

**R. K. Acharyya**

**Insight into the**

# **REANGS**

Tribal Research Institute  
Govt. of Tripura  
Agartala



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**R. K. Acharyya**

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## Foreword

Reangs in Tripura is the 2nd largest tribal group among the 19 scheduled tribes and next to Tripuris. Linguistically and ethnically they are akin to Tibeto-Burman group of North Eastern Tribes. This tribe have their own tradition, culture and self governed village council.

In this study, a detailed picture of their economic activities and social custom and traditions are analysed. I am sure, this will create interest among the research workers for further study on this tribe.

I convey my sincere thanks to Sri R. K. Acharyya, Research Officer, Tribal Research Institute who prepared this Study Report after an extensive field investigation.

Dated Agartla the  
15th March, '99

**S. K. Sarkar**  
Director  
Tribal Research Institute  
Govt. of Tripura.

## Preface

Reangs is the only tribe in Tripura, known as primitive tribe. Out of the 19 tribes, it is of course a folded fact that Reangs still are backward in different socio-economic fronts and leads a primitive nature of life in the natural environment in Tripura, though they are the 2nd largest tribal group.

The present research study report is an attempt to give an insight into the Reang's socio-economic life and traditional culture. I hope & believe, this book will be useful to know the Reangs, from a very close quarter.

I convey my gratitude to all those old aged people of Reang community, who donated their valuable time for giving me relevant datas & information to prepare this manuscript.

I respectfully acknowledge the contribution of Sri Rama Nanda Vaishuab of Jatanbari, Chandraham Reang, Smt. Daroti Reang Judhisthir Reang, Debendra Reang and other of South Tripura and also Ramani Reang, Harimohan Reang, Gitya Kumar Reang and others of North Tripura. I must acknowledge my sincere thanks to Sri Pancharam Reang & Sri Prafulla Reang for going through the cultural part of this manuscript and necessary suggestion for correction of language portion of the same. I would record my thanks to Imanul Hauque, who has made the cover design of this book.

Last of all, I convey my thanks to my staff members who had helped me to prepare the manuscript. I hope this work will help research scholars for further study on this tribe.

15th March, '99

**R. K. Acharyya.**

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Tripura is a very Small state in the North-Eastern Zone of India which once was recognised as a tribal State. There are 19 (nineteen) scheduled tribes living in this State. The Reangs who are one of the main tribes, occupy the second position in regard to tribal population in the State.

Regarding Reangs, few works have already been done on different aspects of their traditional socio-cultural life. Yet these studies could not revealed their socio-economic problems in general, its causes and remedies.

The present study on the Reang as, it is expected, will help to enlight the researchers mainly the Social Anthropologists, Social Scientists, the Administrators and others to understand a little more, the causes and the backwardness of the Reangs, their socio-economic problems to give an insight into a few aspects of their development. This study has covered the social and economic life of Reangs; effect of modernisation and cultural changes. The work done is based on **primary data** through exhaustive field works.

## METHODS OF FIELD WORK

The methods followed for this study are (i) Sample survey method (ii) Observational method. Before explaining the actual design, a brief out -line of the sample utilised for the present study is given below.

### 1. Place of study :

This study was undertaken in some selected Block area where the Reangs are highly concentrated. These Blocks are Matarbari, Amarpur and Bagafa under South Tripura District and Chowmanu, Salema and Kanchanpur of North Tripura District. The Data have been collected from some Reangs concentrated hamlets of these respective Block areas. These hamlets are taken randomly as sample so that accurate information could be secured in a reasonably short time.

### 2. Collection of data :

The methods were adopted to obtain the information directly from the persons covered by the survey. i) Personal interview with the help of schedule prepared for the purpose and ii) observation, participation and group discussion with the community chief, community priest, Baisnab leaders, old persons of the community. Data collected were of three categories such as :

#### i) Household data :

Individual information of the head from the household and his members such name, age, sex, education, occupation, relation with the head of the family, marital status, housing condition, food and drinks, dress, ornaments, assets, language spoken etc. as general information about material culture.

#### ii) Economic data :-

Demographic characteristics, land and land uses, methods of agriculture, cropping pattern, numbers of land holders and their individual holdings. Average per acre yield of various crops, livestock,

other agricultural activities. Main occupation, subsidiary occupation, annual income, expenditure pattern, total indebtedness and its causes.

### **iii) Data on socio-cultural aspects :**

For this purpose data were collected on family structure, clan and kinship, marriage system, divorce and its causes, social ceremonies, association in group life, socio-religious belief and practices, visit to the native and holy places.

Data for general village study were collected through personal interviews usually from responsible persons of the villages and officials serving in and around the surveyed villages.

Data were collected actually residing in the Reang villages. It helped me not only in data collection but also afforded ample scope for observing the Reangs from a very close quarter and for participating in their social and religious activities. Notes were taken on the basis of these observation and formal discussion which helped me to understand the Reangs.

On certain questions relating to economic activities, I think, they did not give me correct information. Even then I have tried to utilise my experiences and tools to find out the exact facts and figures of their economic activities, I attended the ceremonies, festivals, leisure activities, marriage during the time of field investigation.

Data on economic aspects were calculated and distributed with facts and figure for better understanding of the economic activities of the Reangs alongwith infrastructure of the Reang concentrated areas of the State.

More over a detailed picture of their acute needs and aspiration alongwith socio-economic problems are high lighted, so that some efforts may be taken from the Government or Non-Government Organisation.

Last of all, social changes due to the effect of modernisation also taken in to account in details. All together primary datas are the main resource of this study.

**R. K. Acharyya**

## **Tripura & Her People**

TRIPURA, a hilly State in the North-Eastern region of India, is one of the main homelands of number of tribes. Geographically it lies between 22°96" and 24° 3' North latitudes and on 91° 22" East longitudes and has a total areas of 10477 sq. K. M. Tripura has physical link with Assam and Mizoram on its eastern side and is surrounded on the other three sides by Bangladesh. Agartala, the capital of Tripura, is connected to the rest of India by a land route which runs through of Assam and Meghalaya.

### **Topography :**

TOPOGRAPHICALLY, the whole area of the state is mostly covered by dense forest, wide fields, interwoven with streams and marshy valleys lying between small hillocks covered with luxuriant forest break the hilly area here and there.

The proportional distribution of the hills and plains is said to be 2:1. So topographically Tripura is divided into : (1) Hill range (2) Hillocks (3) Valleys (4) Flat tillas (5) Lungas (6) Low land (7) River (8) Lakes. Tillas are local name of low hillocks and Lungas are narrow valleys between them.

### **Range :**

In Tripura, the principal hill ranges from east are the Jampui (height 3200 ft.), Shakantang (peak 2578 ft.), Longthorai (peak 1581 ft), Atharamura (peak 1500 ft.), Baramura (peak 1025 ft.). The others are Deotamura and Gardang hills.

### **Hill-locks :**

The hillocks are known as Tilla. There are numerous hillocks and lesser peaks mostly covered with thick jungle with valuable timber forest of Sal, Shegun, Gamai, Chamal, Karai bamboo and cane of different varieties. Experts suggest that there is a good amount of mineral and gas deposit in the hills of Tripura.

**Valley :**

The first low land in-between two hill ranges is generally known as valley. These valleys are extremely fertile for paddy, jute, oil seed, cotton and green vegetable. These valleys are thickly populated by the tribals and non-tribals.

**Flat Tilla :**

The flat tillas in the hill ranges are the only source of cultivable land. Owing to shortage of wet land, the government is giving settlements to the tribes on these flat tillas with various pattern of assistance.

**River :**

The principal rivers in Tripura are Fenny, Gumti, Muhari, Howrah, Khowai, Manu, Deo, Dhalai, Juri, Longai etc. No river of Tripura is usable for navigation and trading through out the year. During the rains, the streams become full when they flow with severe current. But after a few hours these streams become shallow again as the rain ceases.

**Climate and Rainfall :**

The climate of Tripura is fairly hot during the summer and pretty cold during the winter. From March to May, it is Summer season in Tripura when temperature raises up to 42<sup>o</sup>c. The lowest temperature recorded in January when it generally falls to 8<sup>o</sup>c. Monsoon starts from the middle of May when heavy rain occurs and it continues upto 2nd week of October.

**Soil :**

The soil of Tripura are mostly loose except where silt is deposited. The tilla soils are loose and porous and can not hold water. The soil of lungas are very fertile. The marshy swamps have bog soil which are spongy in nature.

**Vegetation :**

The plain land, hillocks and valleys of Tripura are full of vegetation. Vast areas of the State are usually covered by varieties of bamboos, cane, timber trees alongwith medicinal plants like. Amlaki, Bal, Hartaki, Sarpagandha etc.

## Wild Life :

The dense forests of Tripura give shelter to many wild animals. Indian elephants are found here in good numbers. Beside, deer, bear, monkey, panther, leopard, civet, bison etc. are found here.

Beautiful birds of gay colours can be found during autumn and spring. Beside, singing birds, like Maina, Doel, Shyama etc, some whistling birds are also found here. Butterflies of attractive colours are also available in the higher altitudes.

## Tribes of Tripura :

Tripura is a permanent residence of several schedule tribes besides a large population of non-tribals. The modified tribal list as per 1991 Census is as follows:

1) Bhill 2) Bhutia 3) Chaimal 4) Chakma 5) Garoo 6) Halam 7) Jamatia 8) Khasia 9) Kuki 10) Lepcha 11) Lushai 12) Mog 13) Munda 14) Noatia 15) Orang 16) Reang 17) Santal 18) Tripuris 19) Uchai

Out of these 19 tribes 9 are treated as major tribes viz. Tripuri, Reang, Noatia, Halam, Jamatia, Chakma, Mog, Lushai and Kuki in addition to the following sub-tribes viz.

i) Balte ii) Belalhut, iii) Chhalja, iv) Hajango, v) Fun vi) Jangtei, vii) Khareng, viii) Khepahong, ix) Paitu or Paite, X) Kuntei, xi) Kaifang, xii) Lewtei, xiii) Mizel, xiv) Namte, xv) Rangchan, xvi) Rangkhele, xvii) Thangluya.

Out of these 19 tribes Bhill, Munda, Orang, and Santal are Central Indian tribes who came from M.P., Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa. The Bhutias and the Lepchas are Northern-Frontier tribes who came from Bhutan, Sikkim and North Bengal. The Chakmas and the Mogs came from Chittagaon hill tribes. The others, like Chaimal, Halam, Jamatia, Kuki, Noatia, Reang, Tripuri, Uchai are treated as local Tripura tribes.

The customs and languages of these tribes vary from one another. But Tripuri, Reang, Noatia and Jamatia have nearly common dialects and can follow each others, languages. The Lushai, Halam and Kuki have also nearly common dialects and can understand each other very well. The Reangs, the Noatias, the Jamatias, the Tripuri and Halams by and large follow Hinduism though a small numbers of them have embraced Christianity. The Mogs and the Chakmas follow

**Buddhism** .A good percentage of the Lushai, the Kukis and Garoos are Christians. The rest of the tribes usually follow Hinduism (Sanatan Dharma)

### **Population :**

According to the Census Report of 1991, the total population of Tripura stands at 27,53,345 out of which tribal population is 5,83,920 (28.44%). The people of Tripura are categorised into two groups 1) original residents 2)migrants from Bangladesh. The people who are scheduled tribes claim to be the aboriginals of Tripura. Analysing the records of the previous census reports it may be found that the tribal people once were majority in numerical strenght, but from the census of 1951, they have become a minority group in Tripura. It is however fact that there is a controvarsy over it.

The sex ratio is 940 females for 1000 males in 1971. The density of population was 149 per sq. km. in the census of 1971. The literacy rate among the people is 30.86% as per 1951 Census but it was only 20.24% as per 1961 Census. In 1931 only 2.84% males and females were literate. But as per 1971 Census 60.44% people are literate.

#### **Growth of Reang population**

As per data collected from the various cenus years, the growth of Reang population are as follows :

Year	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991 (Project- ed)
Reang Population	35,881	40,347	48,471	56,597	64,722	84,004	1,11,725
Growth rate	--	--	--	--	--	(14.32%)	(14.33%)

Out of 19 Scheduled tribes in Tripura Reangs standing 2nd position in their number i. e. next to Tripuri tribe. As per census report from 1931 to 1971, it may be seen that Reang population increased distinguishly in 1951 census by 2675 Nos. in 1961, 22,001 nos. and in 1991 18,125 nos. It is also expected that in the coming final report of the 1991 census growth of Reang population would be raised approximatel 1,12,900 in number as the growthing trend noted above.

### **Reang population under the study :**

The present study covers South and North Districts of the State where Reangs residing under different Blocks.

From the table at next page, it is seen that total 1330 family have been covered during survey and total population in these families are 7242 out of which 2906 are adult male. 2935 are adult female and the rest 1401 are children. The percentage among the total population are 40.13, 40.53 and 19.35 respectively. The average size of the Reang family is 5.45.

### **Livelihood Pattern In General :**

Although the general principles of production, distribution, consumption and exchange hold good in all societies, there are certain distinguishing features of the tribal societies. Economic cooperation is one of the most important features of tribal economy found at their clan, village and intra -village level. The tribals produce almost everything they need for their day to day life. The technology is primitive and all their needs are relatively simple.

Jhum cultivation plays a major role in their economy. In Jhum they produce almost everything they consume such as paddy, chilli, jinger, vegetable, fruits, jute ,maize etc. However, they go to market for salt, kerosine, dry fish, mustard oil, cloth etc. They manufacture all types of handicraft items for their domestic use. Cotton produced in the jhum come handy for textile items which they weave into various designs for their own use.

Agriculture is the main source of income of the tribal people and their economic activities are concentrated around it. But agriculture, as we know is exposed to the vagaries of nature. Drought causes irregularities in rain fall which ultimately affects they yields from agriculture. Natural forest products are also irregular and seasonal.

Therefore, a major portion of the tribes has to earn their bread through labour in various sectors e.g. agricultural fields, forest plantation works, brick fields, construction works etc.

Thus their income is determined by natural conditions and



**Reang population under surveyed families :-**

Name of the Block	Total No. of families surveyed	Total population.	Total No. of adult male	Total No. of adult female.	Total No. of Children (0-11 year)	Percentage of adult male	Percentage of adult female	Percentage of children	Average of family.
Chaumamu T. D. Block	335	1675	673	708	294	40.18	42.27	17.55	5.00
Salema Block, North Tripura.	294	1764	745	689	530	42.23	39.06	18.71	6.00
Kanchapur T. D. Block, North Tripura	168	930	339	347	244	36.45	37.31	26.24	5.00
Matarsani Block, South Tripura	128	768	315	340	113	41.02	4.27	14.71	6.00
Amarpur Block South Tripura.	170	1020	445	408	167	43.63	40.00	16.37	6.00
Bugais Block, South Tripura.	217	1085	389	443	253	35.85	40.83	23.32	5.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1330</b>	<b>7242</b>	<b>2906</b>	<b>2935</b>	<b>1401</b>	<b>40.13</b>	<b>40.53</b>	<b>19.35</b>	<b>5.45</b>

From the above table it is seen that total 1330 family have been covered during survey and total population in these families are 7242 out of which 2906 are adult male, 2935 are adult female and the rest 1401 are children. The percentage among the total population are 40.13, 40.53 and 19.35 respectively. The average size of the Reang family is 5.45.

seasonal variations. Most of the tribes, therefore, live below sound economic status. Social and religious expenses have a significant place in the pattern of expenditure among the tribes of Tripura. To meet their needs, they off and on take loan from the money lenders known as Mahajan. They usually take this loan before the harvest seasons at an interest of Rs.30% to 100% per year or sometimes, in lieu of cash crops or paddy crops. Sometimes wealthy tribals also exploit poor tribals by giving loan in cash or kinds and now-a-days it is very common scene in every tribal village in the state.

In short, these are the general livelihood pattern of Tripura tribes. By nature, they are very simple, peace loving, and devoted to religious belief and practices.

### **Literacy rate :**

The Literacy rate among the Reangs is very negligible. In women it is almost nil. 10% of the total Reang population from the three Districts has been covered during this survey. Out of 1330 surveyed families it has been found that the 79.46% of the total women population are illiterate and only 19.76% women have got some school education thus may be recognised literate. The other 0.78% are well educated. Reang women may also be found in different Government jobs in the three Districts. Literacy rate among the Reang men is not satisfactory. But it is showing sign of progress. In fact the Reangs are mostly indifferent to their children's education. Sometime it is also found that a major portion of school going students stop their studies before crossing the primary level of education. It is observed that 58.60% of male are illiterate and 35.80% have got some school education. Only 5.60% reang men are well educated.

Among the Reangs presently some one are found in suitable Government services with high positions; namely Tripura Civil Service, Tripura Police Service, Doctors etc.

From the table below, we may have a proper idea regarding their literacy rate under the Surveyed areas.

**Table - 1**  
Literacy position among Reangs under surveyed areas :

Educational Status	Male	Female	Children up to 11 years.
Illiterate	1703 (58.60%)	2332 (79.46%)	111 (79.52%)
Primary level	734 (25.25%)	8 (16.49)	287 (20.48%)
Senior Basic level	306 (10.55%)	96 (3.27%)	--
Matriculate	132 (4.50%)	18 (0.61%)	--
Higher Educated	31 (1.06%)	5 (0.17%)	--
Total	2906 (1003)	2935 (100%)	398 (100%)



Ref. : 1. Imperial Gazetteer of India (XIII, II)  
2. Annual Administrative Report, Tripura 1965-66

# 1

## History, Migration of Distribution



Casual references on the movement, migration, distribution and ethnic origin of the Reangs can be found in published records, compiled by several writers ranging from British amateur Anthropologists to methodical Anthropological Departments of various universities in India. Lewin in his pioneer work on "The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein"(1869) said that "The Reang, Tipperah, Nowattea had migrated from the Chittagong Hill tracts to Hill Tipperah". Earlier reference of the "Reyangs" can be had from the "Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal" (Dalton E.T.1872).Scott, in his "Gazetteer of Uper Burma and Shan States (1900) observed that - YANG HSEK, YANG-YAN-KUN and YANGLAM, the tribes who were linguistically more or less akin to the tribes of Southern Shan States, called themselves as Reang or Reang, Rioi, Reang Rong and Reang respectively. Regarding their language G. A.Grierson in his monumental work. "The Linguistic Survey of India" (1927-28) said that the Reang dialect belongs to the Palaung-wa group of Austro-Asiatic language family, although at present they speak "KauBarau" which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language group.Regarding their migrational movements. Hadden A.C. in his "The Races of Man" (1929) said that "The earliest south ward wave was that of the Mon-khmer folk of whom the PLAUNG, RIENG and

WA etc.live to the shan states". While the 'Rajmala ; the chronicle of the Royal Dynasty of Tripura mentions several stories on the gallantry of the Reang generals in the Royal Army, we found the reverse in B.C. Allen's "The Gazette of Bengal and North-East India" which says there are two other divisions which are not regarded as true Tripperas, the Nawatias who are said to have come from Chittagong and the Riyangs, who are of Kuki origin and were formerly the Palki (Palanquin) bearers of the Tippera Rajas".

In 1956 an anthropometric study on the Reangs of Tripura was conducted by A.K.Mitra ( The Reangs of Tripura, Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology, Vol . V No.2 July '1985) which is the first methodical study on any tribal community in Tripura. After the establishment of Anthropological survey of India, another study on the Reangs was conducted by B.Mukherjee. From their studies we come to know that the Reangs are of mesorrhine type and both linguistically and ethnically they are akin to the Tibeto-Burman group of North- Eastern tribes.

Though the historical value of 'Rajmala'(Ed. Kaliprasana Sen) is yet to be ascertained, we have an early reference in the 'Rajmala' by Kailash Chandra Singha, the book which was banned by the kings of Tripura. It was affirmed in that book that the Reangs had been living in the valley of Karnafulli River from where they immigrated to Tripura Via Chittagong hill tract. An internal migration within the state also took place after the Reang revolt in 1942-43, a populist movement led by Ratanmani Reang Chaudhury (Popularly known as 'Ratanguru' to the Reangs and who originally,belonged to the Noatia community). The distribution of the Reangs in the state also shows their route of migration.

We have come across an interesting story narrated by Dharmabir Reang of Purba Bagafa who claimed that state for several decades. They were subdued by the Tripuris during the reign of a Reang king.

Numerically, the Reangs are the second largest tribal community in the state and their distribution as enumerated in the census reports indicate their route of movement in Tripura.

*Sub-Division wise distribution of the Reangs.*

Sub-Divisions	Districts	1961	1971
1. Sadar	Tripura West	44	300
2. Khowai		6,469	6,914
3. Sonamura		1	21
4. Udaipur		2,374	2,957
		46	-
5. Sabroom	Tripura South	12,537	13,653
6. Amarapur		7,341	9,239
7. Belonia			
8. Kailasahar	Tripura North	6,283	7,721
9. Kamalpur		2,668	2,710
10. Dharmanagar		18,834	22,207

The history of movement and migration of the Reangs is like that of the other Mongolian tribes in Tripura. "The Tibeto-Burman tribes migrated from their original seat on the upper courses of the Yangtse and the Hoangho towards the headwaters of Irrawaddy and of the Chindwia" (G.A. Grierson : The Linguistic survey of India, Vol.I part Delhi-1927 (reprinted 196, P-41). Major A. B. Fenton, Commandant, 2nd Mardas Lancers and former Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General for Intelligence in Burma has compiled "Routes in Upper Burma including the Chin Hills and Shan States" in which are a number of routes leading from lower Burma and Siam into those districts, during 1991-93. These routes were explored by several British Army Intelligence officers who gave a vivid picture of the villages and inhabitants on their way. But not a single reference was made in their reports on any tribe or their clans and sub-clans now residing in Tripura. The immigration to Tripura might have completed much earlier. There is no documented report on the route of the migration and time of their movement. Hypotheses and probabilities are remodelling from one to another. "All that we can say with certainty is that from about 2000

B.C. there was a movement of Mongoloid Populations from the north to India through Assam and these people alongwith others who migrated from northern Burma, formed in the remote past ,the bulk of the population of Assam". (S.Barkataki : Tribes of Assam.- Ed.1959. P-2).

But it can be assumed that the Reangs, like the other tribes of Tripura, left their original homeland as a result of i) Natural Calamity, ii) Intra-Tribal disturbances or iii) Internal feud and iv) In search of virgin and fertile lands for Jhum cultivation halting on the way temporarily at different places till they reached Tripura . Only a methodical Folklorological study in a contiguous area can highlight their exact route of migration.

For the Confusing statistical data available from census operations we hesitate to reach any concrete conclusion. "There were several difficulties in making a reliable enumeration in those days; inaccessible hills; the impact of the two World Wars; fiery atmosphere in the hills owing to communist activities ; the Reang movement led by Ratanmani ;insufficient administrative machinery to carry on the operation and superstitions of the people in disclosing exact figures". (as observed by Dr. J. Gan Chaudhury in the Reangs of Tripura, P-6).

It has been observed that many Reang families have further emigrated to Mizoram in search of food and virgin Jhum lands, though they had been provided land for rehabilitation to settled life and some assistance for plough cultivation. The Reangs discouraged by the Mizoram Government and the people of those area, are again re-entering Tripura. Their number, of course, is not very significant.

Though the Reangs are scheduled as a separate tribe in Tripura, some earlier Anthropologists have described them as a sect or clan of the Tripuris or the Tipperah tribe. Lewin(in the Hill tracts of Chittagong and the dwellers therein 1869,P-79and in Wild Races of South-Eastern India. London 1870,P-197-89) comments that the Reangs are one of the four clans of Tipperah. H.H.Risley (in Tribes and Castes of Bengal. Vol.II Calcutta. 1891,P-139)gave an elaborate

description of the 18 sects of the Tipperah or Tripura or Mrung tribe. One of the sects is the Reang community. R.H.S. Haichinson (in Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, 1909. P-36) has been credited with the most interesting observation. He remarked that the Tipperahs are divided into two classes, the Poorer or Tipperah proper and the Jamatias and that the Reang is one of the Sub-Castes or sects of them and the Reangs are undoubtedly of Kuki origin.

Confusions are still there as we observe the Uchais, a sub-clan of the Reangs, have been enlisted as a separate tribe in the state's scheduled tribes list, like-wise, the Chaimals are treated as a separate tribe though they belong to the Halam community and finally, during 1971 census operation they were included in Halam chapter.

Now to sum up, we can say that both ethnically and linguistically the Reangs are affiliated to the Tibeto-Burman Tribes of North-Eastern India and their language Kakborok which mean the language of man belongs to the great Sino-Tebetian linguistic family and are closely related to Kok-borok of the Tripuris with some regional variation owing to this isolation and Topographical reasons of their habitation.





# 2



## MATERIAL LIFE

### **The House :**

The Reangs generally live in groups on the hill top. Basically they are of nomadic in nature and their life is Jhum based. From the very beginning they were in the habit of changing their dwellings from one hilly area to the other surrounded by deep and remote jungle patches. Reang villages generally are named after the heads of the village 'Sardar'.

Their dwelling huts are named in their own dialect as Kaireing/char nouh. They generally construct these typical huts with the help of jungle produces. Their hut are built with bamboo strips and bamboo or wooden poles. The platform of the house also prepared with bamboo strips and the roof by bamboo leaf, grass or chan grass. In a house there may be found more than one dwelling hut. But in most case they use to live in a single kaireing or char nouh (A big size tong).

They change their dwellings after one or two years to a new Jhum site. The nouh is one room house and it does not have separate rooms for cooking or for the guest. Of course, inside the Tong there are definite area to sleep separately. Sometime they separate the platform of the Tong by using partition made of bamboo splits. This type of house has no window but must have a varandh "Sangsi" in own dailect for sitting during the leisure hours.

Now-a-days, the Reangs in a major percentage are living in a

specific area permanently and some of them live in mud wall-house in lieu of Tong Ghar. The roof of this mud wall- houses are prepared with chan grass and in rare case with G. C. I. sheets. In some cases one may find two or three dwellings in a house hold and a cattle shed.

A Reang village usually have 20 to 30 house holds. The members of the community under the leadership of Para Sardar show great community feeling and also show authority & respect for village leader.

### **Household utensil :**

The utensils they use, are very few. Their main utensils are baskets of various types and sizes. They also use different types of earthen pots and metal pots such as lota (jug) , gelas (glass) patil (mud made water container ), Dexsi (aluminium container for cooking different curry and pulse etc). Hata (big spoon to serve cooked food), Thala, (metallic dish made of brasses or aluminium). The banana leaf is also an important needs as their domestic purposes. Besides, they also have, some other utensils to carry water, for keeping food grains, storing paddy, cash crops, and other essentials.

Regarding furniture, it would not be wrong to mention here that most of the Reang families have no furniture such as chair, table, almirahs, khat, watch, umbrella, radio, fountain pen or any other modern articles except few settled cultivators with large land holdings.

### **Dress and Ornaments :**

The traditional dress of the Reangs are very simple and does not differ much from that of the other tribes of Tripura. Reang men wear a loin cloth (hand woven) and a piece of cloth as shirt for upper portion of the body. They also wear 'Pagri' like other Indian tribes. The women wear a long piece of cloth for the lower part of the body known as Passra or Rignai in their own dialect and a short piece of cloth as breast garment (Ria). There is a very artistic sense in preparation of these cloths by their own hand woven looms. The colourful shirts and sharis which are made of mill have a demand among them.

The Reang women are generally fond of personal fashion. They are very careful in their hair dressing. They are also fond of typical ornaments made of silver coins and other metals. The name of these ornaments are Rangbutang (to wear on neck) Anchali (for use in neck), Tar (for fore hand), Youhchow checha (fore arm), Kharu (for legs) Jhumka (ear ring) Chandrahar (neck) Taiya (etc. But now-a-days

they are not able to purchase these ornaments due to their poverty sometime they are bound to sale these silver made ornaments at a very low price to the goldsmith during their crisis period, for which it is now a normal scene that most of Reang women and young girl come to the market with out wearing the ornaments though ornaments in the market attracts them very much.

### **Food and Drinks :**

Reangs once were to depend on hunting, fishing and as a subsidiary on Jhum cultivation. Hunting still supplements their food gathering. Their hunting objects are different wild animals and birds, etc. From the jungle they collect edible roots, creepers which also supplement their economy. Reangs by nature are very fond of fish. They have the habit of catching fish throughout the rainy season from the river, charras overflow and in the stagnant water in winter. The process of catching fish are very much interesting. They make some traps which are very common to other tribes of the state. These traps are generally made with the cane and bamboo splits having more than one chamber inside the trap has very narrow opening for which if a fish enters it cannot come back.

The food stuff of the Reangs are varried and sometimes exotic. The main food items are rice, dal, vegetables, dry fish, fish, bamboo shoot, green leafs and roots etc. Besides, they are very fond of eating meat of any bird and animals. During this survey, it is noticed that some Vaishnab families, having no habit of eating fish, meat or any non-vegeterian food stuff. The foods of the Reangs mainly consist of the forest and Jhums products.

### **Drinks :**

Reangs are habituated of dinking liquor. They use liquor in all sort of social rites and ceremonies. Actually the Reang ceremonies have no family budget and they can not keep account of their expenditure. Liquor occupies a lion's share of their family budget.

I have seen Reangs in preparing the liquor in their own process which is known as 'Arraq/chow-arraq (rice beer). It was also observed that some landless Reang families often earn their bread through selling the rice beer and other country liquor. It is also observed that liquor is consumed irrespectively by men and women in the Reang community which is a major problem on the way to their development in all respects.

### **Tools and Implements :**

Reangs do not have valuable tools and implements except a few essential items like, Takkal (iron chopper) and a few basket type containers. Most of their purpose is solved through this Takkal specially in Jhum cultivation, it is an essential tool. They generally use the Takkal for clearing jungles, cutting of fire-wood and branches of unwanted trees in the Jhum field. The Reangs who do plain land cultivation use plough and other implements like their Bengalee neighbours and other tribal communities.

### **Language :**

The Reangs like other tribes in Tripura have their own Language. Their Language is popularly known as 'Kau Bru'. The Language spoken by the Reangs belongs to the sino-Tebetan Linguistic family and is akin to Bodo-Cacharis group. Now-a-days they have absorbed many Bengalee words in their dialect as a result of contact with the Bengalee neighbours.

Beside Kok-Borok, their mother tongue, they know and speak Bengalee well and Hindi to some extent due to recent contact with military and police personnel.

### **Household Crafts :**

Household Craft is a popular method to supplement their household needs. They produce different types of baskets with bamboo. They collect the raw material from the near by forests. The items they produce are mainly Beta (comb), mattress, Nau-Khain, Container of food grains, (Mai-nauh), container for paddy and other Jhum products to carry them to market or houses, Chaukhohi Khauh. (to make alkaline water) including different types of fishing and hunting items.

The women in the family produce on looms mainly different types of wrapper, Richa and Rinai for their own need. In addition to their needs they produce them to earn cash money. Though these hand woven articles have got no demand in other non tribal community, yet among the other tribal community they are quite popular because of their colour and designs.

The Reang household handicrafts specially the baskets, of different sizes and shapes have very good demand in the Bengalee community and neighbouring tribal communities.

# 3



## **ECONOMIC LIFE :**

By tradition tribals are the dweller of forest for which the forest have an important role on the tribal life. Reang economy is generally based on forest and its surrounding. Their Principal demands are fulfilled from the forest resources. The main requirement of food is produced by the primitive method of cultivation, i.e. Jhum cultivation. Due to nomadic nature, they still continue to depend on Jhum. It is found that settled cultivators among them also depend on Jhum cultivation to maintain their livelihood.

### **Pre-agricultural Economy :**

Reangs, pre-agricultural economy was totally depended on the food gathering activities. At that time they used to gather jungle produces beside hunting wild animals and catching fish from Charras and streams.

For hunting they, in groups, generally would attack the wild animals like pig, bear, mouse, deer and hunted as prupal food. They generally had to use bow and arrow and other sharp primitively made weapons. Hunting was then a game of them. The tender aged Reang boys had the habit of hunting as a play of various birds like dove, parrot and wild cock. women of the community were also used to participate at the time of hunting of different wild animals.

Even to day it is not uncommon to one to see Reangs are in

hunting wild animals in traps. I have seen Reang children of Chakma para under Salema Block making traps in course of playing. Reangs during off agricultural period practice hunting of wild deer, pythan, hare, mouse and wild birds. It is also reported that sometime Reangs with the help of other neighbouring tribals attack elephant and get them out from the Jhum field and if they find anyscope, kill elephant for community feast. In olden times they used to kill tiger and wild elephant getting them inside the traps.

### **Fishing :**

Reangs like other tribals are also very fond of catcing fishes. During rainy season then Charras and streams become filled up with water when they catch fishes of different taste. During off-agricultural season they also catch fish in the stagnant water by removing the water or poisoning the water with the help of herbal plants. Now-a-days they also use net of modern type to catch fishe or use traps of various design. These traps are generally made from the bamboo. Women do not participate in fishing.

### **Ccollection of Jungle Produces :**

The Reangs as a habitant of forest fully depends on the forest produces. They collect fire wood, green leaves, jungle roots and various fruits from the forest to fulfil their food requirement in olden days. Reang families under the surveyed areas are found dependant on the forest produces when their food grain is exhausted.

### **Cultivation :**

Jhum is a primitive process of cultivation. Before adoption of the settled cultivation by a large number of Reangs they were habituated with the Jhum or shifting cultivation.

Shifting cultivation is generally practised by Reang of North and South Tripura in addition to plain land cultivation. There is an innate tendency among the Reangs for shifting cultivation.

1. The Jhum or shifting cultivation has serveral stages (1) Selection of land site (2) cutting of trees and jungles in the field (3) Burning the jungle in the field into ashes (4) Worship of forest deities for bumper crop (5) digging and sowing of seeds (6) Weeding (7) Watching for protection of the crops (8) Harvesting (9) Thrashing and

storing of food grain.

In the olden times, Reang Sardar or chowdhuri used to call a meeting of all families residing in the villages. In that meeting it was generally decided where Jhum for that year would be done. Then the Sadar with the villagers would visit the forest area where Jhum would be done and distribute the plots of land demarcating with bamboo sticks among the villagers. This distribution was generally done on the basis of total family members of each family. The choice of land generally been completed within the month of Agrahayan (Nov-Dec.).

2. After selection of land for Jhuming, the villagers would gather in the selected field for cutting down the small trees and jungle of the field and left the field for a week or so far dried the trees and the jungle. During first half of Falgun (Feb) they again visit the field and set fire to the jungle pieces to ashes.

After completion of burning, they would meet in the selected field with the Ochai (priest) for worshipping the forest deities. God *Buraha* is responsible for the protection of Jhum crops and *Mainaukma* for the bumper crops. The ritual observed in the Jhum land by the Reangs is known as "*Wakhar-khaimo*". This ritual is nothing but tossing two bamboo splits which may indicate the prospect of the crops. Then each of the Jhum cultivators makes "*Kaireing/gula*" (a bamboo made platform for watching the jhum field).

During the first part of Baisakh (2nd part of April) a ritual *watamalimi* is performed before the different deities viz Tuibuma, Sangrama, Bonirao, Buraha, Minokma, Khunkma. These deities are generally worshipped as to appease the evil spirits.

When the ritual is over, seeds of paddy, chilli, cotton, muster seeds, mesta, vegetables and fruit plants are sown at a time in the field. Sowing is generally completed within the first week of Baishak. Then the Jhum field is weeded (*huktanmi*) once in a month with *takhal* (a typical billhook) by both male and female. At the time of weeding, drum is beaten to encourage the weeders. On mutual understanding those who have completed their weeding, help others. Some time labourers for weeding are also engaged by them on wage basis.

After a fortnight when the paddy plants are sufficiently grown-up a ritual is performed inside the village to satisfy the *Toi*- *Sangrama* and *Mainokma*. A pig is sacrificed in that ritual and cooked in the

field to offer the different deities.

Harvesting (mairami) starts from the middle part of Bhadra (August-Sept.) During harvesting, services from the neighbour are not taken. The responsibilities of harvesting lie with the family members. The harvested paddy are tied in small bundles and are kept in the field for drying for three to five days. Then women members of the family collect the bundles from the field and hand them over to the male members for thrashing in a big basket (*klang*). Thrashing (Maibuma) is performed by men only in the generay (*khairang*). Necessary seeds are kept in store for sowing in the next year. The Reangs do not use the new rice until a ritual named 'Maiktachami' is performed. In Bengalee term it is known as "Nabanna". After the festival is over they use the paddy all through the year.

A plot of land once cultivated has to be left fallow for three to five years for restoration of the jungle and fertility of the land.

#### **Plain Land cultivation :**

It has already been discussed that two third of land under Tripura is covered with hill, high tillas and slopes. Plain cultivation is possible in the rest one third portion of the card. But as the Reangs are forest dwellers they do not have much plain land for wet cultivation. During field survey it is seen that the Reangs under South District possess considerably good quantity of wet land than that of Reangs under North District. Reangs once do not have the ideas of plain land cultivation. But due to latest social inter-course with the Bengalee neighbours and Muslim they acquired the habit of settled cultivation. In the surveyed area a very few Reangs families were found to be Jotdar having large land holding. These families may be found in Toinani, Bagafa, Kalshi of South District. And Karam charra, Lalcharra, Manikpur in North District. The rest of the investigated families have poor land holdings.

The implements used for wet cultivation are not of modern type. The plough is the traditional implement for wet cultivation. The per unit production of plough cultivation is more than that of Jhum cultivation. They produce paddy, jute till, mustard seeds and vegetable etc. through plain land cultivation.



### **Land Utilisation System:**

The Reangs possess three categories of land namely tilla, slope and Lunga land (land inbetween two tillas). The tillas and slopes are used for Jhum cultivation or other horticultural purposes and the Lunga for plain cultivation. Investigation was possible in 1330 Reang families of North and South Districts of the state.

### **Distribution of Land :**

In the course of the survey, data were collected from the 1330 Reang families of South and North Tripura Districts, covering the following Blocks i.e. Chamanu T.D. Block, Salema Block, Kanchannagar T.D. Block, Matarbari Block, Amarpur Block and Bagafa Block. The following table will show the distribution of land possessed by the Reang families. From the table at next page, the following points regarding of their possession i) out of 1330 surveyed families 22.44% (325) families have no cultivatable land. ii) out of rest 1005 families 603 families possess land less than one hectre, 244 families less than 2 hectare and 158 families above 2 hectrs iii) The percentage of holding families is 75.56%.

### **Quantity and nature of land possessed :**

It is already said that Reangs possesses leveled like Tilla, slope lunga or plain land. Here the table at page no. 26 will give us a complete picture. Analysing the table above it may be seen that total 1005 land holding families have land measuring 2091.77 hectares out of which Tilla land is 1148.34 hectre. Average possession of Tilla land by each of the holding family is 1.14 hectares where as Lunga land is only 0.94 hectares possessed by each family. The highest possessor of tilla land under surveyed area is 8.10 hectares and plain 6.33 hectares.

### **Khas land :**

In the surveyed Block areas Reangs occupy a considerable quantity of Khas land measuring 235.33 hectares Lunga or flat land. The following table will give the details of such possession. Analysing the table at page no. 27 it is found that out of 1330 surveyed families 608 (45.71%) families possessed Khas land. It is also revealed from the data that Reangs under Chamanu in Bagafa Block it is only 17.97%. Data also show that each Khas land holding families possess land measuring 0.39 hectre tilla and 0.28 hectre lunga at an average.

**TABLE NO. : 5**

**Familwise distribution of land according to possession.**

Name of the Surveyed Blocks & Districts.	Total numbers of families surveyed.	Possession of land less than 1 Hectare.	Possession of less than 2 Hectare.	Possession of land above families	Number of landless families	Percentage of land holding families.	Percentage of landless families.
Chauvanua T.D. Block, North Tripura,	335	173	57	26	79	76.42	23.58
Selema Block, North Tripura.	294	146	48	32	68	76.88	23.12
Kanchaqueur Block, North Tripura.	186	79	34	26	47	74.73	25.27
Matbarari Block, South Tripura.	128	64	26	12	26	79.69	20.31
Amarpur Block, South Tripura.	170	58	27	14	71	58.24	41.76
Bagafa Block, South Tripura.	217	83	52	48	34	84.33	15.67
<b>Total :</b>	<b>1330</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>75.56%</b>	<b>24.44%</b>

**TABLE NO. : 6**

**Familwise quantity and nature of land possessed (in Hectre)**

Name of the Surveyed Blocks & Districts.	Name of land holding families.	Quantity and nature of land		Average Possession and land per family		Highest land owner in the surveyed Blocks.	
		Tilla	Lunga	Tilla	Lunga	Tilla	Lunga
Chaumana T.D. Block, North Tripura,	256	246.03	203.25	0.96	0.79	7.26	6.33
Selima Block, North Tripura.	226	214.36	148.75	0.95	0.66	4.56	6.12
Kanchangur Block, North Tripura.	139	225.17	126.79	1.62	0.92	7.34	2.70
Matarbari Block, South Tripura.	102	122.40	140.05	1.20	1.37	3.86	5.23
Anampur Block, South Tripura.	99	156.24	115.33	1.58	1.16	8.10	4.29
Bagafa Block, South Tripura.	183	184.10	209.26	1.06	1.14	5.72	5.22
<b>Total :</b>	1005	1148.34	943.43	1.14	0.94		

**TABLE NO. : 7**  
**Distribution of Khas land (In Hectare)**

Name of the Surveyed Blocks & Districts.	Name of families surveyed	Number of Khas land holding families.	Quantity & nature of Khas land under possession		Average possession of Khas land by the surveyed families		Average possession of Khas land by each khas land holding family		Percentage of Khas land holding families among the surveyed families.
			Tilla	Langa	Tilla	Langa	Tilla	Langa	
Chammau T.D. Block, North Tripura.	335	218	42.09	26.47	0.13	0.07	0.19	0.12	65.07%
Selama Block, North Tripura.	294	118	29.40	34.17	0.10	0.12	0.25	0.29	40.14%
Kancharpur Block, North Tripura.	186	97	38.76	22.83	0.21	0.12	0.40	0.24	52.15%
Masabari Block, South Tripura.	128	45	25.45	27.95	0.20	0.22	0.57	0.62	35.16%
Amarpur Block, South Tripura.	170	91	80.58	36.88	0.47	0.22	0.88	0.41	53.53%
Bagafa Block, South Tripura	217	39	19.25	23.28	0.02	0.11	0.49	0.60	17.97%
<b>Total :</b>	1330	608	235.33	171.58	0.18	0.13	0.39	0.28	45.71%

Khas land under cultivation :  
1. Tilla- 146 hectare.  
2. Langa - 113.26 hectare.

### **Land under cultivation :**

It is a common scene in tribal areas that most of the wet land are left fallow. Now-a- days they become interested in wet cultivation in addition to their Jhum cultivation. The table below will show the land under cultivation. The table at next page show that out of 1330 surveyed families 1005 families possessed land measuring 1148.34 heceters tilla and 943.43 heceters Lunga along with khas land measuring 235.33 heceters tilla and 171.28 heceters Lunga. The table also show that 621.28 heceters Tilla land is under cultivation along with 146 heceters Khas land 768.68 heceters plain land along with 113.26 heceters Khas land is also under cultivation. Land measuring 527.06 heceters Tilla and 174.75 heceters Lunga is still uncultivated and fallow.

### **Averag Consumption :**

From the investigated data it is revealed that surveyed families consume average 4.5 kg rice per day and have deficit of 0.50 kgmonds rice per month.

### **Land Revenue and Taxes : (Maharajahs' period)**

Land revenue is generally assessed on the following consideration.

- (i) Character and capacity of soil. (ii) The character of the crops produced
- (iii) Distances of market (iv) The means of communication.

### **Earlier tax system : (During the Maharajah's period)**

House tax or revenue was being collected previously from the Reangs for doing plain land cultivation and Jhum cultivation. All the every Jhumia families then had to pay a fixed amount annually as tax irrespective the condition of Jhum land. Land revenue or house tax of Jhumia was known as 'Gharchuktikar' payable by the tribal inhabitants for practising Jhum cultivation which was Rs. 3/- per family per year. The Act is known as 'Tripura Inhabitants (House tax) Act, 1965' Before passing this Act, House tax or Jhum tax was imposed according to the provision of the 'Parbatya Parajaganer Gharchuktikar Sambamdhiya Ain of 1329 T.E. (1919-20)'. The system of house tax collection was then some what different and was known as 'Adda Kar' and such "Kar' (tax was fixed up by the allegiance with the Ruler of Tripura and also as a token of respect towards the Ruler. At that time, "Grhar Chukti Kar" or Jhumia tax was realised from the tribal through their

TABLE NO. 8.

## Land under cultivation : (in Hectare)

Name of the surveyed Blocks and Districts.	Total Number of land holding families	Quantity of land under possession.		Quantity of land under cultivation	
		Tilla	Lunga	Tilla	Lunga
Chaumanu T. D. Block, North Tripura	256	246.03	203.25	147.75	178.26
Salema Block, North Tripura	226	214.36	148.75	75.23	108.37
Kanchanpur Block, North Tripura	139	225.17	126.79	118.16	92.21
Matarbari Block, South Tripura.	102	122.40	140.05	78.33	126.15
Amarpur Block, South Tripura.	99	156.24	115.33	82.28	97.79
Begafa Block, South Tripura	183	184.10	209.26	119.53	165.90
Total	1005	1148.34	943.43	621.28	768.68

Follow land :

1. Tilla - 527.06 Hectare.
2. Lunga - 164.75 Hectare.

Choudhuris or Sadars. The Jhum tax was generally assessed on negotiation between Sardar and the King of Tripura. The following table will show the collection of House Tax in different period from 1873 to 1935 from tribal cultivators.

(In thousand Rupees )

Year	Land Revenue	House Tax & jhum Tax
1873-74	38.65	24.67
1874-75	38.78	24.22
1893-94	78.10	40.35
1894-95	88.75	37.13
1913-14	359.73	45.50
1933-34	342.73	40.47
1934-35	450.71	46.96
	644.45	52.59

Reference :- 1.W.W. Hunter. A statistical Account Bengal Vol.,VI.

2. Hill Tippera State Gazetteer-1901-02.

3.The Administrative Report of Tripura State 1314 T.E.

The table below show the specific rate of House Tax (Jhum tax) for Jhumia tribes annually during 1874-75.

Tribe	Rate of Tax
Tripuri	Rs. 3.8 annas
Reang	Rs. 10.00 annas
Noatia	Rs. 10.00 annas
Jamatia	Rs. 3.8 annas
Halam	Rs. 2.10 annas or less
Kuki	Rs. 5.4 annas

Reference :- W.W. Hunter : Statistical Account of Bengal Vol. VI P/510.

From the table above it may be seen that the Noatia and the Reangs were the most heavily taxed subjects of the State at that period. The earlier rate was of Rs. 8/-per family and still before that, the rate was Rs. 12/- per family. From 1289 T.E.(1888-89) and on-wards the Reangs had been paying Rs. 6/- per family per year. "The export duty also imposed on Reangs the inhabitants of Gumati river for carrying trade in cane, bamboo, cotton, oilseed etc. to the neighbouring British district, Noakhali and Chittagong and to sell the same (Reference : The Administrative Report of Tripura State 'for the year 1314 T.E. P/

10). But due to collection of such export duty from the interior hill tribes, by an order, the then Maharaja of Tripura on 16-12-1347 T.E. (1937-38). B.B.K.M. Bahadur allowed Reangs free trade with certain conditions that they would have to pay an extra sum of Rs.4/-as House Tax annually (Reference : Tripura State Gazetteer 15th Baishakh 1348 T.E.)

The Settled Reangs cultivators generally pay land revenue and appropriate tax for their trade. In the absence of current land revenue records it is not possible to have official data, yet as per information collected from the Reangs, they pay land revenue less than other communities at present and Government also reduces land taxes upto 5 Kani plain land (one Kani- 0.40 acre).\

### **Place of forest in the Economic life of the Reang :**

Reang economy is characterised by the close contact with the surroundings. Because the primitive society has tried to work out some kind of adjustment between material needs and potentialities of the environment. The Reangs are recognised as primitive tribe as they entirely depend on forest for want of food, fuel, house-hold construction materials, agricultural implements. Even settled Reangs cultivators looks on the forest for most of their needs.

The food that they take is constantly supplemented by the green leaves and vegetable growing in the forest. Due to scarcities of cultivatable land and during severe food crisis the Reangs look forward to the forest for their livelihood. So it may not be out of place to mention here that forest in the life of tribes man is the only source of insurance against famine.

The main economic activities of Reang in the forest is Jhum cultivation and in addition they collect fire-wood, bamboo, banana leaf, various types of timber, various types of fruits and leaves of herbal medicine roots, honey, oil seeds, etc. They also collect horn hides and bones of animals e.g. elephant, tiger, deer and various types of mineral e.g. stone and lime stone etc. It has been mentioned earlier that they sell forest products to meet the family expenditure.

There is a feeling among the Reangs that they were happy during princely regime and royal orders were much more liberal and useful than those they now have to abide by. Their felling in one sense



true because in those days there was no scientific forest policy of forest managements in state for which the tribals were free to carry on reckless felling of trees for timber and fire wood as well as for Jhum cultivation. But the forest policy does not permit to utilise forest products freely as they did before. Now there are some restrictions on cutting of jungle for Jhum cultivation. The state Government reserves the right over the forest in general During 1886 an Act also was passed by the then King of Tripura imposing restriction on Jhum and also banned the cutting the valuable trees like sal, shegun, gamier, garjan etc. or Jhuming near such timber forest. This was probably the first restriction imposed on the tribals including Reangs. This rule was implemented through a Govt. Memorandum of 1297 T.E. dated 9th Falghuna, (Reference copy of this memorandum be available in the M.B.B. College Library, Agartala). Which says :

1. None can do Jhum within an area of half Drona (1 drona = 6.4 acre approx) distance around the sal forest.

2. The Divisional forest officer and the sal forest guard will duly inform the content of the clause I to the hill people and particularly to them, who are living nearby sal forests.

3. If after the notice has been circulated, any one practises Jhum in the prohibited area, he will be punished with rigorous imprisonment not exceeding six months and also be fined up to one hundred rupees.

4. The officials responsible for the protection of sal forests, shall take special care to this effect and if any fault is found with them they may also be prosecuted criminally.

After issuing of such memorandum, Jhumia settlement scheme came into action from 1888 because the reclamation and settlement in waste land in the interior place was a definite source of increasing state revenue. A reclaimer of land was entitled to get rent remission up to five years. In that year several Government circulars were also issued to the high official to bring interest among the tribals to take more waste land under cultivation. As the days passed on, more and more limitation, either directly or indirectly were imposed upon the tribals who practised Jhum in the forest. During 1908 an area of 15.6 sq. miles of forest was taken as reserved area in which teak, mahogany, sissu, rubber and mulberry were cultivated (Ref. Imperical Gazetter of India XIII P-121) During 1934 this figure increased upto 38.sq. M.

and at the end of 1943 it was about one fourth of the total land of Tripura.

The following areas of Tripura had been declared as Reserve Forest during 1940-43.

1. Langai - Machmara.
2. Langthorai
3. Unokuti

Reference :- ( Tripura state Gazeteer 15 th Kartik 1353 T.E.).

As a result despite a good deal of forest wealth in Tripura, the tribal people specially the Jhumias living in forest area fell under considerable strain to find Jhum land near their hamlets. "Many hill people, who earn their livelihood by Jhumming alone, had been residing in that place.

All the above mentioned reserves are contiguous to each other, and the boundary of one coincides with the boundary of the other. So a dearth of Jhumable land has arisen due to which the Jhumias would suffer. If, because of this, the Jhumias make a shift to other places, then there will be a shortage of labour within the forest Reserves. Thus there will be difficulty in felling the timber and bamboos and also in carrying forest products down hills, the businessmen will suffer losses and the state earning on forest tolls will diminish. The duty levied on cotton and oil seeds which are produced solely on Jhum, will also not fetch in any money to the exchequer" (Reference : Report of Forest Conservator, Scha No.3567-B/3-88 dated 3-8-52 T.E. of the Forest Custom Department, Government of Tripura. It is also assumed that Agriculture and Forest taken together, should have given to the tribal people gainful employment through out the year with sufficiently high income but this is not so. The forest wealth either fills the coffers of the State or increases the Bank balance of the Forest Contractors. As wage earner the tribals get very little out of the natural wealth, that is a part of his habitats and environment.

So, for various reasons mentioned above the forest land extensively is not wanted by the Administrative Department of Tripura. And accordingly in 1943 the boundaries of the Reserve Forest areas of Dharmanagar and Kailashahar was released measuring 251 sq. miles for the use of the Jhumias. They are allowed to Jhum in all bamboo forest hills within the dereserved area (Reference : The Consolidated Administration Report for 1353.-1354 T.E. (1943-45) P.P. 50.

Then the Jhumias were allowed to maintain their livelihood in the forest through Jhum cultivation even in the Reserved Forest area. But the main problem here is that jhumias have no foresight and are very much extravagant. So to cope with the advancement of agricultural systems the Agriculture Department undertook the following measures to assist the distressed people in the hills.

1. Circum lectures against nomadic Jhuming and in favour plough cultivation.
2. Complete abandonment of Jhuming if cultivatable land was available.
3. Proaganda in general for the development of methods of agriculture and introduction of crops which could profitably be grown in the hills under existing Jhum system.
4. Introduction of better quality cotton in Jhum.
5. Introduction of early superior quality paddy in Jhums.
6. Introduction of then sugar cane extension of sugarcane cultivation of single seed sowing system.

(Reference : I bid 1334 T.E. (1924-25 P-17).

So it is seen that Government has taken step to modify the method of Jhum cultivation with an intention to get more crops for the State's interest and at the same time to encourage utilisation of uncultivated plain and flat Tilla land for settled cultivation as a subsidiary occupation. In this regard, there was also a notion that if the Jhumias cultivate the plain land, the Forest resources would be better utilised. From the census report of 1931, it is seen that a good percentage of Jhumaas had changed their attitudes to plough cultivation as a main part of their economy.

The following table will enlighten the position of settled cultivators among the Tripuri and Reang during the year 1931 (source: Census Biharani 1931).

Tribe	Shifting cultivators	Settled cultivators
Tripuri	6.228	84
Reang	4.758	302

The table shows that the Reangs could realised the necessities of the plough cultivation from the beginning of the middle of the last Century, though they have a prejudice against the change of their traditional system of cultivation.

In 1876 Hunter also wrote : "The hill tribes object to cultivation by the plough as being contrary to their tradition and so strong is their prejudice against any change from their own system that a hill man of easy circumstances had taken up some waste land in the plain, near his village, and was cultivating it through Bengalee Musalman who he employed as servant" (Reference: W.W. Hunter :A statistical Account of Bengal page 501).

Observing the above of the past, naturally therefore, the plough cultivation become gradually an important part of tribal economy. But adverse migration of Bengalee refugees from the then East Pakistan has created an acute problem to the primitive tribes, especially the Reang who habituated to stay in interior forest areas.

The Bengalee people first tried to get shelter and tactfully took possession of the plain land from the Reangs in exchange of money as a result of which Reangs become landless. So it is desirable that tribal communities should be made the primary agents for the care and development of the forest and allowed to consume the forest resources. Other wise tribals in general will loose the mother touch of forest which may create socio-economic problems in the state and entire region of North-East.

### **Livestock :**

The role of live stock has a big influence on the tribal economy and on their agriculture.

The Reangs under Matarbari and Bagafa Block rear large numbers of cattle and other poultry birds as they possess plains land. But the Reangs in other Block have plain land for which their live stock are very inadequate. They rear livestock for two purposes. Manure is the primary consideration for which they rear large number of cows, bulls, goats and buffaloes. Not only this, goats, he-goats give them meat and cows milk and milk products . Pigs are reared only for meat. On every occasion they sacrifice pig before deities after which they assemble for a feast. Sometimes they also earn extra money by selling he-goats, pigs, poultry birds. So most of the Reang families under the surveyed areas possess large number of pigs, he-goats, goats, poultry birds. The following table shows the possession of livestock by the Reangs.

The table at next page shows that out of 1330 surveyed families 1272 families possess livestock. The number of pigs is 2797, poultry birds 3237, 967. Milch cow, 574 Bullocks, 40 Buffaloes and 2248, goats and she-goats.

### **Labour :**

It has already been mentioned that livelihood pattern of the Reangs is based on Agriculture and their percentage is 95% among the total Reang population in Tripura. The wage earners in the Reang community are of different categories. Most of them are agricultural labourers and casual labourers. But it is to be mentioned here that a large number of Reang families though have cultivatable or Tilla land in their possession yet, the size of holdings, fertility of land and the crops grown, have created a peculiar position for the labourers in the tribal areas, for which unwealthy and small Reang cultivators with un-economical holding, find it necessary to supplement their low income by working on the agricultural land of the other Reangs or wealthy cultivators as casual labours. Not only this, even in the Kharif season the Reangs have many off-days for which they works as casual labourers. Most of the Reangs under Ramvadra, Srikantabari of the South District and Lal charra, Ganganagar and Vandarima and other villages under North District have no work after the Kharif crop is harvested. The Forest Department provides work upto May. So the Reang labourers devote themselves in collecting forest produces collection and selling them namely bamboo, fire woods, chan grass etc.

### **Agricultural Labour :**

The Reangs as agricultural labour, discharge various types of physical labour. No tribal can imagine to engage a women for plough cultivation. But women are preferred for sowing a-work. There is a popular belief among Reangs that sowing by women brings greater fertility in the field and large yield. The Reang male are generally engaged in ploughing harrowing, fencing, sowing transplanting, weeding, harvesting and thrashing. Reang women are generally engaged for sowing, transplanting and harvesting. Reang children are given light jobs. They look after the cattle and other livestock on grazing duty.

TABLE NO. 9

## Live-stock Position.

Name of the surveyed Blocks and Districts.	Total numbers of family surveyed	Numbers of family possess live-stock	Nos. of Pig	Nos. of Poultry	Nos. of milch cow.	Nos. of Bullock.	Nos. of Buffalo	Nos. of goat and others.
Chauramanu T. D. Block North Tripura.	335	327	926	1052	126	56	Nil	428
Salema Block, North Tripura.	294	286	787	925	256	128	4	510
Kanchampur Block, North Tripura.	186	169	508	378	118	48	Nil	355
Matarbari Block South Tripura	128	121	233	346	213	118	12	413
Amarpur Block South Tripura	170	159	187	227	112	126	6	287
Bagaria Block, South Tripura	217	210	156	309	142	98	18	255
Total	1330	1272	2797	3237	967	574	40	2248

The earner Reangs are of two categories viz i) casual labourer ii) contract labourer. Labourer who is engaged for a day to complete a piece of work on a fixed rate known as casual labourer. In such case a Reang women can earn Rs. 10%/- only per day at present. The contract Reang are also found in various Reang hamlets under North and South Districts, specially at Tainani, Bagafa under Udaipur and Belonia Sub-Division of South District and Karamchara, Kanchan Charra, Lal Charra, Chilengta under Kailashahar Sub-Division of North Distict. Contract Reang labourers are engaged by the rich Reang cultivators having large land holdings. Some times such cultivators engage laboures other than of Reang Community also viz, Jamatia, Notia or Tripuri Communities. Wages of such contract labourer is vary from Rupees 1500/- to 2000/- per year with fooding, lodging and dresses. The Wage rates at present for casual agricultural labourers may be seen in the table below :

**Distribution of wage rate for casual agri-labour**

Categories of Labour	Rate for plain land		Rate for Jhum land		Quantity of land
	Male	Famale	Male	Famale	
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ploughing	45/-	-	-	-	1 kani (.40 acre)
2. Preperatory Operation	45/-	-	35/-	30/-	1. kani or Tin (.40 acre)
3. Harrowing	40/-	-	-	-	- do -
4. Sowing	40/-	48/-	35/-	30/-	- do -
5. Transplanting	40/-	35/-	-	-	- do -
6. Weeding	40/-	35/-	35/-	30/-	- do -
7. Harvesting	45/-	35/-	35/-	30/-	- do -
8. Thrashing	40/-	35/-	30/-	25/-	For yield of one kani/Tin.

The above wage rates are not meant for the Reangs only but also labour classes of non-tribals working in the Reang villages under the rich cultivators. From the above table it is clear that the whole wage system is inadequate to cope with economic stabilities. Because it is quite impossible to complete the wage piece work as stated above in a single day. There fore they can earn only 50% of the total rate.

### **Forest Labour :**

It is not possible to say the exact number of Reangs engaged as forest labourers. But their number must be next to the agricultural labourers. The forest labour are of two types :- a) permanent b) temporary. It is known from the Forester of Kanchancharra (office near A.A. Road, '82' miles) Reang males and females works as forest labourers with other tribal or non-tribal labourers in different projects. The forest of Dumbur project area and Tainani area under Amarapur and Udapur Sub- Divisions gave the nature of work, time shedule of work and rate of wages as follows.

The tribal labourers are generally engaged for the following work :-

1. Felling of trees.
2. Stacking the forest materials at Road work site or depot.
3. Removing the forest materials.
4. Sawing of timber.
5. Transpotation of timber.
6. Digging of electric pillars
7. Construction of thatched office houses or the like.
8. Repairs and construction of roads.
9. Fire protection measures.
10. Seed collection.
11. Nursery and plantation work.
12. Transplantation work.
13. Other jobs.

As per report collected from Manughat Divisional Forest officer it is known that the tribals are mostly engaged on temporary basis and on no work no pay basis. The Reangs constitute 35% of the labours force engaged by the Forest Officer.

A part from the Forest Department, Forest Contractors also engage both tribal and non-tribal labourers. These contract works are generally starts by the month of October-November and continues up to April or May, though contingent work remains all over the year. Working times for casual daily labourers is 8 hours a day. The Forest Department pays wages at the rate of Rs. 39.50 per day for the casual labourer beside contingent or Master Roll Labours. Contractor generally engage labours on piece rate basis. So the income of the labour varies depending on the nature of works performed by them.



### **Project and Road Labour :**

During investigation it was observed that a large number of Reangs works under Dumbur Hydro-Electric project under contractors at the rate of Rs. 35/- per day. It was also seen that on A.A. Road the Reangs are engaged as casual labourers by G.R.E.F. Wages are generally paid twice in a week. In the Chamanu T.D. Block area number of Reangs work as casual labour for making new roads, foot tracks, sand removal, reclamation works etc. at the Rs. 35/- to 40/- (cash and kinds) under the development schemes. Road contractors also engage Reangs and other tribal labours for metalling scheduled roads at the rate of Rs. 40/- per day.

### **Trade and Market :**

It has been mentioned earlier that Reang produce crops to meet their elementary needs of daily consumption. Agriculture is not a business enterprise for them to earn profits. The primary way of life of the Reangs is very primitive and hazardous type, where the past was unpleasant the present is uncertain and future is unthinkable. Dr.J.B.Gangally in his "Economic problems of the Jhumias of Tripura" P.P. 37-38, 1969, wrote, "They produced every thing they consume. Production includes cultivation of crops, collection of forest products, production of textiles, weaving of basket, making of other crafts, fishing and hunting. They did not produce for exchange but for consumption only. But among the crops produced by them, cotton and sesamum were commercially important crops. These attracted the businessman who induced the jhumias to produce surplus cotton, seamur to exchange for salt, tools, metalwares and other necessities."

Early reference of Trade & Commerce of 18th century also available in Tripura Buranji (P.P. 22-23). It is mentioned there that in a market in between Tripura, Cachar and Manipur all the people would assemble to purchase their articles of daily needs. The Cacharics brought the marketable surplus like goat, ducks, hen, dried fish, rice, salt, oil, moshallas, tobacco leaves, betelnuts, etc. The Tiprahs brought articles in the market like copper, salt, oil, molasses, tobacco leaves, betelnuts, jute, cotton, seamur dried fish etc, in the market for exchange or sale. Udaipur was then the capital of Tripura and also a big market town. The Bengali traders had permanent shops. The Reangs from the

sorrounding areas used to come twice in a week to purchase and to sell paddy, jute and cotton as the main commodities sold by them. They used to buy cloth, tobacco, salt, sweet oil, Kerosine, dry fish and liquor.

In the Tripur Sate Gazette, 15th Vaishakha 1348 T.E it is also mentioned that, "Near the upstream of the Gumati river lived the Reangs. They used to carry sesame and cotton down stream to the neighbouring British district of Noakhali and Chitagoang and sell the same." From the above observation it may be emphasised here that trade has been developing in Tripura for a long period. Infact, Reangs or other tribals of Tripura do not produce only for the market, but sale marketable surplus if any after their own consumption. The early reference also ensure that Reangs for so many decades practising trade in cotton, paddy and jute and other unespecifide commodities to buy their own necessaries. Udaipur was then the Capital town of Tripura and also a big market town. The Bengali traders had permanent shops. The Reangs who used to live in hill areas, had a track twice in a week to purchase and to sell. They used to by cloth, tobacco, salt, sweet oil, kerosine, dry fish and occassionally some ornaments and liquor. Effort have been made during field investigation to have a sound knowledge about the details of Reang economic aspects and to find out marketable surplus. It is understood that they have a hiding tendencies regarding quantity of produce raised by them or even the area of land under various crops in a particular year. Yet attempt have been taken here to describe a general consideration depending largely on observation, evidences from the Government officials working in the Reang areas and the reports of some Reang people of South and North Tripura Districts. It is however fact that Reangs in genaral have bo records over their income from different sources but it is true that a good percentage of Reang families have marketable surplus of paddy, cotton, jute, vegetables etc. and a good return is coming to them by selling these commodities.

Recently a trend has also grown in Reangs for fisheries & rubber plantation. During field investigation it was seen that at Tainani, South Maharani under Matarbari Block and in East Bagafa, Kalasi under Bagafa Block, Reangs are practising fishery having big water area with them. The Reang also take loan on subsidy for pisci culture from

**Block Offices under Tribal Welfare Schemes.**

**Artifacts and Artison :-** Besides this Reangs are habituated to sell different types of artisan manufactured by them from bamboo and cane. Reang women on their looms produce wrappers, bedcovers, screens etc. which are marketable surplus and sell by them in the village market during the off season of agriculture.

### **Village Hat :**

A market in tribal areas actually may be termed as "village hat". A Hat may be described as tiny fair, meeting weekly on a fixed day and at a fixed place. During the extensive field investigation several such hats were seen. In the Udaipur Sub-Division under Matarbari Block where Reangs live in large numbers there is a market named Tainani Bazar. Reangs from South Maharani, North Maharani, Debipur, Deotamura and from other adjacent villages come to purchase their essential commodities and to sell their marketable surplus. In Amarapur Sub-Division Reangs are concentrated in Ramvadra area. They utilise the Nutun Bazar and Jatan Bari market for the said purpose. Kalasi Bazar, Kaifang Bazar and Santir Bazar are under Bagafa Block Office area. In Kailashahar Sub-Division investigation was made under Chamanu T. D. Block area. Such type of village hats are also seen in Chailengta, Chamanu, Thalcherra, Manikpur, Manughat, Masli, Karam cherra and '82' miles. In all these hats, Bengali traders sell cloths, ready made garments, cooking oil, fish, dried fish, salt, sugar, kerosine, domestic utensils, farming implements, mirror, combs, earthen pots, ornaments etc. Such types of village hats may also be found in Kanchanpur, Ananda Bazar, Kheda Cherra under Kanchanpur Block and Salema, Ambassa Ganganagar etc. under Salema Block. There is also an important role of these village hats or Bazar from the inter-personal relationships among the Reangs. They can meet twice in a week their kins and relations in these hats.

A Village fair or mela also be treated as village market took place on specific occasion in a year. such types of fair take place once in a year at Longtharai hill surrounding an Asram on the festival of Lampra Puja (Shiba in Hindu Concept) under Chamanu T. D. Block. On that occasion thousands of Reangs and others come for domestic applines, farm implements etc. In South Tripura District there is also

a holy place at Dumburnagar near the Hydro-Electric Project where a in connection with Poush Sankranti festival thousands Reangs and others gathered for homage as well as to sell or purchase their comodities. This fair is important from the religious and commercial stand point.

### **Travelling Purchaser :**

A Travelling purchaser is recognised as village Dalal. (Commission Agent) such type of travelling purchasers visit the Reang hamlets to purchase different crops. Travelling purchaser generally purchase crops grown by Reangs at a very low price. Moreover, they procure all kinds of fruits, vegetable, poultry birds, goats, cow, pig in exchange of negligible price. These travelling purchasers are mostly Non-tribal traders living near tribal hamlets. Sometimes these purchasers used to go at the beginning of Kharif season and to negotiate the price of the crops according to the growth of crops in the field as a whole. It is found that Reangs used to sale oil seed, jute or paddy crops as a whole Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1000/- for one Kani/Tin (.40 acre) crops in the field. But it is estimated, they make loss for at least Rs. 400/- to Rs. 600/- per Kani crops. As a result rainy season they face severe food crisis as they do not have family budgets.

### **Income :**

Economic structure of a Reang family is fully based on agriculture, forest produces and in addition, various forms of labour. From the undergoing table it can be easily be understood that according to the present market price and fluctuating, market position the income of a Reang family is very miserable. Beside this, periodic failure of crops, lack of imagination about the future and other agricultural damages lack of cottage industries create a severe problem resulting in a permanently a deficit economy among them. Efforts have been made to trace out their source of income, expenditure, indebtedness, loan and its utilisation. To have a detailed picture regarding income, Reangs under the surveyed areas have been categorised into 5 (five) groups viz. Agriculturists, Lababourers, Jhumias, Service holders, traders. The following table will enlight on the different income groups under the surveyed families.

From the table at next page it may be found that out of 1330

TABLE NO. 10

## Different income groups

Name of the surveyed Blocks and Districts.	Total numbers of family surveyed	Total working persons surveyed	No. of families earn up to Rs. 800/- P. M.	No. of families earn up to Rs. 1000/- P. M.	No. of families earn up to Rs. 1500/- P. M.	No. of families earn above Rs. 2000/- P. M.	Annual income from all sources	Average monthly income of each family
Chaumanu T. D. Block, North Tripura.	335	978	121	146	42	26	Rs. 3,57,800	Rs. 890
Salema Block, North Tripura.	294	782	142	102	18	32	Rs. 3,06,600	Rs. 869
Kanchanpur Block, North Tripura.	186	518	82	97	2	5	Rs. 1,75,000	Rs. 784
Matarbari Block, South Tripura	128	382	56	48	18	6	Rs. 1,64,800	Rs. 1072
Amarpur Block, South Tripura	170	498	77	82	7	4	Rs. 1,62,000	Rs. 952
Bagafa Block, South Tripura	217	623	113	86	10	8	Rs. 1,99,400	Rs. 765
Total	1330	3781	591	561	97	81	Rs. 13,65,600	Rs. 856

Different income groups under surveyed families

investigated families, working persons are 3781. Analysing the table it may also be revealed that 591 families do not earn more than Rs. 1000/- p. m. and simultaneously 561 families earn to a maximum amount of Rs. 2000/- p.m. 97 families have income up to Rs. 3000/- and only 81 families earn above Rs. 400/- per month. The total income of each family stands only Rs. 856/- per month.

From the table above it can easily be assumed that in this high priced day the Reangs can not maintain the minimum standard of life with this poor income and therefore depend on govt. assistance. The table at page 47 will give a detailed picture of their different sources of income.

The above table shows that their income from the selling of paddy, jute, mesta, cotton and bamboo, vegetable and from the wages of their labour, service under Govt. and Non-Govt. organisation, trade and others. Data also shows that maximum earning comes from jute, paddy and labour where as the minimum is from the service and the trade.

### **Expenditure :**

The Reangs as observed do not have any budget for their family expenditure. As most of them are nomadic by nature and are motivated to liquor, they earn in one hand and spend in other. Except earning from forest and agricultural produces their income is almost nil. Their income from selling of bamboo and fire wood could only sustain their additional expenditure which now become a tedious problem for afforestation by Forest Department for commercial plantation purposes.

From the investigated data different items of their daily needs can be traced out. From the following table it may be seen that their expenditure are mainly on food, cloths medicine, transport, ritual and drink, marriage and other ceremony, plough and shifting cultivation, housing and purchasing of household articles, purchase of land, House Tax/rent and ornaments, education, guest entertainment and other casual expenditure.

According to the table at page 48 & 49 the Reangs under the different surveyed Blocks passing their days with deficit budget i. e. according to their family size their income is very low to maintain the minimum standard of life. Data also shows that average expenditure

TABLE NO. 11

Name of the Surveyed Block & Dist.	Total Nos. of families surveyed	Paddy	Jute & Mesta	Cotton & Bamboo	Vegetable	Labours	Services	Trade and other	Total income (%)	Average income of the surveyed families.
Chamunu T. D. Block, North Tripura	335	2.32	36.56	25.44	9.26	23.04	2.15	1.23	100	Rs. 890/-
Salema Block, North Tripura	294	22.98	18.77	15.96	19.32	16.45	5.40	1.12	100	Rs. 869/-
Kanchanpur Block, North Tripura.	186	13.05	32.12	27.53	5.16	20.40	1.10	0.55	100	Rs. 784/-
Matarbari Block, South Tripura	128	32.92	25.08	12.36	15.29	10.15	3.20	1.00	100	Rs. 1072/-
Amarpur Block, South Tripura.	170	20.73	26.27	18.13	12.09	18.76	2.19	1.83	100	Rs. 952/-
Bagafa Block, South Tripura.	217	19.25	29.30	10.56	17.25	21.78	1.41	0.45	100	Rs. 765/-
Total	1330	111.25	168.10	109.98	78.37	110.58	15.45	6.18	100	Rs. 856/-

Distribution of total annual income from various sources of the surveyed families.

TABLE - No. 12 (A)

Name of the Surveyed Blocks & Districts	No. of Surveyed families	Total expenditure (1964)	Food	Cloths	Medicine	Transport	Rituals and dirnks	Marriage and other ceremony	Plough cultivation.
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Chaumanu T. D. Block, North Tripura	335	100	56.23	0.46	0.56	3.94	30.38	5.26	0.80
Salema Block, North Tripura.	294	100	52.34	1.32	1.45	4.39	25.52	2.97	4.87
Kanchanpur T. D. Block, North Tripura	185	100	48.42	1.26	1.15	2.18	28.32	5.19	0.93
Matarbari Block, South Tripura	128	100	50.48	2.15	3.28	4.27	22.45	3.98	5.26
Amarpur Block, South Tripura.	170	100	46.39	1.93	2.30	4.33	24.80	4.08	4.33
Bagafia Block, South Tripra.	217	100	55.46	1.67	3.06	3.87	15.59	3.31	5.15
Total	1330		309.32	8.79	11.80	22.98	147.06	24.79	21.34

Familywise distribution of monthly expenditure and average expenditure per family.



TABLE NO. - 12 (B)

Shifting cultivation	Housing and purchase of household articles/land	House tax/Rent and other casual expenditure.	Ornament	Education	Guest entertainment	Average monthly expenditure per family
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
2.05	1.35	0.50	0.16	2.26	1.21	Rs. 289.35 (-)
4.38	1.38	0.75	0.25	1.15	0.61	Rs. 325.50 (-)
4.22	0.90	0.55	1.26	2.87	2.77	Rs. 356.72 (-)
1.66	0.56	0.48	0.87	2.00	2.56	Rs. 375.23 (-)
4.13	0.59	0.58	1.22	2.10	3.22	Rs. 352.26 (-)
2.16	0.66	1.30	0.87	4.55	2.35	Rs. 328.14 (-)
Total 19.30	5.44	4.14	4.63	14.93	12.72	Rs. 337.86 (-)

TABLE NO. 13

Name of the Blocks and Districts	No. of surveyed families	No. of borrowing families	Total amount of debt of the surveyed families	No. of families debt up to Rs. 500/-	No. of families debt up to Rs. 1000/-	No. of families debt up to Rs. 1500/-	No. of families debt up to Rs. 2000/-	No. of families debt up to Rs. 2500/-	Average amount of debt of each borrowing families	Percentage of the borrowing families
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Chaumanu T. D. Block, North Tripura	335	248	Rs. 3,96,849.60	10	106	11	70	49	Rs. 1,600.20	74.02%
Saleria Block, North Tripura	294	197	Rs. 3,19,920.12	12	55	35	85	10	Rs. 1,523.36	67%
Kanchanpur Block, North Tripura	186	120	Rs. 1,83,13.60	14	18	45	38	5	Rs. 1,526.28	64.51%
Matabari Block, South Tripura	128	95	Rs. 2,10,499.92			9	50	34	Rs. 2,263.44	72.65%
Amarpur Block, South Tripura	170	133	Rs. 2,04,734.88	14	10	20	56	33	Rs. 1,539.36	78.22%
Bagalia Block, South Tripura	217	198	Rs. 3,14,867.52	11	24	51	70	42	Rs. 1,590.24	91.24%
Total	1330	989	Rs. 16,30,025.64	61	215	171	369	173	Rs. 1,548.15	74.36%

Distribution of debt groups and average debt of each borrowing family per year.

of each surveyed family is Rs. 337.86 per month which is a minimum expenditure level.

Analysing the table it is found that more than 50% of their income expended for food stuff and secondly for ritual and drinks, where as a negligible percentage is expended for their children's education and purchase of cloth.

### **Indebtedness :**

There is a proverb that "a tribal is born in debt and die in debt". The Reang in general are indebted tribal of the state. It is more acute in the case of the cultivating families then the non-cultivating families and their average size of debt is also higher. The investigated data shows that 74.36% of the surveyed families have debt for an amount of Rs. 16,30,0025.64 during the survey. The following table will show the exact picture of the indebtedness under the surveyed Blocks.

From the table at page 49 it is seen that out of 1330 surveyed families, 989 families have debt. Such as 61 families have debt up to Rs. 500/- per annum, 215 families have debt upto Rs. 1000/- per annum, 171 families have debt up to Rs. 1,500/- per annum, 369 families have debt up to Rs. 2.00 of and the rest 173 families have debt above Rs. 2,500/- per year. The table also shows that the Reangs under Bagafa Block are also indebted. i. e. 91.84%. Data shows that the size of debt differs from one Reang belt to other. The indebted families under the surveyed areas have an average debt of Rs. 1,648.15 per year.

The purpose borrowing money are of various nature. It has already been said that the Reang by nature are extra-vagant and lavish to make any expenditure. Sometime they borrow with out any suitable purpose. From the survey it is revealed that the Reangs borrow money for both productive and non-productive purposes. The productive purposes cover the needs like purchase of land, seed and seedlings, bullock and agricultural implements, fertilizer etc., where as non-productive purposes cover the needs to meet the expenses of marriage ceremony, rituals, medical treatment, funeral rites and litigation etc. So the credit needs of the Reangs are broadly related with the following.

1. Agricultural expenditure.
2. Non agricultural expenditure.
3. Family expenditure.
4. Miscellaneous expenditure.

TABLE NO. 14

Name of the surveyed Block and Districts	No. of borrowing families.	Productive purpose				Not productive purpose					
		Plain land cultivation	Rusen cultivation.	Purchase of implements/Fertilizer/Bullock etc.	Housing & Cereal	Freed	Cloth & luxury	Medicine	Ceremony and wage	Education.	Others
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Chauraman T. D. Block, North Tripura	248	43	58	16	6	38	6	42	25	5	6
Salerna Block, North Tripura	197	52	12	15	12	43	5	21	26	8	3
Kanchanpur Block, North Tripura	120	14	41	18	9	2	--	--	35	1	--
Mahantari Block, South Tripura	53	29	3	12	3	15	1	8	10	12	--
Amangur Block, South Tripura	133	25	35	20	5	26	2	5	12	3	--
Bagas Block, South Tripura	198	43	25	28	14	29	4	8	26	16	5
TOTAL:	989	206	174	109	49	153	18	84	134	45	17

Utilisation of loan amount by the borrowing families.

The table at above page 52 will show the actual picture of indebtedness out of 989 indebted families, 206 had borrowed for plain land cultivation, 174 families for jhum cultivation, 109 families for purchasing agricultural implements/fertilizer/Bullock etc. 49 families for housing purpose 159 families for food materials 18 families for members, 134 families for ceremony and wine, 45 families for other casual demands. Interest paid by these borrowing families may be seen from the table at page 54 that out of 989 indebted families 229 families have paid interest of Rs. 36% per year, 283 families paid interest less than 48% per year, 253 families paid interest upto 60% per year, 159 families paid interest upto 84% per year and the rest 65 families paid interest upto 120% per year.

### **Sources of Loan**

There are so many sources of money in the tribal belt. The vital sources are Bank, Co-operative Societies, Church Fund, non tribal friends and relatives and village Mahajan. The following table will show the total picture of different sources of loan and categories of borrower.

It is seen from the table at page 55 & 56 that the indebted families are divided into five groups i. e. agriculturist, Jhumias, Labour, Service-holder and other traders. It is found from the table that 42 families have taken loan from the Bank, 206 families from the LAMPS, Cooperatives etc., 100 families from the village Mahajan and the rest 57 families from non tribal friends and relatives.

It is observed from the data that the Reangs under different Blocks mainly depend on Church Fund and village Mahajans for easily getting loan.

### **Church Fund :**

This is a montary Fund contrused by an executive Committee of the Church in the different Reang belt of Tripura. Church Fund may also be treated as Mutual Benefit Fund organised by the donors among the followers of Christianity. In different Reang village there may be found a Church where maximum inhabitants are Chrisians. These Chrisian people usually donate a part of their income i. e. in cash or in kinds to enrich the fund as a part of their religious code of principles.

TABLE NO. - 15

Name of Blocks	No. of the surveyed families.	No. of borrowing families	No. of families paid interest less than 36% per year.	No. of families paid interest less than 48% per year	No. of families paid interest upto 60% per year.	No. of families paid interest upto 84% per year.	No. of families paid interest upto 120% per year.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Chaumanu Block	335	248	34	45	85	59	25
Salema Block.	294	197	38	59	68	17	15
Kanchanpur Block	186	120	49	46	12	9	4
Matarbari Block.	128	93	20	33	12	20	8
Bagafia Block.	217	198	37	55	58	42	6
TOTAL :	1330	989	229	283	253	159	65

Distribution of rate of interest paid by the borrowing families.

TABLE NO. 16 (A)  
MONEY LENDING AGENCIES

Surveyed Blocks.	No. of family surveyed.	Categories borrower under the investigated areas.	Bank	Co-operative Bank Societies	Govt. organization.	Church Fund	Village Mahajan.	Non-tribal friends & relatives.	Percentage of borrower	No. of borrowing families.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Chamanda T. D. Block, North Tripura.	335	Agriculturist.	12	36	10	18	42	3	48.79%	248
		Labourer	--	3	--	28	14	--	18.14%	
		Jhumias	2	--	12	12	34	--	24.19%	
		Service holder	4	--	2	4	--	5	6.04%	
		Other Trader	--	--	--	4	2	--	2.41%	
Salemia Block, North Tripura.	294	Agriculturist	5	19	12	5	35	--	30.64%	197
		Labourer	--	10	--	--	28	--	15.31%	
		Jhumias	7	12	2	--	52	--	29.43%	
		Service holder	--	3	5	--	--	--	0.31%	
		Other Trader	2	--	--	--	3	--	0.25%	

Contd. P.

TABLE NO. 16 (B)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Kanchangur Block, North Tripura	186	Agriculturist.	--	3	9	15	10	--	30.83 %	120
		Labourer	--	--	--	25	--	5	25 %	
		Jhumias	--	--	2	30	19	--	42.50 %	
		Service holder.	2	--	--	--	--	--	1.66 %	
Other Trader	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Matbarhi Block, South Tripura.	128	Agriculturist	--	9	12	15	15	3	58.06 %	93
		Labourer	--	--	--	--	10	2	12.90 %	
		Jhumias	--	--	5	2	5	5	18.27 %	
		Service holder	2	--	5	1	--	--	8.60 %	
Other Trader	--	--	--	--	--	2	--	--	--	
Amesapur Block, South Tripura.	170	Agriculturist	--	25	14	1	18	10	51.12 %	133
		Labourer	--	--	--	--	3	2	3.75 %	
		Jhumias	--	21	--	2	23	5	33.34 %	
		Service holder.	2	--	--	--	--	7	6.76 %	
Other Trader	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Bagala Block, South Tripura.	217	Agriculturist	4	15	5	20	36	5	42.92 %	198
		Labourer	--	20	3	--	3	--	13.13 %	
		Jhumias	--	30	2	20	20	3	37.87 %	
		Service holder	--	--	--	5	--	2	3.53 %	
Other Trader	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Percentage	42	206	100	207	377	57	377	57	100%	377
	(4.24%)	(20.82%)	(10.11%)	(20.97%)	(38.14%)	(5.76%)				

Different categories of Borrower and sources of various money lending agencies in Tribal Areas.



**Loan Facilities :**

Any doner of this fund can take loan on a minimum rate of interest with some conditions during the off agricultural season or heavy rain fall or drought or famine. Sometime they may get this loan for treatment, marriage and to meet the educational expenditure of their children.

**Surety :**

To have this loan no surety is required. The primary condition is that loaner should have to be the member of the Church and he should have to donate Cash or kinds on weekly or monthly basis. After a considerable period of time one may have this loan in acute need of his family.

**Aims :**

This fund is made by the Christain Reangs to develop their socio-economic conditions and to over come themselves from the depending attitudes on the Government assistance. During investigation it was observed that the Reangs lead a better life where there is a Church because as per their religious code they help other economically weak Reang families to develop their economic status.

**Village Mahajan :**

The role played by the village Mahajan in the interior Reang villages may be an important part on the Reang's life. During field investigation I realised that village Mahajan is treated as a godfather by the Reangs. The Reang cultivators look up to him for loans for seeds, for bullocks and implements. When the crop is ready it is the Mahajan who purchases his product, when a Reang needs food, cloths and ornaments it is the Mahajan who supplies him food grain and cash. For the land revenue, the Mahajan pays them with some conditions. So it is seen that the village Mahajan totally control the whole economic life of the Reangs.

In the social life of the Reang the Mahajan also plays an important role. He supplies money during marriage, funeral rites and other religious festival. But for such type of loan the Reangs have to pay interest at the rate of 100% or above. I am reported that sometime Mahajan charges interest over the interest amount as a principal even though the initial loan is cleared. Even when the Reangs realise that

they are being cheated, they are not willing to repudiate the debt, for they know that without the help of the Mahajans they will not be able to survive in this world. Sometime Mahajans get two third share of the crop in lieu of negligible cash money as interest. Sometime they never get back their mortgaged land or other properties due to the trap of village Mahajans.

These village Mahajans can not be traced out. They have no office. But it is fact that Bengali & Muslim traders who have permanent access to the Reang villages or have a shop in the village market are playing the role of a Mahajan. These Mahajans have enough cash money and landed property.

Early reference of such money landers or village Mahajan may also be found in the narration of Census Bebarani (1931). It was reported that "the money landers belong to Bengali Saha Community and they used to lend money at an interest of 120% to 160% or some time more. They used to make it a condition that the harveste Crops is to be sold to them at a very low price than the market price".

During investigation it has also been observed that the Reangs with large land holding, now-a-days also play the role of village Mahajans. In my opinion these Reang Mahajans are only taking the opportunity of Government rule on banning the sale of tribal land to non-tribals. The poor Reangs facing problem & finding no other alternative, sell their paddy land and other properties to the Reang Mahajans. In every tribal village it is a common scene that these tribal Mahajan have large land holding, fisheries, rubber garden, rice mill alongwith business of various nature.

In this way a tribal village Mahajan acquires the maximum tribal land of the village. It is also seen that once who had landed property now need to work as a daily rated labour on his previous land. Now-a-days these Mahajan have started plantations. Such Reang Mahajans can be found in Tainani, East Bagafa, Srikantabari of South Tripura and Karamcharra, Ulta Charra, Lalcharra, Manikpur, Ganganagar of North Tripura. It is get interesting to note that these wealthy tribal families always turn to the Government for assistance to expand their property. All Government officials and political leaders also usually visit these Mahajan's house and collect wrong information about the people of the village. Through them sometimes these Mahajans take shelter of a political party when they face any problem.

It is also seen that most of these Mahajans are the village leaders/ Pradhans or Head-men in the village.

The main source of income of these families are Government service, agriculture, cattle and poultry or orchard in addition to Jhum cultivation in larger scale. They usually get a good return from trading in paddy, rice, jute, cotton oil seed, pineapple, timber bamboo and other forest products. They are more or less literate. Their children go to school and college in or out side Tripura. A poor Jhumia Reang family can never expect to get these things in life.

So such type of Reang Mahajans and other money lenders should be identified and the poor Reangs should be saved from their crud hands.

### **Economic Consciousness :**

It has been already mentioned that among the nineteen scheduled tribes of Tripura the Reangs are the most backward socio-economically. The main reasons are, however, due to their nomadic nature, habit of shifting cultivation, and addiction to liquor. By nature they earn with in one hand and spend with the other. Practically they have no idea of how to live better with what they earn. It is also difficult to get information about their actual income. Because they have an idea that if they divulge correct information they will loose Government, assistance. And they do not maintain any account of their income and expenditure. It is due to their illiteracy.

Shifting cultivation may be the most sensitive reason for which till to day can not be taken in the light of development efforts. From the investigated data and the total observations is made in two Districts of the State it has been found that most Reang families more or less depend on Jhum crops. But now-a-days Jhum is not at all satisfactory. At the same time natural calamities always affect the Jhum crops. The Government is trying to divert Reangs from shifting cultivation to settled cultivation keeping them in a specific area with all settlement benefit. But practically it is fruitless for some obvious reasons. This is nothing but lack of their foresightness, literacy and developed psychological make up. I have been reported that in Lalcharra, Purba Karam Charra, Gangangar of North Tripura, many Reang families left colonies when Government assistance as per scheme was over and moved for the interior places in search of Jhum land.

It is also observed that some Reang families though have settled down in the plain land and have large cultivatable land have a tendency

not to cultivate the land properly. Most of them cultivate land only for their own family requirements not for selling the surplus crops, I have come across so many Reang villagers where hectares after hectares plain land was lying fallow for years together. Few families have a trend to develop their own property and to get more income.

Regarding trade and commerce, the Reangs may not be treated inferior. For so many decades they have been accustomed to the trading of bamboo, jute, cotton, oil seeds, fire wood etc. It is seen in Santir Bazar, Kalasi, Srikanta bari of South District and Ganganagar, Chailenta and Kanchanpur that Reangs are linked with the trading of above mentioned produces. But actually they do not get actual market price due to the interference of the middlemen or the village Mahajan. Sometimes the Reangs are forced to sell such cash crop at a very low price as they had taken money from the village Mahajan or travelling purchaser. The reasons are to some extent due to their excessive lavishness in expenditure on different rituals, habit of taking liquor and lack of concern about the future.

Though Reangs are experts in making handicraft articles and there are ample scope of utilizing this expertise raw materials in the forest are plenty they do not produce any marketable products. This is nothing but their idleness, lack of interest and ignorance regarding modern economy.

Another vital point of their poor economic structure is the depending attitudes on Government assistance in cash or kind as they know that the government will help them in their distress period. This feeling is hindering their will for self development. It is noticed during investigation that they leave the colonies as soon a specific scheme closes and get their name registered in the Jhumia list of another form village. So the intention of the government to take them on to developmental effort is practically fruitless.

Though negligible in quantity some Reang families have been settled in Lalcharra, Manikpur, Gabindabari, Uttar Longthorai, Shikaribari Gannagar, Purba Karmchara under North Tripura and Srikantabari, Nilrai para, Garjan pasa of South Tripura District and their economic status is improving. Even then specific land based developmental programmes are required to be introduced for them to develop their whole economic structure.

# 4



## Social Organisation

### **Family :**

The smallest unit of a family among the Reangs consists of a man, his wife and their unmarried children (Nuclear family) though the joint family system still prevalent among them. In joint families the eldest male member is the authoritarian head. The families are patriarchal in nature. The head of the family distributes the work load among the members, maintain social relations with agnates and others, perform the rituals and ensures co-operation and harmony in the family. He is respected for his age and experience.

The Reangs have adjusted themselves with the local Hindu environment and have adopted methods, customs and practices of the religion which differ from their traditional folk ways to some extent.

The average size of the family, as it has been observed during survey, is 5.45 person per family.

No. of Family surveyed	Nuclear families	Joint families	Male	Female	Children (0-II yrs.)		Total	Average of the family
					Male	Female		
1330	932	398	3565	3677	659	742	7242	5.45

### **Clan :**

The PANJIHARO (clan structure) of the Reangs are as follows. They are divided into two clans - Meska or Meehks and Molsoi or

Malchai, who are again sub-divided into several sub-clans :

**Molsoi :**

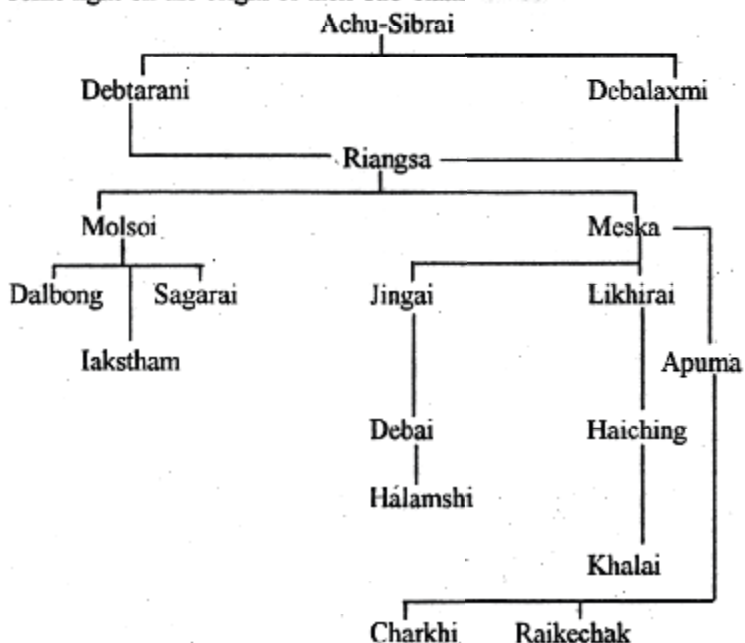
- 1) Dalbong.
- 2) Sagarai.
- 3) Nukhan
- 4) Apeta,
- 5) Changpreng.
- 6) Iakstham.

**Meska :**

- 1) Meska,
- 2) Raikochak,
- 3) Charkhi,
- 4) Tuimaifa,
- 5) Masa or Musa
- 6) Warem,
- 7) Tuimaksa.

The above clan/clans are broadly known by the Reang tribe as PANJI. The PANJI is mainly recognised in two groups as indicated above based on their socio-economic status and activities for livelihood. At present the Yastam panji is also abolished or merged into some larger clan. Dalbong and Sagarai are not panji or clan.

The geneology of the Reangs recovered from their myths throws some light on the origin of their sub-clans as follows.



A genetic relationship between the sub-clans can be established from this. But further details on Debai, Haiching, Halam-Pai and Khalai sub-clans could not be traced out.

There are several myths, or legends and found tales behind the creation of these sub-clans :-

**Meska :**

The totem of this clan is Tiger. Thaibaha, the hero in Reang myths, is considered to be the ancestor of this sub-clan. His mother was conceived after eating a fruit and was brought up by a tigress (Msama) in the forest.

**Raikichak & Charkhi :**

Apuma, sister of Jingoi and Likhirai was abducted forcibly by Lushai or Kuki tribes and she gave birth to Raikochak and Charkhi. Later, Charkhi or the spinning wheel became the totem of the Charkhi Sub-clan.

**Tuimaiafa :**

Turtle (Tuisama) is the totem of this clan. A Reang man was suffering from fever. He sent his wife to his friend asking some medicine and meat of turtle. But the friend demanded her to become his wife. She went back to seek permission of her sick husband. Meanwhile the friend died of excessive drinking. Turtle is considered to be the saviour and thence the clan is named Tuimaiafa.

**Warem :**

Warem means earring in kaubrau. A feud over an earring in a Reang family caused the name of the clan.

**Taomayakcho :**

The origin of this clan is associated with a bird (Tauo). A man wanted to catch this bird for which he started climbing a tree and broke his right leg that got caught in a hole of the tree.

**Dalbong & Sagarai :**

They are believed to be the sons of a Reang father and a Mog mother. Normally, the Reangs avoid any relation with the Mogs.

**Apeta :**

When the Reangs were migrated from the Chittagong Hill Tract, a woman fell down in the river Karnafuli and gulped as much water to look her like a fish. Her son was named Apeta. (A- fish in kaubrau), (pet- stomach in Bengalee).

**Nukhan :**

Four sons of Molsoi went to meet the king of Tripura to complain against their king Kaskau or Kachkau. When Kaskau came to know this, he sent his men to destroy the hut of the sons of Molsoi. Since then the descendents of the four sons of Molsoi were known as Nukham (burnt hut) .

**Changpreng :**

It is the name of a musical instrument. According to Reang belief, Changpreng was a parilineal kin of a Reang couple who caused birth of a illegitimate child.

**Iakstham :**

Parents of Iakstham died after his birth and he was then nursed by his brother's wife. Due to the maltreatment of his elder brother and other members of the family he went to Haiching, a grand son of Meska who was sonless. later, he founded the Iakstham sub-clan under Meska group.

**Kinship :**

The patrilineal and Matrilineal kins of the Reang are called SANDA I and HAUCHU respectively which effectively resembles the agnates and affines. The Reang interpretation for Sandai is Buthaithaghani -earungtungha -buduhaphaim (they are the fruits from the same tree) and for Hauchu, it is 'HAKchuthaha- kailaimo (Marriageable relation).

Sandai is the father's agnatic lineage group comprising primarily two ascending and two descending generations from ego. The Sandai acts as a lineage within the clan or sub-clan.

Kinship terminologies descending from 'Rasi' are as follows :

1. Rasi - Great great grand father
2. Bara - Great grand father
3. Achu - Grand father
- 4 . Apa - father
5. Wngsa - son
6. Angsu -Grand son



Relatives under different generation (BREM ) under Sandai are :

<u>Brem</u>	<u>Sandai</u>
Achu songbrem	Fa Fa and FaFabro
Wfasangbrem	Fa, FaBr, Fasi (unmarried), FaFaBrso and FaFaBrDa
Achaimo	Br,Si,FaBrSo, FaBrDa, FaFaBrSoSo, FaFaBrSoDa.
Sra-mo	So, Da, BrSo, BrSo ,BrDa, FaBrSoSo, FaBrDaSo, FaBrSoDa, FaBrDaDa.

Relatives under Hokchu concept include the following kins.

<u>Brem</u>	<u>Hokchu</u>
Achoi Songbrem	Mofa, FaMo, FaFasi, Mo Mosi, MoFasi.
Wma Songbrem	Mo, MoSi, MoBr, MoSiHu, FaSi, FaSiHu, FaBrWi, MoBrWi.
Hokchu Achaimo	Wi, BrWi, SiHu, WiBr, MoBrSo, MoBrDa, Si, FaSiSo, FaSiDa.
Hokchu Sremo	FaSiSoSo, FaSiSoDa, MoSiSoSo, MoSiSoDa.

The sex of the relatives determines the Kinship terminology. There are separate terminologies for grandfather, grandmother, father, father's brother, mother and mother's sister.

It is interesting to note that FaBr (elder), FaSi (elder) Hu, MoBr (elder), Mosi(elder) Hu, FaSi (elder), FaBr (elder)Wi, MoSi (elder), MoBr (elder) Wi, are described with the same term Aiung or Mama and Atai. Similarly, FaBr, FaSiHu, MoBr and MoSiHu are also grouped within the same- term.

After marriage, the relatives of the new bride also becomes affinal relatives of her husband (in case of cross-cousin marriage). the Reangs generally distinguish their relatives as agnates (Sandai), Affines (Houchu) and clan relative sd (Takhuwkhu).

### **Marriage (Kailaimi)**

The matrimonial relation of the Reangs is regulated by the concept of Sandai and Houchu. Relations by marriage within the

community and generation is Known as 'Halaksam' and the forbidden relation between different generation is known as 'Halak chaya'.

AReang bride is conventionally selected from the kins of her father or mother

**Halaksam**

1. FaBrDa
2. FaSiDa
3. FaFaBrDaDa
4. FaFaBrDaDa
5. FaFaSiDaDa
6. FaMoBrSoDa

**Hokchu**

1. MoBrDa
2. MoSiDa
3. MoMoSiSoDa
4. MoMoSiDaDa
5. MoMoBrSoDa

In the case of separate generation (Hala chaya) brides may be chosen from the paternal side excepting the following relations :

1. FaSiSoDa,      2. FaBrDaDa,      3. FaBrSoDa,
4. FaFaSiDaDa.

Brides selected from Halak chaya group are :-

1. MoSiSoDa,      2. MoBrSoDa,      3. MoFaFaBrSoDa,
4. MoSiDa.

Reangs are endogamous in structure and all types of cousin marriage are found among them. Still they prefer marriage within the clan or Sub-clan. Parallel cousin marriage is declining fast. Cross cousin marriage is very few owing to disintegration in joint families.

Widows, widowers and divorcees are treated as unclean and they are debarred from participating in social ceremonies or rituals. Re-marriage is permissible after the performance of purificatory rituals. The following alliances were observed during investigation.

1. Widow and Widower - Randi randa Kaimo
2. Widower and Divorcee - Sokchok baisikik
3. Widower and Virgin - Sokchok baisikik
4. Divorcee and Virgin - Kakalikalaimi
5. Bachelor and Divorcee - Kakalikalaimi
6. Divorcee and Divorcee - Kakkalaimi

Marriage between a virgin and a Widower or Divorcee is found in Reang Society. A Widow can marry her husband's younger brother. Similarly a Widower can marry his younger sister-in-law

## Marriage Customs

The following systems of marriage are accepted in the Reang society :

i) Marriage by negotiation, ii) Marriage by service. iii) Love marriage, and iv) Marriage by exchange.

**1. Marriage by negotiation :** It is settled through a match-maker (Garwinda ANDRA) who approach the father of the bride with proposal from the father of the bridegroom. After the acceptance of the proposal the father of the bridegroom, with his friends and relatives visit the bride's house and discuss the finalisation of date and time, bride-price etc. Later, the bride's father alongwith his friends and relatives also pay a return visit to the bridegroom's house. The date of ceremony starts at the forth quarter of the night .The bridegroom takes an ablution at dawn in a near by river or Charra or rivulet and sacrifice a fowl or chicken to observe the ritual connected with oomh and pregnancy.

**2. Marriage by service (Chamaraikami) :** Marriage means increase of man power in bridegroom's family. So, it is the traditional custom in the tribal society to pay bride -price to the bride's father. This price can be paid either in kind or by rendering free service to the bride's father's house by the future bridegroom. The period of service varies from community to community. For the Reang society, it is three years, at least. On his arrival he is asked by his future mother - in -law to make a comb for his wife. From the next day he engages himself in all household work and help the household in all respects to prove his ability to bear the burden of a family, failing which , he may be asked to leave. In such case, he is given a cash amount of Rs. 100/- for each year of his service. After the completion of three consecutive years of service he is entitled to start his married life after performing some rituals connected with the marriage ceremony.

According to Reang mythology, the ancestor of the Reangs, Devatarani and Devalaxmi, stayed together for three years so that the child expected from them could be taught all sorts of rituals and prayers by Achu-sibrai. Since then it has become a customary law to stay for three years in bride's house before marriage. But the social scientists see this custom in another light. This service period or Jamaikhata is

nothing but apprenticeship training period under the supervision of the aged and experienced in-laws before the new couple face the reality of life.

**Observations :** 1) Now-a-days this form of marriage is becoming unpopular among the enlightened Reang youths. In most cases they pay the bride-price in cash. The amount ranges from Rs. 300/- to Rs. 500/-. 2) Educated Reang girls of Narairang in Bagafa Block area say that this system is meaningless and an extra burden to their father and derogatory to their husbands. 3) Such system of marriage is prevalent in Thalcherra, Govindabari, Garjanpasa, Sreekanta Bari and in some other villages. 4) Satrai Reang of Labancherra stayed for one year in the house of his Grand father-in-law as her consort's parents died earlier. 5) Dharmajoy Reang of Budhijoy Chowdhury Para is staying at his father-in-law's house after Jamaikhata period as his wife has no brother.

6) Devsingh Reang of Narairang, Bagafa, received Rs. 300/- for his second marriage from his former father-in-law. His wife expired when he was rendering service in their house. 7) Sarbajoy Reang of Kalikumar Chowdhury Para in Tainani area under Matarbari Block was staying with his father-in-law for five years. But the girl gave her heart to another widower and married him.

**3. Love Marriage:** Love marriage or marriage by elopement (Broitoikhi laimo) is rare in the Reang society and the village council is the authority to recognise such marital relation. The couple may escape from their houses and stay in seclusion for some days or weeks. Formal marriage takes place if their parents agree to accept such union.

The village council is the authority to settle the disputes on extra-marital relations. They can impose a penalty of Rs. 200/- 300/- and punishments like flogging in public. The father of the illegitimate child bears all the responsibilities of the child and a portion of his property also goes to that child.

**Observations:** 1) Such marriage is becoming popular for it costs almost nothing save the community feast.

2) In Kanchancharra Gaon-Sabha area cases of as many as eleven marriages were found.

3) Marriage by capture (Toikhai Lamo) and abduction (Haiaphai) are discouraged by society. If the abducted girl refuses to

marry the abductor, the village council can punish him with a fine of Rs. 120/- . At present the amount of penalty has been raised to Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 2000/- .

**4) Marriage on the basis of exchange :** To establish the solidarity between two families the bride's brother weds his brother - in -law's sister . Thus the loss of manpower does not affect any family . Such type of marriage in found is Sandai group.

**Observations :** 1) Though the Reangs are endogamous, instance of exogamy is not rare ,now-a-days .

2) The suitable months for a marriage ceremony are the month of Baishakh (April-May), Jyaistha (May -June) , Kartika (Oct . - Nov.) Agrahayana (Nov. - Dec.), Magh (Jan . - Feb.) and Phalguna (Feb-March). The month of Bhadra , Poush , (Dec -Jan.) and Chaitra and all Saturdays are inauspicious for marriage .

3) Average age of marriage is 15-20 years for girls and 20-25 years for boys .

**Divorce ( Kak laimo) :** Divorce is permitted subject to approval of the village council. The main grounds for asking a separation are i) Maladjustment of the Temperament, ii) Aversion to work, iii) Extra -marital relation, iv) Incurable disease, v) Impotency and vi) Insanity . The village council decides the right on children. They also fix the amount of fines, penalty and alimony.

**Observations :** 1) Mangati Reang of Gobindabari, North Tripura divorced her husband Harijoy Reang on the ground of impotency. 2) Rupabati of Durpa in South Tripura divorced her husband Gangaram Reang who failed to provide food and clothing. 3) Dukhirai of Nandibari, North Tripura, divorced his wife who was averse to household chores. 4) Rangmati , daughter of Wakhirai Reang of Dhankathi, South Tripura was divorced by her first and second husband for her extra-morital relation with other person.

5) Chandrajoy Reang of Dharendra Chowdhury Para in North Maharani, South Tripura, divorced his wife who was suffering from liprosy.

#### **Marriage Rituals :**

**1. Halakchani Salong Sarkaimi :** Is an optional ritual in addition to other customary rites. It is performed to satisfy Bonirao, a

male deity, to save the couple from danger and death. Rice, two cocks are offered under a Salong tree. An iron arrow is pierced into the body of the Salong tree to transfer the sin and vice of the couple committed in their pre-marital life. It is believed that the tree will be thunder struck afterwards. A community feast is arranged in jubilation after such incident.

2. **Broi sanglaimong** : After the finalisation of a marriage proposal a grand feast is arranged by the father of the bride groom and a token gift of 20 bottles of liquor. One boar and one goat as presented to the father of the bride. Generally, the date of the marriage ceremony is fixed within the dark fortnight and the ceremony starts at midnight in the-house of the bride.

On the marriage day the bride-groom is generally accompanied by his parents, friends, relatives and a priest (Aukchai). The father of the bridegroom then presents one he-goat, two cocks (Towla-tawma) and a pig to sacrifice before two deities viz. Buraha and Sangrama for the smooth celebration of the marriage ritual. The sacrificed animals and bird are used for a general feast for the marriage day. The father of the bridegroom then gives new clothes to the bride along with one bed sheet (Baki) one mat (eanthai) for marriage ritual. He also presents a new billhook (dabrook) to be used by the bridegroom in the house of the father-in-law. The bridegroom is not permitted to take liquor. During marriage ceremony a mat is spread on the floor of the tongghar (Traditional hut) on which a bed sheet is also spread. A basket (baileng) containing rice (mairong) mustard oil (hairathawo). flower (khum) cotton (khul), chilli (Thamso) salt (som) alongwith a billhook (dabrook) are kept; container with water, two bottle's of drinks are kept. A breast cloth (Ryisa) as the substitute of the bride is placed before the bridegroom. The actual ceremony starts.

### **Kwpa Twilumo**

AT this stage of marriage ceremony the priest stands before the bridegroom and advice him to stay and work in the house of the bride upto three years and advices him to stay and work in the house of the bride upto three years with the auspicious dabrook and chants the following

Chandi guru bu youggr-a tong ou,  
Bosomoti bu kasing tong ou,

Sorgo bu nai saye tong ou,  
 Ama Ganga tong ou, Borma tong ou, Bishno tong ou,  
 Tini ni bar ou tini ni sal ou,  
 B'sa (hamkoti) bai B'sa (hamkorai) no soitya khemi,  
 iman khemi, khabouha khemi, khubouha khemi,  
 Ang auk chaiha samia, achu sibrai  
 chong nango, achu Hangraiha wai nangmi sci.

Which means keeping Guru, earth, sky, universe and all assembled people as witness, today at this very auspicious moment I (the priest) do solemn the wedding of Mr. X and Ms. Y. It is not plan/creation architected by Achu sibari and executed by Achu Hangrai. Be the couple live long with grey hair like cotton .....

Then the priest takes a considerable quantity of rice in his right hand from the basket and utters as follows :

"BONO MIRONG TAHINDI MAINOK  
 MARI (Name of the bridegroom ) BUNGIW  
 LATE TONGKHEBU MAIK NOKMA ONGNAI"

Which means rice is the goddess of wealth (mainokma). If you do not live righteously then misfortune will visit you and many evil spirits will haunt you please listen to people of the 12 (twelve) clans.

Then the priest takes some chilli in his hand and says the followings :-

THMSADAA HIAWIAI TONGDI  
 HIAWIAIEA KHE NIMI MUKHA  
 HIAWMA TONDI KHUDE KHUNAHA .

Which means if you do not love properly your sweet heart you will experience the burning sensation of the chilli.

Thereafter the priest again takes some salt and chants the following :

"SOMADAI PLAEA TONGDI TONGYA KHLE  
 SOMDAI CHRAM EA THANAI KHUDE  
 KHANAHA KHUDE RENAHA"

(Which means, live like the taste of salt other-wise you will dissolve like the salt)

Then the priest takes some mustard seeds and oil and utters :-  
 THAW DAI MLILAI TONGDI IAKHEBLE  
 MUKTOR ANGNAI-KHUDE KHANAHA

(Which means, live together like oil as absorbed in the body, otherwise oil will come like tears in your life)

The Oath administration is being thus over and the Ojhai then takes a stone in his left hand and strike it with a dao (dabrok ) and utters :

Tula deing khnai phuilai tong di,  
Thamso deing hiaolai tong di,  
Som deing chromlai tong di,  
Hlong ni bu thalu sor ni bu aiya khe tang  
chalai tong di song nunglai tong di.  
Khuar kchang kaham noupho toikumainai ya,  
Lama leing lathai kaham noupho leing lamainai ya.  
Which means :

Your longevity may be of this stone  
Your life span may be of this river  
your teeth may be worn , and you have them anew  
Let your hair turn gray  
Never take bath on the way - side water source  
Do not take rest except in a cool place .

The stone is broken because there is a belief among the Reangs that Buraha who is treated as the guardian spirit resides in the stone and the bride-groom listens to the oath in presence of Buraha. After, this oath bride-groom bows down to his parents and mother-in-law. He then asks his mother-in-law for two pots of rice beer (Chuak butuk). The priest and bride groom first sip the rice beer from the pot with the help of bamboo tubes. Then comes the turn of the rest of the assembled persons.

#### **Sema Sangmi :**

The next stage of marriage ritual is Sema-Sangmi. The bridegroom along with the priest enters the Tong Ghar (traditional hut) where the bride is also brought for the first time. The bride and bridegroom then bow to the priest and offer him two bottles of wine. They ask the priest about their future life. The priest examines the entrails of the cock (discussed before) and predicts their future.

During the night the friends of the bride ask the bride groom to distribute wine. Then the groom's party, other Sandai relations, Hakchu relations of the brides and other villagers participate in the feast arranged by the bride parents. The companions of the bride groom leave the bride's house after the feast is over. But the parents of the bride groom stay back for four days in the bride's house. But now a



days they stay for 2 days only. Tradition says that the new couple earlier could not sleep for first three nights together nor could they even talk to each other for two nights and one day. But now all these have changed.

### **Haio Berai Bimi**

After expiry of one year in the house of the bride the bride groom and bride are permitted to go to the house of the bridegroom for the first time. When the father-in-law of the bride presents her a breast cloth (r'sha or rinai, wearing cloth) and necklace of silver coin (Rang butang). After returning from the bride-grooms house to the bride-house the mother -in-law of the bride groom presents him a dabrook (cutlan) and the father-in-law gives him a long cloth (Dhoti or Pondri) and one turban (Kamsoih) for the first time. The father of the bride groom also presents to the bride's father 4 bottles of wine and one pig (female)

### **Haio Phaimi**

This marriage connected ritual starts when the bride permanently goes to her husband's house. When the Jamai Khata of three years is over and the bridegroom is permitted to go to his own house with his wife. On the first Bsisakh (14 th to 15 April) the father of the bride celebrate a ceremony in his house. The father of the bride then presents some items, comprising a piece of cloth (rinai), one breast cloth (risha), three cocks, one pig, one trunk, one bed sheet (boki), one wheel (Charkhi), etc. according to his financial position. After staying three to four days just before their departure from the father-in-law's house, the bridegroom with wife bows to the bride's parents. The father of the bride blesses them by chanting the following :

"Hantho Chatho Haphung Mai Mong  
Toibung Nang Saichalai Takhu Khubai  
Kong Khlua Tong Laid/etc."

Which means :     You start work in the Jhum and  
                              Let the crops grow more.  
                              You start fishing in the river and  
                              Let the river not be exhausted.  
                              We bless you two for  
                              Long life and prosperity.

# 5

## RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION

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### Origin of Reang Religious Code

There is a popular belief among the Reangs that they have originated from the Achu Sibrai. As we have already mentioned that mistaking some pieces of stones as eggs Bihangama, wife of the Achu Sibrai hatched them for twelve years. The Debatarani and the Debalaxmi were born from these stones who ultimately got recognition as the ancestor of the Reangs : Achu Sibrai gave them warmth and care. He taught them the names of different things that existed in the world; mainly different crops and paddy. He also showed them badia paddy, for which the Reangs perform 'Badia- maibasami; before harvesting. He also acquainted them how to make shifting cultivation and other rituals connected with it. Achu Sibrai taught them all which have been still followed so long by the Reangs in their day life from generation to generation.

One day while Achu Sibrai was in the forest with Debatarani & Debalaxmi; he pretended as thirsty and asked Debatarani to bring water for him from the near by river. Accordingly Debatarani went for water but found the river dry. He then returned to Achu Sibarai and reported the matter. Achu Sibarai again ordered him to try and to go for water. But this time too he was disappointed. Achu Sibarai then sent Debalaxmi to bring water. She was also disappointed and found the-river dry.

Achu - Sibarai then instructed them to worship goddess of water, Taitouchungchaoma, at a particular place in the forest. Debatarani & Debalaxmi did so. Being pleased with them, Taitouchungchaoma agreed to give water, if Debatarani promise to marry his sister, Debalaxmi in due course. They came back and told Achu -Sibarai all these things.

Achu Sibarai also persuaded both of them to marry each other. Sibarai make a thatch (Nokthapa) for Debatarani and Debalaxmi to sleep at night. Finding them hesitating Sibarai created a storm ; for which they have to stay together in union at that night in the thatch.

Achu -Sibarai was happy when he came to know that Debalaxmi was pregnant and asked Debatarani to perform two rituals viz Toichaumi and Kabengbuni for the welfare of the pregnant lady and for the on coming baby. In due course, Debalaxmi gave birth to a male child named 'Raingsa'. Achu-Sibarai taught them to perform "Daririmi" ritual and then "Abhu-Simi," for the purification of the child. "Bacho-"Kami" ritual is still performed for the good health, wealth and prosperity in life of the new born baby.

Thus Debatarani and Debalaxmi, Raingsa and his children, Meska and Molsoi came to know as the ancestors of Reangs. Achu-Sibarai also instructed the deities to take care of them and to punish them if the code given by him are violated by them. That is why the Reangs still follow the traditional social custom so carefully, cautiously and the obediently. Reangs also believe that the heaven and the earth, men, beasts, birds, reptiles and fish were made by Achu-Sibarai, and he exerts the authoritarian control over these and also participate as the spirit in human activities. He also punishes them who violate social codes created by him.

### **Concept of Deities**

There are numerous Reang deities, of which some are worshipped very commonly alongwith various rituals and other unspecified deities are worshipped rarely. There is a common belief in Reangs that Achu Sibarai, sammlin-long and 'Tam-puima' live in the sky and the rest in this world with the Reangs. Of these, Achu-Sibarai is known as Baraha. The god of destruction. His Only activities are to show various dreams in the sleep and to makes peculiar sound in the forest to frighten the Reangs.

Reangs perform rituals to Buraha and his associate ghosts. He is recognised as omnipotent and omniscient. He has a hand in every sphere of Reang life. He is also superficially recognised as the Mahadev or Shiva as in the thought of Hindu religion. 'Thuinairao' is recognised as the king of the deities of Reangs. 'Soinairao keeps record of virtues and good works of Reang' and evil works as is done by (Chitragupta) in the concept of Hindu religion. 'Benaiga' is referred to as the lord of bamboo, cotton, jute and other commercial crops and may be compared to Ganesh of the Hindu religion. Jampira, Sisi, and Manji are the sons of Buraha, of which former is the lord of Forest and the other two are the guardian spirit of the dead. Lampra is also referred as the god of sea and sky and is associated with the Mahadev as in the Hindu mythology. They are all worshipped after a Reang dies.

The female deities of Reangs are known as Motaikotorma, Songrama, Tuibuma, Mainouhma, Bani-Rao Khulongma etc. Motaikotorma is referred to as the wife of the Buraha or Achu-sibarai and is equated as the Durga or Kali as in Hindu concept. Songrama is equated as earth; Tuibuma is the goddess of water or river. Mainouhma is the goddess of the wealth or Tuibuma and Mailongma are the wives of Buraha and are worshipped for house hold peace, prosperity and purification. Mainouhma may be compared with the goddess Laksmi of the Hindu religion. Kangsari and Nakati are the two female deities who are also worshipped by Reangs for the good wealth & long life of their children and mankind.

Darukha and Mapania are the deities of crops and are responsible for harvest and at the same time Doaria is responsible for guarding the houses of the Reangs and their crops. They are also considered as the guards of the all female deities.

Among the unspecified deities, who are rarely worshipped by Reangs are Sanaima, Rangania, Jankhali, Raikhali, Tambura Bambura, Basarai etc. Out of these deities there are few unspecified deities viz Dig, Rong, Bekali, Bondarma, Klingsarma, Jhornasrima, Anator, Bonator, Yamkali, Sainima etc. These are all evil spirits and cause some disturbance in the life of Reangs and that is why Reangs try to satisfy these evil spirits by any means to overcome their day to day problems in life and to live in peace.

However, since the early part of 19th century the Reangs in their religious beliefs were gradually influenced by the concept of Hindu deities, Vaishnavism and Hindu rituals. Influence of Lord Krishna on the Reangs is tremendous with the hope of becoming a perfect devotee of Lord Krishna by some of the Reangs. They discarded meat and fish as their food items. The Reangs feel that there is a close relation between their traditional deities and Hindu Gods and Goddess.

It is interesting to note here that some Reangs believe that the Hindu Gods are more easily accessible and may be pleased more quickly, that is why one can observe shifting of devotion among some of Reangs to the Hindu Gods and goddess beside their traditional deities.

### **Concept of Evil Spirits or Ghosts.**

Like the Hindus, Reangs also believe in evil spirits. The term Bhut is a synonym for Bhut (ghost) in Hindu religion. Buraha is the major evil spirit in Reangs religious thought and they always try to satisfy Buraha (Achu-Sibarai) by worshipping and by sacrificing pig, cock, eggs and fruit. Besides Buraha there are sixteen other evil spirits which are feared for their promise to help or harm a Reang, and Dhanpati is the master of these sixteen evil spirits. Buraha-Bhutlaimi a ritual, is also performed by Reangs in the name of Buraha for the satisfaction of the evil spirits or ghosts. Eska-cugma is also considered as a ghost and there is a common belief among the Reangs that fifteen ghosts reside in rainbows in the sky and these rainbows are the astracts which lead to heaven.

### **Concept of Body and Soul**

The Reangs believe that soul leaves the body for ever after death which have a permanent place in between chest and navel. Displacement of soul (rangmathaukmi) due to attack of deities or spirits causes temporary unconsciousness (thuiplangmi) and diseases are caused if the soul is hurt in any way.

Like the Hindus, Reangs also believe that after any accidental death or caused by incurable diseases, the deceased soul transcends physical integument and becomes wind (Nawba) and floats in the air as 'Bhut' or 'Peret'. There is also a common belief that if one leads a sinful life, he must take eighty four rebirths in animals or insects womb

and then is resuscitated in human form. But if any body leads virtuous life he will be able to avoid rebirth in animals or insects or human being and after death he lives permanently in the heaven or temple of god (Motai- chabe thongha).

The soul of the dead is received by Twibuma (goddess of water or river) if post funeral ritual has been performed and if the bones of specific part of the body is offered before the goddess Tuibuma (i.e. in the river Ganga)

### **Deities concept, Ghost and Superstitions.**

The fear of common Reangs about deities and ghost is reflected in their superstitious belief and dreams. Most of the Reangs dream the deities in their dreams and animal, fish, trees, snakes also are interpreted as carrying some apprehension or omen. To illustrate, its common beliefs among the Reangs with presence in dream will result in rain and storm and the appearance of a dying person will bring them grand feast with meat and wine. Appearance of a living in dream means more crop and falling of a tree in dream may mean severe storm and death in his house.

The Reangs also believe that Gods are to be worshiped to get relief from different deities. Ochai (Vaidya) the Medicine man thus becomes prominent in the Reang social system. The Ochais are called in case of sickness to find out which deity or spirit is concerned with the particular sickness and what remedies are to be followed in connection with that particular deities. The Ojhai fights the evil spirit and the sick person is to sacrifice domestic animals, birds, fruits to satisfy the particular evil spirit. However, now-a-days the old superstitions and belief are giving way to modern medicine but the Ojhai and his rituous skill carry way by the Reangs in the interior.

### **Concept of Soul and Heaven**

The permanent place of the soul in a body is between the chest and the navel and it leaves the body for ever after death. Displacement of soul (Rangma thaukni) by evil spirits causes temporary unconsciousness (thuiplangmi).

After any unnatural death the soul released from the body hover in the air. They believe in the doctrine of transmigration of the soul.

One leading a life of lesser being needs 84 rebirths to have human form again. He has to pass through the life of insects, animals and other sub-human beings. An honest and virtuous soul shall be placed in the heaven (Motai-chabe thongba). The soul of the dead is received by Tui buma after the performance of post funeral rituals and offering of ashes and bones of specific parts to the river.

Buraha, Toibuma and Taitaochung chaoma are responsible for the life and death of the human beings. It is also believed that Sisi and Manji are responsible for death too. There is a distinction between the spirit of dead (Laotak) and the human soul (Mangma- Naba). The soul left the body after death but the spirit remains there till the funeral rites are performed.

To identify the reincarnate child, a mother marks the body of her child with ink spots. If a married woman dies her husband plants plaintain tree on her cremation ground. Otherwise she may not have any child in her rebirth.

'Mtaihamia' is the evil spirit of a person whose funeral were not performed by his descendants. Accidents, snakebites, a chase by wild beasts, an unnatural death are all due to the wrath of the evil spirits.

### **Funeral Rites & Rituals**

The dead body is cremated near a river or rivulet excepting those who died of small pox, cholera and other infectious diseases. In such case, the dead body is buried and after a few months the bones of the deceased person are collected and immersed in the river. Children below one year are also buried. There are some pre-funeral and post-funeral rites to be observed.

**Borok sakma :** The dead body is washed with Chakhuitai (Alkaline water) and Mairungtai (water with powdered rice) and dressed according to sex, neatly. A shroud is spread over the dead body. The head is placed to the east. Rice and chicken prepared by the widow is offered in a new earthen pot. Rice beer in bamboo container is distributed to the mourners. Two birds are made of bamboo splits (Bitaoama and Bitaoasa) and kept near the corpse. These birds will carry the soul to heaven. A dance is performed in front of the dead body through out the night. At dawn, fire-woods are collected for the pyre. For a male it requires fifty layers of fire-woods and for a female, it is

seven. The funeral procession on reaching the cremation ground makes a small but (Simangnok) for the departed soul to take rest. Mustard seeds and sui seeds (Mimosa Scandens or gallnut) are sown to propitiate the evil spirits. The mouth of the dead is washed with water collected from the nearby river or rivulet by the next of kin. After the utterance of the term of 'Haribol' fire is applied to the mouth of the corpse. The Personal belongings of the deceased person, sandal wood, the, gold, silver etc. are put into the fire as oblation. When the cremation is over rice and egg are offered to the departed spirit along with a basketful of paddy, liquor, water, tobacco pipe and tobacco, and a Daborok (chopper) on the floor of the Simangnok. The mourners and the relatives take bath in the river and return to their village. They will come again on the cremation ground to collect the residual bones for postfuneral rituals. The funeral pyre is also washed with water. The residual bones are kept for three days. During these days no member of the deceased family goes to forest or Jhum field. However, there is no restriction on food and drinks.

**Kothainamang :** It is a post-funeral ritual connected with unnatural death only. ON the third day after cremation, relatives and friends of the departed person go to the cremation ground to collect residual bones. The widow of the dead man alongwith other women folk go inside the Simangnok and keeps the bones on her lap. Then she offer the departed spirit, boiled rice, fish, meat, fruits and liquor. While the people dance around the widow with the beating of dru, the priest (Akchai) utter a spell for the salvation of the soul. Two cocks and a pig are sacrificed and the head of the pig is placed on a plaintain leaf by the priest for the funeral rites. Bloods of the sacrificed animals are sprinkled over the residual bones. Then another egg is sacrificed by the priest. A feast is also arranged for the assembled relatives.

In the evening, the relatives of the deceased person return to their houses in a procession, singing and dancing all the way. The weeping widow lead the procession. They stop at a tri-Junction of roads near the house. Again they all dance to the beating of drum. The widow then keeps the residual bones in a NOKSA (Bamboo-shell) and covers it with a piece of red coloured cloth. A bottle of liquor is also offered to the NOKSA which remain at behind the house for the night.

**Lukhlaimong :** This post-funeral ritual is also known as Aichu-Jaothaihmo. It starts at the dead of night or at dawn in presence of all



relatives of Sandai and Hokchu kins. As per their financial ability cocks, ducks and fruits are offered to the NOKSA through Kthoi..... aukcuai. Preparations of rice, meat and fish etc. are also offered to the Lautau ( person's soul guardian of the deceased ) on a plaintain leaf. Other guests and relatives assembled there, also present money, clothings and liquor to the deceased person.

For the propitiation of spirits of the dead (Sisi, Mangsi, Lautau etc.) rice, sweetened rice, preparations of egg and meat, coconut, banana and other fruits with vegetables are offered in front of the resting hut of the residual bones (Asthi) on plaintain leaves. Water and liquor are offered in thirty tubes (wachhong khalfechi).

The house is considered impure till the observance of purifying ceremonies like, i) immersion of the residual bones to a holy river (like Ganges or any other river Gumoti source), ii) Pindadan (pindu) at Goya in Bihar like the caste Hindus or iii) Worshipping of Toibuma and Sangrama conducted by Kothai-akchai (who may be compared with the Mahapurohit of the caste Hindus).

After the observance of such rituals the house is declared purified and all sorts of family rituals, marriage and other religious functions can be observed by the family from then on.

### **Religious Festival**

Generally Reangs are the believers of Shakta cult. But nowadays some of them are turning to Vaishnavism and Christianity. The system of worshipping comprises both Hindu practices and animistic rites. The Reangs perform two Pujas, directly related to their cultivation. Its principal objective is propitiation of gods, so that all the members of the community keep well with good health especially during the period of cultivation. The second Puja is related with the Navanna after the yield, taken in home festivals as followed by the Bengalis. Moreover they assembled once in a year to worship goddess Tripura Sundari or Kali or Ker. 'Worship of Tripuri Sundari is a community ritual when they organised general fair/ feast/Mela, dances, drink and song, drama and other entertainments. Motai- Katorma also a community ritual, these united them in a strongest tie of brotherhood. A good amount of money is also spent in these annual festivals.

During my investigation it is also noticed that a certain

percentage of young Reangs of North Tripura are converting themselves to Christianity by discarding Hinduism or Animism and their main religious festivals are ,Christmas day, Good-Friday- etc.

To summarise the important rituals connected with the Reangs life the following Tables will help to understand Reangs household rituals and different deities.

### **The Reangs and their views of world.**

The Reangs feel proud to call themselves as 'Baran' or Men. This is a common characteristic of the Tribal Societies in the world. Dr. J. Gan- Chaudhury in his "The Reangs of Tripura" gave two interpretations on the origin of the word 'Reang', They claimed Garuda (carrier of Vishnu) as their ancestor. In the Reang dialect Garuda is called. Biangma which has been corrupted into Reang and then into Reang. But the motif of this folktale indicates complete sanskritisation of the society as Biangma might have been derived from the sansrit word 'Bihanga' (Bird) and such folktales have originated after the Brahmanical concept and belief in Hindu deities.

The lifestyle of the Reangs is guided by the super- natural powers or the spirits of good and bad kinds. Magic and with chraft superstitions and Taboos, Dreams and Divinations play important roles in their society. Like the Tripuris, 'Swbrai' is their ancestor and their social laws were first promulgated by him. The village chief or the head of the society can not rule peacefully without the blessing of the spirits. While some of the spirits got Hindu god-names after the Hindunisation of the Reangs, the pattern and style of worshipping them is animistic in nature.

Sickness and ill-health are either involvement or wrath of a spirit. Some magico- religious rites are observed for complete cure from a disease by propitiation of that similarity and contagious magic under law of contact are observed by them. They have strong belief in positive and negative superstitions. Like i) Do such thing so that such and such thing may happen and ii) Don't do such thing so that such thing do not happen.

They believe that the Sun and the Moon are husband and wife while the stars are their children. Household chores are conducted by

TABLE 17 - (A)  
Ritual Calendar of the Reangs

Ritual	Deities and spirits	Male	Female	Aims of ritual	Place	Time	Offerings
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Boisu	Manokma		F	Happy year, Household peace & good yield.	Granary	1st day of Baisakh ( 15th April)	Goat, Fowl fruits.
2. Taibhatali	Toibuma and Buraha.	Both		Good yield	Jhum field	Last part of the month of Baisakh	Goat, Pig, cock, cup and fruit
3. Mwtai Kotorma	Mwtai Kotorma		F	Household peace & prosperity	Near at water source	Aswin (Sept. Oct.)	Black goat and fruits.
4. MaiKechami	Manokma		F	Sanctification of agricultural implements.	Granary	Aswin (Sept. Oct.)	Chicken
5. Sonrorima	Bukundurao	M		Health & Family Welfare.	Yard of the House.	Mag. Falgun (Jan. Feb.)	Cock, goat fruits.
6. Sangmaumi	Somrao Bomiso	M		Peace and Welfare	-do-	Falgun (Feb)	Pig, goat cock, egg.
7. Bisikotirjini	Dakini, Jogini	Both		To get rid of small pox & collarah.	Near cross road outside the village.	Chaitra (March, April)	Hen.
8. Maikhuma	Mutaikomma		F	General Welfare	Yard of the House.	Vedra (July, August).	Pig, Cock, eggs.
9. Nowehrarima	Buraha	M		To protect evil spirit.	-do-	Chaitra, (March, April)	-do-
10. Taikhluwma	Srikakha Srikakhi	Both		General Welfare	Water spaces river or chetra (stream)	Once in a Year	Pig, goat, cock.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11. Toisangrama Katic'hama.	Toibuma. Sangrama.		F	Purification of new built hut and for general purification.	Water spaces river or cherra	When required	White cock.
12. Songrumarima	Songrama		F	To get ride of the attack of Tiger.	Yard of the house.	Once in a year.	Hen.
13. Noksumarima	Noksuma		F	Protection against snake.	Opposite to hut. source	Once in three years.	Cock
14. Hamafa	Bonirao and 'Broirao	M		General Welfare.	Yard of the hut	-do-	Goat, Pig Cock.
15. Puifaima	Biskali Motaikotorma		Both Female	Householed peace and Welfare.	Boundary of the Welfare.	-do-	Buflak, Pig Goat.

**TABLE - 17 (C)**  
Rituals connected with purification  
of mother & child after Child birth.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1.	Abusama	Buraha, Sainirao	M		Purification of mother and child on 6th Week of birth.	Water sources and yard of the House.	Dawn	White cock Hen, Black goat.
2.	Bachao kami	Tholehka	M		Purification of mother and child after four months of birth.	Yard of the House.	Morning	Cock, Egg Fishes.
3.	Dari rimi	Toibama Buraha.	M	F	Purification of mother and child and after four months of birth.	Water source	afternoon	Cock Hen, goat.
4.	Khunk hukama	Bonirao Kalabong		F	Purification of mother and child after birth of eight months.	Yard of the house.	Fore noon	Cock, Hen.

**TABLE -17 (B)**  
**During Pregnancy**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Kabeingbuna	Toibuna,		F	Safeguard of Mother for deities during pregnancy.	Water sources	Dawn	Cock
2. Swanirima	Thuinairao	M		-do-	Yard of the house.	Day time	-do-
3. Taohrowiana	Toibuna		F	-do-	Water source	Dawn	Cock, Hen
4. Chantatchar	Buraha Brouirao	M		-do-	Water source	Dawn	Cock, Hen Pig
5. Nokha	Bonimo Borirao	M	F	-do-	Yard of the House.	Day Time	Cock
6. Aichaurima	Buraha	M		Purification of Mother during pregnancy.	Yard of Cross road of the House.	Day	Pig, Goat, Cock.
7. Chantatoima	Asichui Dakini Jogini	M	F F	Safeguard of Mother during pregnancy	-do-	Before sun rise.	Pig, Goat, Cock.

These rituals are generally performed from the 9th month of pregnancy to 5 years of the child for their good health and welfare till the attainment of the age of puberty  
Contd....P.31

**TABLE - 17 (D)**  
**Rituals ( To get relief from diseases)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Khuglaimi	Grilealaka Kalakhi	M		Recovery from Malaria fever pain of abdomen.	Near Charra	Dawn	Cock
2. Kangsarisimi,	Buraha Bonirao Nakti Hangarai	M M	F F	Recovery from illness of aged people & pregnant women,	Yard of the house.	Day Time	Pig, Chicken, Cock.
3. Bruiraorima.	Sontoisrima Rangsainirima Kangsari	F F F		Recovery from the diseases of stomach fever etc.	Boundary of the villages/ yard of house.	Mid Night	Black cock she goat, she pig.
4. Bruiraorimi	Thornasrima Brouirao	M	F	Remedies from sudden illness or injury caused by fall from the tree.	Yard of the house/ place of accident.	Day time	Black hen/ Cock.
5. Khrophang Thuinairao- rima.	Thuinairao	M		Remedy from illness, loss of appetite and general weakness.	Deep Forest	Noon	Pig, cock eggs.
6. -do-	Haisuma		F	Recovery from the relaxed children.	By the way to hut.	Evening	Cock.
7. Biskalirima	Biskali		F	Recovery from any sort of continuous Diseases.	Crossed Road of the house.	Mid night	she goat, Hen Eggs, Pig.

Contd....P/31

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8. Lampra		Bomirao Lampra	M		Recovery from pain and Swelling from abdomen.	Road side	Evening	Cock, black. hen, pig.
9. Mwehikama		Amakotor	F		Recovery from falstubeuce of stomach.	Yard of the house.	Day time	Hen, dry fish, vegetable curry etc.
10. Buraha-ro- khitama.		Buraha	M		Recovery from fever caused by Buraha.	Deep Forest	Deep night	Goat, Pig. Cock.



the women only and it is a taboo for the men to do household work and weaving. Similarly, it is taboo for to do hunting and fishing.

The economy of the Reang and their social institutions are based on Jhum cultivation. The chiefs and his office bearers are elected for one Jhum cycle only. Their economy are mixed with magical activities. To ensure success in hunting ,fishing, journey and in Jhum cultivatuon. The propitiation of Gods or spirits. Infact, from the selection of site for Jhum (Huh \Huq in Reang dialect ) to storing of the crops there are several rituals have be observed followed by thanks giving ceremonies to the benevolent deities and spirits .

Their marriage ceremony is full of rituals and rites based on magical beliefs. A man should learn the technique of making a cradle before his marriage and an woman should weave cloth for her children before her marriage. Otherwise the child may die. We can refer to the views of the Santhals of Bihar, Orissa and West Begal in this regard. A Santhal youth, who has not participated at the SENDRA (Hunting festival)in Ajodhya hills is not elligible to be a bridegroom. Similarly, a Santhal belle, who has not participated in the dances of Chakoltore fair, is unfit to be a bride.

They believe that music and dance have the magical powers and that the deities, spirits and Gods also love music.

The mother earth (khma) and ocean ( Obdhi) are jointly known as "Lampra " or "Khmabohi " .Hence , it is unthinkable for them that the land could be a property of any individual.

The forests, the rivers, the trees, the ocean, the stones and even the corner of the house are believed to be the abode of spirits. The Reang deities have no anthropomomphic forms and the images are of pre-logical type. There is no specific place for worshipping the deities, though the junction of two roads or a path is treated as the most suitable place (Kau-Bru dialect, lam is meant for road or path, and 'pra' means junction).

The medicine man cum-priest (Okchai or Ojhai)is the fortune teller, interpreter of dreams, friend, philosopher and guide. Liquor prepared by fermentation of rice is treated as stimulant to dancers, singers and Jhum cultivators. They believe that some spirits also join

them if they consume liquor.

Every day a new Sun rises in the east and dies in the west. So they never lie with their heads towards west while sleeping.

The trees and plants which bear fruit is supposed to be females and which do not males.

The Reangs believe in the soul and ghosts and their separate existence. A person's soul can leave his body and take the shape of insect which can re-enter the body. They seldom kill any insect during night lest that may cause damage to any person's life. They believe in the world of the dead which is divided into two parts one for the souls of good and the other for the bad separately. The soul may incarnated as per his work in his previous life. There are some magical practice with which they can understand the kind and formation of the reborn person. The ghosts are capable of sucking blood and usually they possess an ugly and hungry look on their face. The male which they is called "Swkal" and the female is known as "Swkaljau" or "Swkal burui". It is believed that the horticultural gardens are above the evil spirits. It needs sacrifice of chickens or a boar to please the spirits and guardian deities.



# 6

## VILLAGE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM



The Reangs have their own form of internal Government based on a system of well defined hierarchy. There is an integrated 3 tier administrative organisation at the village, clan and community level. The Head of the Community enjoys the title of Rai. The Reangs look up to him as their own monarch whose word is supreme in internal administration and it has to be obeyed. Immediately below Rai is Chapia Khan, who is the next in the hierarchy and is the heir apparent to the Rai. Next to Chapia Khan is called Chapia. He is the heir apparent to chapia Khan Darkalim is the priest. Other lesser but important persons are Dalai, Bhandari, Kanda, Daya Hajari, Muria, Dugria, Daoa and Chhiakrak. They are assigned certain duties. Dalai is the prosecutor, Bhandari is the Store-keeper, Kanda is the attendant of Rai, Daya Hajari is the drummer, Muria is the attendant of Rai, Daya Hajari is the drummer, Muria is the Shehani-player, Dugria is the Karah (One type of local musical instrument) player, Daoa is the assistant to the priest and Chhiakrak is the Royal Umbrella-Bearer. It is worth noting here that, succession is not hereditary and it is determined by the qualities of leadership.

The Chief Minister of the Rai is called Rai Kachak who also possess his personal retinue, in keeping with the honour of his high office. This retinue includes an advisor, personal assistant and hewers

of wood and water. the retainers for the Rai Kachak are Iakchung who is Nazir, Hazra who is the personal attendant to Iakchung, Kangreng is the umbrella bearer for Rai-Kachak, Karma is the personal attendant to Iakchung, Khankalim is the umbrella bearer for Iakchung and khandal is the man-in-charge of food supply.

There are 14 Dafas of groups among the Reang tribe. Each Dafa has its own administrative head.

<u>Dafa or Section of the Reang tribe</u>	<u>Designation of the heads of the Dafa</u>
1) Tuimui	Roy and Karma
2) Mursui	Chapia Khan and Iak-chung.
3) Mechka	Chapia and Iak-chung.
4) Apeta.	Kachkau and Darkalim.
5) Charkhi	Kachkau and Daiya-Hazra
6) Mwsa.	Hazra and Kanda
7) Rai Kachak	Doloi and Kamkalim
8) Taqma Yakcha	Muria and Kamkalim.
9) Oairem	Daoa and Kangreng.
10) Nauh-Kham	Karma and Dukaria.
11) Chongpreing	Sengatrak and Khandal.
12) Sagaroy	Bhandari and Hazra.
13) Reang	Kachkau (kachak)
14) Darbang	Karma and Kangreng.

There are 19 appellations or designations one of which is given to each of the 26 orders according to his rank and status in the community. In all, there are 27 administrative heads for the 14 Dafas. (Reference : Tripura District Gazetteer, Agartala)

The Reangs administrative system as pyramidal in structure. At the lowest level, is the village level administration. Whenever any dispute arises, the complainant shall have to put it before the Holai choudhury who along with the other headmen of the adjacent hamlets will try to settle dispute and failing that, the case might be transferred to the Chowdhury Sardar and if Choudhury sardar can not settle the disputes it might be referred to the Rai or the Reang King.

The Sardar is selected by the Heads of the houses in a village and they are the executive members of the village Council. The village council is authorised to handle and settle all sorts of disputes but mainly adultery (Chongching) forced marriage (Taikhailaimi), molestation

(Abouchuerie) of women and also divorce cases. Disputes over land and shifting cultivation are also settled by the same council. The council imposes fines according to nature of the offence. For example now a days one has to pay a fine Rs. 300/- in adultery cases Rs. 500/- for forced marriage and Rs. 250/- for illicit sexual relationship or in cases of molestation. It may be pointed out here that the amount of fine varies from place to place & case to case.

The village council tries for reconciliation, if there are chances of any marriage breaking down. When reconciliation does not yield any result the council imposes fine upon the main guilt person. If it is a woman who wants get a divorce from her husband after 4 years she will have to pay as fine Rs. 500/- to her husband. This amount of fine is also not uniform every-where. If a Reang man divorces a Reang woman and marries Bangali girl he will have to pay Rs. 300/- as fine as well as half of his land property.

The pivotal place of the Sardar or chief in the Reang community can not be under estimated. He is considered to be responsible for general welfare of the community and is fatherly figure to his followers.

Once upon a time this traditional internal administrative system of the Reangs was something which the rulers of Tripura also honoured. During the princely regime, the rulers had hardly any direct contact with their tribal subjects whatever contact they had was through the local chieftains who enjoyed almost absolute autonomy in the internal affairs of the Reang Community and who to all intents and purposes acted as agents of the ruler's. However, at present only a remnant of these Institutions can be held responsible for such erosion of old administrative system.

First factor leading to the disintegration of this well - knit traditional administrative system of the Reangs is the attempt by the king Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya , who reigned in Tripura from 1927 to 1947, to reconstitute the tribal organisations for self - administration by passing the MONDALI Act,. The Mondalis covered all the self - administrative systems of the state in 1941 . The structure became hierarchical with a central Assembly at the apex .

The second factor was the suppression of the Reang revolt organised by Shri Ratanmani Noatia originates in the Hill or chirragong Hill tract during 1942-43. The Reang unrest during the reign of

Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya was partly a cultural-cum-religious movement to improve the moral and Central State of the Reangs. It was also partly a socio - religious movement and a protest against the existing feudal pattern of society which was exploiting and oppressive in nature.

The king of Tripura used to collect tax though the Choudhuris who were therefore exempt from paying any tax. The Chaudhuris please the Maharaja more often than not made more exaction from the common Reangs. To add to this exploitation, the Reangs were subjected to unequal taxation system. The Tripuris paid minimum taxes where as the Reangs and the Noatias had to pay the maximum. The government impose a higher rate of tax per family as House Tax on the Reangs in Amarapur Sub-Division on the ground that the Reangs were illegally exporting cotton, mustard seed, sesamum etc. to the neighbouring British India without paying any export duty. Thirdly, showing disrespect to the Reang traditions that one could not be a Rai during the life time of another Rai, the then king dismissed the existing Rai named Debi Sing Reang Chowdhury and a put Khagendra Choudhury as Rai of the Reang community. Khagendra choudhury unleashed a reign of terror to teach a lesson to the supporters of erst while Reang. Finally, due to second world War conditions, all available paddy was purchased by the king from the interior to feed the people of Tripura. This resulted in famine.

Ratanmani became the champion of the cause of the suffering Reangs. Chaudhuri was asked to collect soldiers from the Reang youths. Chaudhuri in fact faced a hungry and angry community. The king despatched a strong army to crush the rebels. Their villages were burnt, 3,000 Reangs were arrested including 200 women. They were later released when the king came to know that these famine stricken people were not anti-royalist but anti-Choudhuris. But Ratanmani who was re-captured by British police after he fled from Royal custody was handed over to Maharaja of Tripura where he was brutally killed. Some of his followers were tried by a special court and convicted in July, 1944.

Though the Reang unrest was ruthlessly suppressed, the traditional system of empowering the Chauduris more or less collapsed after this mass movement. The Third and final blow came from the

modern democratic ideas of involvement of the common people in governance. The panchayati system crept into and the traditional Reang administrative structure rumbled finally to pieces.

Changes took place in every field Economic, Social Authoritarianism, Religion, Literacy, Political etc. The Reang community in Tripura since long back are being treated as primitive group of tribe and is still a buning question before the Administration /Government to make them developed at per other tribes in Tripura. Even then certain changes in their family life, social activities, economic activities are dominantly found to be worth mentioning as a sign of transition towards development.

The Reangs who were in 1931 census 35,881 and in 1981 census 84,003 approximately are 1 lakh now in 1991, practising a religion which is a blend of their old animistic faith and Hindu belief and practices. Now-a-days they do not perform most of their religious rite and rituals as they used to do. Their mythology now includes the names of many Hindu deities like Ram, Sita, Shiva etc. A number of Shiva and Krishna temples have been set-up where worship is done by Reang priests.

They also sing Kirton (devotional songs) like their Bengali neighbours. Most of the Reangs, except those who have embraced chiristianity, now call themselves Hindus of Shakti cult. The Reangs who adopted Vaishnavism adjure fish and meat and have given up animal sacrifice.

Reang's rituals can be classified into distinct modes (1) The rituals performed by the individual family (2) by the members of the clan and (3) by the community chief. The basic aim of observing a ritual by the individual family or clan or by the community chief is as a whole for achieving strong economic footing, community peace and individual family prosperity. These rituals act as intermediaries between Reangs and their deities, "NOKHUNGSWAMI" aims for keeping the house sanctified, Khangmo is performed for recovery from illness and KHNAGKA-CHANG-KHANMI for keeping the individual sanctified from birth till marriage. These rituals comprise oral invocation, offerings, divination and sacrifice.

Each of these rituals may cost Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000/- . Now-a-days the amount has become double and is collected through subcription

by KATAR - DAGA , whose responsibility it is to organise the rituals. The rituals give an opportunity to the Reangs from all parts of the state to meet and demonstrate their unity. These occasions are also utilised for the meeting of the chiefs. All disputes are settled and misunderstanding removed in such meetings. These Pujas which once acted as a powerful integrating force are now dying out mainly as a result of the decay of power and influence of the "KATAR-DOGA". Contact with the Hindu Bengalees and other economically strong tribal groups and modern forces have been actively moulding the life style of the Reangs ( L. P . Bidyarthi 1968 ). As culture is dynamic, not only the Reangs, but also the tribals have faced and are facing changes in the sphere of their social, religious and economic life. Never the less, the Reangs have retained the principal elements of their way of life, though these are modified more or less extent. The factors responsible for these transformations are broadly of two types : Traditional and Modern.

The traditional processes characterised by the impact of certain traditions of the major neighbouring communities, have lead to the Hindunisation, Sanskritisation and the tribe-caste contirucam and so on . The modern processes includes factors like Chrisianity, Urbanisation, Industrialisation, modern Education etc. In the case of Reangs the factors primarily responsible about changes among them are their close interactions with Hindu Bengalees and the impact of the Modern Economy, urbanisation, modern Education and also developed agricultural technique.

The traditional process in the past was exclusively responsible for bringing about a transformation in the secular social environment and sacred spheres of tribal culture. It is more, eninent in case of Reangs in Tripura. At is was indigenous, continuous, non-competitive and voluntary. The rate of change was slow, selective and reciprocal, accommodative as well as integrative and assimilative. The Reangs were influenced and moulded mostly by the Hindu Bengalees in every sphere of their life.

While the traditional process brought the regional "Hindu Model" before the tribals. The modern process by and large placed before them, the western urban industrial developmental and democratic "model" for infroducing change. Christianisation of the tribals in



certain selected tribal regions of pockets also presented an alternative " model " then which incidentally became acceptable with the backing of British Government. The spread of christianity through the Western Missionaries (of different churches and denominations) succeeded in bringing about of marked change in the sacred social, educational and economical status of the converted tribal groups. Under these circumstances, the unevenness of social changes led to a large amount of internal stress and strain between one section of population and the others. Owing to all these, the course of integration of the tribes with their age-old traditional processes was considerably disturbed. Recently it has been seen that among the Reang community the younger generation is keen on adopting Christianity though their fore-fathers were mostly Hindus.

The socio-cultural interaction between the dominant community and the tribals bring about considerable changes in the latter. It is obvious that the dominant non-tribal community will influence the tribal community particularly when the dominant community forms the majority of the population. It is no wonder that the Reangs of Tripura have changed a lot in their somio-cultural context as a result of the influence of continous interaction with the dminant Bengalee Hindu community in the State.

This type of changes are quite evident in the case of agricultural practices among the Reangs. There was a time when Jhum was universally practised in Tripura. Before the large influx of people from outside started about the middle of last century the export of cotton oilseeds were solely produced in Jhum. Timber came from unreserved forest. But newly migrated Bengalee Hindu settlers in Tripura yield and return. Thus the tribals also started switching over to settled cultivation from Jhum cultivation ever where possible. Likewise the tribals started adopting the modern agricultural technology e. g. the use of chemical fertiliser, plant protection chemicals, farm machinery and high yielding varieties of seeds. This process of adoption is still undergoing change of tribal agro-economical status. As a result, the tribals in Tripura have shown certain changes in socio-economic upliftment. Even though this change is not at all enough as a huge percentage of them, specially the Reangs are still practising their traditional method of cultivation.

Urbanisation, the penetration of modern economy, education and administrative machinery, democratic and concept of the welfare state have definitely broken the stagnation and isolation in all parts of the country. These processes may be more specifically enumerated as (1) The Development of communication with in the tribal areas and with the out side world ii) Introduction of monetised economy iii) spread of normal and modern Institution, including medical and administrative aids, and iv) introduction of advanced technology, to exploit of mineral, forest, power and other industrial resources.

All these forces are bringing about significant changes in the tribal areas but the rate of changes evidently differs in different points of time in the same culture continuaum.

Modern economy and education have played an important role in changing the socio-cultural & economic structure of the Reangs, also it is equally observed in case of Tripures. It is, of course, to be mentioned that these factors of changes have very slow effect among Reangs but the totality can not be ignored. The Reangs as a whole are also on the path of self reliance for strong economic footings.



# 7



## HABITATS & INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Matarbari Block area :**

Matarbari Block is situated in the South Tripura District under Udaipur Sub-Division at a distance of 55 Km. from Agartala and 2.5 Km. from Radhakishorepur, Sub-Division head quater. Reangs under this Block are concentrated specially in North and South Maharani, Baisabari and Tainani area. The main link roads for these Reang villages are Agartala Amarpur road for North and South Maharani and a cross road Reang Garji Tainani on the Agartala-Belonia road. A few Reang hamlets my also be found in a compact from in Noatia and Jamatia villages on the way to Tainani.

The Reang hamlets adjacent to Tainani market are Baisabari, Tainani Reang para No.1,2,3, Dhankhati Reang para, Pharendra Reang para, Birchandra Reang para, Kali Kumar Choudhury para. Besides these Reang hamlets a few Chakma and Jamatia hamlets may also be found in this areas. Most of the Reang families of this area have their own cultivatable land and practise plough cultivation because two third of this area is plain land. But a large number of families have a tendency for jhuming in addition , in the nearby tillas land slopes for geeting additional crops.

The Government Insritutions which are function in this area are : 1. V. L.W Centre, 2. Nayan Panchayat Office, 3. Police out post,

4. Forest Office, 5. Post Office, 6. S.B.School , 7. 1 No. J. B. School, 8. 2 Nos. Feeding Centres, 9. Veterinary Unit, 10. Ration Shop, 11. Co-operative centre, 12. 2. Nos. Adult literacy centres and a Primary Health centre.

#### **Development Work :**

During my field investigation I have seen 13 Ring well (Pacca) in different Reang hamlets of which 7 are unuseable, 20 tanks were also seen. It is to be mentioned here that interest has grown among the Reangs for Pisciculture. Some owners of the tanks received Government loan on subsidy from Co-operatives and Block office under various scheme of T.W. and Agriculture Department. Regarding agricultural facilities V. L.W. of this area reported. The Reang Plough cultivators take seed and fertilizer regularly on the basis of subsidy. It is also seen that under the supervision of V.L.W. Sector Officer and Panchayat Secretary, Developmental Works e.g. link road, sand removal, reclamation works, seasonal reserver of water, new construction of foot tracks from various hamlets to Tainani are going on. Reangs of this area possess large number of cattle and poultry birds. I have seen Reangs coming with their cattle to veterinary centre for treatment. The in charge of the Centre also advises the tribals of Tainani regarding poultry keeping, breeding, management and selling of eggs etc. Regarding irrigation facilities, I have come across few diesel operated pump sets owned by the Reangs. The land of this area is very fertile but most of the Reangs are to depend on Maharani Chara and rainfall. Buru paddy is also cultivated here. They maintain regular contacts with the Block Office to have a deep tube well for irrigation. They told me that if this tube well was sunk at Debipur at least 6/7 Reang hamlets and 2 Chakma hamlets would get the irrigation facilities for cultivating their own land.

At the centre of the Tainani, there is also a Ration Shop. Reangs and other tribals get sugar, kerosine, oil etc. regularly from this Ration Shop.

Regarding educational aspects, it is observed that two senior Basic and one J.B.Schools are functioning in this area. It is reported by the teacher in charge that 78 tribal students are reading in various classes out of them 36 are Reang students. The teacher in charge of

the J.B. School during field investigation was out of station. Yet it is known from Shri Kali Kumar Reang Choudhury (Pradhan) that 56 students are on the role of this school and out of them 7 are from the general Community, 12 are from other tribal communities and the rest are from Reang Community. I am intimated by one gurdian that most of the tribal students are getting school dress, books and stipend.

In Tainani, there is a Forest Beat office from which the Reangs get regular employment opportunities in plantation and other work. According to the report of the Forester, the Reang and other tribal and non-tribals get regular employment on temporary basis. Report collected from the Panchayat office and V.L.W. centre of this area says that in total 6 roads are under construction. There is a cultural unit in Chandraham Reang Chudhury Para. under the leadership of Birmohan Reang. According to the version of Shri Birmohan Reang, this unit has got all kinds of musical instruments and dress for dance, drama and other cultural programme.

#### **Health and Medical Facilities :**

There is one dispensary or P.H.C. here. Even then tribal people of this area still fully depend on herbal medicine and the modern medicine of few Bengali shop keepers e.g. tablet, capsule etc. For major diseases they are to go to Udaipur General Hospital. At present medical facilities is better as before. It is also fact that due to shortage of Doctors, supporting staff and in sufficient Stock of medicine, People in general do not depend on this Primary Health Centre.

#### **Amarpur M. P. Block :**

The Block is situated in the South Tripura District under Amarapur Sub-Division. The investigated villages may be located on the Nutan Bazar-Thirtha Mukh road, and Ramvadra and adjacent villages in an around Dumbur Hydro-Electric Project.

#### **The investigated villages are as follows :**

Haridas Baisnab Para, Samanjoy Reang Para, Sudhajoy Para, Chupling Charra, Beside these Reang hamlets, there are few Tripuri, Noatia and Chakma hamlets, e.g. Nunchara, Sailen Roaja Para, Madhurai Para are concentrated by Tripura Tribes, Chakmas are thickly populated in Dhanya Karbari para, Dhlu Chara Bari, Deepchand Karbari Para. In all these villages the Reang lives in group.

**Education :**

Totally 4 J. B. schools are there in this areas out of which 2 are in Reang hamlets and other 2 are in Chakma hamlets. In Ramananda para J.B. School, the project staff's Children and Reang children are taking primary education. There is no senior Basic or High School here. Tribal students of this area therefore, have to go to the High school at Nutan Bazar.

**Market Facilities :**

The Reangs of this area face difficulties to sell their products and to buy their required commodities. They are to depend on Nutan Bazar and Jatanbari markets which work twice a week. The Reangs of distant places come earlier in the market and return to their hamlets covering about 15 to 20 kilometers before sunset. So it is required to set up a market in Tirthamukh area so that the tribal people may get marketing facilities.

**Development Programme :**

**WATER FACILITIES :** - During investigation it was observed that no R.C.C. well in the Reang Hamlets. There is no government arrangements for the supply of drinking water in different Reang hamlets. The plough cultivation may be treated as nil but those who have plain and Lunga land cannot cultivate here paddy due to lack of proper irrigation system. No such project is operating here. Reangs of this area, therefore, utilise Gumati river and different streams (chharas) for this purpose.

**Agriculture :**

The Reangs of this area mostly are in pre-agricultural stage and follow their primitive method of agriculture i.e. Jhuming. As Jhum is rain fed, the Reangs get their livelihood by labour or something else as possible to them. Govt. distribute Jhum seeds and seedlings of various plants and fruits. Among them plain land cultivators got bullocks and other implements as Govt. assistance. The marketable surplus of this area are as follows : paddy, Jute, mustar seeds, till, chillies and horticultural products like banana, lemon, pineapple, vegetables etc.

**Fair Price Shop :**

A fair price shop is running here. Rice, Kerosene oil, sugar etc. are sold to the Reang and other tribals on Govt. rates.

**Employment opportunities :**

It is seen that only Forest Department engages casual labourers for plantation works. Alongwith other tribal labourers Reangs also get regular employment for such plantation works. Beside this P.W.D. also engages casual labours. It is reported that 5(five) persons have been engaged in P.W.D.as gangman on fixed pay. Reangs also get opportunity to work under contractor as casual labour at Hydro-project. Few rich plain land cultivators some time engage labour on contract basis.

**Communication :**

One motorable road runs from Nutan Bazar to Tirthamukh. The Reang hamlets are connected by foot tracks. But due to shortage of bridge and culvert on the rivers and Charras the communication system in the investigated area is not enough. So link roads are essential. Extension of bus service up to Mandirghat is necessary.

**Health Service :**

No medical unit is found in this area. One dispensary at Jatanbari and one Primary Health Centre is functioning at Nutan bazar. But these are at least 12 Km. away from the Reang hamlets. The main diseases among the Reangs of this area are desentry, skin diseases, stomach pain, fever (malaria). A few cases of goitare, leprosy are also reported. Para Medical Unit of T. W. generally distribute medicine among the Reangs at free of cost once in a week. But this unit visits these hamlets irregularly. The Bengalee shop keepers also sell medicine of various minor diseases. One P. H. C. is required, which may be set up in and around Tirthamukh to provide medical facilities to the tribal residents and the staff of the Hydro-Electric project. Every year thousands of pilgrims, gather during Posh Mela at Tirthamukh where severe forms infectois diseases among the pilgrims are often seen. It is, however, noticed that a P. H. C. is under consideration of the Govt. at Hydro-project area.

### **Rural Finance :**

The Reangs of this area always take cash money from the money lender, shop keepers residing at Thirthamukh, Jatanbari and Nutan Bazar. A small percentage takes loan from Co-operatives or Bank. Most of the Reang families are found below the minimum standard of life. A few of them have much income from large Jhum and plain land cultivation. Reangs of this area also get all facilities given by Tribal Welfare Department under various schemes.

### **Veterinary Service :**

There is no veterinary unit running here. Reangs, therefore, used to go to an unit at Nutan Bazar. So in every year a good number of live stock died from various incurable diseases. Veterinary unit for this area is essential.

### **Special Nutrition Programme :**

For all the Reang hamlets, only one Special Nutrition Centre is functioning. In total 46 childrens, are getting nutritious food. But it is essential to extend the centre one in each hamlet.

### **Cottage Industries :**

A large percentage of Reangs are habituated in producing handicraft items, through which they may get a good return. As an instance of creating employment opportunities, a Production-Cum-Training Centre of Bamboo and Cane may be established here, through which Reangs and other tribes of this area may be trained for self employment. Raw-materials like bamboo and cane are available here. It is, however, fact that 50% of the students under ITI Jatanbari, are from different tribal communities and undergoing training on different trades.

### **Bagafa Block Area :**

This Block is situated on the Agartala-Belonia Road and about 70 km. away from Agartala. Investigation has been carried out upon the few selected Reang hamlets. These hamlets are Naraifang, Durpa Bari, East Bagafa, Kalasi, and Koyaifang.

Santir Bazar is the Key-centre of this Block which may be considered as a small town surrounded by various tribal hamlets. Santir



Bazar have stationery shops, hotel, restaurant, Banks, godowns and a cinema hall. Beside these, there are few Government Institutions like P. H. C, Panchayat Office, Post Office, Police Out Post, Forest Office, Sericulture Office T. C. P. C. (bamboo and cane), Rest House etc. Santir Bazar is also a market place. This market held twice in a week. Reangs and tribals of different communities and non-tribals purchase their essential commodities from this market. Reangs of the adjacent areas used to sell their agricultural products in this market. Beside this market, Kalasi is also a business spot. Reangs of Koyaifang and surrounding villages sell jute, Mcsta etc. to LAMP, APEX CO-OPERATIVES and at the same time to the non-tribal businessmen.

### **Development :**

**Agriculture :** The investigated areas are more or less covered by plain and most of the Reang inhabitants are accustomed to plough cultivation. Reangs of these areas get seed and fertilizer, bullocks, agricultural implements from the Block office. Various kind of horti plants are also distributed among them through V. L. W. centre. Tribal Welfare Department help them with cash money and agricultural implements under settlement scheme. It is observed during field investigation that most of the Reang families possess plain land among which rich cultivators with large land holding are also be found. Major portion of the plain land is under irrigation facilities through Minor Irrigation Department, and in addition Lougang river, Charras and deep tube wells are the main source of irrigation for growing boro paddy and other marketable crops. Reangs of this area generally cultivate through out the year.

### **Education :**

The whole educational picture of this area is not well. Reangs of Koaifang and Durpa area facing troubles to admit their children due to distance of school. One J. B. School though exists at Naraifang and Santir Bazar area each, yet these schools are not sufficient and out of their reaches though for high school education there is enough scope for the student as there is a Ashram type school along with another high school.

### **Health Service :**

There is only one P. H. C. at Santir Bazar, Reangs and other

interior tribals have to face troubles for treatment. Leprosy and T. B. among the Reangs are prevalent here. In the rainy season it is really a problem to contact with P. H. C. from the interior part. So, dispensaries are required to be opened one in Durpa and another in Koaifang area, so that all the Reangs and other tribals under this Block office may get medical facilities.

### **Drinking Water :**

The problem of drinking water of this area remain unsolved. Reangs still take charra water for drinking purpose. Mainly Lougang charra and Kalasi charra meet their drinking water for which severe gastro-intestinal diseases spread out among the Reangs. This problems are become more acute during summer.

### **Employment Opportunities :**

About 85% Reangs of this Block are illiterate. There is no cottage industry in this area. So the absence of industries and other Govt. services, Reang mainly depends on land and forest. Forest Department, however, provides some works to the tribal on daily basis of Rs. 35/- per day. Therefore they used to depends on Jhuming and wage earning.

### **Transport Facilities :**

The economic growth depends on good communication system. It is more important for a state, like Tripura where the entire system of communication depends on roads. Out of investigated area Durpa (East Bagafa) has only a cross lane. A Bridge on Lougang charra is most essential to contact the Reang villages on the east bank. Not only this, the whole area is under Jungle link roads. So marketing of jute, mesta and other crops which have sizeable marketable surplus do not get suitable market price. Similarly pineapple is being sold at a very cheap rate which is not at all remunerative to the growers. So these difficulties in transport and communication are adversely affecting the growth of economy of Reangs and they are becoming under the trap of village Mahajans.

### **Chowmanu T. D. Block**

This Block is situated at a distance of 117 Km. from Agartala

under Longtari valley Sub-Division of North Tripura District. It is located on the right side of Assam Agartala Road at a distance of 7 Km. from Manughat crossing. The inhabitants are mainly Reangs, Chakmas, Noatias, Kukis, Darlongs (a clan of Kuki), Tripuris and Mogs. Beside, Bengalees also reside in a compact form at Challengta and Chowmanu. The boundary of this Block lies with low and high Tillas and Longtharai hill range having a back ground of natural green forest. The investigated hamlets were Lalcharra compact colony, Kajarai Para, Birjoy Para, Bishnudas Para, Harimohan Para, Gobinda Bari, Garjan Para (East-South) Malidhar, Birendra Choudhury Para, Ganga mohan Para, Poushparam Para, Laban Charra, Pushiram Para, Dulu Cherra, Dhayaram Para, Brajaram Para, Thiyarai Choudhury Para, Ratiram Para, Dhuma Charra, (4 hamlets), Purba Karam Charra, Pashim Karam Charra, Kanchan Charra, Pashim Karam Charra compact colony etc.

The Govt. Institutions functioning for the welfare of this area are Tribal Development Block office, V. L. W. centre, Tashil, Agricultural office, Co-operative, Apex-Operative, P. W. D. office, (civil and electrical) Panchayat office, Educational Institutions (Secondary School, S. B. School, J. B. School, Balwadi centre), Feeding centre under I. C. D. S. schemes and so on.

#### **Kanchanpur Block Area :**

This Block is a tribal Development Block under Kanchanpur Sub-Division. It is situated on the extreme North of the state. The distance from Agartala is 175 Km. and 35 km. South from Pecharthal on Assam-Agartala Road. Kanchanpur is the key centre of the Block where the Block Head quarter is situated.

Investigation was done on the following Reang concentrated villages e. g. Chandripur, Dhananjoy Para, Kheda Charra, Jamarai Para, Kanchan Charra, Balanan Charra, Barakangrai, Birmani Para, Tuisama, Vandarima and Kanpui.

Data for this purpose were collected from 300 Reang families. These hamlets are mostly isolated from the Block Head Quarter and covered with high Tillas and dense forest. Langai river crosses few of these hamlets. Kheda Charra and Vandarima are the most interior hamlets from the Block office.

The Govt. institutions which are functioning in this area are 1) Post Office, 2) Bank, High School, Nagar Pachayat office, Tahasil office, Ration shop, Industry office, Co-operative office, P. W. D. Veterinary centre, Police station, big marketing centre etc. In a true sense all Govt. offices are functioning for the care of different tribal communities. But in different Reang villages there are only few Govt. establishments like J. B. School, Ration shops, Adult Literacy centre, Feeding Centre.

### **Developments :**

**Agriculture :-** The investigated areas are mostly covered by Tillas and slopes. The plain land is rarely found in the villages. Therefore, Reangs survive here depending on Jhuming.

Reangs mainly depend on Jhum cultivation. They are provided with cash money, Jhum seeds, fertilizer and rarely with bullock and other agricultural implements required for wet cultivation. Agriculture Department also provide them with different seeds and plants of the fruit and vegetable Forest Department and T. W. Department also assist them with different valuable timber, Rubber plants to grow up their economy.

### **Education :**

The whole educational picture under this Block is not satisfactory. A few of the surveyed hamlets like Kanpui, Khendacharra, Jamarai Para, Kanchan Charra, Vandarima, Barkangrai have Adult Literacy Centre and one primary school. One S. B. School is functioning in Khendacharra and other in Machmara. The strength of the student is not satisfactory. Feeding centre though functioning in above hamlets yet due to irregular supply of rice, masur dal and other medicine the beneficiaries are being deprived of.

Still I have found in Chandripur and Jamarai Para few Reang boys and girls continuing their studies in the J. S. B. School and Kanchanpur High School. In Machmara there is also a XII School having student Hostel.

### **Health Service :**

There is a P. H. C. on the way to Ananda Bazar Road at the Central point of Block Head Quarter. Reangs of the interior part of

the Block, therefore, have to depend on this P. H. C. Another Primary Health centre are also functioning at Vanmung (Jumpui Hill).

The villages like Vandarima and Kheda Charra are mostly concentrated with Reangs and are far off from the Block Head Quarters. It is, therefore, required to establish one dispensary in Kheda Charra and one in Vandarima. It is also reported by the villagers, their para-medical team headed by a doctor of Primitive Group Programme visited the Reang hamlets thrice in a month and distributed various medicine for general diseases, Medical Team of Malaria and small pox also visits in the villages twice in a year. Getting no proper medical help nearby they affected by severe no diseases. I was also an eye witness of premature death of a 18-20 years girl affected by an uncommon fever. That girl could not be taken to Hospital as it was far away from the village.

The common diseases under surveyed families are reported to be Malaria, Dysentery, Diarrhoea, uncommon fever, Leprosy and Tuberculosis. Epidemic form of cholera is also not uncommon among them during summer.

During investigation, it is observed that the Reangs are not willing to go to P. H. C. for any sort of diseases at the first stage because they think their diseases would be recovered through herbal medicine and other animistic activities. Reangs believe in Uchai baba who tries to give them relief from the severe disease through Puja and sacrificing of he-goat, cock and other animals. When the primitive treatment fails, they go to hospital and sometime doctors also can not help them much.

So the medical assistance for the villagers is required to provide them modern and scientific treatment.

### **Transport :**

Local transport facilities is not well. The main metalled road is Pecharthal-Jumpui Road. Most of the Reang hamlets have no approach road from the Block Office. Therefore, they, use their foot tracks and Charras for going from one hamlet to another.

### **Economic Activities :**

Reangs under the surveyed area are very much poor. Their sources of income is Jhum cultivation. Plain land in these villages are

rarely available. Reangs who possess plain land have no irrigation facilities for which they do not get sufficient crop. Inadequate supply of seed, fertilizer, agricultural implements also cause low production. So the income from land do not sustain their demand.

Reangs, therefore, rush for wage earning through contractor, forest office and also under S. R. E. P, N. R. E. P. schem. They also work in the house of the Lushai people as contract labour for domestic work, work in orange garden, work in Jhum field, carrying water up the hill, collecting fire wood etc. It is reported by the Reangs of Kanpui that due to heavy rainfall in the month of June/July the crops of Jhum will not be grown as they expected. So a severe food crisis is awaiting for them. There is also another point to explain here that the Lushai people of hilly areas force them to work as bonded labour under them and do not allow them to go outside the village or for S.R.E.P., N. R. E. P and any other works provided by the Government in those areas.

So the economic status of the Reangs is not satisfactory. Specific programmes for them are, therefore, required. Development schemes are to be drawn up according to the needs of the area for best utilisation of the natural resources. The Reangs in Chandipur and Kachan Charra are living to some extent better life than that of Reangs under Vandarima and Kheda Charra.

### **Drinking Water Facilities :**

It is a common picture in the hill areas that the tribals face drinking water problem. During rainy season this problem does not become acute but in winter they have to face extreme difficulty. A few ring wells were found in different Reang villages at the time of investigation but most of these were out of use.

### **Marketing Facilities :**

The main market of this Block is Kanchanpur Bazar. Other important markets are, Machmara, Bhangmung, Dasda.

### **Salema Block Area :**

This Block is situated under Kamalpur Sub-Division of North Tripura District. The distance of Block Head Quarter namely Salema is 125 km. from Agartala and 20km from Kamalpur. River Dalai is following by the Eastern side of this Block coming from the Longtharai

hill range. Topographically it may be said that 75% of the total land is under hill and the rest 25% are low land or flat cultivatable land. The habitants are mostly tribals such as Mog, Hallam, Garro, Chakma and Tripuri etc.. A large number of the non-tribals also reside under this Block.

The investigated Reang villages are Birbabu Reang Para, Bhagirath Reang Para, Balaram, Kathal Bari, Dunkarai Bari, Harimangal Chakma Para, Ganganagar.

### **Development :**

The Government Institutions like, Forest Ranger office, Post office, High School, Industry, P.W.D. Electric supply Agriculture, UNICEF, Police Station, P.H.C etc. are functioning under this Block area. All these wings of various Departments works for the betterment of the tribals and nontribals inhabitants. There is also a good market known as Salema Bazar, which is held once a week.

### **Reang Hamlets :**

Reangs under this Block resides far away from the Block Head Quaters. Highest concentration of Reangs are in the Ganganagar and Shikaribari area. The adjacent Reang villages are Birbabu Reang Para, and Bhagirath Reang Para. These villages are mixed with other tribal population and non-tribals. Datas were collected from 25 and 35 Reang families of the above mentioned villages. The Jagannathpur is a Reang village, 6 km. from Ambassa. Reangs of this village use to live better life because they possess plain land. Reangs under Harimangal and Chakma Para have not sufficient plain land for which most of them survive on Jhum cultivation. Datas were collected from 50 and 54 families of these villages. Ganganagar is a Reang village on the road from Ambassa to Gandacharra. Datas were collected from 75 families.

Reangs under this village live from hand to mouth depending on Jhum cultivation. The main sources of their income are selling of fire wood and other forest products. Most of the Reang families have got settlement and other benefits.

### **AGRICULTURE :**

The Reang villages under this Block are mostly high tillas and slopes. It is, therefore, assumed that the average land holder tribal families depends on Jhuming. Land under Birbabu and Jagannathpur

area may be treated as fertile land. But the soil condition of Shikaribari and Ganganagar area is much inferior and they can not produce paddy according to their demand. The irrigation facilities are still absent in the lower area of Longtharai hill. Reangs generally use the charra water for irrigation purpose. The V. L.W. Centre of the respective Gaon Sava provide them seed, seedlings, fruits plants and fertilizer. Agriculture Department also arranged digging of pond and mini barrage for pisciculture and irrigation purpose and assistance for horticultural garden. But most of them are indifferent to develop themselves.

### **Education :**

During investigation it is seen that in most of the Reang villages there are J.B. School, Adult literacy Centres and school & under I.C.D. S. scheme. But in true sense it is found that only few boys and girls crossed primary school level and only 15 Reang boys and girls are reading in Senior Basic level. In Ganganagar and Shik ari Bari area the illiteracy is a major factor. Reang children up to the age of 12 years do not know even to write their name. Few student however studying in Shillong. Reangs above the age of 50 years do not have any school education. The women under this Block are mostly illiterate.

As investigated, it is felt that the educational facilities in the Shikaribari and Ganganagar area have to be raised. Asram type school up to Secondary level may be set up in both of these places. More over the facilities for encouraging the students may be planed in such a way so that the students and the guardians may utilise the Government assistance to educate their children.

### **Health Service :**

In the Block area there is a Primary health Centre at Kulai. The surveyed villages under this Block are at a long distance from the P.H.C. Reangs sometime visit this Hospital for medical assistance. But in general they still depend on the herbal medicine and traditional Puja to get cured from the diseases. Reangs of the interior places generally affected with gastro intestinal diseases, unknown fever, leprosy and diseases which sometime caused their death. So it is very essential to establish one dispensary at Chakma Para area. It is however



fact that Medical Team under P.G.P. visits the Reang villages and distribute various medicine to the villagers as per their diseases. Malaria workers also visits these villages once in a year.

The village quacks also play a role in the life of Reangs. Initially they go to these quacks for treatment and when the case gone beyond of their treatment they go to hospital when doctor has also nothing to do for the patient. It is surprising to note that sometimes these quacks also carry out surgical operation like abortion.

### **Transport :**

The transport facilities under this Block is to some extent better than in other Blocks. Most of the Reang villages under this Block area along the way to Gandacharra Road and Ambassa-Dharmanagar Road. During investigation it was seen roads and foot tracks are under construction under the S.R.E.P. and N.R.E.P. schemes. Villagers, therefore, move from one village to another through charras or jungle roads. The villagers of Ganganagar expressed their demand for construction of approach roads from Gandacharra Road to their hamlets.

### **Market :**

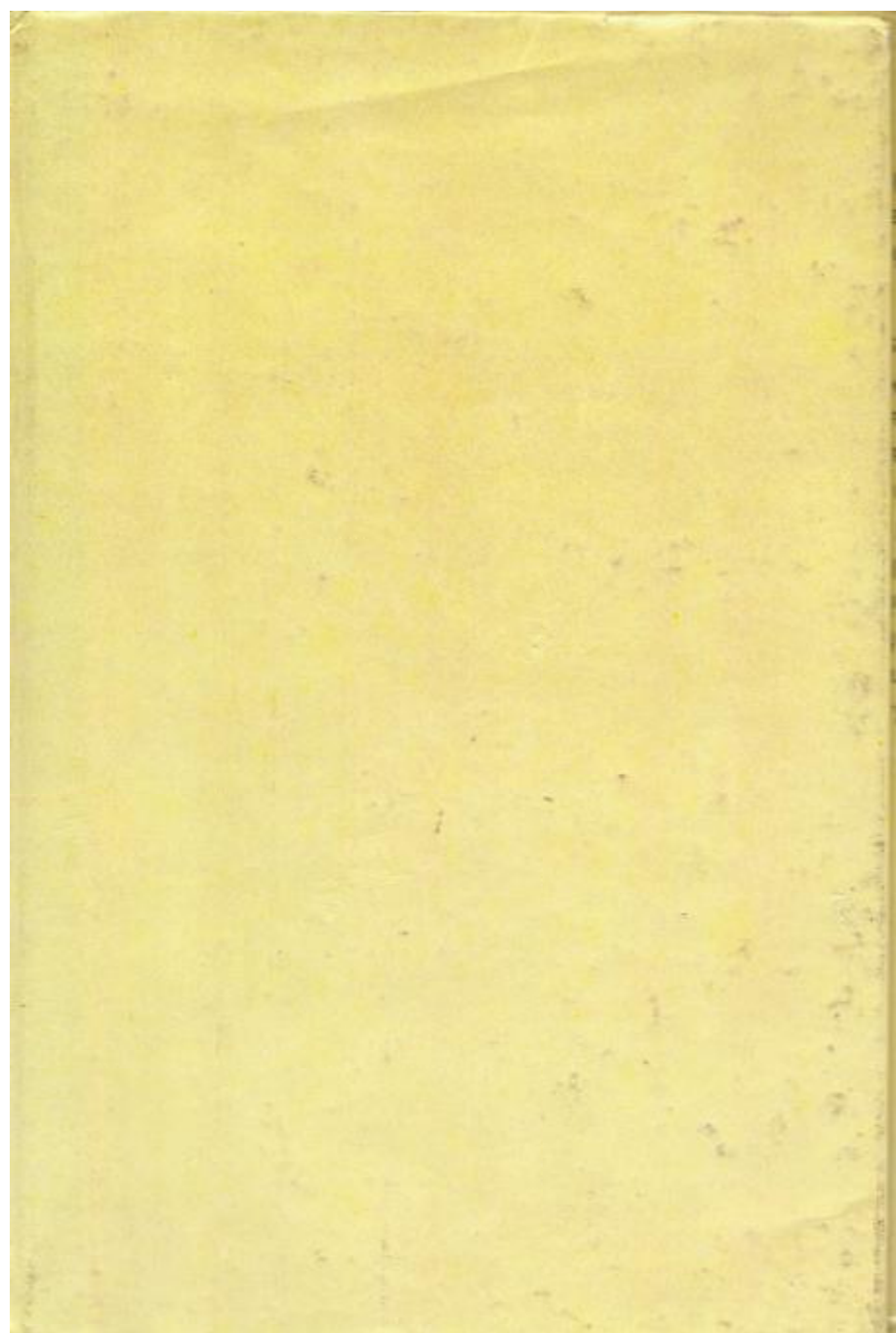
Ambassa is the key centre of this Block and also a good market place. Reangs of interior part come to this market for buying their essentials. In Ganganagar there is also a very good market which takes place twice a week. In Shikaribari there is no market. But few days ago GREEF has established a market on two sides of A.A. Road before their Ambassa Head Quarter.

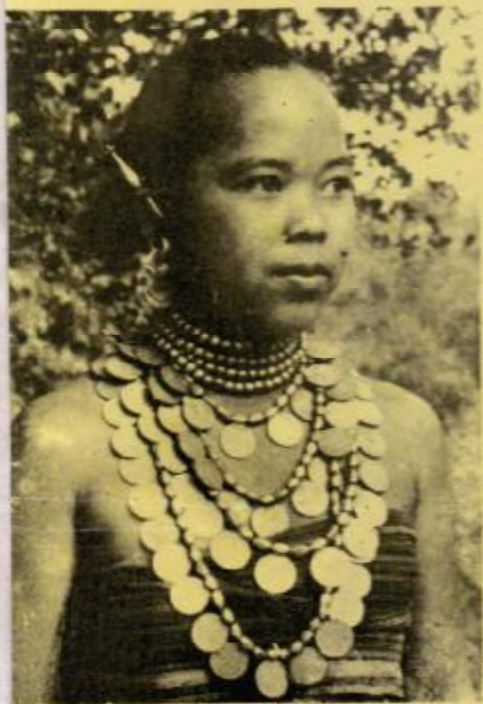
### **Remarks :**

Hence to draw a conclusion it can be said that it would be useful for the planner and the government if certain steps are taken particularly in the sphere of education, health and agriculture. It is suggestion that Asram type school with boarding house facilities are required in the Reang concentrated areas. Un-employed youths are to be motivated for self employment programme of the Government because due to socio-politicals changes in the country the Reang young generation may loses their tradition in socio-economic aspects.

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