

# **THE KARBONG OF TRIPURA**

**Dr. D.N. Goswami**

**Tribal Research Institute  
Government of Tripura  
Agartala.**

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## **PREFACE**

Tripura is an abode of heterogenous population. People of different ethnic origin reside here. The Halam Community is one of them. There are many groups and sub-groups in the Halam Community. The Karbong is one of these groups. There exists very scanty recorded account of this groups. This dissertation is an humble attempt to fulfil this need.

The data collected are distributed in seven chapters. In spite of all possible care, there may be omissions and commissions which may be kindly viewed with consideration.

**D. N. Goswami.**



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**D. N. Goswami**

# The Karbong of Tripura

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## Chapter I

### HABITATS

Tripura is a very small State having an area of 10491.69 square kilometers only<sup>1</sup>. It is situated in the eastern part of India between 22°-59'-24"-31" north latitude and 91°-12' -92°-24" east longitudes.<sup>2</sup> It is a land-locked state surrounded by Bangladesh in all sides with the exception of a narrow passage in the northern side by which it is connected with Assam. In the eastern side also it has a common narrow boundary with Mizoram, the other Indian State.

Tripura is a hilly state. There is no mountain here. There are many small hillocks which are locally known as Tilla. There are small slit of plain land between these tillas which are termed locally as Lungas. The aerial views of this tract is like weaves. This hilly tract may be geophysically classified into five classes viz hills, lungas, rivulates, marshy or water logged areas and strips of plain along the border with the Bangladesh.

The Hills of Tripura stretching north to South are parallel to each other. These hills gradually become higher from north to south. The hill ranges are also gradually higher from one another from the western side i.e from the plains of Bangladesh. From the western side these ranges are Badamuda, Atharamuda, Longterai, Sakhanthang and Jampuithang. The distance between one range to another is about 19 Kms.<sup>3</sup> The highest peak is named as Betlingship and is situated in the Jampuithang range.<sup>4</sup> Once these hilly tract was covered with dense bushes and forests which were the natural abode of many wild lives. There was very little internal road link before the merger of this princely state with the Indian Union in the year 1949<sup>5</sup>. The British termed this hilly tract as Hill Tippearh. This Jungle environment was inhabited by the people of various tribes. The Bengalees who were the highest revenue payees in

those days<sup>6</sup> were the inhabitants of both Hill Tippearh and the adjoining plains of Tippearh, Sylhet, Noakhali and Chittagong which constituted the Chakla Roshnabad, the Zamindary of the Kings of Tripura.<sup>7</sup> This hilly tract was serving as the sheltering area, food gathering, hunting ground and providing land for producing food to the various tribal people of Tripura.

Many streamlets come out of these hills which are very thin and not navigable and as a matter of fact these are termed as rivers only to honour them. These are the Gomati, The Haora, The Khowai, The Dhalai, The Manu, the Deo, the Juri, the phene and the Muhuri etc. The Gomati is the principal river of the State which is the confluent of the two streamlets named as Raima and Sharma rising from the Longtarai and the Atharamuda ranges respectively. These two unite" to form the Gomati" just above a succession of rapids known as the Dambur falls near the south eastern boundary of the District. The rapids then flow for a distance and ending in one grand impressive cascade springs into a large round of pool from which the stream makes its murmuring way through a narrow passage of rocky walls."<sup>8</sup> The river then flows west ward by the side of Amarpur, Udaipur and Sonamura towns and enters Bangladesh near Bibirbazar. Small streamlets locally termed as Chada are the tributaries if the river on either side. The Haora rises from the BadaMuda and passes by the side of Agartala and enters Bangladesh. The Khowai originates from the Atharamuda and passes north east ward by the side of Teliamuda, Kalyanpur and Khowai and ultimately enters Bangladesh. The Dhalai rises from the Dhalajari hills and enters Bangladesh by the side of Kamalpur. The Manu rises from Kahaisiv of Sakhanthang and the Deo from the Jampuithang, flows westward and cuts the Sakhanthang and unites with Manu near Kumarghat. This united flow is also named as Manu and passes westerned by the side of Kailasahar and enters Bangladesh.. All these streams are rainfed, they become very lean in winter and very strong in the rainy season. These are not



navigable. There are some plain land on either bank of these rivers. There are also some valleys which constitute the plains of Tripura along with the Longas. The valleys are Gomati valley, Manu Valley, Dhalai valley and Khowai valley. As Tripura is a land locked state it has boundary with plains of Bangladesh. Along the border there are some strips of plan land in the territorial jurisdiction of the State. Besides these, there are some natural water-logged areas in the state which become full to the brim in the rainy season and gradually get dry during the autumn when Borapaddy, a zaid crop, is grown there.

The soil of the State is red in colour, specially in the hilly tract, and lacks in adequate origanic matter. The soil of the plains and the longas are transporated soil and rich in organic matter. The soil is generally acidic in nature.

The forests of Tripura were full of bamboos of different types, cane brakes, bushes and different valuable woods like sal, Segun, Agar, Gamai, Camal, Garjan, Rata and Sunil etc. The special grass termed as Chan used to grow here profusely which were utilised as roof covering material of dwelling houses and huts. After the partition of India, the population of Tripura, increased suddenly by the influx of the victims of the political operation who actually made settlement here by cutting the Jungles. As a result the wild enviroment which was suitable for the growth and survival of the original people had undergone a sudden change. This dense forest was the abode of various wildlives like Tigers, Elephants, Bears, Monkeys, Deer etc. and birds like Python, Cobra and various other animals. The Elephants were the source of income of the royal Government,<sup>9</sup> and there is evidence that even Rhinoceros was available here.<sup>10</sup> The spectacled monkey or Dadimukh Bandar as it is termed here is the speciality of Tripura, with enormous increase in population and day to day intrusion from adjoining Bangladesh, to cater the requirement of roads and housing and various other development activities the

forests are ruthlessly being destroyed. So elephants, tigers or Rhineros and Pythons etc have become rare animal now.

The State, being situated in the monsoon region, receives fairly well annual rainfall of about 200.7mm."279.79" was the highest rainfall recorded in the year 1990.<sup>12</sup> The major rains occur due to south west wind. The State is neither too hot nor too cold as the average temperature recorded was 25.5<sup>o</sup>c and 10.4<sup>o</sup>c respectively.<sup>13</sup> The temperature begin to fall from the month of November and the coldest months are January and February. Again the temperature begins to rise from the month of March and reaches its culmination in the month of April. The highest temperature recorded on the first of May, 1960 was 42.4<sup>o</sup>c while the lowest was recorded in the second day of February 1955 was 3.7<sup>o</sup>c.<sup>14</sup>

### **Social environment**

With this short write up of the natural environment that must have moulded the life style and food habits of the people, we should have a look into the social environment where that lived together with other people and gradually developed a heritage both in social and cultural sphere of life.

The Government of India recognised 19 tribal communities as scheduled tribes among the tribal population of Tripura. More than 25% of the total population of the State belongs to scheduled tribes as the Census figures of 1981 show that out of the total population of 2053058 the tribal population is 5, 83,920 only<sup>15</sup>. It is natural that a smaller and so called backward population is highly influenced by the major and so called developed group. Thus a rapid change is noticable in the life style, in the mode of production of food stuff and also in the standard of living. Each tribal community is divided into various classes. At present some clans have become so microscopic that they can not be termed as a seperate clan. Some people of those clans even try to amalgate

themselves with other major clans for deriving financial benefits. For want of suitable match within their own clan they are being compelled to make matrimonial connections with the people of the other clans and even other community and in this way the basic features of a particular clan are being changed in the next generation. We shall also find this phenomenon occurring in our specified clan, the Karbong also.

Out of the nineteen scheduled tribes, as mentioned earlier, Halam is a major tribal community of Tripura. According to the Census of 1981, the total Halam population of the State was 28969.<sup>16</sup> The figures of the Census of 1991 are not yet available and hence the decennial increase can not be ascertained now. But we may have an idea if we consider the figures of the previous Census reports as shown in the following table.

| Year of Census   | 1951 | 1961  | 1971  | 1981  | 1991 |
|------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Halam population | 1644 | 16298 | 19076 | 28969 |      |

The figure of 1951 seems to be not rational in comparison with the figures of later ones but from 1961 the growth seems to be steady. This Halam community comprises various clans. K.C.Singha, the pioneer historian of Tripura, opines that the Halam tribes consists of 13 clans namely Molsom, Rankhal, Kalai, Rupini, Bongcher, Kaipeng, Langai, Dub, Cadain, Karbong, Khulung, Machbang and Mutil - anla.<sup>17</sup> S.B.K. Devvarma opines that the Halam tribe is composed of 17 clans eg. Kalai, Kulu or Khulung, Kaipeng, Kaireng, Cadai, Dub, Sankachep, Thangachep, Nabin, Bongcher or Bongshel, Morsem or Molsom, Sardakheng or Murasingh, Rankhal, Rupini, Langai, and Langlong.<sup>18</sup> The Census report of 1340 T.E mentioned the clans of the Halam tribe and these are - Kalai, Kulu, Karbong, Kaipeng, Kaireng, Cadai, Dub, Sankachep, Thangachep, Nabin, Bongsher, Chaimal, Morsum, Murasingh, Rankhal, Rupini, Langai and Langlu. In the foot note the editor admitted that the Chaimals are not actually Halams, they

are included in the Kuki tribe and the Murasings are the clans of Noatia. Both the communities got place in the table of Halam by mistake.<sup>19</sup>

Our survey reveals that at present there are 14 groups in the Halam community and these are Molsom, Kalai, Rankhal, Rupini, Bongcher or Bongchel, Kaipeng, Langkal, Thangachep, Sakachep, Dub, Khaknu, Mareapang, Cadai and Karbong.<sup>20</sup> Any how, from the above lists we are informed that the Karbong aconstitute group with in the greater Halam Community. Mr. Joy Krishna Karbong also admits that though it is very difficult now to ascertain the actual Karbong because they had marriage connections with other groups and tribes and as such purity of racial characteristics is disappearing day by day, still the Karbongs are actually a group of the greater Halam tribe.<sup>21</sup> Thus we may assume that the Karbongs belongs to the Halam tribe.

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13. Menon K.D.:op., cit.,p.57

14. Ibid. : p.57

15. Govt. of Tripura : Some Basic Statistics, 1989 p.p. 12-13

16. Census of India : 1981, series 21, part I. p.382.

17. Singha K. C. : op., cit., vol.I p.24

18. Devvarma S.V.K. : The Tribes of Tripura, p.13

19. Devbarma S.C. : Census Bibarani, 1340 T. E. p.81

20. Mr. Dhanan lal Halam : He is a teacher who conducted the survey regarding the clans of the Halam tribe and helped me. much His native place is Lalchari, Kulai, Kamalpur.

21. Mr. Joykrishna Karbong : A resident of Karbong para, Chambadi, is the son of late Rabi chandra Karbong, the late Roy of Karbong during the princely regime. His opinion is very important as he also leads the Karbong-s till today being a member of the's village development committee.

## Chapter II

# INTRODUCING THE KARBONG

### History

The Karbong are a small group of people belonging to the greater Halam Community. The history of the Karbong is yet to be known. They say that they have been residing here for a longtime but they cannot specify the time or name of the king who permitted them to settle here. Some elderly people say that they came from Doyapatter and some are of opinion that they began to settle here during the region of Danguri Ma and Dangui pha. Tradition has it that once on occasion of a quarrel a queen cursed them to the effect that in future never they would be well populated, never would be able to organise a village of their own. Some tales are there regarding the infighting between the tribes over the aquirement of land. During such infighting once when the Tripuris attacked Halam village, mostly populated by the people of this group, at night they found in the darkness some Karbongs' (Pillows) lying in the Hamlet. They, of course, did not spare those 'Karbongs' and cut them into pieces. But when they found that those 'Karbongs' were bleeding like human being they exclaimed, "Karbongs" ....Karbongs". And from then the people of this group is known as "Karbong".

From these stories we may assume the following as reasonable. (i) That the Karbong may have migrated from Douchapather. The name Douchapather is found in the Sri Rajmala for several times. <sup>1</sup> S.B.K Deverma opines that the Halams were originally the inhabitants of Khurpuitabhum, the hilly tract on the north of Manipur. Due to scarcity of food they left their original home in search of new and fertile jhum fields<sup>2</sup>. The census report of 1340 T.E. also narrates that the Halams were originally the inhabitants of Khurpuitabhum.<sup>3</sup> Thus it may be possible that during the great

march in search of food a group of Halam may have settled in the Dauchapther region and later they entered the heart of Tripura. (ii) In Tripura the queens were given the names of the king with the word Ma, at the end to show respect to her. But there is no king named as Danguipha in the list of the kings of Tripura. The sound itself leads us to think about Danger pha. Is it he who subdued Halamas? (iii) It is very possible that the Tripuris could not form a state without subduing various tribal group. In the process of state formation bloody inter-tribe feuds were there and the Halam were no exception. The term 'mela kuki' refers to those Halams who threw their allegiance to the kings of Tripura.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we may conclude that a population of kuki-chin speaker who perhaps lived in the north of Manipur entered Tripura through Douchapather, in search of food, had a confrontation with the Tripura people who killed them like 'Kabong' but ultimately they threw their allegiance to the Tripura and the present Karbong of Tripura are their descendents. Gradually they were brought under the taxation system of Tripura known as 'Ghar Chutikar'. There is evidence that Halam subjects were charged at the rate of rupees three and annas eight per 'Khana' per year.<sup>4</sup>

### **Population**

This community is scantily populated. The census of 1340 T.E. shows their number as 38 only in which 19 were females.<sup>10</sup> The Census of 1961 shows a slightly better figure of 72 persons in which 48 were males and 24 were females.<sup>11</sup> In the subsequent Censuses, perhaps, cleanwise counting was discontinued and as such no record regarding Karbong population is available. Our survey reports that the total population of this group at present is 182 persons approximately. (1991)

### **Distribution**

Our survey reveals that 70 persons reside in the Karbong

para of Champabodi under Jirania Block of the Sadar Sub-Division, 75 persons reside in the Khaiamongol of Khowai Sub-Division and only 37 persons live in the purna chandra Karbong para of east R.F, Khowai sub-division. The gradual increase from 1340 T.E. (1930 A.D) to 1990 A.D shows that this group is on the verge of extinction.

### **Physical Features**

As the Karbong belong to the Halam tribe, their physical structure are like that of a common Halam person. Males are of medium hight with good physique. The muscles of chest, biceps and feets are worth seeing. Their face is round shaped having less growth of beards. Nose is not so sharp,. hair is stiff and slightly raised. Their body complexion is dark brown but fare faces also are not very uncommon. The women folk is slightly shorter that the males having well built and black short hair.

### **Dialect**

The Karbong dialect is the same as that of the Halam. The Halam dialect belongs to Kuki-chin language of the greater Tibets Burman language group.<sup>7</sup> The language of the Halam are not very different than that of the Kukis. Slight changes took place in their pronunciation as they are residing around the Tripuri speaking people.<sup>8</sup> Hunter's is opinion that the Halam dialect may be added to the list of Thado, Lusai, and Khend etc. the sub-clans of the kuki people.<sup>9</sup> Acharyya Suniti Kumar also opines that language of MaiteiKuki and Lusai etc. are also sub-language of the Kuki- chin language which is a part of the Assamese. Burmese group of greater Sine -Tibetan of Kirata language.<sup>10</sup> In this way Greerson also included the Halam dialect in the Kuki group.

As the Halams are divided into various groups and each group, living in a compact geographical area, has its own indentity and tradition. The mode of pronunciation differs slightly between



group to group. To indicate the same object the sound produced by the twisting of tongue by different groups varies a little either more or less shorter or longer particularly in case of nasal sounds. A list of Karbong words have been collected and compared with those of the some other communities and presented below in a tabular form.

### TABLES

| Bengali  | Karbong | Darlong | Tripuri |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Ami      | Kaima   | Kaima   | Ang     |
| Tumi     | Nangma  | Nang    | Nong    |
| Se       | Hima    | Arna    | Ba      |
| Baba     | Kaupā   | Pa      | Babu    |
| Ma       | kini    | Nu      | Ama     |
| Bhai     | Kenaipa | Upa     | Takhuk  |
| Bon      | Kenai   | Unu     | Ahauk   |
| Thakurda | Kupu    | Pu      | cucu    |
| Thakurma | Pi      | Pi      | Nana    |
| Bhat     | Bu      | Bu      | Mai     |
| Mach     | Na      | Nga     | Aa      |
| Jal      | Tui     | Tui     | Tui     |
| Mad      | Rakju   | Rakzu   | Cauyak  |
| Badi     | Khau    | Khau    | Pada    |
| Ghar     | In      | In      | Nok     |
| Sukar    | Vok     | Vok     | Vak     |
| Kukur    | Ui      | Ui      | Sani    |

|        |        |        |          |
|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| Bagh   | Ikui   | Kui    | Mocha    |
| Morog  | Ar     | Ar     | Tak      |
| Garu   | Serat  | Sehrat | Musuk    |
| Haria  | Saki   | Sakhi  | Musui    |
| Cand   | Tha    | Thla   | Tal      |
| Surjya | Nisa   | Ni     | Chal     |
| Tara   | Arsi   | Arsi   | Athukiri |
| Hat    | Kut    | Kut    | Yak      |
| Mukh   | Hngmai | Hmai   | Baukhuk  |
| Pa     | akai   | phei   | Yakung   |
| Nak    | ainar  | Hnar   | Bukung   |
| pet    | phung  | phong  | Bahak    |
| Mangsa | Mi     | Sa     | Bahan    |

A simple study, without going into details and complex variations, shows that the majority of the Karbong words of the above table have close resemblance with that of the Darlong words where as there is less similarity with the corresponding Tripuri words. In some cases, of course, there is similarity (Nong, Tui) and that is either due to social influence or being originated from the common stock. I have collected some other words which are noted below :

#### A. Words relating to human body :

|         |         |         |           |
|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Bengali | Karbong | Bengali | Karbong   |
| Hat     | Kut     | Mukh    | Hugai/Mur |
| Cul     | Sam     | Thot    | Pilkul    |

|      |        |       |          |
|------|--------|-------|----------|
| Nak  | ainar  | Pa    | Aki      |
| Pet  | Fung   | Komar | Keng     |
| Gala | Ringer | Ghad  | Rongtang |
| Cokh | Mit    | Buk   | Am       |
| Stan | Runu   | Jihba | Mautari  |

### **B. Words relating to insects and pastes :**

|           |            |          |         |
|-----------|------------|----------|---------|
| Bengali   | Karbong    | Bengali  | Karbong |
| Prajapati | Phalep     | Masa     | Kamthar |
| Makadsa   | Singklimai | Chinajok | Rauet   |
| Jok       | Siluk      | Pipda    | Sigmer  |
| Sap       | Marul      | Kakda    | Ai      |
| Kachap    | Lamjuk     | Kachim   | Sarpha  |
| Indur     | Muju       | Beji     | Bes     |
| Kath      | Bidali     | Khillai  |         |

### **C. Words relating to Birds and Animals :**

|         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Bengali | Karbong | Bengali | Karbong |
| Pakhi   | Wa      | Payra   | Farbli  |
| Sakun   | Sikurak | Teta    | Thrai   |
| Maina   | Manai   | Chil    | Raume   |
| Merag   | Ar      | Hans    | Oatak   |
| Sukar   | Vak     | Garu    | Serat   |
| Siyal   | Hiyal   | Bhalluk | Ibam    |
| Kukur   | Oi      | Bandar  | Idwar   |

|        |       |       |       |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Bidal  | Aming | Harin | Saki  |
| Chagal | Kel   | Ghoda | Sakar |

#### D. Plant and its parts :

|         |                |         |         |
|---------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Bengali | Karbong        | Bengali | Karbong |
| Gach    | Thing tak      | Mool    | Arjung  |
| Bet     | Menang         | Bans    | Roe     |
| Pata    | Na             | Lata    | Luisang |
| Dal     | Thingtak medak | Chal    | Aboon   |
| phul    | Par            | Fal     | Fal     |
| Beej    | Aru            |         |         |

#### E. Crops, Vegetable and Fruits

|           |         |            |              |
|-----------|---------|------------|--------------|
| Bengali   | Karbong | Bengali    | Karbong      |
| Dhan/Caul | Sang    | Sarisa     | Harua        |
| Til       | Tisi    | Pat/Karpas | Pat          |
| Cinar     | Sakma   | Regun      | Manta        |
| Cal Kumra | Maipul  | Kacu       | Kachu        |
| Lau       | Melow   | Kumda      | Maikthum     |
| Seem      | Aibe    | Maric      | Marsui       |
| Kharkol   | Maipol  | Pan        | Panbo        |
| Kanthal   | Laoc    | Kala       | Moth         |
| Lebu      | Misir   | Kamala     | Kanel Thumti |
| Supari    | Kaoai   | Narikel    | Nerkela      |



### F. Words relating to house and house goods.

|           |             |                |            |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Bengali   | Karbong     | Bengali        | Karbong    |
| Badi      | Khau        | Ghar           | In         |
| Gola      | Maizam      | Daraja         | Duar       |
| Janala    | Kabraf      | Sukarer Khowar | Rukul      |
| Kotha     | In rukulsai | Cala           | Inspoke    |
| RannaGhar | Gantiiin    | Paikhana       | Ekin       |
| Guru ghar | Goainak     | Murgirghar     | Arin       |
| Cula      | Rautap      | Bichana        | Punfa      |
| Bailsh    | karbong     | Lep            | Rej ai     |
| Tosak     | Punhak      | Catai/Madur    | Jamkhong   |
| Pati      | Jamkher     | Tant           | Thumdal    |
| Banduk    | Setai       | Kodal          | Kodal      |
| Langal    | Langal      | Takkal         | Sum/Serel. |

### G. Words relating to Nature :

|          |              |         |           |
|----------|--------------|---------|-----------|
| Bengali  | Karbong      | Bengali | Karbong   |
| Prithibi | Rining       | Nadee   | Tuipui    |
| Batas    | Thrithu      | Tilla   | Tung      |
| Kuasa    | Rade         | Mati    | Rining    |
| Tara     | Akhi         | Alo     | Nisa loom |
| Pahad    | Khaumul      | Cad     | Tha       |
| Jhad     | Thrithu fiys | Chada   | Tuiti     |
| Tusar    | Adaisakta    | Megh    | Re        |

|       |      |         |         |
|-------|------|---------|---------|
| Surya | Nisa | British | Roahang |
| Baraf | Eril | Akas    | Roan    |
| Agun  | Mui  |         |         |

#### H. Words relating and colours :

|         |             |         |             |
|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|
| Bengali | Karbong     | Bengali | Karbong     |
| Tak     | akhate      | Jhal    | Ahang Sakta |
| Nonta   | Along Sakta | Misti   | Athum Sakta |
| Tita    | akha        | Sada    | Angui       |
| Lal     | Acheng      | Neel    | Adum        |
| Halud   | Eng         | Kalo    | Aoam        |
| Kamala  | aeng        |         |             |

#### I. Words relating to diseases :

|            |         |           |         |
|------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Bengali    | Karbong | Bengali   | Karbong |
| Rog        | Damlai  | Cof       | Kha     |
| Sardi      | Khabu   | Jwar      | Khurta  |
| Mathadhara | Khuhai  | Dat Betha | Kahana  |
| Basanta    | Jegata  | Kalera    | Alumpa  |

#### J. Words relating to time and direction :

|         |          |         |               |
|---------|----------|---------|---------------|
| Bengali | Karbong  | Bengali | Karbong       |
| Din     | Ni       | Rat     | Jan           |
| Sakal   | Jina     | Bikal   | Khaulauataкта |
| Bhor    | Jing     | Sandhya | Janjingtauk   |
| Dupur   | Dauphara | Aja     | Tuni          |

|       |         |          |             |
|-------|---------|----------|-------------|
| Kal   | Nangtua | Agamikal | Nangtunimin |
| Mas   | Mas     | Bachar   | Akum        |
| Purba | Pub     | Paschi   | Pacim       |
| Uttar | Uttar   | Dakhin   | Dakhin      |

**K. Words relating to food and utensils :**

|         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Bengali | Karbong | Bengali | Karbong |
| Bhat    | Bu      | Khai    | Sikampo |
| Mangsa  | Mi      | Thala   | Mairang |
| Tarkari | An      | Ghati   | lota    |
| Cida    | Tongper | Bati    | Ruhum   |
| Mad     | Rakzu   | Gelas   | Gelas   |
| Mach    | Na      | Karai   | Karai   |
| Dim     | Attui   | Dog     | Tasla   |
| Mudi    | Uram    |         |         |

**L. Words relating to war and justice :**

|           |             |          |                     |
|-----------|-------------|----------|---------------------|
| Bengali   | Karbong     | Bengali  | Karbong             |
| Dhanuk    | Phel        | Parasta  | Armangta            |
| Banduk    | Selai       | Bicarak  | Kanthurang          |
| Ballam    | Ballam      | Curi     | Sikuk               |
| Teer      | Teer        | Sasti    | Kanginsapta         |
| Golabarud | Selai Bethi | Ray      | Bicar<br>Ethurangal |
| Akraman   | Akraman     | Jarimana | Jurbana             |

|         |        |       |       |
|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| Polayan | Aratta | Hukum | Hukum |
|---------|--------|-------|-------|

**M. Words relating to Plant :**

|              |               |            |            |
|--------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| Bengali      | Karbong       | Bengali    | Karbong    |
| Sal Gach     | Sal kung      | Karai gach | Khan Kechi |
| Jam Gach     | Jambu Kung    | Segun Gach | Segunkung  |
| Camel Gach   | Jhaurain Kung | Sundi Gach | Munao Kung |
| Kanthal Gach | Laui kung     | Bel gach   | Bel kung   |

**N. Some Adjectives :**

|           |              |         |               |
|-----------|--------------|---------|---------------|
| Bengali   | Karbong      | Bengali | Karbong       |
| Bhala     | Athata       | Bada    | Abon          |
| Manda     | Thama        | Cheta   | Asiti         |
| Sukh      | Ahaita       | Bhanga  | Akai          |
| Dukh      | Dukh         | Chidra  | Aku           |
| Man       | Long         | Sundar  | Athasakta     |
| Cinta     | Tarbak       | Nutan   | Attai         |
| Hag       | Kiningase    | Satya   | Saitya        |
| Bhalabasa | Thata        | Mithya  | Mila          |
| Biswas    | Khulung      | Alas    | Adak          |
| Sahajya   | Sahajya      | ucu     | Asang         |
| Dhar      | Lakai        | Nicu    | Arnuya        |
| Paka      | Amin         | Sundari | Atta Sakta    |
| Durpal    | A tak dammak | Gayak   | Lakarsthurang |

### O. Some Verbs :

|         |            |           |              |
|---------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Bengali | Karbong    | Bengali   | Karbong      |
| Kara    | Kutho      | Khaoa     | Nearg        |
| Basa    | Kauthung   | Jaoa      | Ser          |
| Paoa    | Kamanta    | Pankara   | Kien         |
| Neoa    | Kahanchai  | Deva      | Kipiata      |
| Kanda   | Kacaapta   | Hansa     | Nauai        |
| Bala    | Krilang    | Khaoa     | Kausak       |
| Mara    | Athita     | Dekha     | Kumta        |
| Khuda   | Oaiaksam   | Snan Kara | Tuike seting |
| Hanta   | Lamcirang  | Daudana   | Kaurtui      |
| Dadana  | Kartairang | Bona      | Thumkan      |
| Para    | Silang     | Pada      | Padirang     |

### P. Pronouns :

|         |          |         |         |
|---------|----------|---------|---------|
| Bengali | Karbong  | Bengali | Karbong |
| Ami     | Krima    | Amar    | Kauta   |
| Amara   | Kania    | Amader  | Kanta   |
| Amake   | Nauatuna | Tumi    | Nangma  |
| Tomader | Naungta  | Tomar   | Nauta   |
| Se      | Hima     | Tahar   | Nauta   |
| Tahara  | Angta    | Tahader | Angta   |

### Q. Interogative Pronouns :

|         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Bengali | Karbong | Bengali | Karbong |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|

|        |          |      |           |
|--------|----------|------|-----------|
| Ke     | Atuma    | Kara | Hatumnani |
| Keno   | Ima      | Ki   | Ima       |
| Kothai | Jamnoham | Ki   | Ima       |
| Kathan | Jetauk   |      |           |

**R. Some other words :**

|         |         |         |             |
|---------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Bengali | Karbong | Bengali | Karbong     |
| Rasta   | Lampui  | Samne   | Mana        |
| Piche   | Kumuk   | Kache   | Judungarpak |
| Dure    | Alak    | Iswar   | Bauthaun    |
| Purus   | Mauraun | Stree   | Naupang     |
| Taka    | Som     | Paisa   | Puisa       |
| Grisma  | Aloomjo | Barsa   | Sinje       |
| Seet    | Falbe   |         |             |

**Tense forms of some common verbs :**

|      |      |     |
|------|------|-----|
| Verb | Jaoa | Ser |
|------|------|-----|

**Present Tense**

|            |          |                  |                |
|------------|----------|------------------|----------------|
|            | Begali   | Karbong Singular | Karbong Plural |
| 1st person | Ami jai  | Keima serangta   | Kania serangta |
| 2nd person | Tumi jao | Nangma ser       | Nauta ser      |
| 3rd person | Se jai   | Hima ser         | Angta ser      |

**Past Tense**

|            |                |              |              |
|------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1st person | Ami Giyachilam | Keima Kisita | Kania Kisita |
|------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|

|            |                |               |              |
|------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 2nd person | Tumi Giyachile | Nangma Kisita | Nauta Kisita |
| 3rd person | Se Giyachila   | Hima Kisita   | Angta Kisita |

### Future Tense

|            |            |               |              |
|------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1st person | Ami Jaiba  | Keima sering  | Kania Sering |
| 2nd person | Tumi Jaibe | Nengma sering | Nauta sering |
| 3rd person | Se Jaibe   | Hima sering   | Angta sering |

### Present Tense

|            |           |              |             |
|------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| Verb       | Kara      | Kutho        |             |
| 1st person | Ami Kari  | Keima Kathu  | Kania Kathu |
| 2nd person | Tumi Kara | Nongma Thura | Nauta Thura |
| 3rd person | Se kare   | Hima Thura   | Angta Thura |

### Past Tense

|            |                |                      |                      |
|------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1st person | Ami Karechilam | Keima<br>Kuthoangta  | Kenia Kutho<br>angta |
| 2nd person | Tumi Karechile | Nongma<br>Kuthoangta | Nauta<br>Kuthoangta  |
| 3rd person | Se Karechila   | Hima<br>Kuthoangta   | Angta<br>Kuthoangta  |

### Future Tense

|            |             |                   |                  |
|------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1st person | Ami Kariba  | Keima<br>Kathura  | Kania<br>Kathura |
| 2nd person | Tumi Karibe | Nongma<br>Kathura | Nauta<br>Kathura |



|            |           |             |                  |
|------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| 3rd person | Se Karibe | Hima Kathra | Angta<br>Kathura |
|------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|

Verb : Khaoa : Kausak

### Present Tense

|            |           |               |              |
|------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| 1st person | Ami Khai  | Keima Kesera  | Kania Kesera |
| 2nd person | Tumi Khao | Nongma Kesera | Nauta Kesera |
| 3rd person | Se Khay   | Hima Kesera   | Angta Kesera |

### Past Tense

|            |             |            |            |
|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1st person | Ami         | Keima      | Kenia      |
|            | Kheyschilam | Keserkanti | Keserkanti |
| 2nd person | Tumi        | Nongma     | Nauta      |
|            | Kheychile   | Keserkanti | Keserkanti |
| 3rd person | Se          | Hima       | Angta      |
|            | Kheychile   | Keserkanti | Keserkanti |

### Future Tense

|            |             |                |               |
|------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1st person | Ami Khaiba  | Keima Keserta  | Kenia Keserta |
| 2nd person | Tumi Khaibe | Nongma Keserta | Nauta Keserta |
| 3rd person | Se Khaibe   | Hima Keserta   | Angta Keserta |

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## CHAPTER- III

### ECONOMICS ACTIVITIES

The traditional economy of the karbong consists of gathering of leaves, roots, tubers from the jungles; hunting wild animals and birds, catching fishes from the rivuletes or water legged areas near their habitation. All these vocations indicate their habit of food gathering. Again as producers they practise jhum cultivation, till the plain tracts, rear domestic animals and birds, maintain fisheries and practise a bit of cottage industries. At present with the fast changing social order, they also are changing their orthodox attitudes and get inclined towards various jobs for earning livelihood.

#### Food gathering

Various vegetable both leafy and root or tubers grow in the moonson fed forests of Tripura. In the lean days of winter some vegetables also grow beside the streams or rivers. They collect these leaves or roots according to availability. Two types of tubers are worth mentionable among the collected vegetables. One is termed as rambal which is white under the skin. The other is covered with throng skin likeneedles but it is redish under the skin. It is termed as Jonga. They prefer this redish tuber as it seems to be more tasteful than the white one. They also collect form leaves (KOKODAM), mushroom (pathung or pomai) and a leaf named as Muitepe which is considered by them as a good food. Muitepe grows throughout the year in the jungle. The collected leaves are cleaned with water and are placed on the cover of the container containing hot rice. The leaves are covered with a lid. As a result of this heat treatment, the leaves become soft and are considered to be ready to serve. They also use leaves like Dhania termed by them as Khomhaj, the flowers of wild plaintain termed as Congui, the stems of the plant named Tara termed be them as Thorai, the stems of a variety of arun named as Gandai termed by them as Kamangtu and the buds of the bamboo termed as toi as vegetable.

The active young boys do not participate in the collection of wild vegetables. The work is meant for the ladies and minors boys and girls. They say that there is no taboo in vegetables collection. But as the aged and young males do more laborious works like cutting of fire wood, hunting or cultivation, they direct the womenfolk and the minor boys and girls to collect vegetables. The food gatherer generally leave their home in the morning after breakfast. They carry with them a basket (khada), termed by them as bem; a cutter (takkal), termed by them as cem, and sometimes a sickle, termed by them as cikra. The list of collection also contains honey and rein. They collect honey in bamboo pots. They also collect seasonal fruits that grow in the forest such as wild banana (Ramkala), wild palm (Ban barai), figs, wild guavas, fruits of camal, pine apples and other various fruits. The mushrooms are also collected by them. Form experience they avoid the poisonous varieties and collect only the edible ones. They are very fond of this food termed by them as Patung. For house hold use they collect bamboes, sungrass and fire wood. The surplus materials are taken to the local market and disposed of. They purchase salt, kerosin, dried or smoked or decomposed fish (Sidal) with this cash. Generally they come back to their hamlets at noon after gathering vegetables or other materials.

### **Hunting**

Hunting is also a means of food gathering, Hunting may be individual or a group concern. Generally the adult male karbongs practice hunting. Though they claim that are no taboos in hunting yet boys or girls of below ten years of age and the women are not allowed to participate. The reasons they show are that the women and the young folk are engaged in other house hold duties during hunting. The owner of the gun who is also as expert in shooting chosen as the leader of the hunting party. The other members act according to the advice of the leader. The weapons generally used

in hunting are deshigun, spear with bamboo handle, cutter, bow and arrows and pieces of stones. Each hunter must carry his own cern in addition to the weapons allotted to him. Generally the hunts are wild hogs, deers, porcupine, tortoise and wild cocks and hen etc. Sometimes the prey is brought within the shooting range of the hunter by group chasing. When the hunter hits the animal, the other members rush to the animal and kill it with the weapons they have with them. Sometimes the prey is surrounded from every side and all the members attack it simultaneously and kill it. In case of individual venture to hunter hides himself in the bushes near the way to the water source or besides the water source where the animals usually come to drink water at a particular time. The hunter takes this chance and suddenly hits or fires at a prey.

The meat of the hunt is generally distributed in equal share among the members of the hunting party. The actual hunter or the shooter gets the head and a portion of the hind legs of the kill. After clearing the share of the shooter, the remaining meat is divided equally among the participants, where the shooter is also regarded as member. There is no special share of Accai or the priest. The meat thus collected is not consumed fully on that day. Setting aside the quota for days consumption, the remaining portions are made pieces. These pieces are then pierced by a sharp bamboo strip and dries in the sunlight. Sometimes the entire meat is tied to a bamboo piece and hanged over the oven. In this process the meat does not decompose but becomes dried or smoked. This meat is consumed during the rainy season when kills are not available. The cooking process includes the use of alkalinized water or Kharpani. In case of cooking dried meat Kharpani is a must. Other recipes are ginger and powdered rice. Muching leaves are used in lieu of ginger, in case ginger is not available. Generally they do not use mustered oil in cooking. But the survey shows that now a days they are getting used to it. The fresh meat is cooked with Ghani oil and other spices.

## Fishing

Catching of fish is also another way of food gathering. Fishing is generally done individually or in a group in the chadas or rivulets near the hamlets. Both the male and female participate in the fishing but the menstruating women are not allowed to join the fishing party. Fishing is done throughout the year but the special season is the period from the month of Aswin to kartik when the water of streamlets begin to recede. Implements used for fishing are very simple and all these are home made. Generally angle, spade, sewing basket, pala, spear, enchi, zed or anta, sudam orocha, dola, khakpai etc. are used. Decomposed fish (Sidal), eggs of aunts, earth worm etc are used as bait for angling. Sometimes small chadas are made water less by drawing out water using sewing basket and fishers are collected from the mud. Some poisonous plants are used in the river for catching fishes. In the upstream of the river the sap of the Ru plant are dropped in the river. The roots of Ru plant and other poisonous plants are also used. These poisonous water when comes in down, perhaps, causes breathing difficulties to the fishes and as a result the fishes float on the surface water. The fish catchers then use Pala and jhata to catch the fishes. The fishes thus caught are divided equally among the catchers. They do not consume all the fishes they caught in a day. Some fishes are dried in the sun after cleaning the abdominal portion. Some are also smoked by hanging over the oven. In rainy season when fishes are not available they consume these dried or smoked fishes. Of-course dried or fermented fishes are always preferred to the fresh fish. The fishes dried or fresh are inserted in the holes of a bamboo pole having a knot at the bottom along with salt, turmeric, onion, green chilies and leaves of Khunjarpuri, Mirtinga variety of bamboo is preferred for this purpose. After packing all the ingredients inside the bamboo pole, the opening of the bamboo is tightly closed with sannggrass or some other creeper. The bamboo is then placed in fire. The bamboo

slowly begins to burn and the ingredients inside the bamboo begins to boil. When the bamboo begins to boil. When the bamboo is almost burnt and becomes black, the cooking becomes complete. The food is now ready to be served. They are almost omnivorous and so not spare even frogs, snakes and kuchias.

## FOOD PRODUCTION :

### A) Joom Cultivation

The main function of food production is joom cultivation. The dense forest areas where the domesticated animals like cows and buffalos have no access are generally chosen for Jhum cultivation. The soil of the chosen tract showed be blackish in colour and there is to be dense growth of bamboos. After selecting the site a small area is cleaned and three bamboo poles are planted there. These bamboo poles served the purpose of possession by one. No one generally there after select the same area when he sees the bamboo poles. The cultivater then collect a handful of soil from the chosen field and place that soil under his bed with a view to having dream good or bad. If he dreams a good scene then the field is finally selected for cultivation. Otherwise this field is left or spared and the farmer starts searching for a new area. Before starting the work of joom they worship a god terned as Lampra. Survey report shows that they worship Hajagiri (Luxmidevi). Bala, Thumnirok, Banirok etc. perhaps by the influence of the Tripuris as they reside among the Tripuri speaking people. As they have no priest they perform these pujas by engaging a Tripuri Accais. It is found in the village of champbadi that the Tripuri Accai presides over their Pujas. The main items of the jhum pujs are green bamboos, bamboo leaves, wine, thread, cotton, earthen pitcher and banana leaves. Generally they do not open their mouth about the hymn. But the sounds appear to be like the following : " Hima Khumuta lui Kuthu bang je kangsh, chang oash, Nang thanke asha kuttu

dowar Nangma Parka kaka reng alka enn." Such other hymns are also chanted by the acai.

Both the male and female go to cultivate the joom in the month of Falgoon and Caitra. Only the very old man and women and the mere children stay at home as they are not allowed to work in the jhum. First of all they erect a hatal and plant termeric. Gradually they clean the jungle and Kainak. The jungles when dried are burnt into ashes. Then comes the round of actual sowing. They make a pit with takkal and sow paddy, jute, cotton, sesame, arahar, pepper, arun, beans, pumpkins, cucumbers, bottle growd, kharmuja, futi, and melon etc. The seeds germinate after the first shower. The weeds also spring up with the plants. So the process of weeding starts. They pull out the weeds and make the soil of root areas loose. Both male and female work for the whole day in the field. The plants grow up and gradually bear fruits and seeds. The fruits and seeds attract various eaters like boars, bears, monkeys, percupines and even elephants along with birds like tiya, parrots, tota, maina and babui etc. The birds attack the field during day time, so the cultivators chase the birds and watch the field from the machang of the kainok. Some times they make harah sounds with the help of a bamboo piece to ward off the menacing hordes. The animals come to devour the crops at night and the jumia passes sleepless nights to protect his crops from damages by animals. Naturally the work is very tiresome. The female are not allowed to stay in kainok during night. Hence the lone male on his machang amidst the desolate expense counts the hours of the weary night. To keep spirit and also to avoid fear he sings songs like "Loi....Loi.....etc."

The crops begin to be ready for harvesting in the month of Bhadra. Some fruit like Cingra etc. come first. The first reaping is offered to the God Bala. The people become happy and in marry making they organise various festivals like Buthar Kangni. They



ceremonially take new rice after offering to the God Malima. Fowls, eggs ducks etc. are offered to the god for granting good crops. They all together enjoy the new crops.

### **Cultivation of Plain Land :**

Now a days only jhum cultivation does not provide enough food to the tribal cultivators. The jungles are becoming thin with the increase in population. The high land is less fertile and shifting to another place has stopped as there is no fallow land. The cultivators thus begins to use the plain land between the two hillocks called Longa. These Longa lands, as they are termed, are fertile, The scientific methods of cultivaton are becomeing incresely popular now a days this trend entered the tribal areas also. So gradually plain land cultivations is becoming popular amongst the tribals who were previously entirely dependent on jhum cultivation. In the past they did not practise domestication of cows and buffaloes for the purpose of ploughing. Now with the change of the mode of cultivation they have began to rear animal not only for meat but also for supply of manure for the agricultural field. Of course, this type of cultivation is followed by very few cultivatios because most the the common tribals are land less subjects and most of them have no plain land in their procession.

### **Animal Husbandary :**

Previously they did not tend cattles as they were entirely dependent on the jhum cultivation where the bullocks for ploughing and cowdang for manuring were not necessary. They keep and rear hogs, Cocks because these animals and birds are used in their various cultural and religious rites. They also keep dogs and these animals are used in their hunting activities. The cats are reared as pet animals. Now with their aquintance with plough in cultivation they are getting accustomed to keeping cows, buffalows, goats, etc. The hogs, poultry birds and goats are used in religious fuctions

*where as the poultry birds, ducks and hogs are also used as food*

### **(D) Handicrafts :**

All most all the tribal people were self sufficient. They are used to cater their needs from their own productions, as far as practicable, because in the by gone days they had little chance to meet other people due to lack of proper communication links. Thus every family used to prepare their own household goods from the raw materials available in their surroundings. Thus they become expert in handicrafts. The Karbong people too are expert in handicrafts.

#### **(1) Cane and bamboo works :**

Tripura was very rich in bamboos. Various types of bamboos grow in this hilly tract and once canebrakes were also found in abundance. They used to make bem, for carrying goods, Kiship, for preparing Kharpani; Bailing for winnowing the paddy and rice, Dal for preserving paddy, Chakhikok, Trishing, Dingra, Khuturik, Muda, etc. with bamboes and canes. Both males and females are used to work in this area but the menfolk are very expert. They also prepare Qaing or cradle for babies. These commodities were not marketable goods but these satisfied their daily needs. Some box like things or basket are even made for keeping cloths and ornaments.

#### **(2) Weaving :**

They prepare their garments from the cotton they produce in the jhum field. Females are expert in this jobs and generally males do not take part. Cotton is first made free from the seeds there after the cotton is carded with the help of a bow made of bamboo and string obtained from plants fibre. A piece of wood is used to strike the bowstring just on the piled up cotton causing its fibres to get apart. This cotton is made Nalle by pressing on the thigh. This

Nalles are used for spinning yarns by using a Charka. The threads are made coloured by dipping them in colour extracts obtained from various plants. For an example black colour is obtained from the leaves of the plant named Cicha. These leaves are collected and soaked in water for 4-5 days. Then adequate quantity of Kharpani and other ingredients are mixed in the solution. The threads when dipped in this solution become black. In this way the barks of a plant named Chingfak are powdered and soaked in water. Then adequate quantity of Kharpani with other ingredients is mixed. This solution is used for making the threads red. They declined to disclose the names of other ingredients, perhaps, owing to professional secrecy. These coloured threads are used in the indigenous looms to weave cloth. Looms are made of bamboo and are very simple in mechanism. Generally the males prepare the looms. The women use them to weave cloths.

### (3) Carpentry :

They possess very little skills in carpentry works. Previously wooden furniture was not used probably because of the difficulties in transit from one place to another as they had to frequently shift in search of a good jhum land. Naturally they used bamboo pieces, dried shells of the bottle grounds etc. as containers in their daily life. They made only the Som (mortar) and serel (Chiya) for husking rice. The som is made from a straight trunk of tree. The bottom is inserted into the earth and the top is made plain with a hollow inside the top. The seral (pestle) is made of a piece of a log so that it can pound rice in the mortar. The paddy is placed in hole and pounded continuously by the pestle to husk the paddy. Now a days they use chair, table etc. but these furniture is not made by them. They get these furniture made by the Bengali carpenters. They also prepare ropes with the fibers of the bark of some trees. Generally udal, Sat etc are used for this purpose. The males prepare ropes and also disposed of the surplus in the local market. They do

not use much made of skin. Some musical instruments and the phaibong used in the loom are made of skin. They do not prepare earthen utensils but have these from the local market.

#### **(4) Horticulture :**

Now a days they become interested in raising orchards and Rubber plantation. As most of them have no tilla land they cannot fulfil their as-piration.

#### **(5) Income from Forest resources**

Like ropes of udal tree they also the surplus vegetable, roots etc. in the local market. They also sell various forest products for their livelyhood. From this source they earn a bit.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOCIAL LIFE

The traditional social life of the Karbong was homogeneous, simple, compact and selfreliant. But incourse of time it has lost its traditional character. Remarkable changes have taken place in various works of their social life owing to such factors as decrease in their population, contact with othet tribal people and change in the habitat. The karbong generally like to name their villages after the names of famous leaders along with the name of their group. Purna chandra karbong pada or Khasia Karbong pada or Champa badi karbong para may be cited as examples. They reside peacefull with other tribal neighbours in a village as they are numerically minority among their neighbours. 'Kaau' is a term to mean a hamlet or pada while In is used for house or room. As there are only a few padas, the view noted above is not fully vertified. Gereally some families constitute a pada.

Ha in Halam, language means soil and Lam means owner. So the Halam means the 'Owner of the soil or earth'. The owners of the earth love to stay on the top of the hillocks from where they can observe the surrounding jhum which lie on the slopes of the hillocks.<sup>1</sup> The hillock having habitation must have a water source like a chada or water springs. otherwise the hillock would not be selected for making residential purpose. Before selecting a plot for erecting a handful of soil from the chosen plot and place and place the soil under his pillow before sleeping. If it reveals a good dream the plot is finally selected for settlement. Otherwise the headman will search for another new plot of land. At the selected plot a puja is offered to the deity when cocks are sacrificed as bali. The house is generally made of that ching grass and bamboos. On a platform a house measuring about 20'x 14' sqft. floor area is built having atleast three rooms though are no so called partition walls. The first one is used as common room where outsiders are entertained and

the bachelor inmates of the house reside. The second one is the main room where the head of the family and other in one corner. Wooden planks are placed on the floor of the platform and other two sides of the wall are also covered with wooden planks, these planks are plastered with mud. The oven has three opening for pushing fuel in. Some bamboos are hanged over the oven for preparing smoked meat and fish. There remain a hole in the platform near the oven for throwing out the garbage. The third part of the house is a separate room known as Sasier, where the crops are stored and tools are kept. The house of a person is not built by him alone or with the help of the paid labourers. The neighbours offer their labour in the construction of the house and also in the cultivation of jhum crops. This system is known as Hrlomaiso. They use home made quilt, bed sheets etc. Generally they do not place their feet towards the water sources while sleeping. Previously the pig's sty was not made separately. Pigs were used to room under the platform of the house. Nowadays separate cowshed, pig's or goat shed are made as they are becoming accustomed to the plain land cultivation.

### **Food Habit**

Karbong's main food is rice. They take rice thrice daily, once in the morning once at noon and again at night. They carry rice bowl bundled in the plaintain leaves to the jhum for their launch at noon during the jhuming period. Generally all the members of the family take rice from a common dish. The dish is replaced by banana leaves. They sue dried shall of bottlegourd as the drinking glass for water termed as tuiom. Guests are always welcomed but there is no obligation that the guests would take food from the common dish. The menu contains vegetable curries, curries with fishes or meat, boiled or roasted vegetables or fishes etc. with the exception of cow and elephants they enjoy the meats of almost all animals. They like starched rice. Bubel or earthen pots are used for

cooking rice. Previously they used to prepare rice in green hollow bamboo plocs but now a days they also prefer alluminium utensils. Vegetables are cleaned and cut into suitable pieces. Adequate quantities of salt, turmeric, ginger, fish or dry fishes are mixed with the vegetables. The mixture is now inserted in a green bamboo tightly pushing in with a bamboo stick. The opening of the bamboo is closed by sangrass or may other harmless creepers. This bamboo is now placed in the fire. When the upper skin of the bamboo becomes black when the bamboo is half burnt, the cooking becomes complete. they like this very much.

### **Salt**

At present they purchase common salt from market. Previously they used to meet their need of salt from the waters of some streams or from the saline rocks of the hillocks. There are some streams having saline water which are named as Laban chada, Noon chada etc. The water of these chadas are salined in taste. Salined rocks are generally liked by the wild animals. So it was not very difficult to trace them out.

### **Kharpani**

They use alkaline water in cooking vegetables, fishes and meat. The ashes of the tender bamboos along with the cakes (Cakikhok) of sesame or mustered are put in a khada specially meant for the purpose of making kharpani or alkalinized water. This khada is then hanged to a higher portion and some water is poured into that knada. The water thus peases through the asnes and is collected in a pot placed through the asnes and is collected in a pot placed below the khada. This crude distilled water is termed as kharpani and used in the preparation of all curries.

### **Preparation of Chekharak Zu and Maisabutuk :**

They like home made liquor very much. The elders, the

young and kids all together relish the drinks. Wine is a must in each religious rites, marriage and other social and cultural functions. Various kinds of leaves, barks and roots are mixed with the powdered rice and made cakes. These cakes are dried and preserved. They generally do not disclose the names of the herb ingredients of this cake. But it is assumed that the leaves of Simdrama, Pineapples, Jackfruits, the barks of Kuchia and the roots of Matia alu, a kind of tuber, are used. These cakes are termed as choan, or Chal. Now the cakes are mixed with cooked rice of the sunned paddy and placed in a Dangee or pot for fermentation. 5-7 days are given for the fermentation process when Chekharakzu is prepared. They enjoy this fermented water with bamboo pipes. A portion of this mixture is separated in a pot and placed over the oven. Now by the process of indigenous distillation by a earthen jar specially made for this purpose, they prepare pure alcohol which is preserved in the bittles for muti having a piece of hand soil or stone in its bottom and a piece of charcoal is placed over the mixture. Now the instrument is ready for smoking. One may also use water in the bigger piece of bamboo for purification of the smoke and for also hearing the sweet music that is created at the bamboo when smoking continues. Almost every individual has his own instrument of smoking.

They also are accustomed to chew betel leaves with arecanut and lime from the market and enjoy this chewing.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

The common dress of the male is Dhutibarak and Kamcaulani. The Dhuti covers the lower portion of the body while the Kamcaulani is used as shirt to cover the upper portion of the body. Generally these dresses are white woven by the women in their waist loom. The males do not like coloured dresses. Rignai Borak is the dress for the lower of the body of the females while Risa is meant for the upper portion. Ritirak is a piece of cloth by



the means of which the kids are hanged from the neck of mother. Rignai is generally made of black coloured yarn but the Risa is a combination of yarns of various colours. The females make their dresses in the waist loom. The menfolk only produce cotton in the field and this is their only contribution in making dresses. All the other details are done by the females. At present young boys and girls prefer pants and shirts or skirt and blouse which are available in the market. But the elder generation stick to their traditional dresses. On the occasions of festivals and other socio-religious functions the young too maintain their old tradition as an obligatory custom.

The females are very fond of ornaments. They like necklace made of coins, earrings or pashas and bangles of colourful glass. Silver made ornaments are mostly used which are made by melting the old silver coins. They also use chains of small balls of glass and flowers. Each young girls must have a flower in her hair. They also prefer perfume which they obtain from the flowers of Nageswar and other various wild flowers.

### Utensils

They say that previously they would prefer earthen pots for cooking rice. Prepared rice is kept in the bubel. Rice is also cooked in a bamboo piece. Curries are prepared in bubel and are kept in the anbui. Bamboos are used for cooking fishes and meat. Water vessels are termed ad tuikusti. Water is lefted and carried in the dried shells of the bottlegourd or bamboo pots. Oils and other alike liquids are kept in the bamboo pieces. They prefer light forest produces for house hold works. Now a days the utensils of alluminium have replaced the old utensils in the house hold of these tribals.

### Social structure :

Karbongs are said to be one of the fourteen clans of the

Halam tribe. A family consists of husband and wife including their offsprings. The grand father and grand mother, unmarried sisters, widow sisters may also be included in the family. Thus family is the nucleus of the karbong society.

Dafa is constituted by some families. Dafa may further creates clan and family all the clans constitute Halam tribe.

### **Inheritance**

Karbongs have a patriarchal society. Father is the head of the family. Generally the father in his old age divides his properties among the sons who then have their separate families. The parent live with a son with his own share of the property. This son either the eldest or the youngest looks after the paraent and after his parents death inherits his parents share of the property. Though other sons load seperate family life, yet no important decision is taken without consulting the old father. After the demise of the father the eldest brother gets the position. Generally father arranges marriage of his daughters. But after his death the elder brother or younger brothers, as the case may be, takes the responsibility. Generally the widows are not allowed to inherit the property of their husbands. But the sons generally look after their mother if she does not remarry. Similarly the widow sister is also looked after by the brothers who share her devorce money. She may remarry again.

**Kinship :** The relatives are considered very dear in the karbong society. The widow sisters are looked after by the brothers. The marriage ceremony of the brother remain suspended till the married sister joins the fuction from a distant place. The presence of maternal uncle is essential in the marriage ceremony. The bride respects the elder brother of the bridegroom and maintains repectable distance from him and avoid touching. The relation of the bride with the younger brother of the bridegroom is very

sweet. The elder sister of the bridegroom and her husband are also always respectable. The bridegroom respects his mother and father-in-law and he talks very less with them. The bride respects the father and mother-in-law. All the relatives are always welcome.

### **Birth rate**

The pregnant women are not allowed to do laborious works. They are generally spared from lifting water or carrying heavy weights. During delivery two experienced women termed as Kumajuk and Lumaju attend the women. They help and nurse the pregnant women during the labour pain. Generally the verandah of the dwelling house or one corner of the main room is used for delivery purpose. Menfolk are not allowed to enter the area of the delivery room. They use hot water during delivery. A sharp bamboo blade is used for cutting the naval cord. After that it is tightly tied up with a black thread by three knots. The extra naval cord and the delivery liquids are carried by Lamaju for throughing at a distant place. The father of the now born baby traditionally accompany her. The mother refrains from doing any religious, cultural and house hold duties for eleven days. This period is regarded as the period of impurity. The baby is given a name on the day of birth by organising a puja when the neighbours are invited to be entertained with rice, meat and liquor. There is no role of the mother in the naming of the new born. Names are given according to the name of the grand father or grand mother. There is no hard and fast rule for determining the date of first rice taking by the baby. Normally it is done when the child is almost six to seven months old when the child is able to take solid food. The mother gives the first morsel of rice in the month of the child. On this occasion a puja termed as Abursu is solemnised when the chickens, ducklings, lequer and oils (for messaging the baby) are offered. The guests present the child coins (money). The system of initiation or upanayana was unknown to the karbong people

previously. But now a days they are following the system of the Tripurians and perform the rite by the help of an Accai who performs the rituals by offering drinks and meat to the deity. Now it becomes obsolete.

### **Marriage System**

There is no child marriage in the Karbong society. Marriage takes place only when the boy is adult and the girl experiences her menstruation. No specific age is fixed for settling marriage. They say that when the boy attains about 18 years of age they may be allowed to get married (1) Normally the parents select the match for their girl or son. The father of the boy allows his boy to see the selected girl before marriage. If the boy dislikes the selection of his father, the affair ends there. But if the boy confirms the choice of the father the matter progresses towards the final stage. (2) If the boy selects any girl as his life partner, the friends of the boy convey the news to his parents. The father of the boy conveys the news to his parents, the friends of the boy convey the news to his parents. The father then goes to the house of the girl and seeks the consent of the father of the girl. If the father of the girl gives his consent then the process of marriage starts. (3) If the boy loves a girl and wants to marry her and if the girl also wants to marry him the father of the boy goes to the house of the girl and prays for the sanction of the father of the girl. If the father of the girl agrees to the proposal, the matter ends in a marriage. But if he does not agree the matter stops there. (4) If any boy kidnaps a girl by force and brings her home for marrying, the father of the boy then and then rushes to the house of the father of the girl and prays for his pardon and proposes the marriage of his son with the girl. If the father of the girl agrees, the matter ends there but if the girl then disapproves her father's decision, the girl is even tortured by her father to follow his decision. At last the girl submits to the desire of the father.

The Karbongs make matrimonial relationships with other

tribe, perhaps due to lack of adequate numbers of marriageable boys and girls in their own society. The marriage between a brother and a sister or between cousins belonging to the same Clan is prohibited. The month of Magh and Falgoon are regarded as suspicious period for the marriage ceremony while the marriage in the month of pous, Chaitra and Bhadra is prohibited. The Saturday is regarded not suitable for marriage ceremony. The sexual relationship before the marriage ceremony is censurable. In case of such happening the society is very strict and even orders caneing of the culprit. They compel the boy to marry the girl if she becomes pregnant before her marriage.

### **System of dowry**

The system of dowry is prevalent in the karbong society, particularly in case of women whose father used to get a lumpsum amount as he was loosing a working land of his family. The rate was previously fixed as rupees chay kudi, Chay adhuli Chay siki etc. Anyhow it was fixed during the negotiation in presence of the Sardar (Kamaskok) of the village. In lieu of cash payment the boy could offer his labour in the house of his father -in-law. This is termed as Jamaikhata. The period was fixed during the negotiation of marriage but it was not above 5 years. After the initial marriage the boy goes to the house of his father-in-law and begins to live there. Generally though the husband and wife reside in a house yet they are not allowed to make sexual relation because if the girl becomes pregnant or the boy dies before completion of his period of labour there, the girl becomes a victim. Yet if there is sexual connection resulting in pregnancy of the girl, the boy is compelled to take the girl to his own house and he is never allowed to desert the girl. If the boy dies during his period of compulsory labour in his father -in-law's house causing pregnancy of the girl, the girl is allowed to remarry again but the offspring of the deceased husband is recognised as the child of the deceased person.

## Marriage Ceremony :

The bridegroom dressed in traditional dresses starts for the house of the bride along with a party consisting of his parent, friends and other relatives. The bridal party generally prepares the marriage place (Kunja) by bamboos, canebrakes and banana plants. The bridegroom's party is received by the bridal party with proper decorum and are entertained with meat and liquor. Before the marriage the father of the bridegroom sends hogs and ornaments of the bride to the father of the bride. The father of the bride performs pujas before the marriage. Liquor, Langee, new cloth, cock, seeds of paddy, cotton and sesame etc. are the main items of the marriage ceremony. Accai presides over the function and receives a fee of Rs. 8-10 only. The bridegroom is given a higher seat while the bride is given a lower seat for standing inside the Kunja. The Accai prepares the images of the deities by bamboes and brakes and helps the bride and the bridegroom to recite the mantras of vow before the deity. The parents of the bride and bridegroom pours water on the head of the bridegroom from a bamboo pipe during the whole ceremony. Accai offers offerings to the fourteen gods and goddesses and Mahadeva. He chants : "Thanasi busa tai, thanasi busa jaokhalang rak masoak ayuba rakhaung. Durba thangmasoak ayul lakkhoang. Calli camasoak kaupal Cauthang. Taubak lakayaaug ayul lakthang. Nauyung kaucang maibang kaucang thing." The bride and the bridegroom recites the mantras and pray for the blessing of the God. There after they enter the house of the bride's father where they perform Lakhipuja. After the ritual is over, the bridegroom and the bride start for their own house. The bridegroom's party is entertained with enough meat and wine. If the house of the bridegroom is far away from the house of the bride, the party stays there for the night and starts for their own house in the next morning. If the boy is scheduled to give his labour if bride's dowry then he will stay there and his party will leave for their own village.

## Divorce

Divorce is prevalent in the karbong society but actually it occurs very rarely. The society does not permit divorce without any valid reasons. Perhaps their numbers makes the elders so strict in granting divorce. Divorces are considered and sanctioned only when (a) the male partner is incapable of sexual activities (b) the female partner is incapable of being pregnant. (c) either the male or female partner develops extra martial relation and (d) either the male or female partner develops insanity. In such cases either of the partners can seek divorce from the partner in the Court of village Council. The Council in its hearing considers the reasons stated by the plaintiff very cautiously and if find it to be true, pronounces sentences if seperation with fines of 6 sikki to rupees 6 kudi. The fine money is given to the aggrieved party generally though a small portion goes to the council fund. During the session the cost if meat, wines etc are supplied by the accused. The seperated man and women can remarry again according to their own choice.

## Remarriage of widow

Widows are allowed to marry again after the demise if their husbands. Divorced female or male also can marry again. Generally a wido or a seperated female is allowed to remarry after elapsing three years of the death of their husbands or from the date of seperation. This marriage is termed as Hanga or Langi bejaba. Generally an unmarried boy does not marry a widow though there is no such hard and fast rule. The male may have more than one wife but females are not allowed to have two husbands at a time. This is an offence and divorced is allowed in this case. Of course, a male having two wives is a rare phenomenon now.

## Indigenous games

Indigenous games are not practised widely at present by the people of the karbong society as almost all the children both male and female come in contact with the nearby school going boys and girls where modern games are practised. Details of some of the old games have been collected from the old people of the society who are of the opinion that previously these games were practised by the young people.

(1) Mustues mudrang : One player closes his fist tightly the other player tries to open it by force. Thus the tussle begins. It is dual game where ones personal strength is showed.

(2) Erbon rang : It is an individual as well as a group game like tag of war today. The only difference is that in place of a rope a bamboo is used. A bamboo is placed in the middle of the field having its midpoint at a marked point. The two parties hold the bamboo from two ends. With the signal of the Referee each party try to push the bamboo to the opposite direction. When one party becomes successful in crossing the midpoint by pushing the bamboo is declared as the winner.

(3) Panja : It is also a dual combat. The two player sit face to face having their knees on the ground with the left hand over their back. One player hold the right hand of the other player firmly and applies all his strength to make the opponents hand touch the ground. The successful one in the act is declared to be the winner.

(4) Maguti Dairang : It is also known as Paikhela, played by young girls. The seeds of oleander are used for throughing into the Court and passing it from one court to another with the help of the toe of one of the leg above the ground while the other leg bent at knee loosely. If the seed fails on the lines of the court the player is declared as out. The player thus jumps with one leg and pushes the seed fail exactly into the next court so that it may not fall on the



line. In this way she who can pass the seed through all the courts at a time without changing her leg is declared as the winner. There are other games but it was not possible on the part of the author to collect detailed information about these games for some unavoidable reasons.

### **References and Notes**

1. Ghosh Sudhangshu : Nandan, Baisak-Jaistha, 1394 B.S.  
Calcutta, p. 56

## CHAPTER V

### RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICES

The Karbong are believers in Sanatan Dharma. They believe in oneness of the almighty though they offer pujas to different gods and goddesses like Mahadeva, Durga, Kali, Laxmi etc. as they believe that those gods are mere incarnation of various powers of the almighty. They believe in the indestructible nature of the soul. They also believe that the soul only changes the body. Death means transmigration of the soul from one decayed body the new one. There is no difference in the religious practices with that of the vedic Hindus of the plains of India.

#### **Religious Festivals :**

##### **Garia :**

They also celebrate the Garia Festival. It is, of course, a mass festival and they participate in it like other tribals of Tripura.

##### **(2) Ker :**

Like other tribes of Tripura, the Karbong people celebrate the Ker festival in their villages. They put different signals of no-entry in the village by bamboos or bamboo made sticks at every entry point to the village.

Any one who breaks the barrier and enters the village during the puja is liable to punishment.

##### **(3) Ganga Puja :**

In the month of Agrahayana the Karbongs worship Ganga in the nearby Chada or river. They prepare beautiful flowers with bamboos and offer white coloured he goats.

**(4) Pous Parban :**

The Karbongs observe Pous Parban on Makar Sankranti day. They prepare rice - cakes and offer pujas. On this occasion they go to Tirthamukh and immerse the Asthi of their relatives in the holy water of Tirthamukh after the annual Shradha.

**(5) Dol Puja :**

Previously they used to perform Dol Puja but at present they are not performing this festival.

**(6) Butharnikrag :**

It is a special youth festival when all the young boys and girls dance in groups and dine together after harvest of the jhum crops.

**(7) Inspokrunulang :**

It is observed during covering the roofs of the house with sanngrass when all the males of the village extend their labours. The owner of the house gives them a good feast with wine and chickens.

**Dreams and Devination :**

The Karbong people have firm belief in dreams and devination. Dream has some significant bearing, on their day to day life. Good dreams are not disclosed and kept secret while the bad one is disclosed so that its effect becomes ineffective.

In selecting the site of jhum or plots for building residential house, the owner brings a handful of soil from the site and places the soil under his pillow. At night he goes to sleep wearing a clean cloth and sleeps alone. If he dreams of good things like fish or water sources or marriage ceremony etc. he expects that there would be good crops in his field or his house would be good one where he may reside peacefully. Seeing a beggar, naked women etc. in a dream is considered to be very bad. If one dreams the scene

of a good feast he expects a very bad condition in the near future - "Akuni Karmang mu thamak" but if he dreams a bad scene in the dream he expects a good thing to happen in the near future - 'Atuni Karmang amu phatha'.

Similarly guests are regarded as the sign of prosperity in the near future. Generally the Acai offers special pujas by sacrificing chickens or pigs for warding off the bad effects of the dream.

### Witch Craft :

Karbong had faith in the witch craft. Some one of the society particularly and old ugly women was said to have been possessed by the evil spirit of a witch. These women could do much harm to the people of the society, as they believed that these witches could even suck human blood from the affected person ultimately leading to death being lean and thin day by day. If any person is suspected of the possession of the witch, the person was excommunicated first and then tortured and ultimately killed mercilessly. Now a days with the progress of education, such beliefs are withering away. They also believe in some magic powers like Banmara or throwing of arrow. The Accai or specialist in this craft performs pujas and throws an arrow at a particular tree with a view to do harm to an individual.

If consequently the tree starts drying day by day, the person aimed at also becomes weaker day by day and ultimately dies. There are experts who can use counter the spell to nullify the effect of the "Ban" and the people take his help. But this practice also is disappearing from the tribal society with the progress of Education.

Fertility rite : The Karbong perform certain pujas to increase the fertility of the jhum field for a good bumper crop. During Jhaumpuja they offers cocks of three varieties to the deities. In the marriage ceremonies they offer cocks of four varieties to the deities with the expectation of happy conjugal life of the couple with a

number of children. In some other pujas also offer goats to satisfy the Gods.

### **Illness and Methods of Cure**

(A) Previously the Karbong people had their own system of curing diseased persons. But at present, with the decrease in pollution, as they are residing in the villages where the majority people are other tribal people particularly the Tripurians, they almost forget their old practices and follow the advice of the Tripuri Accai.

The treatment done by the Accai may be classified into two categories. (a) Firstly as they believe in magical practices and divination. They try to cure the patient by performing counter magical practices and by offering pujas to the unsatisfied Gods whom they believe are prime causes of the illness of a particular person. The reasons may be summarised as follows :-

- (i) Disregard to the Gods and Goddesses.
- (ii) Disobey of any family custom.
- (iii) Domination of evil spirit.
- (iv) Throwing of "Ban" by the enemy.

(B) Secondly they use some herbal medicine prescribed by the Accai for common diseases. Generally they hesitate to disclose the names of the herbs used for different diseases, perhaps, for professional secrecy. The common people keep mum due to fear of the Accai. Naturally it becomes difficult to collect the names of the herbs used for a particular disease with requisite dose. Methods of Treatment : When an accai is called for the treatment of any diseased person, he examines the person and put a series of question to the patient and his relatives to ascertain whether the

patient has violated any family custom and displeased any God or Goddesses due to ignorance. The questions in series are put to the members of the family of the patient. From the statement of the patient and his relatives, the Accai tries to come to a conclusion. At last he asks the patient whether he has any enemy who can do harm to him. He repeats the questions to the relatives of the patient.

Then the Accai asks about the movement of the patient just before his illness. He asks the patient whether he has experienced any unnatural object or scene just before his illness. He suggests the names of some animals whose body may be dominated by the evil spirit and asks the patient whether he has seen such animals etc. with the answers of the above questions, the Accai tries to come to conclusion about the cause of the disease, If he is not satisfied or fails to come to a conclusion, he takes resort to divination. I came to know one of the methods. The Accai takes a thread and holds it straight by pressing it by the fingers of two hands. He then begins to recite some mantras which ends in the name of a God whom he suspects as responsible for the disease. In this way he continues the chanting of the mantras. The hand of the Accai begins to tremble when he recites the right name of deity who is responsible for the illness of his patient.

Slowly the trembling begins but it become gradually so violent that the Accai fails to control him and begins to kick on the earth.

When the actual causing deity is recognised, the Accai suggests puja of deity. Different deities want different animals and birds as offerings.

Bathunullan (goats) Ram trap (poultry birds), Faratangam (Chickens) and Vok (pigs) etc. are offered according to the choice of the deities. The animals are offered with home-made wine. The number of offerings depends on the seriousness of the illness. This is also ascertained by divination. The Accai also prescribes some beads containing roots, leaf, fruits or part of any animal as

determined by divination. The patients use those beads either in their arms or hang the beads in their necks or fix in their waist with the thread belt.

To a certain the enmity by other person the desha tui endrung is performed. Generally oil is rubbed in a nail of the Accai who utters mantras while rubbing.

The nail thus becomes clean and in it the Accai views the picture of the person who threw ban to his patient in order to do definite harm. the Accai then arranges the counter ban to nullify the effects of the previous one thrown by the enemy. If he succeeds, the patient begins to recover from illness .

Besides these supernatural activities, as I said earlier, the Accai prescribes some herbal medicine for some common illness which are noted below :-

Name of the disease

Herb used with method of application.

1. Cold and Cough :

- i) The leaves of Amai sukai are belied with water. This boiled water is advised to take for several times. Leaves of Amai Sukai are sower in taste.
- ii) The leaves of Sangrass are boiled and the water is prescribed in various doses.
- iii) The juice of Basaka is administered.

2. Diarrhea :

- i) The barks Thaichuck Bukur or Kuchia are boiled in water and this water is prescribed in several doses.

3. Headache : i) The Accai massages the head of the patient with mustard or sesame oil chanting some mantras.
4. Burnt : i) Harkakma is used as a plaster. Harkakma is like wool. It is cleaned and the soft portion of the inner part is used for plastering.
- ii) The fat of the Python is prescribed to use as ointment.
- iii) The bark of the Myrobalan fruit is separated from the seed, pasted and used as plaster on the burnt.
5. Prickly heat : i) Rubbing of the leaves of sesame on the affected portion is prescribed.
6. Toothache : i) The patient is advised to chew the haihoc and wash the mouth with warm water.
7. Red Eyes : i) Drops of Mother's breast milk is advised.
8. Vomiting : i) The syrup of anthurmiser a kind of lemon, is prescribed.
9. Inflammation of eyes : i) The eyes are fomented by placing a piece of burning charcoal in the leaves of banana and covering the packet of banana - charcoal by a piece of cloth.
10. Fracture of bone : i) A bandage is prescribed by chal, the main ingredient of preparing



- wine.
- ii) A bandage by the leaves of Khapjora is also prescribed.
11. Cut :
- i) The paste of the leaves of chilhi is advised.
12. Snake bite :
- i) A knot is prescribed just above the cut portion by the bark of a plant named as merong.
13. Ring Worm :
- i) The leaves of Drone plant is prescribed to be rubbed in the affected place.
  - ii) The juice of Basil leaves mixed with mustared oil is advised to be applied on the affected place.
14. Post natal bleeding :
- i) In case excessive bleeding of the mother after birth of the child, the mother is advised to drink the juice of Dubgrass for immediate stoppage of bleeding .

#### **Disposal of dead body :**

They burn the dead body according to the traditional Hindu custom. Dead body is kept inside the house, not outside the residing house.

The neighbours and relatives are informed of the demise. They wait for the disposal of the dead body for joining of the relatives who reside at distant places. The dead body is carried in a stretcher made of bamboos locally termed as Machang. The Accai presides over the funeral rituals. He proceeds first towards the burning ghat which must be near a water source like a Chada or a river. He

sprinkles sacred water mixed with the leaves of Basil and the threads of cotton on the leaves of Basil and the threads of cotton on the way while proceeding towards the burning place from the house. The carriers of the dead body follow him through the cleaned road. The body is placed on the pyre having its head in the western direction. The Accai then recites some mantras and with the chanting of these mantras the eldest son of the deceased person or his son-in-law, in absence of the eldest son, performs the funeral rites by putting fire to the mouth of the deceased. After the completion of the burning work, the eldest son collects the Asthi or remains of the deceased person and plants a Basil plant on the burning spot. There after all the persons who have accompanied the deceased take bath in the running water of the river or Chada and walk on the cooked rice - thrown way to the house. The return to their houses in wet clothings and take Basil leaves and thus purified they enter their houses. Their old custom regarding the period of penance for 13 days. First they perform the Shradha after three nights and do not cut their hair for seven days. On the 13th day they perform Shradha ceremony. Accai presides over the function. All the neighbours, relatives are invited to attend the feast. In this feast Rice - cake is a compulsory menu in addition to wine, rice and other items. The necessary items and materials required for the pujas of this ceremony includes Banana, Batasa, molases, sugar, sesame, cotton, paddy etc. The remains of body of the deceased or the Asthi is preserved in a hole of a big tree and after one year the eldest son or the son-in-law immerse this Asthi in the sacred water of Tirthamukh after performing the annual Shradha there on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

## CHAPTER VI

### VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION AND JUSTICE

Like other caste and communities, the Karbong had their own pattern of village administration. A Council of elders would be selected annually by the villagers. That council was small and efficient. Justice was cheap, quick, visible and binding to the members of the society. Now a days the traditional means of social control has lost much of its hold over the village people.

Some opines that among the different clans of the Halams, the Morchums used to get the recognition of the Tripura Darbar and was bestowed on with the title of Ray. Naturally that Ray used to administer the society by choosing leaders from among the different clans. Karbong were not very populous enough yet they might have had their own village leaders who used to serve under the Morchum Ray.

Another opines that a village Council was formed with 3 - 3 members of the Karbong who were termed as Choudhury or Dewan. The Council was known as Baradewal. Now with the increase with their number, the size of the Council was enlarged admitting additional members. Thus we have the Chandda Dewal or Sola dewal.

But the survey by the author reveals that in the Karbong pada of Champaknagar one Sri Joykrishna Karbong claims himself to be son of one Rabi Chandra Karbong who was the Ray of the Karbong clan during the reign of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya for about 12 years till his death. After the death of Rabi Chandra the title of Ray was to pass on Sri Joy Chandra Karbong, his eldest son who still maintains the seal of the Ray. But due to death of the King and change in the administrative set up of the State Joy Chandra

was never bestowed on with the title of the Ray. Sri Joy Krishna also showed the torn flag, a piece of turban of his father and other memoirs which are now in his possession. Thus it is clear that during the later Manikya's reign the Karbong had their own Ray who used to rule over them in the villages.

### **Ray :**

It is suggested that the Ray was to be selected by the king and once selected by the king and once selected he used to rule continuously during his life time. After his death normally his eldest son used to get the post. Thus it becomes a hereditary post. The Ray was assisted by Galim, Kamchako, Sengja etc. These posts also seemed to be not hereditarily. The duties of these officials are not fully known now. It is expected that the first three constituted the Council and the last one was used as a Paik or news bearer whose duty was, perhaps, similar to that of the Khandal of the Tripuris.

### **Choudhury :**

While the Ray was the head of the Karbong community, there must have been some leaders who controlled different villages. Here comes the officials like Kamaskas or Choudhury who was assisted by Khandal and Chenga. The Khandal used to do the duties of the Paik or Peons while the Chenga was the messenger who used to take the sanction or approval of the Ray (who resided in a distant village), in case of a important decision. These posts were not hereditarily.

### **Jurisdiction :**

The Choudhury was the head of the village. His sanction was obligatory for any socio-religious and cultural activities. He used to try the cases of disputes over landed property, forceful harvesting of one's crop, cutting ails of one's plot, damaging one's crop by cattles, individual quarrel resulting in riots, the cases of divorce

and illicit sexual connection or rape etc. No social religious or cultural functions could be held without his prior approval as over these functions also quarrels might crop up disturbing peace of the society. In other words Choudhury was all in all in the village life and none could live there without obliging the village leader.

### **Relation with the king :**

The king was regarded as the sovereign who holds the all power bestowed on him by the God as the representative of the almighty in the reign he ruled over.

Naturally only the King could pronounce the death sentence to any accused found guilty. Generally the Choudhury's of the villages settled all the smaller disputes mentioned earlier. In case of any difficulty appeal could be made to the Ray who settled the appealed case with help of other Choudhury's under his jurisdiction. But in case of the capital punishment the Ray could not settle the case and he had to forward it to the royal Darbar for final disposal. In the capital there were some officer' designated as Missips who represented the tribal of people of Tripura. Each tribes had its own Missip but it was not obligating that the person selected for Missip of a particular tribe would be a member of that tribe. Generally the members of the royal family or respectable Thakurloks of the capital were selected as Missips. During the period of Rabi Chandra karbong, Jogendra Thakur was the Missip of the Karbongs as stated by Sri Joy Krishna Karbong of the Karbong para of Champaknagar.

The Ray used to forward the cases to his specified Missip who tried to settle the case by his own power of Judgement and wisdom. If he could succeed, the appeal was not forwarded to the king. In case of his failure the case was referred to the King. The King heard the case in the full Darbar and disposed of it according to traditional custom, Hindu laws and his own intellect and wisdom and pronounced the verdict which was binding to all. So, there was

chance of doing wrong by the king but as he was the highest Court, the accused had no other alternative but to submit to his Highness's whim.

The Ray had good relation with the king or the king used to keep him satisfied as he was the only link between the king and his subjects and through whom the king and his subjects and through whom the king collected his revenue and got assurances of the allegiance of the tribal subject. The King used to invite the Ray in the Capital before Luxmipuja in the month of Aswin-Kartick every year.

The Ray would start his journey from his place well in time. He was then seated in chair dressed in fully official dress comprising Dhuti, Rimkanjali, turban, flag, spear, kaddar (Symbols of the dafa Halam) and Mohar in his chest. He used to hold Silver pipe in his hand. His men carried him on a chair up to the boundary of the village from where he used to walk to the Capital with his retinue. The King used to receive him and housed him in a guest house where daily ration was supplied for him and his men. The king then met all the Rays in the Hasambhojan (State banquet) and disposed of all Governmental works like rate of taxes etc. to be levied next year upon his tribe. Then the king bade farewell to the Ray by presenting Rs. 2.50 - 3.00 each along with cloths for garments, quilt etc. The Ray used to halt his journey on foot at the border of his village from where he would send a messege to his people who would at once come out to receive him on that spot and then carried him on a chair in a procession beating drum and playing other musical instruments, to his house.

#### **Procedure of Judgement :**

While seeking justice, a plaintiff has to bring charges, pay the requisite fees to the Choudhuri, against person or persons who did him harm. The Choudhury receives the case and becomes aware of the names of the accused and nature of the crime. He then issues

order through the Khandal to the accused to be present in the Court of the Council on a particular date and at a fixed time. Generally the hearing was place in the house of the accuser who used to arrange the entertainment of the Choudhury's party including the witnesses. Adequate quantities of meat and wine are arranged for the occasion. The Choudhury hears the statement of the accused and the accuser and verifies the validity of their statements from the witnesses. He then pronounces the punishment to the accused or dismisses the case and fines the accuser for bringing a false suit, according to the customary law of the tribe.

The punishment pronounces by the Choudhury was obligatory but in special cases the accused are allowed to appeal before the Ray of the clan or Choudhury himself forwards the case to the Ray if he has any difficulty to dispose it off. The punishments are of two types (i) physically punishment which included caning, beating with a stick, slapping or kicking according to the nature and gravity of the crime and (ii) monetary fine. The money collected from fine is given away to the accused keeping a small amount thereof for the Council. In addition to the punishment the accused are compelled to supply some quantity of meat and wine. For this purpose numbers of animals and numbers of fottles of wine are specified. The accused are compelled to abide by the decision of the Court. The accused can not live peacefully in the village if he disobeys the judgement of the Court. So they have to comply with the verdict.

### **The Court of Ray :**

The Ray disposes of typical cases referred to him by the Choudhury's. These cases are about fatal injuries caused to an accuser by an accused. His Court comprise the Choudhuris, Galim and Kamchake. He hears the cases and verifies the fact from the witnesses and disposes of the cases. He inflicts monetary fines according to the nature of the injuries. He has a round piece of stone supplied from the royal Darbar. In case of fatal injuries the accused

are fined the equal wright of tanka to that of the stone. The money thus collected is given to the parents of the injured person keeping aside a small amount for the Court. The cases of murders would be referred to the royal Darbar through the Missips by the Ray of the clan or tribe.

### **Livelihood of the village officials :**

All the village officials were the ordinary people of the clan who had their own land for cultivation. But because they were always engaged in the affairs of the villagers, they could not spare much time for their own household or occupation. Naturally the villagers used to help them in cultivating their fields.

Sometimes the guilty persons were engaged in their fields to replenish the punishment for their guilts. But with the progress of time these posts became hereditary and created a ruling class in the natural society of the tribe. The hereditary system made them autocratic and they considered the amenities the villagers gave them as a matter of their rights. They used to engage corvee in their fields. Those who incurred their displeasure were used as corvee labours. Perhaps, this system was not unlikely. It is evident that Rajarshi like Govinda Manikya even enjoyed the labours of the Corvees without spending a single piece from his coffer. It should not be treated as a fault the village Sardars followed their monarch's foot steps in this respect. They would share a small amount of money from the fines in a suit in addition to the Court fee, mentioned earlier. The villagers also remained always panicky and tried to keep them pleased. The sardars used to enjoy the best vegetables, birds or animals from the villagers. Where the producer was unwilling to spare his best products, he was robbed off forcefully. Thus initially though the system worked on natural justice, with the passing of time it became a tradition and finally became a tool of extorting money by the medieval monarch.



### References and Notes :-

1. Dutta & Banerjee (Ed) : Rajgi Tripurar Sarkari Bangla, P.3  
some Brahmothar grants of Govinda Manikya reveal that the riots  
of those lands were exempted from Bhet, Begar, Pancha Pancak  
etc. which means that the ordinary ryots had to pay those taxes  
including begar.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

- (1) The Karbong belong to the Kirat groups of people.
- (2) Numerically the karbong are, perhaps, the smallest tribal group of Tripura. Their number is dwindling gradually as their growth rate is very poor. The clinical reasons for this poor growth rate should be analysed and the expected mothers and babies be kept under special medical attention.
- (3) They are very poor. Their economic and educational status should be developed by allotting adequate financial grants without seepages. They should be allotted agricultural land (both tilla an lunga) and encouraged to practise plough cultivation and wean away from jhuming. They may be encouraged to produce fruits and vegetables. Necessary technical training for this purpose should be given.
- (5) Their dialect may be studied by the linguists as a part of the efforts of developing the Halam language as a whole.
- (6) In course of our field survey anguish and anxiety of the old generation were found because of the eradication of traditional cultural heritage. The society has been divided along the lines of modes of worship. A controversy has already arisen between the parents and children regarding conservation of ancestral tradition.

## APPENDIX - A

### SOME KARBONG VILLAGE

Karbong para Champaknagar is situated south of Champaknagar under Jirania Block of the Sadar Sub-Division. 15 families of Karbongs with a population 70 only live there. Among those 70 people 36 are males and 34 are females. There is a Junior Basic School in the village where 7-8 karbong students study. Others do not go to school due to economic reasons.

These families have 33 Kanis of Tilla and 15 Kanis Lunga land in their possession. The highest occupant have 6 kanis of tilla land. I family does not have even tilla land and 8 families occupy no lunga land. One person have a pond of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  kani water area.

There is no service holder among Karbongs of this village. Mainly they earn their livelihood by selling forest produces like firewood, sanngrass, and bamboos etc. They work as daily labourers in the surrounding areas. 5 families tend cattle, 5 families keep Buffaloes and each family keeps ducks and poultry birds. There is only one family which keeps hogs.

As the population is very few and as they live in a village where other tribal peple are majority, they used to make matrimonial connections with other tribal people. 2 Rupini women are married to the Karbong boys of this village. The need adequate financial support and agricultural land to improve their economic status.

Karbong para, East R.F. :

This karbong para is situated in the East R.F. is Ambassa under Kamalpur Sub-Division. 6 families came under the purview of this present survey with a total population of 37 only. Among this 37 souls, 15 are males and 17 are females. Of this 37 souls, 8 males

and 4 females are literate. One person of this group may be classified as educated. There are 13 school going boys and girls comprising 4 boys and 9 girls.

3 families have some landed property while 3 families consisting of 10 members are daily labourers. 2 persons of two families are in the service. One family consisting of two member is solely dependent on jhum. 1 family is earning their livelihood from Agriculture. 2 families rear cattles and other animals. Almost all the families tend poultry birds.

## APPENDIX - B

### SOME FOLK SONGS

The Karbongs have a rich heritage of folk songs as their socio-cultural and religious functions are performed with various songs. The main economic activity also becomes bore without songs. Their marriage ceremonies, love affairs are not performed without songs. Hence it may be said that music revolves round their life cycle. Some songs are noted here as examples with or without translation. More songs should have made this chapter a very useful one but owing for some unavoidable reasons it can not be done now. Let us first start with the economic activities.

(1) Baisa ahangta Sangtuisirang, har anangseehar. Daorao kaita ibaoi camta, nangku nangarai

Haric haric khuaisirang dhaolaoe otakta."

English translation :-

It is the month of Vaisakh, we shall sow paddy

Come brothers and sisters come;

It is noon now, we are hungry.

Brothers and sisters work speedily.

(2) Jaistha ahangta alaineng atukta

Lui cunic cirang harae, harae onangni harae,

Ghilic at akta jhingka aparta harak,

Onangoi khu oayisirang harai."

English translation :-

Jaistha comes, our joom fields are full of weeds

come friends for weeding jhums

day is over, flowers of Spong gourd bloom

come friends, let us go home.



