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DIRECTORATE OF TRIBAL RESEARCH,

GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA, AGARTALA.

# BULLETIN

OF THE DIRECTORATE OF TRIBAL RESEARCH

GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA.

1974

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**of the Directorate of Tribal Research**

**VOLUME—I ( Part-I, II & III )**

**1974**

## INDEBTEDNESS AND LAND ALLENATION SURVEY OF TRIBAL FAMILY UNDER MOHANPUR BLOCK :

### Introduction :

The total population of the Scheduled Tribes in Tripura is 28.95% of the total population of this small State which has an area of 4,116 Sq. miles or 10,660 Km. comprising 60% hill and 40% plain lands, As the constitution of India has provided a special provision for safeguarding the rights and privileges of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, with a view to obtaining and uplifting the weaker section of the Community in respect of Socio-economic and educational status to the level of the people of rest of India. A study of the problems of land alienation and indebtedness of this people will be much helpful in knowing and to mark the Socio-economic condition of this backward people.

With the above mentioned view, in Tripura, like other States, the Directorate of Tribal Research has chalked out a programme for making a sample survey on the basis of indebtedness and land alienation of the tribal families in this state so far as possible for research purpose and to study their Socio economic status and to get a clear picture of it as far as practicable. The Mohanpur Block has been taken as a first target for conducting a survey as per programme.

In accordance with the information this Directorate has had, there are 37 Gaon Sabhas under Mohanpur Block, of which 21 Gaon Sabhas are predominantly tribals. A random spot sample survey has been made in this 21 tribal predominanting Gaon Sabhas as to feed the information of the purpose. The number of households that came under survey was 340 taking more than 10% tribal families per Gaon Sabha under the aforesaid 21. The data have been collected verbally from the heads of the families. So, the survey was purely based on their oral information for which the actual fact may vary to some extent. However it was found that 36.5% of the surveyed households were suffering from land alienation and 81.1% of the households were indebted either to the village money lender or the some other agents.

While making minute examination of the role of indebtedness in their economy it is observed that indebtedness is a serious problem affecting the bulk of the tribal people. Borrowing is very frequently resorted to for meeting their cash needs primarily for maintenance purposes and occasionally for other purposes including agricultural operations and social ceremonies.

### Indebtedness :

Indebtedness is admittedly a serious problem affecting the bulk of the tribal people. In the absence of sufficient food grains to go the whole year round and any other supplementary occupation, most of the tribal people of the area are indebted in one form or another. Borrowing is very frequently resorted to for meeting their cash needs including social ceremonies.

The sources of finance which are available locally particularly to the cultivating households can be broadly divided into two groups :

- a) Government Source
- b) Private source.

Government source includes developmental loans given through the Blocks, Agri-loan offered by the Co-operative Bank etc.

Private source includes well-to-do villages acting as Mahajan, Paddy merchants, Money lender-cum-trader (one who lends money as well as commodities) friends/relatives living in and out side of the village. All of them are not, of course, money lenders by profession. The Mahajan-cum-trader type specially dominates the area.

To appreciate fully the objectives behind incurring debt it is necessary to know whether the debts are taken for productive or non-productive purposes. A debt ordinarily becomes productive when an amount borrowed at reasonable rate of interest is helpful in earning a higher income. In the same manner an unproductive debt is that debt which does not pave the way for such higher income. Instances of productive debt as observed here though a few in number can be cited. These are among others, investment in household cultivation, live stocks, petty business, etc. Examples of unproductive debts are domestic expenses, marriage ceremony, funeral ceremony etc.

Whether tribal people feel any need for cash, they make it available from the local mahajans as it is the easiest way to borrow. They would visit the nearby market where the village mahajans are generally present to offer loans to the faithful tribals who are simple, innocent, and easy going. The loans would however, carry compound interest at the rate of 50% during the first year and 100% there after. The mode of repayment is in kind i. e. by tendering the future cash crops after harvest at prices which are normally calculated at less than half the prevailing rates.

Being conscientious, the tribal borrowers immediately after harvest deposit a major portion of their produce by way of repayment towards the interest of the debt of which no account is normally kept by them. Thus within a few years tribal borrowers, found themselves being crushed under the heavy burden of an almost ever growing debt from which they cannot easily extricate themselves. It is noticed that a sizeable part of credit made available to the tribal through other agencies had, indeed, been diverted towards repayment of the borrowings from the money-lenders.

Among the sample households 81.1% were indebted to an extent of Rs. 2,48,359. The position was worse in the case of Debendra Chandra Nagar and Bôdhjung Nagar Gaon sabhas where nearly 92.3% of the households were in debt. The average amount borrowed per households varied from Rs. 735/- to Rs. 3,240/- and over all average was Rs. 760/-. Almost all the loans were taken in cash.

With a view to finding out the exact magnitude of the problem among tribal households, data were further analysed and it was found that the amount owned by most of the indebted tribal house was very much. Majority of the households (24.7%) owned above Rs. 1,000/-. The respondents owing less than Rs. 50/- are very small and only 2.4% of the total households. The percentage of the households who are owing debts upto Rs. 200/- is 21.8% and that of the households owing between 201/- to 500/- is 14.4% and owing between 501/- to 1,000/- is 12.9% only.

It is also interesting to note here that the some families of Dumakari Dak, KamukChera, Baikunthapur, and Chandpur are not indebted. It is not because of their fair economic condition but because of their weak capacity for repayment of the loans as they have limited resources to offer security against the loan, in some cases they have nothing but their manual work to offer.

#### **Purpose of borrowing :**

An analysis of the purposes of borrowing revealed that more than 23.3% of the total family borrowed for productive purposes of which 99% of the families were to take loan to purchase bullocks as that were stolen by the cattle lifter especially during the agricultural season; 58.8% of the families borrowed for non-productive purposes which included mostly social ceremonies and domestic expenses.

#### **Sources of borrowing :**

Though there exists many sources of borrowing money, it seems that the tribals preferred to take loans from the private money lenders to from the Block and Co-operative Banks. It may be assumed that it is due to the difficult process of getting loans from the Block Officer and Co-operative Banks since they have to go to a lot of Government Officers for getting the loan.

#### **Age of Loans :**

About 34% of the borrowers had taken loan more than 3 years before the date of investigation, while 7.3% were within one year and 57.3% were within 3 years. This was obviously because of their poverty and incapacity of repaying the old outstanding debts.

#### **Rate of interest :**

As the most of the loans have been taken from the private money

lenders in the villages, the rate of interest is very high varying from 50% to 100% and in some cases it is more than that 75% of the households had been paying interest varying from 50% and only 25% of them had been paying interest of less than 50%.

#### **Nature of debts :**

Generally two types of loans are in vogue (i) loan in kind and (ii) loan in Cash. Loans in kind are generally repaid within the same agricultural year and are to be repaid before taking fresh loans. Generally loans in kind are incurred either before Ploughing or before harvesting and the same must be repaid after harvesting. Mahajans or Jotdars are the chief sources from whom loans in kind are generally taken for which interest charged are very high.

Loans in cash are generally taken from money lenders or businessmen for which they charge an excessively high rate of interest ( often 100% ).

Tribals often cannot repay the cash loans for which they run the risk of losing their lands.

Generally the labourers do not get heavy amount of loans as they have no security to offer against the loan to be taken. Though, in some cases they take loans which they repay with their physical labour. As these type of borrowers are poor and landless people they utilise the loan in non-productive purposes..

The creditors are mostly non-tribals and living in the same village or in the adjacent villages

#### **Family earning capacity :**

The size of the tribal family on an average varies from 5 to 7 members in different Gaon Sabhas and the relative proportion of male and female members is almost equal in every family.

Adult units per household vary from 4 to 6. Earners per household are more or less the same ( varying from 3 to 3 ) members in each household in each Gaon Sabha. Almost all the adult persons of a household may be treated as earners. In a family the number of adult members are generally equal to the number of minor member and this shows the equal strength of earners and dependants in each household.

It may further be noted that the number of dependants become larger than that of earners as the family size increases.

The incidence of occurrence of medium sized households ( i. e. consisting of 5 to 8 members ) is maximum and consequently earners in large numbers are found in this group. Work force is available in large numbers in almost all Gaon Sabhas among the tribal families, but a fair proportion thereof remain idle due to non-availability of employment.



### Income :

It may be noted that it is very difficult to collect correct data on income and expenditure from tribal folks. They are not usually accustomed to balancing their expenditure with income. The reason for this maladjustment may be stated as follows : (i) the people cannot properly estimate or calculate the actual income of the year (ii) they usually cannot avoid expenditure at the usual scale irrespective of likely short fall in their income. (iii) they very often take 'LANGI' ( Rice Beer ) especially at the time of festivals. These factors often force them, especially the poorer sections, to live almost half-starved during loan periods. Thus their economic condition fluctuates from season to season.

### Expenditure :

The distribution of expenditure on different items shows that food stuff consumes the maximum of their total income (70%). Expenditure on liquor is very high in almost all Gaon Sabhas. The fact that the expenditure is greater than income clearly indicates that the people had to depend on heavy amounts of loans from year to year to meet the deficit in the budget.

### Land Alienation :

Transfer was generally effected by the following methods :

1. By concealing the name of the community.
2. By not registering the transfer.
3. By registering the transfer on 'baina patra' i. e. registering the agreement of sale after receiving one fourth of the total value of land on anticipation of getting permission from the Government and
4. By a mere revenue stamp-receipt in the token of hand note ( document )

As regards the loss sustained by the transfer, it was found that heavy losses were suffered in almost all the cases. The difference of selling price and market price has been taken into consideration while calculating this figure, a net loss of Rs. 1000/ approximately per acre was incurred during alienation of land by the people. It is further revealed that loss incurred in lands transferred with permission is lesser than that without permission.

The reasons of transfer were mentioned as due to consumption purposes. They reported that the problem of meeting even the minimum family requirements remained particularly acute for some years after the drought of 1965 and 1972. During those drought years, the crops failed. Most of the loans and later incapable of repaying the loans which became heavy with interest after some years, forced them to transfer parts of their lands at that time to get over the crisis.

It may be summarized that alienation took place mainly from tribals to non-tribals in or adjacent villages. Transfer were mainly caused for consump-

tion purposes and meeting such contingent expenses as medical, social, religious festivals etc. Only in few cases the transfer were for production purposes. Such as improvement of some portion of land by purchasing livestock other than bullocks.

While examining, it is found that indebtedness is the most important factor which is directly and positively co-related with alienation of tribal lands. In most cases of alienation it was found that the heavy load of indebtedness forced the people to sacrifice part of their land even though holding possessed was not much. A large portions of land were lost due to Kabala system i. e. the people obtained cash loan mostly by mortgaging their land agreeing to repay the amount within stipulated periods and their failure to do so within that time meant loss of the mortgaged land. In some cases it was also found that on 'bainapatra' agreement the land had been alienated to the non-tribal without receiving the full amount of the land value. As for example, Shri Biswanath Deb Barma of Insanpur Gaon Sabha sold 4 (four) kanis of nal land for Rs. 2,600/- to a non-tribal person. When the question of permission for transfer of land arose, both of them came to the agreement that Rs. 2,600/- would be given at first and the remaining amount would be given after receiving the permission. On this agreement ( as Shri Deb Barma was in urgent need of money ) a 'bainapatra deeds' had been registered and the land had been made alienated to the non-tribal people some years back. But still now Shri Deb Barma is neither getting the permission nor getting the due amount according to the agreement. So it is obvious that in some cases the tribals are deprived of getting the actual cost of his land when transferred or alienated to any non-tribal people without permission.

#### **Conclusion :**

As has already been stated, all the factors mentioned above are more or less interlinked. The extremely low economic condition often necessitated the borrowing by tribal people from the people of other communities at a fairly high rate of interest which they could not repay in time and were thus forced to part with their land for receiving the debt. And this is the chief reason for tribal land alienation. The extremely low economic condition hardly allows any other means of subsistence than adopting measures that would lead to land alienation. Moreover, their traditional socio religious customs demand a high expenditure often much beyond their capacity to meet the same except by borrowing. They cannot usually increase the efficiency of their productive business. Further, their excessive drinking habit is another important factor in further worsening their economy. Thus in order, the protective measures adopted may meet with the derived degree of means all the above factors responsible for the miseries of the tribals must be kept in view and simultaneously tackled so that their economic condition improves and they are not forced to take loans for mere subsistence.

## VILLAGE ECONOMY SURVEY

### Introduction :

The problem of Scheduled Tribes living in compact areas is essentially that of economic development of their areas and of integrating their economy with that of the rest of the country.

With the objectives of ascertaining the sphere of inequalities and also the depth of such inequalities amongst the scheduled tribes especially in the economical and educational field, it was decided in 1974 to undertake an economic survey by the DIRECTORATE OF TRIBAL RESEARCH. Keeping these ends and objects to the fore, this Directorate has selected two villages under Sadar North Block (Mohanpur) namely Bhati Fatikchhera & Sepaipara to undertake an intensive survey.

We owe our sincerest gratitude to all inhabitants living in these villages without whose sincere and constant help the field survey could not have been so successfully conducted.

The survey of the villages which are purely inhabited by the Tribals is taken by the Directorate of Tribal Research with the main objective of studying the problems of Socio-economic setting of the Tribal areas. It was decided to take up the study in two selected villages under Mohanpur Block in Sadar Sub-division.

The field work for the survey was undertaken from the beginning of 1974. Data were collected at the household level. The information was also collected on such aspects as population, occupation, economic condition, production, education, land holding etc. The data were collected by interviewing and observation. A Scheduled frame for the purpose and the village survey sheet were also filled in. All the families of the villages were covered. The Survey team consisted of 6 (six) members who are the Trainee under this Directorate.

### Location :

The two surveyed villages (Bhati Fatikchhera and Sepaipara) are situated to the North of Agartala with a distance of about 20 (Twenty) Km. by the side of Agartala Simna Road. Each of these villages has hamlets. Some hamlets are named after the direction i. e. Dhakinpara. Some others are named after the name of village Sardars i. e. Ishan Thakur Para. There is no motorable road from Kamalghat to Sepaipara in true sense of term. One has to move through the narrow path over the meadows and paddy fields. Though there is a 12 ft, broad road from Kamalghat to Bhati Fatikchhera still there is no suitable communicable roads from one hamlet to another.

### Population :

The aforesaid villages have a total population of 755 persons and 10 hamlets. Cent percent of the households were intensively surveyed. The

male and female population in the villages are 51.26% and 48.74% of the total population. No other tribes of Tripura could be found in these surveyed villages save the Tripuris.

The population pattern of the two villages are almost same as any other villages in this State.

#### **Size of Family :**

The average size of the family should be discussed in briefly before proceeding further.

While observing the collection, it is found that the average size of the family is quite big, varying from 6.0 to 8.6 members. It is interesting to note here that the average size of the tribal family is bigger, although by a little margin than that of family of any group. The biggest family found in the survey was consisted of 33 members in the hamlet named Ishan Thakur para under Sepai para.

#### **Administration & Communication :**

For the purpose of civic administration all the surveyed villages came under the sadar sub-division having headquarters at Agartala, The Police station is at Sidhai. There is no Post Office in any of the villages. Both the villages are served by the Kamalghat Post Office which is very close to the surveyed villages.

As to the medical facilities the local people depend mostly on an unqualified practitioner of Kamalaghat who attends to the cases of minor nature. Cases of serious nature are, however, taken to the Government hospital at Mohaupur of Agartala.

None of the villages of on any Buy-route. The bus stop is far away. The distance to the bus stop has to cover on foot or bullock-cart or by bicycle.

#### **Source of Water :**

Water from kachha well is largely used for drinking purpose and water from the shallow tank is used for all purposes. Ordinarily, in each hamlet there are wells, The wells are not kept covered nor do these have pulleys to draw water from them. Besides there are some privately owned kachha wells in the compound of well-to-do families for their own use. There is no irrigation canal or well constructed by the Government yet,

#### **Marketing :**

The site of the large bi-weekly market at Kamalghat is just near the surveyed villages. On every monday the 'hat' which is relatively of big gathering takes place and the hat on friday is of a smaller size. The people of the surveyed villages attend the hat for sale of agricultural produce and purchase of domestic requirements. There is not a single grocer shop in

any of these villages from where people can make purchase groceries of immediate nature. Even Bidi and Tobacco which are classed as conventional necessity to the agriculturists, are not available within the villages.

#### **Co-operative :**

Co-operative movement in this part of the west district is at a decaying stage. In spite of that there is a large size Co-operative Society in this area which is functional satisfactorily in supplying foodgrains and essential Commodities to its share holders. Sometimes it also distributes agricultural loan to the villagers.

#### **Education Institution :**

In each village there are Social School and Adult literacy centre for imparting primary education. There is a high School at Kamalghat where the School goers are receiving higher Education up to the School Final standard.. There are also Mahila Samities in both the villages and the village women are getting opportunities for cultivating and learning embroidery and other village crafts at leisure period.

#### **Recreation facilities :**

Types of recreational avenues that are open to the people of the village under observation are a few in number. There is only one youth club at Bhati Fatikchheta named 'YOUNG BLOOD' for the recreation of the young boys. Besides there are some private radio sets in the solvent families.

#### **People :**

At the time of survey, there were 108 households in these two villages. The villages are purely inhabited by the Tripuris only. Out of the total population of the villages, 48.15% are agriculturists and 15.85% are depending on other sources of income.

#### **Literacy and level of Education :**

The majority of the village folks are not so conscious as they should be, of formal type of education imparted at school today. A literacy for the purpose of our survey is one who has the sense of the three Rs. and obviously a person with certain level of education. The percentage of literacy amongst males is 25% and it is 3% amongst females.

Female education even at primary standard presents gloomy picture. Regarding secondary standard, it is observed with interest that only a meagre percentage is reported to have secondary level of education. The literacy percentage of the studied two villages as whole is not discouraging.

#### **Economy :**

The economic activity of the people is mainly dependent on actual workforce. That is to say that persons who are aged between 12 and 60 and

are actually engaged in any occupation by which they can maintain themselves partly or wholly have been considered as workers. For our present survey, persons below 12 have been treated as dependents. Female working force is relatively high among the tribals.

#### **Occupation :**

Like most of the villages of the state, the two surveyed villages are dependent on Basic Industry like agriculture in one way or other. Cultivation is the chief occupation of the majority of the tribal households. Next in importance is agri-labour. Nearly 90% of the respondents depended on cultivation. Only 3% of the total population are engaged in Government services. The Secondary occupation of most of the tribal people are day-labour and forestry. The percentage of own cultivation is highest among the total working units.

#### **Land :**

To the villagers possession of land irrespective of size and type is a must for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes. Therefore, it is worthwhile to know who owns land for cultivation, who lets out land to cultivated by others and who enjoys both. The major part of the villages surveyed is a double, cropped area. Only the lands which are lying near brooks and where overflow water is available, Boro crop is cultivated there. Out of the total households, land owning families (near 23.7%) claim to have land within the limit of 5 to 10 kanis, 36.11% to have 2 to 5 Kanis and 43.52% are landless.

Food, shelter and clothings are the three basic needs of human. It is land, rather cultiyable land, that provides food to the settled agriculturist. Then in order to maintain privacy and run a secured life he feels the need of owning a piece of homestead land (relatively high and dry) so that he can construct a house there upon. Other, types of land include ponds, orchards, bamboogroves and some sort of income in cash or in kind is derived from such sources.

#### **Agricultural Tools :**

In this pre-eminently agricultural area simply possession of land is not enough. Improved method of cultivation through modern agricultural appliances is of prime need in order to yield a high production. In these villages not a single scientific agricultural implement is found-such as improved plough, power tiller etc. They followed the traditional old method in cultivation, for which production of crops are decreasing day by day. Further, they hardly use manure either natural or artificial. Facilities for irrigation is rarely found.

**Livestock :**

Among the livestock possessed by the villagers are cows, bullocks, goats, pigs and the poultry birds are only native cocks and hens. Ducks are very rarely found in this area.

**Participation in Organisations :**

In the villages under reference there are some formal and informal organisational like school committee, mahila samity, village panchayat, club and so on. In course of interview entries regarding one's membership in one or more of such institutions were entered in the Scheduled :

Panchayet	Co-operative	School Committee	Club	Mahila Samity
Members 4	31	8	24	6

There are only few participants who are associated with more than one organisation at a time.

**Analysis of the Household data :**

As has already been mentioned, two villages belonging to Tripuri tribe were selected for intensive study. Particulars about the names of villages selected, their population, distance from the Block-headquarters and the main tribes inhabiting them are given in the table below :

Name of the village	Tribe	No. of households	Population	Distance from the block head quarters.
Bhati Fatik- chera.	Tripuri	76	518	8 Km.
Sepaipara	Tripuri	32	237	20 Km.

The survey consisted of 106 households. Among the total population 51.26% is male and 48.74% female. A majority of them are above 12 years and it is 70% of the total population. About 70% of the respondents were illiterate.

The literate position is given below :

Class I and below	Upto Class V	From Class VI to VIII	From Class IX to XI	Onwards
143	121	64	48	

**Size of Family :**

The average size of family vary from 6.0 to 8. 6. The over all aveage for these villages works out to 7. 3.

**Occupation :**

Nearly 48.3% of respondents depend on agriculture, and 43.52% on Agri-labour and 8.33% have other occupations. The average family depending on Agriculture is 48.13%.

No. of families depending on different occupations.

Agriculture	Agri-labour	Day-labourer	Service
52	47	6	25

**Land Owned :**

Out of the total households as many as 56.40% were reported to be possessing cultivable land and 43.52% were landless.

**Size of holding :**

The size of cultivable holding was very small, mortgage of land was much in vogue. Only 23.7% of the households had 5 to 10 kanis of land 36.11% of the families had 2 to 5 kanis. The remaining 43.52% of households had no cultivable land.

**Crop grown :**

Paddy and jute were the principal crops generally cultivated in these areas. Paddy was chiefly grown for domestic consumption while the other was intended for sale. Tobacco and oil seeds were also grown on small patches mainly for domestic consumption. About 56.48% respondents were reported to produce food crops and 15.07% jute.

**Disposition of Agri-produce :**

With the exception of jute, all other crops are meant mainly for home consumption. In case of Aman/Aus paddy, however, a small percentage were offered for sale. Production of Boro crop, was very low and a very little is sold. As the food-grains produced were not adequate to meet the requirements of the tribals, they had therefore to depend on the money lenders and traders. A substantial percentage of these crops would go to traders-cum-money lenders in the form of yearly interest and repayment of the loans advanced by them. So hardly any surplus of their crop production was left for disposal in the open market.

**Economic Status :**

The economic status of the surveyed villas were as follows :

Rich—3.70%  
Average—12.97%  
Poor—83.33%.

**Marriageable age ;**

The marriageable age varies from person to person. The average age is 22 in case of males and 16 in case of females.



## CHUAK—A DRINK FOR TRIBALS IN TRIPURA

At the very outset of writing this collection, Shrimati Chandani Deb Barma, a 80 years old lady of Daptari Para, Paschim Simna under Mohanpur Block West Tripura District, might be conveyed our gratefulness for her kind and hearty co-operation in informing the process of preparation and essential compositions of preparing Langi—their favourite liquor used in every walk of their life.

While going into the depth of tribal ways of social life, especially in the interior region of Tripura, we cannot help mentioning the importance of Langi - a raw rice beer which they would drink as a rule. It is so important to them that without langi, a tribal life cannot be imagined. It is an essential element in the tradition of hospitality which is one of the most admired of tribal virtues, it is an important element in the price paid for most religious rituals, no tribal conference can succeed without it, it is the pledge that binds together those who make a pact of peace.

Rice beer is a food. The tribals get rest drinking langi after a whole day labour and they get relaxation from drinking it. "The rice beer of the ADHIS has been studied by the Department of Anthropology which has found that while the alcohol content is small it enriches the nutritive value of the ADI diet approximately by 10 percent of calories, 5.5 percent of protein 5.3 percent of calcium, 11 percent of phosphorus, 29 percent of iron and 8 percent of niacin, with the result that it was found superior to the food of the average Indian peasant in all important nutrients" (A Philosophy for NEFA—by Verier Elwin).

The rice beer of Tripura tribals also is exclusively essential to study. There is every possibility of it containing the above said components.

Generally, the tribals use two kinds of liquor—i) Langi or Butuk, ii) Bottle Beer or Chuak, In Tripuri language both of them are commonly called Chuak. So Chuak has got ambiguous meaning. It denotes both langi and chuak.

There is rather special problem. The people are very hospitable and invariably press rice beer on visitors to their village. If the visitor is not a teetotaler, he might decline to accept it but he should show that he has no taboo in his mind as it is the simple and natural gift of friendship unity and integrity.

### NOW LET US DISCUSS THE PROCESS HOW CHUAK MAY BE PREPARED :

#### A) Preparation of Langi :

Before the preparation of langi, a fermenting tablet (local name Chuan) must be prepared. At the time of chuan preparation, they observe some customs. The person who is going to

prepare chuan, must put on a sacred dress which has not been used after washing it. The person will not mix with or touch other persons or things save the essential utensils cleaned previously. Generally, females prepare chuan and langi. At the time of preparation they pay homage to the goddess of liquor (a dryad) and would sing the following folk song by catching the chuan. The song is like questioning and answering one.

Numa Nufani Talade Nukka ?

Nuk yakhu.

Nukha Nukha.

O' Aichuk Tokbakma.

Nung Kusum Tulangdi Kukhui Tulangdi.

Ano Kutui-You Kulangdi.

Khopcha Nungkhai Dirang.

Khopnui Nungkha Dirang.

Meaning : Have you seen my parent ? No. have not Have seen have seen. O bat ! early in the morning take away sour and bitter taste. Give me sweet and pungent taste. Let one drink make intoxicating-two drinks make more intoxicating. Now-a-days this folk song is not generally in vogue. So, little do the modern tribals acquaintant with it.

#### Chuan Preparation :

For the preparation of rice beer (langi) chuan is the main fermenting tablet (mentioned previously) that would be prepared first and preserved in a suitable place. There is a wild tree which is locally called Chuan Tree. It has big leaves, generally 20 Cm. long and 13 Cm. wide with narrow end. The tree is a big one and it becomes bigger with the passage of years. The leaf of this chuan tree, local name Chuan Blai, is the vital component that must be added in the preparation of chuan. If this leaf is not available, Chindrama leaf may also substitute it. It is said that hundred different ingredients (leaves and roots) may be added & used in chuan preparation. So far, names of 18 different leaves and roots have come to our knowledge. The addition of different leaf in chuan will produce different taste of the langi.

The components are :

- 1) Chuan leaf
- 2) Atap rice
- 3) Jack fruit leaf
- 4) Sugar cane leaf
- 5) Chindrama leaf
- 6) Takhi Selang leaf
- 7) Dhutura leaf

- 8) Thakti waksa leaf
- 9) Bor leaf
- 10) Duk mangkhong leaf
- 11) Barmajal leaf
- 12) Khumdrupui leaf
- 13) Sammaso leaf
- 14) Chanduma root
- 15) Pineapple leaf
- 16) Dry chilly
- 17) Brinjal leaf
- 18) Sweet potato leaf etc.

To make chuan, atop rice, chuan leaf, jackfruit leaf, dry chilly, sugar cane leaf, chindrama leaf etc. are used differently for different taste. Such as if sugar cane leaf is added, the taste of the langi will be slight sweet, if dry chilly and chindrama leaf are used it will be pungent, and if chanduma root is added it will produce a strong and good liquor. Even if all the above mentioned components may be added, atop rice and either chuan, leaf or chindrama leaf only are enough for chuan. In making chuan, the rice must be stop variety.

It might be noted here that the tribals generally cultivate a special variety of paddy in jhum land called "Mataima" which is cultivated by a special class in the tribal community for preparing langi only. All Classes of tribal are not allowed to cultivate this variety of jhum paddy as there is some customs to be observed. According to them the langi prepared with this rice has a special taste. But at present as the practice of shifting cultivation is gradually decreasing due to various factors, it affects to some extent in their social customs since the tribal people observe some rituals in cultivating this variety of jhum paddy, which is disappearing now by degrees.

The process of preparing chuan is an indigenous method. At first about  $\frac{1}{2}$  Kg. of rice (atop) is taken and sink it in a vessel early in the morning. Then the rice is taken out at noon and placed it in a basket where the water may be dropped down and keep it for sometime so that the rice may dry up. Then this soaked rice is powdered by 'dheki' or by some other process with 3 or 4 chuan leaf, 4 or 5 jack-fruit leaf, 2 or 3 dry chilly, 2 or 3 chindrama leaf till they all well mixed and powdered. Then add water just the mixture to become mould like a kneaded flour before preparing bread. Then the mixture is taken out and make round cakes having about 8 Cm. diameter and 1 Cm. depth. the quantity of the cake is so taken that it will be about 125 gram in weight when dried up. Then scatter some hay in a basket and place the

cakes (chuan) on it and cover the cakes with hay again. Then keep it in a shadow place in a room for three days. At first the cake will be bluish in colour and then it will become complete dirty white gradually. After three days, the cakes will be kept in the sun till they completely dry up. This cakes are called 'Chuan'.

This chuan is preserved for preparing langi or butuk in future.

#### Langi (BHUTUK) Preparation :

To prepare langi (Butuk)  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Kg. of rice is taken with water in an earthen pitcher and boil the rice to make boiled-rice. This time the rice might be any of 'atop' or 'siddha' variety but preferably 'atap'.

For the rice of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Kg. rice one chuan (cake) is added i. e. the proportion is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Kg. rice : 1 chuan (cake) for langi or butuk.

Again the dried chuan (cake) is powdered and well mixed with this boiled-rice in the pitcher. After well mixture, the earthen pitcher is covered with banana leaf and tied the neck of the pitcher with the leaf by a thin bamboo cane. Then it is placed again for three nights in the room. After three nights the langi is drinkable.

At least after three nights the earthen pitcher is taken out and opened the cover and pour drinking water till it fills to the brim. When bubbles will come up in the water mooli bamboo pipe locally called chungi is dipped to the bottom of the vessel and drink it with that pipe by sucking. This is langi.

#### Cungi :

The sucking pipe chungi, made of mooli bamboo has a special method of making. The narrow end of the top portion of a mooli bamboo is taken and cut it with node in one end and without it the other end. Then the two sides of the pipe have been pore near the node so that the liquor only without rice may enter.

#### Social Customs :

The social custom of drinking langi (butuk) is also very interesting. The usual convention for measuring the quantity how much a person is allowed to drink is easy method. A long soft bamboo cane is taken and break it at the equal length of the diameter of the vessel so that the bamboo stick may be placed on the neck. Then rent a piece of the stick from one end up to the just middle of it and bend the rent piece to make perpendicular with the original stick and place the stick on the neck of the vessel indicating the end of the rent piece the mark of his share. When the liquor will be drink, the level will come down and when it will reach to the level of the end of the rent piece, he has to leave the vessel for another person. Again water will be poured to the full brim and next person will instal his place. So on they will drink. This marketing stick is locally called 'Tengi'.

When in the assemble many a person gathers, they will sit in two rows keeping the langi vessel in the middle. When any person of a row has finished his turn, he will keep the chungu on the other side of the tengi. It indicates that the turn of the other row has granted.

In the assembly generally the tribals would drink one by one and the turn goes round according to seniority. The junior most one has to serve the gathering and he would drink last of all.

**(B) Chuarak—A bottle liquor :**

This bottle beer (local name chuarak) is identical to the country liquor that we may have from any grog shop. They prepare this chuarak from langi by distillation. The distillation process is also very easy and own method.

At first the langi is taken in a big earthen vessel or aluminium vessel (used at present). Then another earthen vessel is placed up-set on the langi vessel and the two joining of the necks is bedaubed with mud to make it airtight. There makes a hole at the bottom of the second vessel which is placed up set and for this position the hole will remain upward of the two vessels. Then a bamboo delivery pipe (local name Chhabacho) is fitted at the upward hole and closed the leak with rag. Besides this process, some tribals use a small earthen pitcher having hole in the side to fit the Chhabacho and some small holes at the bottom to come up the vapour and close the neck with rag placing the small pitcher on the big one.

Then the other end of this pipe is introduced inside patni and the leaks are closed with rag again. This patni is specially made. To make patni two earthen pitchers; one big and one small with narrow long neck are required. The bigger pitcher is placed vertically and the smaller pitcher which has narrow neck is placed inclined position in the bigger vessel and the two necks of the vessels are permanently joined. The end of the delivery pipe is placed in the narrow neck of the pitcher and water is poured in the bigger pitcher for making the vapour cool.

Then the langi is brewed and the vapour comes out through the delivery pipe ( Chhabacho ) cooled to liquor in the patni.

Now a question arises, how long the langi may brewed and spirited liquor vapour will be produced. The test is also very easy. A stick is taken with some cotton at the end. The cotton of the stick is dipped in the patni where the liquor with vapour remains. Then keep it in fire for a moment and strike the stick on the pitcher. If the cotton burns the langi may be brewed more as it has capacity of producing liquor vapour. If the cotton does not burn, the langi has become spiritless and if brewed, the liquor will be insipid. In such way they prepare bottle liquor or chuarak.

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