi birds gave her a single nail. Kasamti arranged even these nails in order,

Now some thread was needed. Her father being absent in the house, Kasamti requested her step mother for a needle and some thread. The step mother did not pay any attention to her request. She rather turned her face to the other side. Having failed to move her mother she demanded the same to her aunt. Her aunt, too said, "Ask your 'pishi' and she went away. All had left for their respective work saying her the same thing. In the meantime one day she got her grandmother alone, and entreated her for a needle and some thread. The grandmother's heart got softened by Kasamti's earnest entreaty. She found out a broken needle and some thread and handed them over to Kasamti.

Kasamti even though she was overwhelmed with grief, was now pleased a little. Now she gathered the feathers, the nails and the beaks given to her by the naoi birds and made a fine dress of a naoi bird by needling them with thread. When this dress was made up one day, at noon, when all set out to work in the jhum field, Kasamti put this dress on lightly for a trial. But what a wonder it was. As soon as she wore the dress, she felt immense strength in her body, as if she was really a naoi bird.

Now it was her turn to fly out of the cage. One day Kasamti put on that dress tightly, and as she felt herself a naoi bird, she broke the cage into pieces by pecking splashing, and nailing it with her beak, nails and feathers. Who was there to keep Kasamti captive now? She, flying by means of the two wings, sat on a tree. Her heart leaped up with joy of freedom. She was moving here and there, flying over her house. And inviting the naoi birds flying in the remote sky, she said

(iv) Wait—wait a little
In this sky
And pick me up.
Give me strength in my wings,

For, in the blue sky
I, will fly.

Kasamti broke the cage already and came out and she was flying in the sky like a bird. All gathered in their courtyard to see their Kasamti in the form of a bird. Kasamti's parents looked up to the sky and requested her again and again to come back. In response to their words, Kasamti said, "You did not feed me in my hunger. I did not have a single drop of water from you in my thirst. I have got only scolding and rude words. You have understood it very well now that you can no more keep me locked up. Are you now calling me to go back to you for this only ?

The birds flying in the blue sky are dearer to me than you. I like to fly with them. I had no intention to kill Lajanti. Her fate being ill, the sheafish had swallowed her in. But you did not try to understand it.

Now, to Lajanti, Kasamti said, "sister, Lajanti I will never forget what you have done for me. It is you who have saved me from hunger with food and from thirst with water. May god bless you. I wish that you may get yourself married to a good husband. You will be happy. You are a girl of turmeric complexion. The river water too turned into turmeric colour when you plunged into it. So, the river has been named after your body colour.

Invoked by Kasamti, the naoi birds began to fly here and there over their house. Now Kasamti would also fly with them. Before her departure she called Lajanti and said her the last words, "sister, you go back to the house. I shall now rise up in the blue sky and breathe in a horizon of freedom and safety.

Kasamti's parents and all others were gazing at the disappearance of Kasamti, with tears in their eyes, Kasamti too, while going away flying with the naoi birds, said,

O, the naoi birds of the remote sky,
up in the remote sky you go
Pass all the faeces out
on their bodies below.

The old lady and her iguana

It's a story of long past. There was a prosperous village. Almost all the villagers owned some land in that village. Those who did not own any land, used to work as daily labourers in other's land. They maintained their livelihood earning wages as labourers. So none of the villagers suffered from any crisis.

In this village an old lady lived in a small hut built on a small tilla (hill) in one corner of that village. She had none of her own. Everyday she used to go out at break of day for begging. But every day she would beg only in three houses.

There lived a big iguana in a hole beside the courtyard of the house of that old woman. The old woman loved that iguana very much. Everyday after her begging she would scatter some rice at the courtyard for that iguana. Till the iguana ate the rice the old lady would not start cooking. One day on the occasion of a marriage of the daughter of a rich man of the village, all the villagers were invited, no one was omitted. Even the father of the daughter had personally invited the old lady. The father of the daughter had brought all the youths of the village to work and distributed duties among them accordingly. The day before the wedding all the villagers assembled at the wedding house.

Sitting on the varanda of the house the old woman was thinking on the previous day that the nextday was the wedding day. But to attend the wedding what clothes she would wear ! Only two pachhras (garment) were there in the house. These were also dirty. Some places on the pachhras were torn due to displacement of the fibres. Would it be wise, she thought, to go to the wedding wearing this type of cloth ? At this time the iguana had come out to take his meal. But towards him she had no attention, she did not go to beg that day. She was thinking and thinking. At last she decided that she would bring a good pachhra from a known house situated down the tilla and would return the pachhra after the wedding day. She therefore thought not to go out to beg on the day. The day would somehow pass with the remaining rice at the house. Thinking so she stood up from the varanda. All on a sudden her eyes fell on the iguana. She saw the iguana entering the hole, only the tail of it came to her sight. Seeing so, the old woman brought some rice from the house and scattered them while she remained standing nearby. But the iguana did not come out from the hole to eat. At this her mind was upset. Today she had no scope to cook, because if the iguana did not eat she was also to remain unfed. After standing there for sometime, she went back home with sorrow. The old woman peeped out from the house whether the iguana had taken its food or not. But she found the rice scattered on the same spot. The iguana had not taken anything. That meant that at night also she was to remain unfed.

On the other hand the boys of the village had settled that they would make the altar of the marriage all through the night. So at night all had begun to work for the altar. As night passed a bit, the father of the daughter had sent wine and pork for them to eat at the time of working. In the midst

of these, a boy told "We will not take drinks only with pork as it is a day of pleasure. I will eat a meat of the sort that I have not taken for a longtime. Is there anybody else amongst you who can provide us with this type of meat ; Having heard his word, all had started thinking. What type of meat was this that they had not eaten for long ! All were drowned in thinking but nobody could find the type of meat meant for. Suddenly one of them shouted in pleasure— 'Yes ! Yes ! I can recall ! many days are gone ! we have not eaten any iguana's meat. Let us have some iguana's meat today'" Another boy told—"but at dead of night from where will we have iguana" ? The one who spoke first, told this time—"If you are able to catch and kill, then I can say the whereabouts of that iguana". Then all had cried out in chorus. "Alright, Alright, you tell us where that iguana resides, we will catch it and kill it for the purpose.

The boy told then—"Beside our village where an old woman lives on a small tilla (hill), there lives an iguana in a big hole beside the courtyard of her house. That one is big in size and if you desire you can kill and have that one. But beware : the old woman by no means should get a hint of it. If she comes to know there shall be no way. The old woman keeps watch over it like the wealth of yakshas". Then another boy told—"Is it wise to kill the iguana when the old woman takes so much care of it and loves it so much ?".

All the other then told—"It is only an iguana. What is the harm done to the old woman if the iguana is killed. Let us kill and bring that silently". It was dead of night. At a distance the foxes were yelling. It was pitchy dark. One was going ahead showing the path with a bamboo made burning flambeau. When they reached the house of the old woman then an owl had hooted harshly. They had found out after much searching, the hole of that iguana. Thereafter one of them had started piercing in the whole with a long pointed bamboo. After a while the iguana came out from the hole full of cuts and wounds. And as soon as the iguana came out they beheaded it with a chopper. All left the place then with the iguana. The next moment the owl had hooted again in a rough tone. With that hooting the old woman woke up from her sleep with an alarm. With an unknown fear her mind crumbled. A pericious fear had occupied her mind. But she did not get a smell of the misdeed that took place outside her house. Again she fell asleep.

The boys then cut the iguana into pieces and after roasting it in fire began to eat with wine in delight. As they had become intoxicated with wine, all drooped down gradually at their places. They were no longer in a condition to work. Gradually the night advanced toward day break.

While the operation to kill the iguana took place the old lady was in deep sleep. Now the old woman had suddenly woke up at a call as if somebody was telling her—"Old woman, old woman, get up quickly and run away from here". The old woman got up from sleep horrified and looked all around to find nothing of the kind. She was pondering as to who could be there to call her that way. "May be I was dreaming"—she thought but she could not drive away fear from her mind. Who might have called her in that fashion. Tossing on her bed in anxieties over the matter she finally fell in sleep again. But after a while the same thing happened. This time as if telling with hot haste—"oh; old woman are you still sleeping. Get up quickly. Runaway, hurriedly ; Half part of the village has almost come to an end ; If you like to survive' run away this moment". Again the old woman got up and as frightened. The same thing in exactly the same way cannot be repeated—she thought. "What an inauspicious word ; what does it mean, that half part of the village has almost come to an end ! No, this time she will sit up late at night. Let it be observed. Whether the same thing happened again or not. The same thing again happened. This time she had heard it distinctly as if somebody was telling her "old woman, Oh old woman are you sitting still ? Don't you have any love for life ? Do you want to die ? The entire village is going to be destructed. Your house too will be washed away. If you like to save your life then run away this moment from here. Are you not hearing the roaring sound which is approaching fast ? Run away, run away quickly". The old woman then exclaimed as she was startled with fear—"Who are you to frighten me in this way ? Are you man, or ghost or a god ? Who are you ?"

The old woman heard the reply "I am not a man, nor a ghost or a god. I am your that iguana. The boys of the wedding house have killed me this night and they have eaten my meat along with wine with pleasure. For that very reason the entire village will be smashed by my curse within this night. I will immerse the entire village under water. Hence forth a big lake will appear here instead of the village. Only a post of this house will stand above the water as if to remind others of the existance of it one time. So you run away this very moment".

At that moment the old woman heard a big roar. As if the sea was rolling fast towards her. What a big roar. Hearing this the old woman became very much nervous. Instantly without further delay, the old woman began to run through the rear passage of the house. It seemed to her as if a huge cobra was running behind her raising its hundreds or thousands of heads. Running at a great speed she reached the adjacent village at dead of night and no sooner had she entered the varanda of a house she fell down

unconscious. At dawn when the householder opened the door he saw this old lady lying in unconscious state. He brought her in and had her nursed with much care. After a while, for intensive care of that householder the old woman recovered her senses. She, then still panicky ; narrated to him in a frail voice of the havoc that took over. The householder then along with the villagers set out for the spot to ascertain the matter which he learnt from the old woman. The spot bore the evidences to testify the report of that old woman. They all became astonished, and alarmed. There was no sign of the village nor the dwellers ; only unfathomable water spread all around. They became surprised. Nothing was visible except the top of a post which remained erected a little higher than the level of the water. The post was of that house where the work was going on in connection with the daughter's marriage of a rich person.

A piece of Pumpkin,

There were two sisters married in the neighbouring village. The younger of them was very rich—possessing immense wealth and gold. The elder sister was in the opposite state—very poor and earned her livelihood by begging from door to door.

One day the elder sister visited the younger sister's house with a mind of getting some help from her. The younger sister offered her a piece of pumpkin and some rice at best to make a meal. She offered nothing more than that. The younger sister notwithstanding her wealthy position was never compassionate or sympathetic to her sister and being very selfish and crooked thought to get some services from her sister in return of the 'help' she had offered.

The younger sister asked the elder sister to sit with her and requested to bring out the lice from her head. She first looked into the elder sister's head. The elder sister being very poor could not oil and comb her hair and the younger sister brought out some lice from them. Now the younger sister bent forward her head but the elder sister failed to find any louse, The younger sister started combing her hair and suddenly discovered lice fall from her comb. On seeing it she thought within herself that the elder sister had no mind to find the lice and thus had deceived her. She thought that her sister was beside herself with the rice sufficing a meal and in no mood to do what she had been asked to. She therefore meditated to revenge this indifference to her request and being angry took away the piece of pumpkin from her. She did not stop here, she had driven away her sister by the back door on the plea that if she leaves by the front door, it would augur bad for her children. The elder sister thus insulted and humiliated left the house in silence anguished within and with tears stepped forward for home.

All the way she was weeping and thinking of her starving children awaiting eagerly her return with something to feed them. Hastly she collected the leaves and roots of some vegetation from the road side hedges to boil them for the children. Coming home she dressed the roots and leaves and put into a bowl—at least these will relieve them slightly from the pervading appetite. She felt very tired after the days walking and from hunger and could not help accusing her fate for all her miseries and after a while fell into a slumber beside the boiling bowl. In her slumber she dreamt a wonderful dream. God has appeared to console her saying, 'O my sweet child, I have been very much pained in seeing your wretched state from above. You get up and find I have converted all your vegetables into gold, what more I can do for you my child.'

"Take the gold and sell them to live happily with your children. She was startled to get up and to her utter surprise found all roots in the bowl have really become gold—as per her dream. She immediately went out to sell out them and in no time became very rich. She had changed her whole state and made everything rich.

But she could not forget the behaviour her sister had done to her in driving out from her house. By the grace of god today she was no longer in her old state and now got a chance to retaliate the insult. She sent an invitation to her younger sister to visit her house and see them for herself. She had already learnt from people of her elder sister's changed state and on getting the invitation she came to the elder sister's house to see for herself whether she had become wealthier than herself. The younger sister was very happy and delighted to see the elder sister's gold and other wealth. The two sisters spent the whole day together conversing all throughout and ate together. Coming to her house the younger sister also sent an invitation to the elder sister to come to her house. The elder sister was awaiting this chance only. She came one day to her sister's house. She came adorned with all her golden ornaments in a horse cart. As she reached there, the younger sister came running out of her room to receive her. But the elder sister entered through the back door by which she was once driven away.

When the lunch time came, she was offered variety of delicious food-stuff. The elder sister looked at them and did not pick up a single item to her mouth. She touched the utensils several times with her costly ornaments and came out from there by the back door. Seeing her leave in that way the younger sister entreated, "Why have you not taken anything—sister"? The elder sister replied promptly from the gate "When I visited your house in my wretched state, I had no gold ornament and good clothes, that time you took

away the piece of pumpkin you had offered as alms and to insult me drove me away through the backdoor saying that had I been allowed to pass by the front door, it would augur bad for your children. You did all these since I was poor. But now ? You are showing so much care and love to me as I possess now gold and wealth. It appears that you are showing love not to me but to my wealth. And for that I have taken nothing from the dish and come out touching the food stuff with my ornaments". Saying so the elder sister got into her conveyance and came away. The younger sister was thus paid back in her own coin.

CHAPTER—XI

Folk Medicine

Like all other hill tribes of India the Tripuri tribe of Tripura also possesses the trait to extract medicine from various plants, leaves, roots, bark etc. to cure the illness of men as well as animals.

Methods and procedure that the Tripuri tribe applies to cure disease or to heal a wound of man bear similarity with other tribes of the north-east India. Two methods, viz. the folk medicine and magic are generally applied in this respect. Both the methods are believed to be primitive. While the magical method deals with the supernatural belief, the folk medicine is based on natural or physical aspects. The Tripuris have a great belief and reliance on magic and folk medicine.

The 'Ochai' is generally the specialist in the art of magic. With the performance of magical rites he is believed to be able to cure a diseased man. At times he also plays the role of the village physician. In some cases, they call in the 'Ochai' for the treatment of disease. After observing the diseased person, the 'Ochai' comes to know why and how that man has fallen ill. If any evil spirit be responsible for the illness, the 'Ochai' performs magical rites as a device of treatment to drive away the evil spirit that caused the illness. To drive away the spirit the 'Ochai' sometimes blows over the patient with utterances of mantras which is said to be effective and curative for the ailment. Otherwise, for this purpose, the 'Ochai' performs a worship. In this worship he sacrifices fowls, pegions, goats etc. and utters mantras to remove the spirit. These mantras are different for different illness and the animals to be sacrificed in the worship also vary.

Besides, for various disease the 'Ochai' prescribes or applies folk medicine as a mode of treatment. When he ascertains that the illness is caused by disease and not by evil spirits then he depends upon the folk medicine. The village priest or the other men who performs the job of medical practitioner in the village is very careful and practical not to leak out the secrecy of the mode of treatment and the ingredients of folk medicine.

The mode of treatment varies according to category and intensity of the disease. The folk medicine practitioner prescribes medicine on the basis of his diagnosis. Sometimes he prescribes an ointment to rub on the body. Sometimes he gives folk-medicine to tie with the body for a specific period. In a few cases he prescribes a medicine to swallow. The medical practitioner also prescribes amulet prepared by himself to cure the disease. This amulet contains various types of roots, leaves and many other things. On many occasions this very amulet is sanctified with mantras.

As the folk medicine practitioner solely maintains his secrecy of the mode of treatment it is not at all possible to know the names of the medicines. We can only put a few examples of treatment as done by the practitioners. These are as follows:(i) To remove the speck on the eye the 'Ochai'-cum-medical practitioner treats the patient by taking seven

pieces of onion. On the first day of the treatment the 'Ochai' bites a piece of onion and gives a blow from the mouth on the affected eyes of the patient and thereafter he utters charms and incantations. He recites charms and incantations seven times and each time he bites a piece of onion and blasts a blow from the mouth. On the second day the 'Ochai' uses his charms and incantations on the affected eyes of the patient five times in the aforesaid way. The next day the 'Ochai' performs the treatment three times in the similar way and the disease is cured. If this treatment fails, they apply another mode of treatment for the same disease of the eye. In this case they apply juice of a leaf of a specific tree in the eye for three to four days and the disease is cured. (2) If anybody suffers from fever, they advise him to take the juice of a creeper, named 'Sangdari' in Tripuri, with sugar. (3) Those who suffer from loss of appetite take a medicine for normalisation of the feeling of appetite. They grind the seed of a little tree named 'Tharai' and take it with water. (4) Sometimes they apply a composite herb to stop the bleeding from a cut by grinding the leaf of 'Masundui', 'Sambrema' and 'Durba' grass together. (5) To cure throat pain they are used to take the juice of the root of a tree named 'Takkhi Cheleng'. To collect this very type of root a rule is to be followed. The root of the 'Takkhicheleng' tree which is bent towards west is to be collected for medicine by stopping the breath. (6) A special device is applied for the remedy of the ulcer caused at the backside of the children's ear. For this disease they collect the mushroom on the dead tree named 'Muikhumu Kachauk' and after burning it rub the ash of that mushroom on the ulcer. It is noticed that this medicine is effective to cure the disease. (7) If eruptions spread out on the body of a child a medicine prepared by mixing 'Til Oil' and the juice of the roots of a tree named 'Rou' is rubbed on the body. (8) To get rid of the attack of the freckles they apply a medicine prepared from the seed of a little tree named 'Muitapi' to the affected place of the body for at least three to four days in a row. (9) A medicine prepared by mixing the coconut oil and lime water is prescribed to apply on the sore caused by burn. (10) If eruption spreads in the facial part of a person, the inner soil of the oven is applied for remedy. (11) When the little children suffer from high fever they are rubbed with a medicine prepared from the juice of a little plant called 'Chhak Kuchang' to reduce the temperature. (12) Some-time they prescribe the flower and leaf of 'Khum-Jhumka' (jaba) to be rubbed on the body after grinding it properly to reduce the high fever. (13) If anybody suffers from tooth ache he is attended by the 'Ochai'. The 'Ochai' keeps a cowrie and some durba grass on a banana leaf in front of the patient. The 'Ochai' thereafter spells out some mantras with the aforesaid articles and remove the worms from the teeth. Thus the 'Ochai' can cure the tooth ache. (14) Those who suffer from vomiting tendency, indigestion or irregular clearance of bowels eat a salt after baking it properly to remove the aforesaid troubles. (15) If any child discharges liquid yellow stool they generally prescribe the juice of a tree named 'Chethuang' or powder of the seed of 'Thaithap' tree for treatment. (16) When anybody suffers from stomach flatulence they prescribe the fried leaves of a plant named 'Dukhupui' to eat. At the time of colic pain the 'Ochai' rubs the stomach with mustard oil and the water of 'Hukka' with enchanting

mantras. The 'Ochai' rubs the stomach of the patient seven times and every time of rubbing he spells mantras. It is noticed that after the performance of this rite by the 'Ochai' the pain of the stomach subsides. (18) If the joint of a limb is bruised or injured by any means they prescribe the leaf of a little tree named 'Dankalas' and lime to rub on the injured part for remedy. (19) At the time of fever if anybody suffers from bad headache they then fasten the forehead with a piece of cloth putting the roots of plaintain in it. (20) When a man suddenly feels biting pain in the stomach then he takes ginger consecrated by mantras from the 'Ochai' as medicine for remedy. (21) If anybody takes poison he is then given to eat uncooked 'Berma' (dryfish) and egg mixed with water as medicine to take out the poison from the stomach. They act promptly upon the poison taken and causes vomiting of the poison. It is reported by the villagers that the patient is bound to vomit as the uncooked dryfish and egg bear offensive odour. (22) They are in belief that if any child suffers from hydrocil then he is to get a bite on testicle by the fish named 'Latiabarak' (latafish) for remedy. (23) If within a month or more after the delivery any mother discharges liquid stool she is given to eat the root of a little tree named 'Lachijagnai' (Lajjabati) sanctified by mantras as medicine. (24) After the delivery if any mother's breastmilk does not emerge and the breast becomes stiff then a gourd leaf soaked in hot water for sometime is to be rubbed on the breast and thereafter the milk begins secreting and the breast turns normal. (25) Sometimes at the time of suffering from the boil or carbuncle they give a medicine prepared with the leaf of merigold, soap and dissolved lime for applying on the boil and that is efficacious. (26) For dysentery they prescribe a medicine prepared by pounding the bark of a tree named 'Bathaibukur' and sugar. For this purpose the bark is to be soaked in water and then it is pounded with sugar. This medicine is prescribed to eat always in empty stomach. (27) When the children suffer from cold they prescribe honey as medicine for remedy. (28) After eating 'Muitu' (an esculent root) if anybody feels itching in the throat he is given to chew betal leaf with nut and lime to get relief. (29) The smart pain caused by the piercing of singhi fish's prickle is removed by applying the pupil of the 'Puthi' fish. (30) If the fish bone prickles in the throat of a man the 'Ochai' then swallows a ball of the boiled rice three to four times. Everytime of eating the small rice ball he spells mantras. After the performance of this rite by the 'Ochai' the fish bone which pricked in the throat of the man is removed. A mystery is noticed here that the man in whose throat the fish bone is pricked is not at all offered to eat the boiled rice balls sanctified by mantras. Instead the 'Ochai' himself eats the rice balls sanctified by mantras to remove the fish bone and ultimately he gets through. (31) If a man having finished his bath feels any troubles he then sprinkles salt, purified with mantras by the 'Ochai', in the water where he took bath. It is reported by the villagers that sometimes it occurs owing to the activities of the malevolent deity. So to get relief from this sort of troubles caused by the malevolent deity they always depend upon the 'Ochai' who with his magical activities is able to relieve the man from his sufferings. (32) A medicine is prescribed for the children when they suffer terribly from cough. This medicine is prepared with the gall of

'Muislae' (a large serpent) and the seeds of orange. This medicine, after grinding them properly, is offered for eating. (33) When somebody feels troubles from 'hiccough' then he is given the bark of 'Lambag' tree to tie in the hand for relief. It is noticed that the bark is tied in the hand in a single breath. (34) If urine of a person is not discharged properly or his urinary tract pains then he is prescribed to eat the juice prepared by pounding the bark of a tree for remedy. The name of the tree is not disclosed to preserve the secrecy. (35) If anybody suffers from scab then he is prescribed to apply an ointment prepared from the bark of a tree named 'Abithi' and sulphur for remedy. It can be mentioned here that this 'Abithi' is used for catching the fish after poisoning the water. For this purpose they spread the juice of the bark in the water and the water becomes poisonous and the fish of the water floats up. That is why the name of the tree is 'Abithi'. In Kok borok "Aa" means fish and 'bithi' means medicine. (36) Among the tribals some people know to heal the headache through magical performance. If anybody suffers from headache then the man who knows the secret to cure the headache utters mantras viz. 'Ongting' Ongknia, Ongchua du saha pha' etc. and rub mustard oil on the head of the patient three times and at the time of rubbing oil he utters the aforesaid mantras. Along with the mantras he spells the name of the patient. (37) If anybody's nail is damaged by any means then they prescribe the blood of 'Kuichcha'—a sort of eel to apply on the damaged nail as medicine, for three days and it is cured. (38) If sometimes an ant accidentally enters inside the ear of a person then they pour some mustard oil inside the ear to kill the ant. (39) When some one is confounded by suffering from high fever he is then prescribed to eat the blood of 'Kuichcha' along with water as medicine to bring down the temperature. (40) When a man feels pain to discharge urine or his urine is not discharged properly then he is advised to eat the seeds of the 'Tukma' plant as medicine. The seeds are to be soaked in water and when they are fully wet then they are to be taken. (41) For the illness caused by dog bite the Tripuris till now are greatly dependent upon the medicineman or the 'Ochai' particularly those who are staying in remote places. If a man gets the bite of a dog, he goes to the 'Ochai' for treatment. The 'Ochai' then makes three to four balls of boiled rice. All these rice balls are sanctified with mantras and prescribed to the patient to eat the blood of 'Kuichcha' along with water as medicine to bring is fully cured with these rice balls sanctified by mantras by the 'Ochai' (42) If any little child discharges stool every now and then, then the root of a tree (which is not to be disclosed) is collected looking westward and by stopping the breath. Then the root is tied on the ear of the child. When the stomach is cured and the discharge of stool is normalised, the root is thrown into the water. (43) If anytime a bamboo-split or any type of thorn pierces into the body, the 'Ochai' gives the person a ripen banana after sanctifying it with mantras to eat. And it is reported that after eating the sanctified banana the split comes out within three hours. (44) Among the Tripuris a few persons are also able to join the broken bone in a human body. The man who knows this medicine, takes the leaf of two types of trees, one kind of a creeping plant, the bark of a tree, the inner flesh of a snail or the yolk of an egg and grinds all these

articles collectively. After grinding these articles the paste is applied on the wound and it is bound with a piece of cloth for seven days. After seven days the broken bone gets joined.

Another mode of treatment was also noticed during the survey. Some persons in the remote places are also able to join the broken bone of the human body only by tying a creeper around the wound. The creeper which is tied on the affected spot is not disclosed.

Whatever be the name of these creepers, barks and the leaves of the tree used for joining the broken bone, it is a fact that in the interior places till now a few persons are present who are able to join the broken bone within the body with these folk medicines. (45) To set right the twisted joint of the human body caused by any accident they prescribe folk medicine. They first rub on the twisted spot the fat of pork. Thereafter, a sickle is burnt and a small hole is made on the spot with the sickle. Thereafter the leaves of a tree named 'Kerang' and a special variety of rice named 'Kaon' are boiled in a bamboo pipe collectively. A plaster is made and it is applied properly on the twisted spot. This pound medicine is applied and bandaged with a piece of cloth for some days for remedy. (46) To get relief from the neckpains they prescribe a medicine for the patient. The leaf of arum after being smeared by the fat of pork is heated and the medicineman touches the neck with it repeatedly. If this medicine is applied repeatedly the pain is cured. (47) Sometimes they prescribe the leaf of 'Basok' tree to get relief from the suffering of cough. The leaves of 'Basok' are to be boiled with ginger, black pepper etc. in water and this boiled juice is taken for remedy of cough. (48) When the little children suffer from cough then they rub the fat of pig preserved for long on the chest and back for cure.

From the aforesaid facts we can draw an outline of the mode of treatment and remedy by the Tripuris of their sufferings and diseases and also for their general health. It is to be mentioned that the health of the Tripuris, particularly those who are staying in the remote places are more or less sound. Since time immemorial they have been wholly dependent upon their own mode of treatments.

Even in this last part of the twentieth century it is noticed that at places at the time of suffering from any disease they first depend upon their folk medicine and magical rites. After the performance of magical rites and application of folk medicine if anybody fails to cure himself of the disease then he wants to take modern medical treatment.

By any means, I cannot sneer at their belief in folk medicine as they are successful in the treatment of diseases to some extent. Though they mainly depend upon their own way of treatment to cure the diseases that does not of course mean that the medicine applied or prescribed by themselves are sufficient or accurate for remedy.

It was observed at the time of investigation that a certain percentage of the Tripuris, specially the older generation of the rural Tripuris, express their apathy for modern treatment.

This may be so that religion has created a hurdle against their acceptance of modern medical facilities. Since the major portion of the rural Tripuris are credulous people, whenever they suffer from a disease which is not cured by the magical rites or folk medicine they come to the conclusion that this disease is caused by a malevolent deity or by an enemy who performs some magical deeds.

Another reason which disheartens the rural Tripuris on modern medical treatment is the insufficient medical aid in the interior. It is worth mentioning here that adequate number of primary health centres or dispensaries are not there in the remote places where most of them dwell.

Now-a-days the dispensaries which are maintained in the remote areas are helpful to them to some extent. But there is a version to go to them as the communication system from their areas is yet to be improved.

Let these people be provided with modern medical facilities. The economically and educationally advanced group can only shoulder this great responsibility with sympathy to free them of their ignorance which is based on superstition and religion. The folk medicine which is practised them is alright. But their traditional belief on the chronic diseases to have effected by mischievous deities or evil spirits cannot be accepted particularly in the modern era. So it is our responsibility to make them understand the good effects of modern medical treatment with sympathy and co-operation and providing them with medical facilities. Alongwith it the communication system has to be improved to enable the people to come for the aid of modern medical facilities available at their nearest places.

It is a hopeful sign that with the upliftment of literacy the rural Tripuris, particularly the younger generations, are realising the importance and usefulness of modern medical treatment and are extending their hands for it.

CHAPTER—XII

IMPACT OF MODERN SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS ON TRIPURI SOCIETY (CULTURE, RELIGION, LANGUAGE ETC).

Culture :-

The Tripuri culture has evolved through ages in its own soil and developed through the generations. As they gradually came into contact with the neighbouring Bengalees an assimilation of the two culture to a considerable extent took place. The acculturation is occurring rapidly within the urbanised Tripuris in comparison with the Tripuris residing in the interior places.

Somehow, the Tripuris of the remote area are to this day in a position to sustain their traditional culture. Their dress, ornaments, artificates, food habit, performance or dance, folksongs and observance of festivities etc. remain till date their own. But it needs to be mentioned here that a little bit impact of the neighbouring culture is also penetrating in it. As for the traditional ladies garment, it deserves mentioning here that, the female folk wears 'Pachra' and 'Richa' all the time. In this case a change is noticed to certain extent among the young girls. Specially at the time of visiting a village market or a town area many of them wear sari and blouse. The young boys have also been accustomed to wear trousers whenever they come to any urban area. Even at the time of weaving their garments some of them are observed now-a-days to use wollen thread with modern design. The Tripuri folk songs are rich in composition and expression. These are melodious in tune and bear the great significance of their way of life. But as a result of acculturation at present the young generation shows great interest in Bengali and Hindi songs. Sometimes, they compose their songs imitating the tune of Bengali and Hindi songs.

For dance also the Tripuri tribe deserves well appreciation in all corners of the country. In this faculty they have very popular cultural aspect. With enthusiastic endeavour they express some parts of their way of life in their dance. Some of the dances like Garia, Mamita and Lebang bumani etc. are very popular among the Tripuri community. The afore cited dances are performed collectively by the young male and female folk. In the month of Bhadra/Aswin on the occasion of taking new rice after it is harvested and grinded, they dance collectively irrespective of sex. This dance is known as 'Maikatal'. The musical instruments like flute (sumu), champreng, sarinda etc. are played. Lebang is the name of a insect in Kok borok, 'Buma' means to kill the 'lebang' insect by trick. About this the Lebangbumani dance is composed. In a particuar period the 'Lebang' insects migrate in search of food to the hill slopes where jhum seeds are sown. To allure the insects the male folk make a rythmic sound with two bamboo splits in their hands. The rythmic sound plays a majic role on the insects and whenever they come down to the slopes the womenfolk run after them and catch the insects. As this trap had once been used for catching the insects in course of time this practice has become a part of their cultural life which still they observe through this dance.

The musical instruments like 'Tuitreng', Lebangti' etc. are played in this dance. Now-a-days in the month of 'Jaistha' they usually perform this dance. Lebang Bumani dance is also one of the most colourful dance of Tripuri community. The male and the female take part in this dance collectively. The 'Garia' dance takes place at the time of 'Garia Puja' in the month of 'Baisakha'. Like the Tripuri community this dance is also popular in other communities such as Jamatia, Reang, Noatia etc. To have a happy and prosperous life and for bumper crop in Jhum cultivation they propitiate the god 'Garia' and dance on the occasion of new year. Both men and women take part in this dance. The drum and flute etc. are played in this dance.

In the months of October-November 'Mamita' dance is performed. 'Mamita' dance is one of the most favourite dance of Tripuri community. After the observance of worships of the god and goddess of 'Duapathar' this dance takes place with a community feast by inviting persons from neighbouring village to make merriment. The invitees perform the dance with the host villagers. The musical instruments like 'Wathop' 'Champreng', Sarinda, Tuitreng etc. are played in this dance.

Religion :—

Practically the Tripuri religion is based on Hinduism. The habitants of the interior though perform their traditional ritual according to their customs, many of their God and Goddesses are akin to the Hindu Gods and Goddesses particularly in the nature of belief. Only the mode of worship is completely different. Besides, the neighbouring Hindu Bengalees have a distinct shape of their deities which is absolutely found absent among the Tripuris. In the Tripuri community bamboo made structure represents the form of the deities.

In the interior most of the worships are performed by the priest who is rightly a community fellow. But a striking difference is observed in the urbanised Tripuris who perform their worships and other religious rites with the help of their neighbouring Bengalee priest. Even in birth and death rituals we generally do not find to engage a Bengalee brahmin in the interior places. Whereas, in urban area it has become a practice in the Tripuri community to engage a Bengalee brahmin during their birth and death rituals.

It is now evident among a small percentage of rural Tripuris who have imitated it from the urban section to engage Bengalee brahmin along with their own priest specially at the time of marriage and death rituals.

In the interior some of them are still dogmatic to follow their traditional rites and rituals. A new trend is also noticed specially among the young generation of the rural area. A negligible percentage of them have embraced Christianity.

Religious function and beliefs are confluenced with their way of living. Though they observe their traditional festivals and religious rites now a

days they are gradually influenced by other castes' festivals also. Specially during 'Durga Puja' many of them visit to the urban areas to observe the festival.

The belief behind some of the deities of the Tripuri community and the neighbouring Bengalee community shows resemblance. The purpose to worship some of the deities of the two communities are also identical, such as 'Laxmi' in Hindu society is the Goddess of wealth. In Tripuri society we find two Goddesses named 'Mailooma and Khoolooma'—they are also worshipped for wealth and prosperity. Both the communities worship the aforesaid deities as household deities. In Hindu community we find Goddess 'Ganga' as the Goddess of water. In Tripuri community also there is existence of water Goddess—named 'Toima' in Kok Borok language.

At present due to financial hardship the Tripuris in the interior are not all the time able to worship their deities with as much enthusiasm and splendour as before. But still they are maintaining their traditional customs. But in towns and its adjacent areas many Tripuris observe the rites and rituals in a way their neighbouring Bengalee Hindus observe.

Otherwise, belief in soul, birth after death etc. are found common between the two communities which have been discussed in details in the aforesaid chapter to some extent.

Language :—

Among the nineteen (19) scheduled tribes of Tripura, Tripuri community is the largest in number. The language they speak is called 'Kok Borok'. A tribal translation of the term 'Kok Borok'—is language of man. Among the (19) tribals of Tripura—Tripuri, Jamatia, Reang, Noatia, Koloï, Rupini etc. are the kok borok speaking tribals of Tripura. The Kok Borok language belongs to the Bodo group in the Tibeto—Burmese sub family of the Austric family. The vocabulary of this language comprises a large number of words similar to or slightly different from the Bodo words which bear the same meaning. Some of the examples of Bodo and Kok Borok languages have been cited in chapter one (1).

After Bengali, Kok Borok is the next important language of Tripura. This language has been accepted by the Government. Long back this language had no scripts. Now a days it adopted the Bengali scripts with few additional scripts. In early days this language was enveloped completely in the rural area connected to Kok Borok speaking tribals. The number of publication in this language were also very negligible. With regret it may be noted here that most of the present generations of the Tripuri community of urban area are not acquainted with their mother tongue.

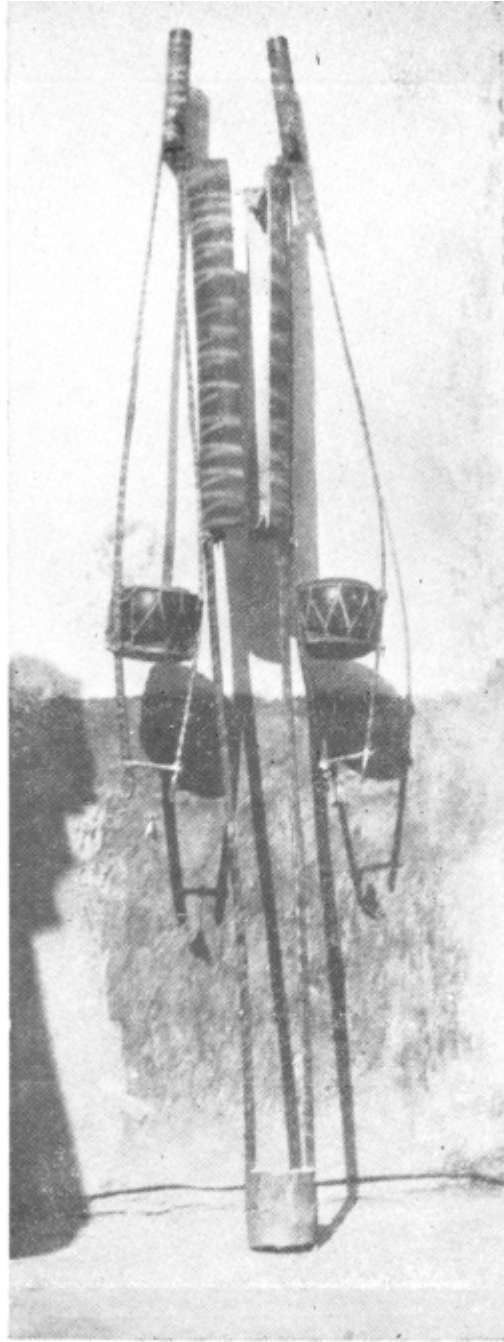
But a new wave is on progress with enthusiasm. Government is taking keen interest to develop this language. Some of the books are being published in Kok Borok to introduce in the school level. In the interior

Kok Borok schools teachers are recruited for imparting lessons through **this language**. Non Kok Borok speaking communities (Bengalee) are also gradually taking enough interest to learn this language. At Agartala two non Government institutes namely Rabindra Parishad and Dayananda Foundation are courageously taking pains to acquaint this language with the non Kok Borok speaking persons.

All India Radio Agartala plays an important role to broadcast on drama, songs, radio talks, recitation etc. in this language. Besides, many literate persons are extending their helping hands to publicise this language to the general people through their mighty pens.

Their efforts are appreciable as language is one of the most powerful media to make closer a person with his neighbours.

- 14) Roy Choudhury, N. R. : Tripura through the ages, Bureau of Research and Publications of Tripura, 1977.
- 15) Sen, Kaliprasanna. : Sri Rajmala, Vol—I, II, III, Rajmala Press, Agartala.
- 16) Singha, Kailash Chandra : Rajmala, Commilla 1896.
- 17) Saigal, Omesh. : Tripura, Concept publishing Company, Delhi—1978.
- 18) Sen, Tripur Chandra. : Tripura in Transition, Agartala 1970.
(B) (Megazines)
 - 1) Saradio Gana Abhijan, 1874 B S.
 - 2) Bodosā—19th Annual Conference. Bodo Sahitya Sabha Gauhati, session, 1978.(C) (Report)
 - 1) Tripurar Census Bibarani, 1931 A. D. Dev Baīman, Samarendra, Tripura State Press, 1343 T. E. (1933 A. D.)



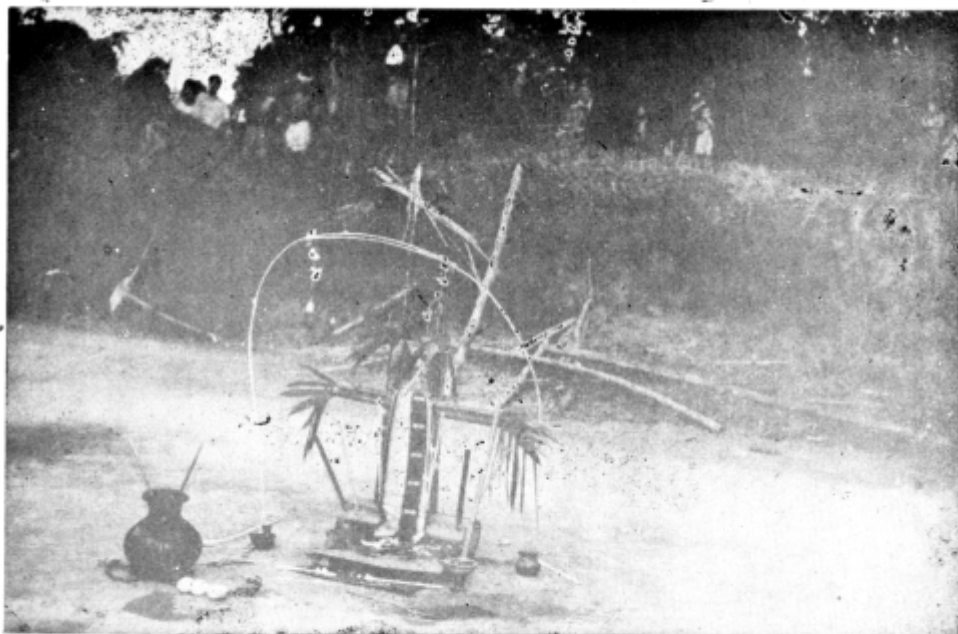
TAK TUI TRENG (A TWO STRING BAMBOO FRAMED
MUSICAL INSTRUMENT)



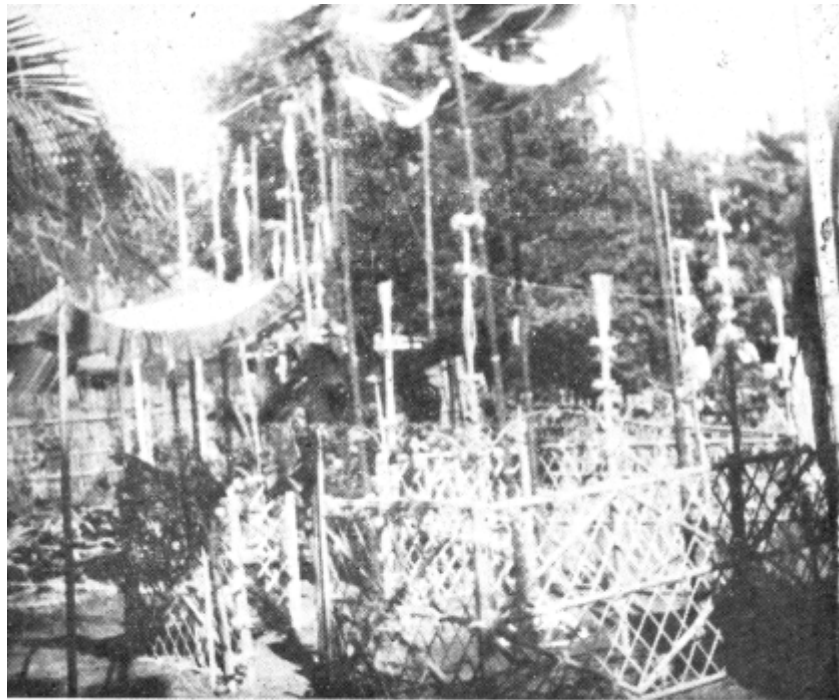
A TRIPURI "BELLE"



A TRIPURA FLUTE (SUMU)



DEITY "GARIA"



TRIPURI MARRIAGE BEDI (ALTAR)



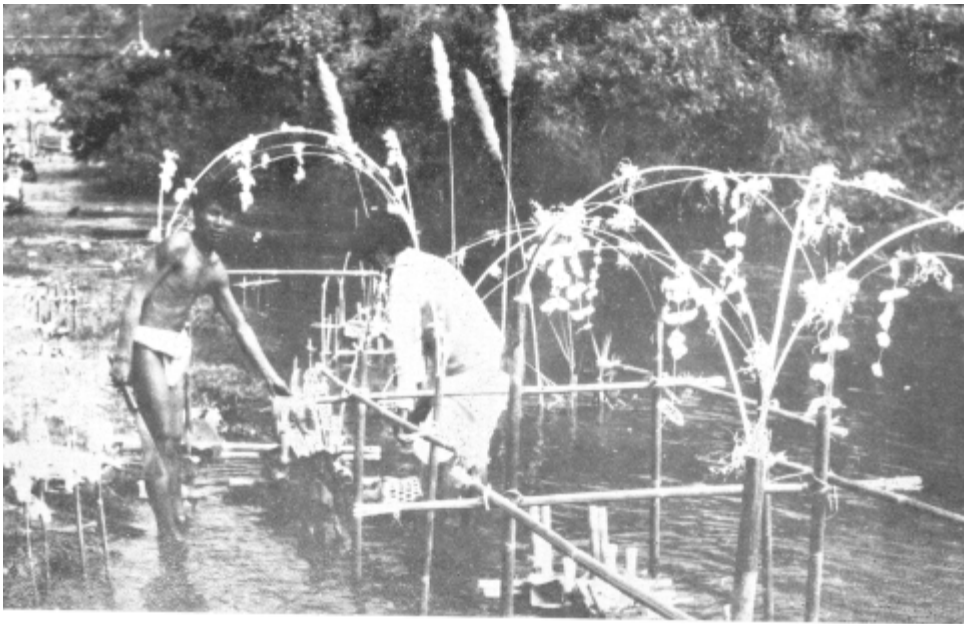
SHELTER FOR ASTHI (SKULL)



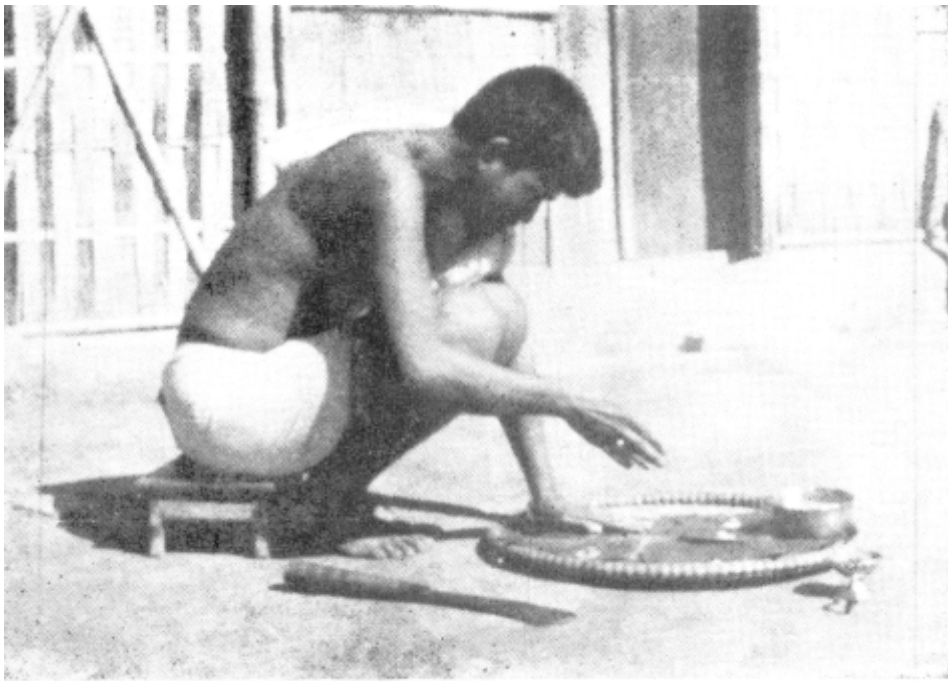
AN 'OCHAI' CURING A PATIENT



CANE AND BAMBOO CONTAINERS



GANGA PUJA AT TIRTHAMUKH



EXAMINING THE CAUSE OF DISEASE