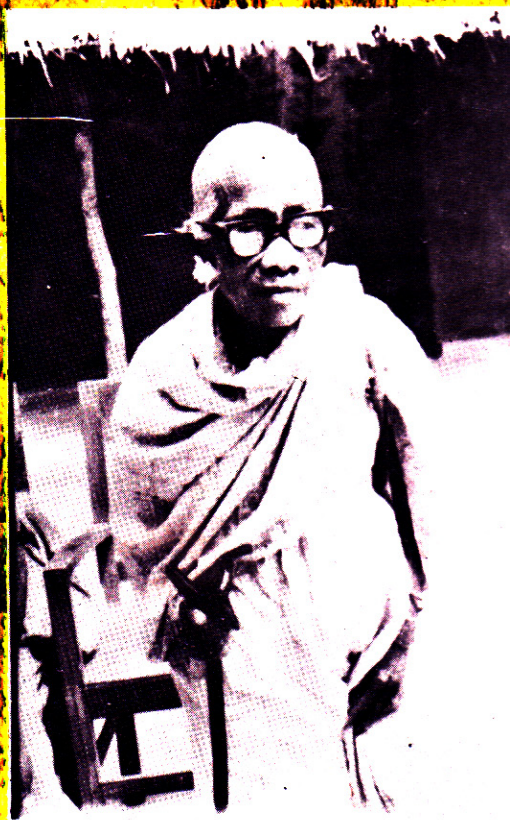


The Murasings

(A sub-tribe of Tripura)



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Tribal Research Institute
Govt. Of Tripura
Agartala

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Foreword

Murasings in Tripura is a less known tribal Community. They are known to be the sub-tribe of Tripuri Community having their own separate Social Organisation. Ethnically they belong to Mongoloid racial stock. Majority people of this Community are vegetarian and followers of Vaisnavism.

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

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

Dated Agartla the
28th Feb '99

(S. K. Sarkar)
Director
Tribal Research Institute
Govt. of Tripura.

PREFACE

The Murasings is a less known tribe and belong to minority tribal groups of Tripura. Ethnically this Community is most akin to the Tripuris, though have some separate entities. Those differences are prevalent in their way of life and traditional culture. Their concentration are mainly in Udaipur & Sonamura. A very little percentage of them are in Taidu-Ampi areas of Amarapur, Sub-Division. Their numerical strength in Tripura would be approximately 3,500 in numbers. In various census Report, their population strength as shown differs with actual position.

The present Monograph deals with the different aspects of Murasing's traditional social organisation, economic activities, acculturation etc. I believe this monograph will generate interest on this Sub-tribe and to help for further research work on them. I respectfully acknowledge my gratitude to Late Nityananda Murasing of Tulamura and other elder members of his community for helping me by providing information and data regarding their socio-cultural life economic activities and traditional heritage.

I would like to record my thanks to Sri J. Sinha, Ex-Lecturer BT College and Dr. P. K. Halder of Tripura University who have rendered me all possible help to complete this work.

Dated Agartala the
28th Feb. 99.

(R. K. Acharyya)

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Place of Study :-

This study was undertaken in some specific Murasing concentrated villages under Udaipur and Sonamura Sub-Division. The villages investigated are Chungthing Charra, Taidum, Trapadum, Ranikilla, Paticharri, Buraghat, Badraipathar, Mirja, Tackma Charra, Toibandal of Udaipur and Sonamura Sub-Division.

A variety of interdependent and interrelated research methods generally used to study a life of a community such as (i) The sample survey method, (ii) Observational method, were also used for the purpose of present study. Before explaining the actual design, a brief out line of the sample utilised for the present study are given here :

Collection of Data :-

Two methods were adopted to obtain information directly from persons covered by the survey. They are : (i) Personal interview with the help of a schedule prepared for the purpose. (ii) Observation, participation and group discussion with the community chief, the old and aged persons and prominent Baishnavait religious leaders.

The Schedule :-

The information schedule was prepared on the basis of a draft schedule. The main schedule comprised the following aspects - (i) Individual information from the head of the house hold and its members such as name, age, sex, education, occupation, relationship with the head of the family, marital

status, accommodation and housing, food habit, drink, dresses, ornaments, assets etc. which were taken as general information on the material culture. (ii) Economic Structure : Demographic characteristics, land and land use systems, methods of agriculture, cropping pattern, numbers of land holders and their individual holdings, average per acre yield of various crops, livestock, agricultural activities, occupation, subsidiary occupation annual income, expenditure, total indebtedness and its causes. (iii) Socio-cultural activities : Such as family pattern, clan, kinship, marriage, divorce, social ceremonies, association in group life, socio-religious beliefs and practices, visits to native and holy places.

The data were collected actually residing in the Murasing villages. This stay therefore not only helped not only the data collection but also afforded ample scope for observing the Murasing people from a very close quater through contact and participation in their various activities. Copious notes were taken on the basis of these observations, which helped in understanding the life and culture of the Murasings. At first most the Murashing refused to give actual data and information on many aspects of their economic activities, land holding and income pattern. To gain more insight in to the nature of their customs, conventions, beliefs and practices, various aspects of their day to day activities, social values, extensive field investigations were made. The ceremonies, festivals, leisure activities, marriage, funeral rites and rituals were as fare possible, personally observed during the period of the study.

Ratan Krishna Acharyya.

CHAPTER - I

Introduction

Tripura - The Lands and the people

Tripura was initially an ancient and small (4,116 sqm) hilly tribal kingdom in North-Eastern India. Heavy rainfall, rich flora and fauna, fertile fields and temperate climate have drawn numerous groups of people to Tripura from different directions since time long past.

Topographically Tripura consists of a number of hill ranges, hillocks and hilly terrains interspersed with wide fields. In Tripura the monsoon starts here from the late May. It receives heavy rainfall up to September-October. The recorded rainfall in this region is more or less 200 (two hundred) inches (500 cm) per year. This rain fall has created many rivers, valleys and abundant green grass forest, different kinds of trees and plants which are utilised by the people for their livelihood. Like its rich flora, Tripuras fauna, rich both in number and variety. In the green forests of Tripura, one may find different categories of wild animals birds and insects etc. Side by side there are abundant fertile fields in Tripura, very good for producing food crops, vegetable and cattle feed. The climatic condition is also very temperate which creates a beautiful natural environment in this region.

This natural environment attracted people in groups to enter Tripura in different waves from the long past. At present Tripura is a place, where besides 19 tribal groups. Various races, communities of different religious and linguistic groups, live together. Murasing is also one of the tribal groups of Tripura and they got the opportunity of gathering wild vegetables, practicing of fishing, hunting, farming and interacting with other social groups living in the same natural environment.

Tripura has a big tribal population. The following table shows the population of Tripura according to the Census of 1981.

Sl. No.	Name of tribe	Population	Percentage among Total tribes.
1.	Tripuri or Tripura Tippers.	250382	55.57%
2.	Reang	64722	14.36%
3.	Jamatia	34192	7.59%
4.	Chakma	28662	6.36%
5.	Halam	19076	4.23%
6.	Noatia	10297	2.28%
7.	Mog	13273	2.94%
8.	Lushai	3672	.81%
9.	Uchai	1061	.21%
10.	Kuki	7775	1.72%
11.	Garo	5559	1.23%
12.	Munda	5347	1.18%
13.	Orang	3428	0.78%
14.	Santal	2222	0.49%
15.	Khasia	491	Negligible
16.	Bhil	169	Negligible
17.	Chaimal	Nil	Nil
18.	Bhutia	3	Negligible
19.	Lepcha	175	Negligible

Out of these 19 tribes, the Bils, the Mundas, the Orangs and the Santal have migrated from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and west Bengal while the Bhutias and the lepchas have migrated from Sikim, Bhutan and North Bengal. The Garos the Khasis and the Lushai are supposed to have migrated from Assam and its adjoining states. The Chakmas and the Mogs are from Chittagoan Hill Tracts and Arkan. The remaining

tribes claim that they are the aboriginals of the State.

The tribes of the Central India (Now Madhya Pradesh) came to this territory to work as labourers in the tea gardens brick kilns and stone quarries etc. and then stayed here earning their living as labourers and agricultural workers. As labourers and agriculturists. The reasons for migration of the chakmas, Mog, Garoos and Lushai are believed to have been due to shortage of fertile jhoom land and for reasons of social disturbances. The Chakmas have migrated in large numbers in Tripura since 1947 and they are now the fourth largest tribal group in Tripura.

Other than different tribal groups, non-tribal immigrants are also found in Tripura, who came here primarily for economic stability e. g. the Manipuris, the Nepalis, the Oriyas, the Panjabis, The Biharis, the Maruaris, the Gujratis etc. The Bengali Hindus are at present the major group in Tripura who on different socio-political grounds were forced to come to this territory.

Socio-economic life & Problems of the Tribals of Tripura :

Most of the tribes in Tripura belong to the Mongoloid racial stock. Physically they are short and sturdy. They possess good physique. Most of the speak Kok-Borok which may be grouped in the Aestiro-Asiatic Language group of the Tibeto-Burman family. According to an other opinion, they may also be classified under Bodo-group of Indo-Mongoloid group of people.

Ethnically most of the tribes of Tripura possess almost identical cultural and social traits, having their separate entity. Of the nineteen tribes, the Tripuris are treated as the most advanced Community. All these tribes have their own administrative and legal systems although their traditional forms and authority are now undergoing changes.

Most of the Tripura tribes are traditionally Hindus. They

believe in Shakta Cult and worship Shiva, Durga and Bishnu like other non tribal Hindus. Garia puja and Ker puja are performed by most of the tribal communities. The majority of them perform pujas of the forest and water. They also believe in evil spirits and ghosts. During the last 30 years many of them have embraced Christianity.

Although the tribals of Tripura are basically agriculturists, many of them still depend on Jhoom or Shifting Cultivation. They produce their essential food crops, vegetables, fruits and other cash crops like mesta, cotton, oilseed etc. in the Jhoom. They buy only salt, kerosine oil, dry fish etc. from the market. Their women folk weave their cloth on their traditional looms.

Many of them have no cultivatable land and as a result, continue to depend on Jhoom. Now-a-days, however, sufficient Jhoom land is not available owing to sharp increase in population and the utilisation of forest area under afforestation schemes of the government. A large number of tribals are therefore, now forced to earn their livelihood as daily labourers which leads to a certain amount of stratification in their society. Another acute problems is constant dependence on Government loan and money landers for which tribals in general, are facing a lot of trouble to modify their way of life socio-economically by drifting into the main stream of live.

In general the tribals of Tripura are educationally backward. A very poor percentage of them is literate. They are rarely well educated. There are very few schools in the remote tribal areas. Even when the Schools exists, they are mostly primary schools and most of the Tribals are found to be indifferent to get their children educated. Emotionally all the tribes of Tripura are peace loving and mild natured. They have a close community feeling and are very disciplined in their social life. Their hospitality is praise worthy.

CHAPTER - II

The Murasings are a less known tribe of Tripura. They belong Noatia Tribe of Tripura. Opinion differs on the origin of the name. Legend has it, that once when a stretch of jungle was burnt down for jhuming, the roasted body of an animal was found. It has burned beyond recognition. People made a feast of the roasted carcass and then took its head which had two horns on it to the king to claim that they had discovered a strange animal. They thought the discovery would bring them honour, title and money from the king. But the king was annoyed to see the head. It was infect, the head of a cow. And his subjects though were Hindus had eaten a cow. The king therefore decreed that these people should be called "Murasing" people who possessed the horne head of a dead animal. The word 'Marasing' in the course of time was changed into 'Murasings' by their neighbours.

According to another legend, these people came to be known as Murasings/Murasings from their practice of decorating their houses with the horned heads of dead animals. The practice can still be found among them.

Some Murasings say that the king Bir Chandra Manikya, (1862-1896), the then ruler of Tripura, gave them the honorific 'Murasing' as they were religious leaders of the community and the dwellers of the hill tops. But the connection between the word 'Murasing' and the two distinctions they claim is not clear.

Numerically, the Murasings are quite a small community compared to other tribes of Tripura. All Census Reports till 1971 wrongly listed them as Tripuris. Their number according

to the 1971 Census is only 221 i. e. 109 men and 112 women. The present study, of course, has found that their numerical strength is higher than what was stated in the three previous censuses from 1961 census. It is assumed that their population would not be less than 3 to 4 thousands. It is understood that in Government records they are being recorded as Tripuris. But it is interesting to note that the Tripuri community never treated them as a part of their community persons. In different records they are also identified as a sub-tribe of Noatia community. Murasings also commonly treated as one of the Halam tribes (12 Dafas) though their traditional culture, language etc. are very much akin to the Tripuris and the Noatias. The Murasings of course regard themselves as a separate tribe, not Tripuri or Noatia.

Migration and Concentration :

According to their own opinion and in various references the Murasings were dwellers of Lamai Hill of the present Bangladesh. They were quite happy with their way of life. They produced whatever they needed in the Jhoom. Then famine and incurable diseases struck them and they started to enter Tripura in groups, specially the southern part of the state, in search of Jhoom land. Since then Murasings began a nomadic life. They went where their jhoom lands took them and thus arrived in Udaipur, Belonia, Amarpur and Sonamura Sub-Division where they finally settled down. Jhooming was their primary food gathering activity. In Jhoom they used to produce paddy, chilly, cotton and vegetables alongwith other cash crops according to their needs. They used to take roasted meat of animals and birds with green chilly and bamboo shoot and Khar Pani (acid water) alongwith other vegetables. At that time to protect the jhoom land from the wild animals and birds they used to make barricades by bamboo fencing. They also used to set up traps called "Eya raha" to keep off wild elephants,

"Burals" to catch deer, wild pigs and monkeys and "Kildang" to catch birds, "Khui" to catch the jungle fowl.

Life in Tripura for them was happy. They were self sufficient. There was no change in their social, economic and religious practices. They used to track to the village hut two - three times in a year for purchasing essential articles. Only young men went to the markets which were far away from the villages. The old men and the women of the community use to see them off to the market for which they set off on a day and time considered was piceous for the long journey. The young people in groups of two or three tracked down through the jungle path to the market. Sometimes even after a considerable period of time some did not come back. They were given up for lost, probably killed by the wild animals. They went to markets for articles like ornaments for the women folk, earthen pots, pitchers etc. Sometime they used to purchase iron stick for making fire. These iron sticks were found in the houses of village leaders and some well to do families. The procedure for making fire were than called 'Harqudak', 'Hargaija' 'Harduk' etc.

Then came a time when population increase posed problem with the Murasinggs for which they began to acquire more and more forest areas for Jhuming. This news reached the then King of Tripura. The king had a nobble way to solve the problem. He then engaged them in a battle. He ordered the young men of the Murasing Community to join the army. Hundreds of young men were forced to join the king's army and no one of them returned alive. It shocked the whole community. When another such order came form the king most young men fled to the deep forest and others run away to their previous homeland. Those black days are still alive in the memory of these people and find expression in their folk songs.

*"The memories we suffered in Tripura.
It was beyond all descriptions.
Our boys died young in the battles.
The Choudhuris forced them to join the Army
and the king's anger led them to work hard for
five days
on a ration of one day."*

Physical Feature :

Ethnologically the Murasings belongs to the Tibeto-Burmlse stock of having marked Mongoloid feature with an admixture of Aryan blood. Their physical characteristic are also akin to the other tribes of Tripura. They have medium stature well built physique, flat face and nose and their complexion varies from black to brown. It may be noted here that all of them are not of the same stature.

Language :

Their dialect popularly known as Kok-Borok belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese Language group. Kok-Borok literally means the language of man. The same Language is also used by other major tribes of Tripura, such as the Tripuri, the Noatia, the Jamatia, the Rupini, the Kokoi etc. The Murasings have also think that they have originated from the Bodo Community of Assam as their Language is quite akin to the Bodo-Language.

History and Origin :

According to their own folklore the Murasings have originated from the jamatia tribes of Tripura. There is an interesting story about this. Sri Banamali Jamatia had been in Nabadwip, West Bengal for twelve years in order to learn Vaishnavism. After the completion of his study, he came to Tripura as a Vaishnav leader and began to call himself. Prabhu-Pad-Banamali goswami (1795-1879). He was permitted by



A Vaishnab Guru

the then Maharaja of Tripura to spread his religious faith amongst the other tribes and the people of his own community. Two of his disciples, Balai Chand Goswami and Hari Chand goswami, went to Umrai to propagate their religious faith among various tribes particularly among the Jamatias. Most of the jamatias, however, refused to accept his faith as it prohibited eating fish, meat and drinking liquor. The jamatias then got united against them and drove the Vaishnabs from their community. Banamali Vaishnab and his followers left Tripura for Chand pur, Purbasa (Barisal), Umrai, and Harina (near Chitagong Hill Tract) now in Bangladesh. Banamali Vaishnab and his followers then propagated their faith among the Tripuri Community residing in those places. After staying there for several years Banamali Vaishnab came back to Tripura in search of Jhoom land and took the name "Nutan Tripura" or Noatia.

A good percentage of Banamali Goswami's followers have converted themselves to dedicated Vaishnavs following the rules and principles of Vaishnabism. After institution

(Diksha), they follow the principles laid down by the **Diksha Guru**, Srimat Harichand Goswami. In all religious festivals they display a four coloured Flag. The colours are Black, White, Blue and Saffron. Each colour has a special meaning. Black denotes the dark period of their life-the stage of pre-religious faith. Blue denotes first days of their life after **Diksha** (beginning a meaningful life for the knowledge of Universe, nature, death and soul). White denotes the stage when they begin to follow the religious code and principles after **Diksha**. It also indicates a person who has attained knowledge of Self, God and Nature. Saffron denotes the stage, when one totally devoted himself to god and become **Vaishnav** Guru or **Mahanta Maharaj** and also who usually spreads Vaishnavism and keep in touch with his followers.

To identify them as a tribe separate from the Tripuris and the jamatias the then Maharaja of Tripura, Bir chandra manikya as stated earlier awarded them a new title "MURASING" which the Murasing say means "a devoted community to religion and the dwellers of Hill top". The Maharaja also called a meeting of the Vaishnav leaders of this Community in his court and honoured them. He entrusted Sri Nishan Chandra Debbarma (Thakur) to represent Murasing Community in his court and to inform the court of their problems and grievances form time to time. Sri Nishan Chandra Thakur was the "Misip" (representative) of Murasing Community for several years.

Classification :

The Murasings are divided into three major Dafas (Classes) : **Danggra, Masbang, Totaram.**

The word "**Danggra**" has come from the word "**Dungar**" (a stream or river). It was applied originally to those who had the habit of taking bath in the stream. The word

"Masbang" originated from **"Muskuthang"** i. e. reformed as Muskuthang, Masku, Meskang - Masbang. Masbang means those who liked eating green chillies, Likewise Totaram Dafa was the name of a group of people who rear a specific bird which can imitate the sound "Ram". They are classified under four major groups according to the Vaishnav Gurus and their Akhras they follow These groups are : (i) Murasings (ii) Jaganathas (iii) Kalachand or Kalachandi and (iv) Totaram. These Akhras or Vaishnav Assemblies are the symbolic status of each Dafas. They have different ways of religious thought, practices and observation of religious rites, rituals and festivals.



A Place of worship

CHAPTER - III

Economic Life :

Production and consumption are economic activities. The tribal people are traditionally cultivators and dwellers of the forest. The forest is the main source of their economy. There was a time when they earned their livelihood only by Jhoom Cultivation and selling the Jhoom and forest products. Thus at one time their whole economic activities were confined to the forest only. But now-a-days their economic activities have changed. It may now be categorised under (i) Primary and (ii) Secondary. Their economic activities may be classified as follows :

1. Agriculture,
2. Daily Labour,
3. Agricultural labour,
4. Craftsmanship,
5. Cattle rearing
6. Employees.

Primary Occupation :

Agriculture : Murasings are mostly agriculturists. There are big farmers among them, who have most modern implement for cultivation and also lead their life by selling the surplus yield in the market and who are treated as the landlords in the village. The second categories of farmers are those who are very poor agriculturists and since they do not know modern scientific methods of agriculture the net return of their farm is very low. Most of the Murasings belong to the second group

Who generally earn additional income as labourers.

Land and land Holding :

In the surveyed villages, one may find abundant plain land surrounding the villages where Murasings are generally residing. The Murasings are not the only owner of this plain land but non-tribals and other tribals of the surveyed villages have also possess a considerable portion of the plain land. Small tillas and slopes may also be found in the surveyed areas. These tillas and slopes are covered with green vegetation. Fertility of the land varies from place to place. As a result of which crop yield is not uniform. Lack of proper irrigation facilities is also a vital factor for variation of crop yield. The tillas and slopes are mostly sandy and porous and do not hold water. So these tillas and slopes can not be utilised for producing food grain. Therefore, these slopes and tillas are fallow and are generally used for homestead purposes. The majority of the surveyed Murasing families have got Government settlement benefit as per settlement and re-settlement schemes of the Tribal Welfare Department, which provide them land (plain and tilla), bullocks, agricultural implements, cash money, poultry birds, plants of various fruits, fertilizer etc. The following table will bring out the land holding pattern of Murasing families of the surveyed areas :

Village wise distribution of land under surveyed families.

Name of the villages surveyed	Total No of surveyed families	Possession of land less than 5 kani	Possession of land less than 10 kanies
1	2	3	4
Chungting cherra	24	10	9
Taidum	25	11	6
Tarpadum	12	3	4
Rankihla	29	9	10

Name of the villages surveyed	Total No of surveyed families	Possession of land less than 5 kani	Possession of land less than 10 kanies
1	2	3	4
Pati Crhari	32	9	12
Burghat	26	12	7
Badrai-pathar	16	3	5
Mirza	23	12	6
Takma cherra	17	9	5
Tai-Bandal	48	18	15
Total	252	96	78
Percentage	100	28.96%	30.96%

Possession of land of 10 kani above	No. of families possessed khas land	Total Kash land possessed by surveyed families	Average possession of khas land by per khas land holding families.
5	6	7	8
3	6	13kani	2.16
4	11	26 kani	2.36
4	6	7 kani	1.16
5	5	12 kani	2.40
8	14	8 kani	0.72
3	11	21 kani	1.90
6	6	9 kani	1.50
4	7	12 kani	1.85
--	3	7 kani	2.33
7	17	21kani	1.23
44	86	137 kani	1.59
17.46%	34.12%	0.54	
		(Averge by 252 families)	

Nos. of the landless families	Total possession of home stead land.	Total possession land by the surveyed families.	Area under cultivation
9	10	11	12
2	54 kani	160 kani	129 kani
4	46 kani	186 kani	158 kani
1	18 kani	126 kani	112 kani
8	56 kani	215 kani	206 kani
3	67 kani	271 kani	236 kani
4	49 kani	209 kani	192 kani
2	28 kani	148 kani	136 kani
2	39 kani	192 kani	172 kani
3	36 kani	156 kani	139 kani
8	76 kani	32 kani	206 kani
34	469 kani	1990 kani	1767 kani
13.49%	1.86 kani	7.89 kani	

K = Represents kani 1. Total possession of plain land - 1990 Kani (795 acre)

1 (one) Kani 2) Total possession of khas land - 137 Kani 54.8 acre)

= 6.40 acre 3) Average possession of land per family - 7.89 Kani (3.16 acre)

From the table above, it may be seen that among the 252 surveyed families 218 families possess plain land measuring 1990 kani (795 acre) including khas land of 137 kani (54.80 acre). The possession of homestead land by the surveyed families is 469 kani (187.6 acre) 34 families (13.49%) have no cultivable land. On the average 7.89 kani (3.16 acre) land is possessed by each of the surveyed family. The further details are like this. Out of 1990 kani land (i. e. 795 acre) 96 families possess land less than 3 kani i. e. 2 acre (38.09%), 78 families possess land less than 10 kani (4 acre) (30.96%) and only 44 families (17.64%) have land holding of above 10 kani (4 acre), 86 families out of 252 surveyed families possess Government khas land. The average homestead land possessed by each of the surveyed family is 1.86 kani. The homestead land is mostly under khas lands.

Jhoom Cultivation :

Jhooming is a primitive process of cultivation with which the tribals are accustomed through generations. Jhoom cultivation in Tripura generally is done in the hill range, tillas and slopes with forest cover. First of all the land is selected and then the jungle of the selected areas is cut and left for sometime for drying. After a fortnight or so, the said area is burnt and the land then is prepared for sowing which is done with a typical bill-hook (takhal). After five or seven days seeds of paddy, jute, cotton, mesta, chilies and other vegetable seeds are sown. The sowing is generally done by Baishak (April - May) and harvesting are done by the end of Ashwin (Sept. - October).

But Jhoom cultivation now create acute problems by causing severe soil erosion. Not even that the yield of crop raised through Jhoom cultivation is not high and can not sustain the cultivators for the whole year. Another point is that due to expansion of plantation works in the forest areas by the forest Department/Corporation, land for jhooming is becoming scarce. Besides the yield from Jhoom is very low in comparison to other forms of cultivation.

The Murasings once practised Jhoom cultivation. Now-a-days they do not depend on Jhooming. Most of them have got plain lands and are well accustomed with the methods of plough cultivation and plain land utilisation.

Plough Cultivation :

Earlier the Murasing did not accept the plough cultivation and were happy with their traditional method of cultivation. But due to scarcity of Jhoom land and frequent availability of assistance from the government to encourage plough cultivation, they like other tribes in Tripura, have taken to the plough cultivation. The neighbouring Bengali cultivators also

have some influence upon them to change their method of cultivation.

Agricultural Implements :

Most of the agricultural implements used by the Murasings are Primitive and traditional. The majority of the plain land cultivators use the plough. During investigation it was found that 148 out of 252 surveyed families possessed plough and other accessories and bullocks. Apart from the plough, they also use the following agricultural implements e. g. Rua, Takhal, Hee, digging stick, ladder, spade, sickle etc. in agricultural and domestic activities.

Average Yield :

The total area of the surveyed village are 1990 kanis (795 acre). Out of this only 441.75 acre is cultivable land which is rain fed. As a result they get only one main crop during the kharif season.

The average yield of one kani land is about 10 to 15 monds paddy per crop in the surveyed area. The rich cultivators produce two crops per year on the same plot of land by using water from water sources. But most of the Murasing cultivators have no other ways to produce more than one crop per year for want of irrigation facilities. Recently the government has taken steps to provide irrigation facilities. But such facilities have not reached the interior Murasing villages. The general farms produce of the Murasings are paddy, cotton, mesta a variety of jute, Oil (mustard) seeds, vegetables and Rabi Crops etc. I have seen that every investigated family produce green vegetables on their homestead land. The annual yield generally varies due to either to shortage of rainfall or heavy rainfall. The following table will show the principal crops and other crops of the area and also the average annual yield of each crop.

Annual Yield.

Name of the village surveyed	Total Nos of families surveyed	Total Nos. of land holding families.	Total quantity of paddy
1	2	3	4
Chaungting cherra	24	22	24MT
Taidum	25	21	23MT
Tarapadum	12	21	28Qtl
Ranikilla	29	24	32MT
Patichari	32	29	36MT
Buraghat	26	22	27MT
Badrai pather	16	14	29MT
Mizra	23	21	26MT
Tackma cherra	17	14	17MT
Taibandal	48	40	53MT
Total	252	218	297MT

Total quantity of Jute	Total quantity of Wheat	Total quantity of Potato	Total quantity of Bringal ginger
5	6	7	8
5 MT	8Qtl	14Qtl	2Qtl
7 MT	6Qtl	7Qtl	19Qtl
6MT	3Qtl	3Qtl	5Qtl
3MT	7Qtl	7Qtl	3Qtl
20Qtl	9Qtl	8Qtl	27Qtl
14MT	11Qtl	3Qtl	1Qtl
10MT	3Qtl	5Qtl	1.50Qtl
8MT	15Qtl	7Qtl	2Qtl
7MT	5Qtl	9Qtl	5Qtl
22MT	10Qtl	10Qtl	3Qtl
102MT	7.7MT	7.3MT	1.5MT

Total quantity of green vegetables	Total quantity of oil seeds	Total quantity of cotton
9	10	11
9 Qtl	5Qtl	1.30Qtl
13 Qtl	3.5Qtl	.50Qtl
5Qtl	2.5Qtl	--
15Qtl	3Qtl	.50Qtl
17Qtl	7Qtl	1.50Qtl
15Qtl	3Qtl	.75Qtl
7Qtl	9Qtl	.20Qtl
8Qtl	8Qtl	1.75Qtl
6Qtl	12Qtl	3Qtl
10Qtl	15Qtl	5Qtl
10.5MT	6.8MT	1.6MT

Analysing the table above, it is observed that the 252 surveyed families have produced paddy as principal food crops i. e. 297 M. T. Mesta as a cash crop 102 M. T. oil seed as cash crop 6.8 M. T. wheat 7.7 M. T. potato 7.3 M. T. Brinje 1.5 M. T. and cotton 1.6 M. T. during the surveyed year. They also produce fruits of various nature.

Marketable surplus of paddy comes from only from 15 to 20 families. Jute is produced only to earn cash money. They also earn something by selling of sugarcane, vegetable, oil seeds and fruits like jackfruits, mango, banana, pineapple etc.

Average Consumption :

Practically the Murasings try to produce food grain as per their needs, only a few of land holding families produce surplus food gain. The average size of a Murasing family is 5.52. As their staple food is rice, they need approximately 3.5 kg. rice per day for three meals i. e. one in the morning, the other two at midday and at night. The average annual requirement of the total 252 families is 258 M. T. rice. It is

also found from the collected data that the average annual yield of paddy cannot sustain their consumption demand. The following table will present a picture of their consumption pattern.

Consumption & deficit of Rice.

Name of the surveyed village	Total Nos. families surveyed	Village wise annual produced (MT)
Chanthing cherra	24	17Mt.
Taidum	25	16Mt.
Tarpadum	12	22Mt.
Ranikilla	29	13Mt.
Paticherra	32	25Mt.
Buraghat	26	19Mt.
Badraipather	16	21Mt.
Mirza	23	18Mt.
Tackmacherra	17	12Mt.
Toi-Bangal	48	35Mt.
Total	252	198Mt.

Villagewise annual rice consumption (in MT)	Annual deficit(-) surplus (+) (in MT)	Average Annual deficit of each of surveyed families.
25MT	8(-)	8.33
26MT	10(-)	0.40
15MT	7(+)	NIL
31MT	8(-)	0.28
30MT	5(-)	0.20
26MT	7(-)	0.27
17MT	4(+)	NIL
20MT	2(-)	0.09
16MT	4(-)	0.24
52MT	17(-)	0.350
258MT		

From the table above, it may be pointed out here that the annual yield of rice is 198 M. T. whereas the average consumption of 252 surveyed families is 258 M. T. per year. The average per year deficit of rice is 60 M. T. The average

deficit of per family is 0.023 M. T. so they have to buy rice from the local market at a very high price, which sometime is beyond to their buying capacity.

Daily labour :

Among the 252 surveyed families 34 families have no cultivatable land. The other 218 families have some land. Most of the adult members of their families are wage earners. Both men and women work as daily labourers in the agricultural fields or in the construction of huts or mud walled houses. The wages are generally fixed in accordance with the price of work. In the agricultural field the rate of wages is Rs. 25/- to 30/- per day with or without a midday meal. In case of construction or repair or maintenance work of houses it is Rs. 30/- to 35/- per day.

In the course of this survey, it was found that only families with large land holdings engage, daily rated labourers on their land. These large land holding families generally belong to Murasings and other tribal communities or the Bengalis. The Bengali traders also engage them on piece rate basis for other specific jobs.

Though their percentage is negligible, there are some Murasing people who cultivate land on the basis of sharing of crop. In their spare time they work as daily labourers. The other form of labour is Agri- contract labour for the whole year. Some rich Murasing families with large land holdings engage contract labourer from one to three years on Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 5,000/- per year in addition to food, lodging and cloths for agricultural work such as ploughing, horrowing, sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, cattle rearing etc. including Domestic works.

It was also found that some Murasing labourers were

engaged in forest plantation and road construction activities under the contractors. During the survey of has come to notice that they were engaged on daily wage basis, and sometime on piece rate. The rate of wages also varies i. e. for the male labourer it was Rs. 35/- and for the women Rs. 30/- per day for eight hours duty.

House Hold Industry :

In general the Murasings are experts in handicrafts and in making domestic and agricultural implements. They produce these articles with bamboo, cane and wood according to their family needs and sometime for selling. These articles are "TISHING" (to carry fire wood, roots), lunga (to carry food grains, vegetables or paddy from the field or to carry them to the market), TUKRI (to store food grains or any other things), MAIGOLA (to store rice or paddy), CHAKAM (ladder for use in the paddy field), JIYAHM (Mat for sitting purpose or to sleep), KICHIP (One kind of hand made fan) and other articles of domestic necessities. Since these articles are used by all communities, there is a good market for such articles. During survey it was seen that in most of the Murasings families, old men/women are engaged for producing such handicraft goods. On discussion with them it has come to notice that they are getting a very good return by selling these handicraft items e. g. Tishing @ Rs. 60/- per piece Langa @ Rs. 40/- to Rs. 50/- per piece, Tukri @ Rs. 3/- to 5/- per piece, Maigola @ Rs. 60/- to 75/- per piece, Jiyahm @ Rs. 15- 20/ - per piece depending on their sizes.

It is, however, a fact that although the Murasings do not produce these handicraft for selling or to earn their livelihood but some times they earn extra money by selling the surplus items in weekend markets. It was also learnt that when they need money for any purposes, they produce these handicraft

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goods. The capital required for producing these handicraft products is minimum but the labour to collect the raw materials is the maximum. Basket making would be another source of income because the raw materials used are readily available from the nearby forest areas. Most of the surveyed families also have typical loom and handmade spinning tools by which they produce cloth for their use and some time a marketable surplus.

Domestication of animals :

Once the Murasings were a nomadic tribe. They did not know the utility of rearing cattle. But as they settled down in a particular area or adopted plough cultivation they started to rear large numbers of cattle and at the same time other domestic animals and poultry birds except pig. At present, they get a very good return by selling fowls, ducks, eggs, goat, cow milk etc. It was found that most of the surveyed families rear a good number of poultry birds to earn extra money. They rear bullock and cow for plough cultivation and milk products. The cow dung is used as manure in the field and in the pond for pisciculture.

Distribution of live-stock population.

Name of the village surveyed	No. of families surveyed	No. of bullock	No. of cow	No. of Goat
1	2	3	4	5
Chanthing cherra	24	48	56	14
Taidum	25	62	58	18
Tarpadum	12	18	25	38
Ranikilla	29	46	75	59
Paticherra	32	70	85	61
Buragnat	26	53	66	18
Pudraipather	16	19	27	38
Mirza	23	49	56	40

Name of the village surveyed	No. of families surveyed	No. of bullock	No. of cow	No. of Goat
1	2	3	4	5
Tackmacherra	17	16	23	29
Taibandal	48	55	48	63
Total	252	417	519	416

No of pigs	Poultry birds	Buffalo	Others	No. of families have no live stock.
6	7	8	9	10
6	89	2	2	5
--	61	--	--	2
--	95	--	--	8
--	104	--	12	4
--	209	--	--	12
--	78	--	18	6
--	81	--	--	3
--	97	--	--	5
--	107	--	--	2
--	79	--	--	8
--	1,000	2	32	55

Analysing the table it may be seen that out of 252 surveyed families only 197 families possess cattle and poultry birds. They possess 519 milch cows, 417 bullocks, 416 goats 1000 poultry birds, 32 of other birds and animals. Only one family possess 2 buffaloes and 55 families do not possess any live stock.

Occupational status :

On the basis of collected data from the 252 surveyed families, the following categories of workers have been identified, e. g., land owner cultivators, Bargadars having small cultivatable land, agricultural labour-cum-Bargadar, daily labourers service holders and traders. Out of 252 surveyed

families the total population. The following table will give a complete picture of occupational status of the Murasing families surveyed in the ten villages -

Occupational Status

Name of the village surveyed	Total No. families surveyed	Total number of families members.	Total Nos family members engaged in different occupation	Own land cultivation.
1	2	3	4	5
Chanthing cherra	24	115	69	13
Tuidum	25	152	92	37
Tarpadum	12	62	37	14
Ranikilla	29	161	89	26
Paticherra	32	186	112	42
Buraghat	26	136	88	28
Badraipather	16	92	56	20
Mirza	23	124	77	18
Tackmacherra	17	85	52	21
Taibandal	48	279	189	53
Total	252	1392	861	282
Percentage	--	--	100%	32.75%

Bargader having small own cultivatable land	Agricultural labours & Baragadar.	Daily Labours and production of artison and handicraft items	Service	Trade
6	7	8	9	10
17	12	3	1	
15	8	31	1	1
9	2	6	3	3
24	10	21	5	3
24	12	28	4	2
15	14	22	--	1
8	9	17	4	--
13	22	34	--	3

Bargader having small own cultivatable land	Agricultural labours & Baragadar.	Daily Labours and production of artison and handicraft items	Service	Trade
6	7	8	9	10
107	14	7	--	
18	28	78	28	5
149	120	263	28	19
17.30%	13.94	30.55%	3.25%	2.21%

From the above table it is seen that out of a total working persons only 252 persons are engaged in the cultivation of their own land and their percentage stands at 32.75 among the total working persons. 149 persons work as Bargaders in addition to the work in the small plots of land possessed by them. And they constitute 17.30% of the total people. The Agricultural Labour-cum-Bargadars are 120 and their percentage is 13.94 of the total working persons. The total member of daily labourers are 263 which is 30.55% of the total numbers of workers. These 263 persons are also engaged in some sort of subsidiary occupation like production of handicrafts. Only 28 persons are known to be service holders and their percentage is only 3.25 of the total earning members of the ten surveyed villages. The rest 19 persons are engaged in different types of trades and their percentage is 2.21.

Income :

To measure the amount of income, specially of the tribal communities is a very difficult task. Because they are not able to give exact information in this respect. Moreover, they are afraid that if they convey the real income they will be deprived of the government assistance. Another point is that they do not have any fixed source of income. A lion's share of their income comes from agriculture. It is also a fact that they cannot

handle money like others. Very recently they are coming in the field of business. Earlier they used to produce things only for their own use and not for sale.

Even then, efforts have been made to assess their income on the basis of their statements and to some extent through observation of the annual production and consumption regarding the quantities of different crops they produced. At the same time income from other sources have also been taken into consideration to get a total picture of their income.

Income

Name of the village surveyed	Total number of families surveyed	Income upto Rs. 1000 pm.	Income upto Rs. 1500/- pm.
1	2	3	4
Chungthing cherra	24	9	6
Taidum	25	6	8
Tarpadum	12	5	1
Ranikilla	29	11	8
Paticherra	32	13	9
Buraghat	26	8	7
Badraipather	16	9	4
Mirza	23	7	6
Tackmacherra	27	6	4
Taibandal	48	18	11
Total	252	92	64

Income upto Rs. 2000/- p.m.	Income upto Rs. 2500/- p.m.	Income above Rs. 2500/-
5	6	7
5	2	2
5	2	4
--	3	3
6	3	1
5	3	2

Income upto Rs. 2000/- p.m.	Income upto Rs. 2500/- p.m.	Income above Rs. 2500/-
5	6	7
4	3	4
--	--	3
4	4	2
4	2	1
10	4	5
43	26	27

Nos of families Income above Rs. 2500=27(1071%)

Nos of families Income above Rs.2000=26(10.32%)

Nos of families Income above Rs. 1500=43(17.06%)

Nos of families Income above Rs.1000=64(25.40%)

Nos of families Income above Rs.1000=92(36.51%)

Average Income Group : 20.22%

How Income Group : 79. 78%

Analysing the table above it may be seen that out of 252 surveyed families the per family income of 92 families (36.51%) is upto Rs. 1000/- per month, of 64 families (25.40%) earn upto Rs 1500/- per month, of 43 families (17.06%) approximately earn upto Rs. 2000 per month and the rest 27 families (10.71%) earn above Rs. 2500/- per month.

On analysis it is also found that 79.78% of 252 families under this survey belongs to the low income group and the rest 20.22% may be considered as some what in better income group who usually do not face financial hardship of maintain their families. The table also shows that only 10.71% of the surveyed families are above the status of marginal framers as they have got larger holdings of land.

Expenditure :

The Murasings as a whole do not maintain any family budget. By nature they earn with one hand and spend with the other, They do not know the art of savings and spend lavishly

as and when they get money from any source. Their items of expenditure are mainly foodstuff, clothing. There is no provision for recreation of any sort, in their budget. As they do not take meat and other non-vegetarian foods their needs are not regards as expensive as those of other tribes of Tripura. They live from hand to mouth but lead a healthy life with peace, harmonee and faternity

The table below will show the expenditure :

Nos. of surveyed Families.	Average Monthly income of each family	Expenditure on food & related items	Cloth, Ornaments, social ceremony & religious Festival	Health care & Education	Agricultural Expenditure	Average monthly Surplus (+) or Deficit (-)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
252	Rs. 1,650/- (100%)	Rs. 1,155/- (70%)	Rs. 495/- (30%)	Rs. 198/- (12%)	Rs. 250/- (17%)	Rs. 448/- (-) (27%)

Average Income per family : Rs. 1,650/-

Average deficit per family : Rs. 448/-
(27%)

Average Annual Income per family : Rs. 19,800/-

Average Annual Expenditure per family : Rs. 25,175/-

Average Annual Deficit per family : Rs. 5,375/-

From the above table it may be seen that on different items they make some recurring expenditure for the maintaining their life style. It is seen from the table that the average monthly income of each surveyed family is Rs. 1650/- Per month and said amount is being spent for the purpose of food and related needs, clothing and ornaments, social ceremonies and guest entertainment, for agriculture implements and fertilizer, medicine, education and other un-specified needs. Details may be seen in the table above. The surveyed families have spent 70% of their monthly income on fooding and related needs 30% on clothing, ornaments, on social

ceremonies and guest entertainments, 17%, for agricultural implements and fertilizer 12% for medical and educational purpose. It is also observed that 27% deficit is still lies for mainting their families.

Indebtedness :- To meet the deficit in the budget, the Murasings, find no alternative than to take loan from different available sources/agencies. The important borrowing sources are village Mahajans (trader and money lender), relatives and rich people of their own community, non-tribal shop keepers, travelling traders. Sometimes they also take loan from the Co-operatives, Banks, Lamps and other government agencies.

The table below gives their indebttness pattern.

Indebtness Picture

Name of the surveyed	Total number of families surveyed	Total Nos. of borrowing families	Total amount of loan taken previous years.
1	2	3	4
Chungthing cherra	24	18	21.585
Taidum	25	21	18321
Tarpadum	12	3	5375
Ranikilla	29	16	10738
Paticherra	32	22	16309
Buraghat	26	14	5974
Badraipather	16	11	7331
Mirza	23	17	13796
Tackmacherra	27	12	9783
Taibandal	48	39	21132
Total	252	173	136344
Percentage Average	541.05	68.65%	788.11

Amount repaid	Interest paid per anum	Total rep amount of blance outstanding	Total No of families borrowes from the village mahajan
5	6	8	9
5,327	60.80%	16.258	10
78.56	36%	10.465	- 9
1234	36%	4,141	--
3239	60.100%	7499	7
5023	60.100%	11,286	13
743	60.100%	5231	8
2510	96%	4821	3
4679	60% to 100%	9117	6
2143	60% to 100%	7638	3
4978	60% to 100%	22154	15
37734	--	98610	74
218.11	--	570.00	42.77%

Total No. of families borrowes from the relatives and friend circle.	No. of Families borrowed from the cooperative/Bank Govt. Agency	Total No of families borrowed from the Travelling purchaser (Dalal)
10	11	12
7	--	1
8	1	3
2	1	--
8	--	1
6	2	1
3	--	3
5	1	2
7	2	2
5	2	2
17	3	4
68	12	19
39.31%	6.94%	10.94%

From the above table to may seen that 173 Murasing

families out of 252 families surveyed, have taken loan of different nature and their percentage stands at 68.65%. An amount of Rs 1,36,344 only is the total loan of 252 families for the last year and the average amount of loan per family is Rs 37.73 only i.e. the average repayment by each family is Rs 218.11 only. The interest paid by the borrowing families ranges from 36% to 100% per year. The outstanding balance of the loan amount of total surveyed families is Rs. 98,620/- and the average outstanding balance of the each of the surveyed families is Rs 570/- only.

Analysing the sources of loan it has been found that out of 173 borrowing families 74 families (42.77%) have taken loan from the village Mahajan, 68 families(39.31%) borrowed from friends and relatives, 12 families (6.94%) borrowed from banks and co-operative societies and the rest 19 families (10.98%) from the visiting purchasers i.e. the persons who visit Murasing villages to purchase different agricultural products, domestic animals, poultry birds etc. These people generally advance money to the Murasings during the off agricultural season for future buying of crops and domestic animals etc.

Utilisation of loan amount :-

The nature of indebtedness among the Murasings and the sources of their loan has already been discussed. To have a detailed idea of the utilisation of the loan amount, the following table which gives the data collected from the 252 Murasing families may be useful consulted.

Utilization of Loan Amount

Name of the villae of surveyed	Total Nos. of surveyed families	Total Nos. of borrowing families	Food surveyed Cloth & Domestic estic utensil
1	2	3	4
Chungthing cherra	24	218	7
Tarpadum	25	21	5
Ranikilla	12	3	--

Name of the villae of surveyed	Total Nos. of surveyed families	Total Nos. of borrowing families	Food surveyed Cloth & Domestic estic utensil
1	2	3	4
Paticherra	29	16	6
Buraghat	32	22	9
Badraipather	26	14	4
Mirza	16	11	3
Tackmacherra	23	17	5
Taibandal	48	39	13
Total	252	173	54
Percentage	--	100%	31.21%

Marriage social ceremonies and other rituals	Treatment of family members	Construction of hut & purchase of land property	Religious tour outside Tripura.
5	6	7	8
5	2	--	--
4	1	2	--
--	--	--	1
3	2	1	1
5	3	1	1
3	1	2	--
2	2	1	--
3	3	--	2
6	4	4	5
34	20	12	9
19.65%	11.59%	6.94%	5.20%

Repayment of existing loan	purchase of agri. implements & fertiliser etc.	Purchase of bullock & poultry birds
9	10	11
--	2	1
3	4	2
1	--	1

Repayment of existing loan	purchase of agri. implements & fertiliser etc.	Purchase of bullock & poultry birds
9	10	11
2	--	1
2	--	1
1	2	1
1	2	--
2	--	2
4	2	1
20	14	10
11.56%	8.09%	5.70%

From the table above it is found that out of 252 families 173 have taken loan different amount for different purposes. Out of 173 borrowing families 54(31.21%) families utilised their loan amount for purchasing food grains,, cloth and domestic utensils 34 families (19.65%) for the purpose of marriage, social ceremonies and other rituals, 20 families (11.56%) for the treatment of their family members, 12 (9.94%) for construction of huts and to purchase land property, 9 families (5.20%) for the purpose of pilgrimages out side Tripura to Gaya, Varanasi, Brindavan, Nabadwip and other holy places on India, 20 families (11.50%) have utilised the loan amount for the purpose of repayment of their outstanding loan, 14 families (0.09%) to purchase agricultural implements and fertiliser and the rest 10 families (5.70%) for purchasing of bullock, goat and poultry birds.

Beside Murasings take loan from the Mahajan with an intension to repay the same after harvesting of paddy and other cash crops but in fact, it is seen that they could never repay their loan amount in full, because the yield was not sufficient for their needs even. Another vital point is that they are to pay a very high interest which makes the repayment of the principal sum never possible and the poor Murasings are drawn to the

perpetual indebtedness to the Mahajans and Jotedars. It is however fact that in the recent past this position changed due to introduction of Banking System in tulamura.

Economic Consciousness:-

The entire economic structure of the Murasings dependent on agricultural products. In general, the Murasings have a very poor knowledge about the improved method of cultivation and they do not have any economic planning. They buy everything necessary or otherwise when they have money. They even sell their valuable things to buy something that catches their fancy. In fact, there is insystematic planning of economic activities. It will be found that there are anomalies in their family budget which can easily be set at right through proper economic planning. This happens because of lack of farsightedness, and due to literacy and traditional habits.

Being agriculturists, the income of the Murasings is mostly in kinds. The livestock may also be a very good source of income they rear goat, cow bullock and poultry birds like fowl, pigeons, ducks etc. But the middle men usually advance them money and procure food grains, vegetables, cash crops and other domestic animals like goats, cow, bullock and other poultry birds at a very low price.

The younger generations of the Murasings are, however, found to be more or less aware of these problems and are forming a habit of leaving their traditional social and economic activities and are diverting to other areas of jobs and most of them expressed their interest in setting up small business for producing handicrafts alongwith handloom goods. Some also were interested in pisci-culture and rubber plantation on their land. Those who are agriculturists are now producing various crops than the customary food grains. Another point is that they do not fully depend on village Mahajans for agricultural

and other purposes of loan but depend on the bank and other government credit agencies. They also maintain a regular contact with Block Head Quarters to have information regarding the facilities that may be available to them.

Developmental Needs :-

Agriculture :- Tripura possesses an immense potential for the development of agriculture. But there are some unavoidable problems in the way of agricultural development. The main obstacle is undoubtedly the practice of Jhum cultivation. Jhum is surely an uneconomic and wasteful way of cultivation and its per unit production is very low. This system is actually affecting the socio-economic condition of the tribal people.

The government, of course, is allotting land to them for settlement and providing other facilities for changing their way of economic life from shifting cultivation to settled cultivation. But this problem could not be solved fully. It is to be mentioned here that the tribals specially the Murasings have the attitude to change their method of cultivation and most of them have adopted plough cultivation. But following factors are hindering the development of agriculture.

1. Lack of ununiform soil condition;
2. Variation of agro-climatic condition;
3. Absence of proper irrigation facilities;
4. Want of modern agricultural implements and fertilize;
5. Uncertain condition of climate i.e. flood, delayed, insufficient, rain, drought etc.
6. Lack of credit facilities;
7. Lack of storage facilities;
8. Inadequate marketing facilities.

In general the soil of Tripura belongs to red soil group

and to a certain extent this is loose, lateritic and gravelly. The investigated areas also belong to this type to some extent. The soil of the high tillas and high land can not hold water, for which fertility of land is very poor. In Ranikilla Colony, Murasings are selling off their homestead land for this reason and the received from settlement schemes. Therefore, it may be mentioned here that the condition of soil have an intimate relation with the tribal economic life.

The Murasing shows little interest in growing fruits and vegetables though the land is capable of producing them. The Murasings, may be encouraged to produce bananas, pineapples, jack-fruits, coconuts, betel-leaf, tobacco etc., so that they can earn some additional income for their livelihood. Jute and other cash crops profitably be grown in Ranikilla, Paticharri, Tarpadum, Mirza and Taidum. In the low lying areas paddy may also be cultivated on a large scale. In Mirza and Taibandal, cotton, ginger and turmeric may also be grown as cash crops. In Patichhari on low tillas and slopes new varieties of crops may be introduced. In the slopes the cultivation of coconut as a high yielding cash crop will be profitable. It is also repeated that owing to inadequate supply of fertilizer and seeds in time they are facing problems.

The absence of irrigation facilities is another hindrance for cultivation. During field investigation it was reported by the Murasings that due to the absence of irrigation facilities they could not cultivate Boro Paddy and other Rabi crops. Therefore, deep tube wells will be helpful in Mirza, Ranikilla and Taibandal villages.

The absence of proper marketing facilities also retards the development of agriculture. Commodities of various nature may be produced by the Murasings but they must have the feeling that they are getting a very good return from the market. The absence of development of transportation system and lack

of links with motorable road also create problems for which travelling purchasers and middle men are getting the benefits of their production. Moreover, the Murasings do not get remunerative prices for their crops in the market owing to the operation of the travelling buyers.

Assistance therefore, have to be provided to them by allotting plain land, bullocks and high yielding seeds, plants, poultry birds, domestic animals and also agricultural implements and fertilizer so that their economic conditions may improve. These facilities should be given to the Murasings residing mainly in Taibandal, Ranikilla and Patichhari areas.

Animal Husbandry :-

Though it was found that Murasings do not eat meat of any kind, they have taken to rearing of birds and livestock in large numbers to improve their economic condition. They normally keep milch cows, bullocks, goat and poultry birds. Co-operative farms may be set-up with high yielding crossbreed cattles, subsidy may be given to them by the government so that they may start poultry farming and cattle farming to earn extra income through selling milk, birds and eggs etc.

Handicrafts :-

Regarding handicrafts and basketry it may be said that this may be the only other way to earn a living for the families which have no land of their own or have a very small holding. The government may encourage this community through proper training in handicrafts and busketry. Co-operatives and the private sectors may also come forward to set up village level handicrafts workshops and train the Murasing people in various handicrafts so as to make them efficient in producing

different items with modern implements to develop their economic condition.

Education :-

Without education no society can progress. The tribal people in general are the section of people among whom the rate of literacy is negligible. From the collected data and through observation, it has been noticed that the inadequate number of primary, middle and High Schools in the surveyed areas is the reason of this low rate literacy among the Murasings. Moreover, stagnation and dropout of school going children after class VIII or below class VIII is also a major problem. It is felt that at least two residential Ashram type Schools (Class 1 to XII) one in Taibandal and the other in Patichhari areas will help to spread of education and literacy rate among the Murasings. Other facilities like stipend, school dress, text books, mid-day-meal, merit scholarship, educational tour may be provided to create interest among the Murasing children in education. Likewise interest in the guardians and other aged persons is to be infused through group discussions, video films and other media so that they take proper step to educate their children. Adult literacy programme is to be extended in the surveyed villages to provide nonformal education to the elderly people.

Health

The tribal people generally believe in folk medicine, aministic rituals and chants. Quacks also play the role of a doctor in the interior tribal villages. Therefore, care must be taken to extend medical facilities to interior Murasing Para and Taibandal. It is reported that doctors under Primitive Group Programme (P.G.P). sometimes visits and provide medicine to them. Though there is a dispensary in Tulamura under the administrative control of the District Hospital, South Tripura,

Yet most of the time tribal people do not get medicine or other clinical facilities. So this dispensary may be upgraded to a Primary Health Centre for the benefit of the local tribal people.

Suggestion :-

An integrated man power planning is required as a measure of social and economic development to overcome the poor infrastructural conditions of the Murasing villages e.g. Patichari, Ranikilla, Suknachrra, Haekrishna Murasing Para, Taibandal. In addition, effective planning is also necessary considering the different nature of topographic conditions and cultural peculiarities of the community. Attention is to be given towards the development of transport and communication system, credit and marketing facilities. In agricultural, plants and fertilizer are to be provided in time so that they may be encouraged are to be provided in time so that they may be encouraged to give up their traditional method of cultivation (Jhooming) and adopt the modern and scientific system of agriculture, horticulture and live stock rearing.

The programme of manpower planning should therefore be emphasised for the creation of an appropriate environment to introduce economically improved agricultural practices and agriculture based small scale industries so that Murasings could be brought into the light of developmental efforts.

In this regard credit institutions like banks, co-operatives, welfare agencies, government and semi-government organisations have a vital to play. They should extend their helping hand for the uplift of these people.

CHAPTER - IV

Social Life

Family :-

The Murasing family consists of father, mother and children. By nature the Murasings are very simple, peaceful and religious minded. Their family is bounded by the religious code imposed by the 'Vaishnab Guru' They strictly follow the instructions/guidance of the elderly persons of their family. The father is recognised as the head of the family. The women in the family generally work throughout the day, collecting fuel wood, drawing water, cleaning utensils, cooking meals and looking after the children. The daughters help their mother in the domestic work, go to school and also look after younger sisters and brothers.



A Murasing Family

The adult male member of the family generally work in the field to produce paddy and other marketable crops. The sons help them. Besides, the father as the head of the family, performs some other duties for maintaining the family customs and Vaishnab rituals and also teaches other members of the family the Vaishnab principles. It is observed that most of the surveyed families do not have the minimum standard of life. Yet they are living happily with great emotional attachment with each of them in the family.

Dress and Ornaments :-

There is no marked variation in dress and ornaments between the Murasing Community and the Tripuris or the Noatias. Most Murashing children below 5 years of age do not usually wear any cloth. Every adult male wear a piece of cloth (Maximum 2.5 yards) around the waist and occasionally wear a shirt on the upper part of the body when they visit a government office or market or attend family festivals. The women wear two pieces of cloth, (local name Riya & Pasra) , which are generally weven by them. The Riya freast cloth and pasra is worm from waist below. They donot use shoes except on special occassions.

The Murasing women are fond of ornaments and flowers like other tribal women in Tripura. After having their 'Diksha' from the Vaishnab Gura (initiation to vaishnabism) they strictly follow the instructions/guidance of the Guru. The women folk give up their ornaments and use only tulsimala on the neck and tilak on the neck forehead and other parts of the body according to Vaishnab principles. The female members use only Jhumka (earring) in the ears and Kharu on the legs. In the past they used ornaments made of pure silver. But now-a-days they wear imitation ornaments. Girls from well-to-do families use ornaments made of gold. Dresses and ornaments are undergoing changes now-a-days.

Food and Drinks :-

The Murasing Community following Vaishnavism observes some restrictions on food drinks. Their primary food consist of rice, vegetable, tender bamboo shoots, wild roots etc. They do not take meat, fish , onion, musar dal and any non -vegetarian food. But now-a-days it is not uncommon to see them taking fish, dry fish, musar dal and other non - vegetarian food. Even then they do not eat meat of any kind.

Murasings in general do not consume liquor, rice beer or other alcoholic drinks. But both men and women smoke. At present some young person are found to eat meat and take alcoholic drinks.

Utensils :-

Murasings use aluminium utensils for their domestic purpose. They also use various types of earthen pots and bamboo made baskets. The aluminium utensils are jug, pitcher, bowl etc. Except a few well-to-do families most of them use earthen pots for cooking rice and curry. The cooked food generally served on banana leaves, aluminium or brass dishes, spoons ladle made of bamboo or aluminium are also used. Drinking water is generally stored in the earthen pitchers (Kalas). As for house hold furniture, most of the families use Machang (bedstead made of bamboo). A few of them also sleep on the floor and rarely use wooden bedstead. Now-a-days they use chair, table, almirah etc. Other than furniture, Radio, tape recorder, lighter fountain pen, watches, modern dresses, bed covers/ sheets and other modern domestic appliances are also used by them according to their financial capacity.

Clan :-

The Murasing Community may be divided into four



major groups
i) Murasings,
ii) Jaganathas,
iii) Kalachand-
nds, iv) tota-
ram. All these
are clans of
the Murasing
Community
w h i c h
originated
from four
V a i s h n a b
leaders or
'Gurus'. These
V a i s h n a b
leaders are
originally of
different tribal
communities
e.g. Jamatia,
Tripuri and

Noatia. But practically when they embraced Vaishnabism after the contact with Pitambar Goswami of "NabadwipDham" they changed their clan name. And the Vaishnab leaders began to use the title of Goswami at the end of their names. In this regard it may be mentioned here that Sri Balichand Goswami is the first Vaishnab Guru of Murasing Community. Murasing is the dominating clan of these four group which are as follows :-

(I) (Balaichand) Murasing. (II) Jaganatha group (III) totaram group (IV) Kalachand group. Next importance after the Murasings are the Kalachandis.

The views of Kalachand group have certain influence

after the Murasing clan. Community chieftainship generally passes through Murasing clan. In matrimonial alliance the Murasing clan is preferred. Yet it is a fact that there is no restriction for such relationship with other two clans. Murasing clan uses the Goswami title (Vaishnab Guru) to indicate of the clan. Some times it is seen that a Vaishnab leader transfers his power and prestiges to his nearest disciple who belongs to the Murasing clan.

The kinship terminology may be classified from the existence of Murasing's family organisation i.e. relative under the same blood and same tree. Murasing kinship relation may be observed from the father's two ascending and two descending generation. They are explained as 'A man's father's and his brother's and their children, his father and father's brother's and their grand children, From the mother's kinship relation may also be traced out from the relation, as 'Mother's father, father's mother, mother's mother father's sister, mother, her sister and brother, mother's sister's husband etc.

Thus it may be referred that the kinship relation of Murasing community specified under agnates and affines. The relations as mentioned above under agnates and affines may also be traced out form of address used by the Murasing Community among the themselves and with the other tribal community

Relation	Bengali	Murasing	Reang
Father's Father's father	} Barababa	Rachi	Ayaong.
Mother's Mother's Mother			

Father's Father	Thakurda	Achu	Achu
Mother's Mother	Thakurma	Achuma	Achuo.
Father	Baba, Babu	Baba	Apa.
Mother	Ma	Aa-mo	Amo.
Mother's elder brother	Mama	Aiumg/mama	Aiung.
Father elder sister's			
Husband	Pisha	Aing	Aiung.
Mother's elder			
sister	Masi	Atoi	Atoi.
Father younger			
brother	Kaka	Kaka	Mama.
Elder brother	Dada	Dadakater.	Atakatar.
Younger brother	Chotovai	Datrkadhu	Faiyong.
Elder brother's			
wife	Baudi	Bachai	Bachai.
Wife	Bau/Stri	Nik	Hik.
Husband	Swami	Saidusang	Sai.
Wife's younger			
sister	Shali	Prangjuk	Pruranuk.
Wife's younger			
brother	Shala	Prang	Prang
Son's wife	Bauma	Aamijoka	Hamyao.
Daughter's			
husband	Jamai	Chamarisa	Chamarai.
Grand child	Nati	Shuk	Shuk.
Great grand			
child	Panti	Ayansa	Mushuk

From the above, it may be seen that Murasing social structure and kinship pattern do not exist beyond the relations of their own.

Kinship Behavior & Social Norm :-

The Murasing family is primarily a joint family. Murasing children are grown up as the children of the joint

family. The father's obligations to his son and the family are in socio-economic, moral and religious affairs. He has to teach his son/sons how to do plough cultivation, shifting cultivation and other forms of domestic work like tending the cattle, building houses etc. He is also responsible for his sons training in the families traditional activities, moral and religious ritual and rites. Reciprocally the sons also have some moral obligations to their father and the family such as looking after them in their old age. To the son his father is a symbol of idealised divinity whose order is the law. The Murasings have respect for age and authority. The primary relationship between the husband and wife is based on socio-economic co-operation and peaceful co-existence for continuing clan line. After the birth of a child the interpersonal relationships between the husband and the wife become closer.

The children being the objects of their interest, both of the parents try to adjust themselves to the needs of their offspring. They take decisions regarding the family, land, education, health and the marriage of their children together.

The relationship between the children and their cousin is very sweet. The relation of the wife with the husband's elder brother is of avoidance. If an elder brother touches his younger brother's wife he would be fined by the council of Vaishnab leaders. The relation with the elder brother's wife is very sweet. A woman may not be on joking relation with her younger sister's husband and the husband's elder sister as these relations are respectable to her.

Inter-Ethnic Relationship :

The Murasings live with various communities, e. g., Bengali, Hindus and Muslims and other tribal communities as their neighbours. The Murasings came in contact with the Bengalis for the first time extensively after they embraced

Vaishnavism. Earlier their contact with the Bengalis were mainly with the Brahmin Community who used to perform their puja. The Brahmins used to prepare their horoscope also Murasings at that time engaged the Bengali refugees of different castes namely Namasudra, Doppa, Jalia, Jogi, and others for agricultural duties sometimes on payment and sometimes on sharecropping basis.

The Murasings do not use a *Hokkah* used by Namasudra. They generally participate in the marriage and other festivals of neighbouring Bengalis but do not take any non-vegetarian food there. They also participate in the 'Kirtans' (worship) in the house of their Bengali neighbours. They have adopted the worship of 'Sani' and 'Satyanarayan' as a result of the contact with the Bengali refugees.

Relations with the Muslims :

The relation with the Muslims is an interesting one. The Muslims were quite familiar to Murasings as they had frequent occasion of contact with them and visits to many places in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). But after their conversion they do not allow Muslim to enter in to their dwelling house or to use the same 'Hukkah' or glass for drinking water. They employ Muslims only as agricultural labourers on payment or share basis. They buy vegetable and agricultural implements from the Muslims. They acquired the knowledge of making many house hold goods from the Muslims.

Relation with other Tribal :

The relations of the Murasings with the other tribes like the Tripuris the Jamatias and the Noatias are very good because they think that these three tribes belongs to the same racial stock. They usually form matrimonial alliances with the Tripuri, Noatia and the Jamatia even though they are not the followers

of Vaishnavism. The Tripuri, the Noatias and the jamatias follow the shakta cult. They only engage the Mogs and the Chakma in their agricultural field as labourers and sometimes the Mogs to treat their children from illness. They do not allow the Mogs to enter their dwelling huts though they enter the houses of Moghs. They do not eat any food prepared by a the Mogs. But they used the same Hukkah by changing its water. The Halam who are of Kuki origin are not looked down upon like Muslims or the Moghs. Their favourable attitudes towards the Halams may be seen from their co-operation and peaceful co-existence in the same habitat.

The inter ethnic relation does not have any effect on their economic transactions with different castes and communities. From market they regularly buy salt, chilli, vegetables, agricultural implements, oil, matches, cloth, tobacco umbrella, soap, paddy, cotton, jute or sell their marketable produce to any person irrespective of castes and communities who agree to pay for them suitably.

Women in the family :

In the Murasing community women have an important role as mother, wife, sister and daughter. Women in the Murasing family work for the welfare of the family from dawn till dusk in the work of cleaning utensils, fetching drinking water, collecting fireweed, cooking food, bringing up children, looking after the cattle, and domestic animals, observance of religious ritual and rites. As a house wife a Murasing women, in addition to the above chores, assisting in Jhuming, storing of food grains paddy, jute etc. and help in the marketing of these goods, keeping record of family expenditure etc. also fall under her duties. The women also maintain social relations with other relatives.

The elderly women in the family is respected like the

elderly male members. In the community the women, though not permitted to join in the meeting of the social council, participate in the village festivals, devotional kirtan (song) etc. The Murasing women are happy members of the family.

Marriage & Marriage rituals :

One is not permitted to marry with in the following relations

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Father's | Brother's | daughter. |
| 2. Father's | sister's | daughter |
| 3. Mother's | brother's | daughter. |
| 4. Mother's | sister's | daughter. |

The female kin preferred for the marriage is generally next to two ascending and descending generations. In the paternal side the following kins are preferred.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|------------|----------------------|
| 1. Father's | Father's | daughter's | Son's daughter |
| 2. Father's | Father's | daughter's | daughter's daughter. |
| 3. Father's | Sister's | daughter's | daughter. |
| 4. Father's | brother's | daughter's | daughter. |

In the same way on the mother's line the following kins are preferred.

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1. Mother's | sister's | Son's | daughter |
| 2. Mother's | brother's | Son's | daughter. |
| 3. Mother's | Father's | brother's sons | daughter. |
| 4. Mother's | daughter's | son's | daughter. |

Age of Marriage :-

The age of marriage for the girls among the Murasing is generally take place between 14 and 18 years and 20 and 25 years for the boys. The Murasing girls generally menstruated at the age of 12 to 14 years. It is then the parents begin to think about the arrangement of their daughter's marriage. Very few

females remain unmarried till 20 and hardly any reach the age of 25 before getting married.

Form of marriage :

There are two types of social marriage in Murasing Community.

(A) Marriage by Elopement :

This marriage is generally negotiated by the 'Bachai' (wife of elder brother). The negotiator is called 'Garinda'. The marriage takes place if the girl agrees to go to the house of the groom willingly. At first the boy chooses his life partner without knowledge of the girl's parents. If the boy decides to take the girls as his wife, he tells his elder brother's wife (Bachai) i. e. 'Garinda' about it and requests her to help him to get the girl. The 'Garinda' jokingly demands cash or kinds from the boy for her help. The Garinda then goes to the girls house and tries to convince the girl by telling her about all, the good qualities and financial soundness of the boy. She also promises to provide her ornaments. If the girl is convinced then the Garinda fixes up a date and informs the boy to take the girl away from her parent's house. On the fixed day, in the evening the boy and his friends wait in any lonely place decided earlier near the house of the girl. The Garinda then goes to the girl's house and comes out with her. On the way the Garinda makes it sure that the girl's future life would be happy. If the role of the Garinda is performed by the girls elder brother's wife, she sees them off to some distance from the house. Then the boy goes to his house with the girl and tells his parents to accept them as a husband and wife. If the parents agree, they keep the girl separate, usually along with the younger sister of the boy for the night.

Next morning, the father of the bridegroom sends one or

two of his kins to the bride's house to inform her father that his daughter is staying in the boy's house and to request him to give his daughter in marriage to boy. If the father of the girl agrees he invites the parents of the boy to his house.. The parents with their relatives and the Mahanta Maharaja go to the bride's house.

The parents of the girl go to the boy's house with out any sweet, betel nut, betel leaf or any other thing. The father of the boy then arranges a feast for the parents of the girl. The parents of the girl generally goes to the boy's house to assess the capacity of the boy if he would be able to provide food, clothes for the girl and if she will be happy in the proposed marriage. They also collect information about the boy's landed property or his share in his father's properties. The parents of the girl also collect information about any sort of hereditary disease or abnormalities in the boy's family line. If they find it good in every respect, they assure the boy's father that this marriage may take place. The father of the boy then asks the parents of the girl generally demand upto Rs. 301/-. But the amount is negotiable and can be adjusted according to the financial capabilities of boy's parents.

Sungkatar (Final word) :

The word 'sungkatar' means the final word in the Murasing language. For the final discussion and to fix-up the date and time of the marriage, the father of the girl invites the parents of the boy and their relatives to his house. The boy's father in company of others then visits the house of the bride for the final word. He takes good quantity of batasa, sandesh, Muri, betel leaf, betel nut and a piece of new cloth for the girl's father. The parents of the girl and other neighbours assemble in the girl's house. The girl's father announces the bride price. Nowadays the minimum bride-price is generally Rupees one thousand. On mutual agreement the actual date an time of

marriage is fixed as per Hindu custom by consulting the almanac and by taking into account the vaishnab views in such matter.

On the marriage day, the bride is called back from the bridegrooms house. The marriage ritual is performed in front of the 'Mahanta Maharaj', the vaishnab gurus of each clan, Relatives and neighbours are invited.

Next day, the bride comes back with the bridegroom to other father-in-law's house. Earlier, there was custom of the "groom worker" in the bride's house for three years as a free labourer.

Marriage by Negotiation :

This type of marriage is widely prevalent among the Murasings. Initiative is generally taken from boy's side. If the father of the boy knows of any eligible teen-aged girl and if the clanship and kinship restriction do not stand in any way, if the health of the girl is good, he send his nearest kin with the proposal to the girl's father. If the negotiation is fruitful, the parents of the girl is invited to the boys house. This is known as 'Sindur Shilani'. In Bengali this ritual is called 'Ashirbad' Or 'Manglacharan'.

Among the Murasing Community the bride may be taken from her father's house with or with out notice. If the bride's father agrees, the bride will be taken openly. In this case bride's father arranges a big feast for 50 to 60 persons in his house. But if the father of the bride is poor or if he confesses his inability for such a feast the father of the bride tells the father of the boy to take the date is fixed and the 'Bachai' (the sister in law) of the girl sees the girl sees the girl off in the evening with out notice to the neighbours and her kins. The brother-in-law of the boy then takes over the girl from the 'Bachai' of the girl and on the way to bride-groom's house he makes jokes

with her on the basis of new relationship. But if the boy's father agrees to arrange the marriage, on the next day the bride is again taken back to her father's house in a "Palki", (palanquin) and then the actual marriage ritual is performed in the bride's house. Sometimes the marriage may also be solemnised by the father of the bride-groom after a few days depending on his financial condition. But it is a convention of the brides people to go to the house of the bride's father the next morning with sweets, pan, betel nut, khai to inform him that his daughter is in their house :

Nini Nasajoke Faribuchaya
Shult Bachaiya Machhula chaiya
Kaham Kurumna
Amukani (father's name of the boy) Busa.

Bachhalani Nog Chasgaikha.
Which means,
Oh; uncle;

(Name of the father of the boy) son has taken your daughter for marriage. She has not been eaten by a tiger or she did not commit suicide or has not been punished by others.

One thing here is to be noted : If the father of the boy is financially stable he may suggest and fix up the date of marriage in front of the neighbours and relations of the girl. In that case the father of the boy bear all the expenses. The father of the boy' says "Aung-khaigaitilanglya-Aung Humajoknu Tilasgni" (I will bear all the expenses of the marriage. The marriage should take place in my house).

Marriage Ritual :

On the morning of the day of marriage, a marriage stage is generally erected with special bamboos, coloured papers, banana and mango leaves as is done by the Tripuris in front of

the "Radha Krishna Temple" of "Tulshi Mandir". The bride and the bride-groom keeps fast on the day of the marriage. The invited guests attend a feast at noon. In the evening the fathers, mother and neighbours of the bride and other invited guests come to the grooms house. The bride-groom's father receive them cordially and conducts them to seats close to the marriage stage. Then the brother-in-law and sister (distant relation) of the bride groom fetch water in two jars from the nearby pond or stream for the bath of bride and bride-groom before and after the marriage ritual. The carrier of the water should not be a widow or widower. On the yard of the house two wooden seats are kept and on one of them the bride-groom sits. On a bamboo mat, paddy, durba grass, banana, till oil, honey inceuse sticks etc. are placed and tightly covered with two pieces new cloth. They represent the bride and the groom. The bride is then taken for the marriage ritual, luxuriously dressed with ornaments, flower garland and garland of tulshi. The ornaments are boloi (for the fore arm), Oyzkhum (ear ring), Jumka (ear ornament), Toiya (for ear), Nakful bali (for the nose), Senganang (a small stick for hair dressing). The priest (Mahanta Maharaj) first guides the bride and bride-groom to the "Radha Krishna Temple" or Tulshi tala (Tulshi bush). After taking oath and bowing infront of Tulshi plant they come back and sit on two wooden platform face to face. The Mahanta Maharaj then convert them into dedicated Vaishnab and give the "Dishkha" uttering "Mantras" in the ears of the bride and bride-groom one by one and prays to God for their over lasting and peaceful conjugal life. After that the priest knots the two corner of cloths worn by the bride & bridegroom as a symbol of conjugal bond. And finally Mahanta Maharaj instruct to the exchange of tulsi garland between the bride and the groom.

Then the priest (Mahanta maharaj) places on a banana leaf cotton, muri, mustard oil (thak), a piece of stone (kalang) etc. The bride and bride-groom then sit side by side and the

priest utters the following words and blesses the couple :

1) "Haiya Chaiya Balai bathai, Paschim Gala Tangadi" -
Which means Oh God, please give the couple a long
and a healthy and diseases free life.

2. Halong Toi Aayuk Langdi.
Halong Toi Aayuk Langdi

Which means you to receive life as long as that of a
stone.

3. Ranganang Angoi
Changanang Augoi Kashamklai Tongadi.

Which means - You two may get wealth, prosperity and
prestige in life.

The priest then pours water from the jar on the head of
the bride-groom and the water flows down from the head of
the bride-groom the bride. Then all the guardians and important
relatives follow the priest. After they have completed the ritual,
the relatives like brother-in-law, sister-in-law and others start
joking with the bride and bride groom.

At last the priest take the bride and the groom before the
Temple and chants some mantras in front of the God and
Goddess according to Vaishnav Principle and then declare the
end of the ceremony.

On that night the bride and bride-groom sleep separately.
On the next morning the kins and relatives are invited to a
feast in which the bride's people and relatives also join. This
occasion is called "Pantha" or "Boubhat". In the feast only
vegetarian dishes are served.

Fung Bali :

ON the next day (the third day after marriage) another

feast in held for the Vaishnab leaders of each clan like "Mahanta Maharaj" and other devoted Vaishnabs. Here also only vegetarian dishes are served.

When the feast in over, the bride's parent and their associates get ready for departure from the son-in-laws house. At the time of departure the father of the bride calls his son-in-law and placing the hand of his daughter on the hand of the son-in-law says :

"Babu-nini-thani Aui Angsa
Jogna nini eyag tisai Rukha
Haiyu na khama
Khlayaidi gun na
Koham Kolalaidi
Kaham Kurang Nu Tongadi".

(Oh, Son-in-law, I am putting my affectionate daughter under your control. Please do not forget to tell others the good qualities of my daughter and to forgive her faults, if any. May God bless you two)

Then the bride and bride-groom bow-down to the bride's father and mother and the other seniors. They also advise the son-in-law and the daughter-in-law to go by the tenets of Vaishnab principles.

Love Marriage :

This type of marriage though not permitted by the society still it is not looked down upon by the community. Love marriage except between direct blood relations frequently take place among the Murasings. Love marriage with other tribal communities are also prevalent in their community. After observing certain rituals the bride and bride-groom are given social recognition.

Child marriage is not permitted in this community. The

age of marriage is generally between 16 and 18 years for the girls and 22 and 25 years for the boys. Marriage does not take place only in the Bengali months of Chaitra, Bharda and Poush.

Inter-Caste Marriage

Previously inter-caste marriage was uncommon in the Murasing community and in the case of such marriage heavy fine was imposed on the couple by the village council and they were not given social recognition.

But now-a-days inter-caste marriage is permitted if the bride and bride-groom are converted to Vaishnabism, after observing certain rituals for purification and "Vaishnab Bhujan" (Community feast) is thrown. It is interesting to note here that Murasing community does not enter into marriage alliance with other community. Yet they may sometimes arrange marriage with the sons/daughters of the Noatia and Tripuris but never with the Jamatias and other tribal and non tribale communities in ordinary condition. I found during the survey that one Sri Nityananda Murasing of Tulamura has got married to a Scheduled caste (Das Community) Bengali girl and had been leading a peaceful conjugal life for the least 12 years.

CHAPTER - V

Religious rites and Practices

Birth Ritual :

Like other tribal and non-tribal communities the Murasings also observe rituals before and after a child is born in their family. Before the delivery a separate hut is constructed for the mother and her would be new born baby. This system may also be found in other tribal and non-tribal communities. After delivery the following rituals are generally observed by the Murasings.

ABURSUI (Ritual for Purification) :-

This ritual is performed by the Murasing Community on the seventh day from the day of the birth of the child. On the morning of that auspicious day, the head of the baby is shaved and his fingers nails and toenails are also trimmed. The mother takes bath in the nearby river or charra. The Mahanta Maharaj chants mantras. On the bank of the river or the charra Toini sumru (goddess of water) is worshipped by Mahanta Maharaj. To propitiate this goddess, banana, batasa (Suger Cake) and fruits are offered. After observing this ritual the mother carrying the new born baby came back with the other family men and the Mahanta and other sit in front of the Hari Temple (Temple of Lord Krishna or Sri Chaitanya Bhagaban). In the yard of the temple a Kirtan (devotional song) is sung. The Mahanta Maharaj puts a tulsi garland around the neck of the

baby and sprinkle water on him with a tulsi leaf chanting mantras for the purification, welfare and good health of the new born baby. In the evening, five lamps are lighted by the grandmother or the grand father of the new born baby in front of the house and in the court-yard of the house and the naming ceremony performed. On that occasion amongst the assembled vaishnabs and other guests. After 30 days another ritual is performed for the purification of the mother when the mother is allowed to live in the main dwelling hut. This ritual among Bengali is known as "Suraj Darshan" (Ha-Karimani). That is on that day, the new born baby also become pure and is treated as a Vaishnab. During these 30 days the mother is given complete rest from cooking, collecting fire wood and other domestic chores.

Belief in Spirits :

The Murasings believe in spirits and deities, like other tribals in Tripura. The Murasing deities are many in numbers. Some of them are worshipped regularly through different rituals while others are unspecified mainly to get rid of the diseases. The main deities of the Murasings are "Burah, Banirok, Lairang, Kakubani, Mok, Toichakal, Toimatai, Toima, Chakljuma, Hakumi-Buracha etc. Out of these deities Buraha is feared for his power of destruction. Dreams are his domain. In dreams he create mysterious sound, pulls paces to frighten young children and the oldman and women. Murasings believe that one suffers from mental abnormalities, serious fever, gastric pain etc. if Buraha (Nandi-Viringi in Hindu Concept) is angry with the person. So a puja is performed at 12 noon on a Tuesday or Saturday in the deep forest, under a big tree.

They do not sacrifice any animal or birds before these spirits. They satisfy the Buraha by offering only rice, bananas, Sugar cake, batasas, fruits. khoi (fride paddy) etc. The priest

then looks for sings to determine if Buraha has taken the offering by uttering the following mantra. (chents)

Kabuai(2) Nung Puja Nakha.
HInkhalai Per Kaisa Balapkaisa
Mathal Maung Nai. Saitya Bade
Mithya Tasadi Chaka Hinkhalai
Nihik Aung Thung Nihik Ba
Nama Aungthung 1 Naikhalai
Thunga Surja Raj a Kasing Tanga
Patti Raja, Kaisa Balap Kaisa
Mathal Khallaioi Phanlokdi

(Oh deity if you have actually accepted my offerings, please show it on these banana leaves. Oh, deity, do not tell a lie, if so, your mother will be your wife and your wife will be your mother. Look, Surjya Raja is looking from the heaven Mother Banumata is under your feet and stars in the sky are my witnesses. So please do not tell a lie.

Prior to this the priest says,

Aou Dag Naichu
Hoo, Buraha Raja
NiniNisa Na Chhill Ball
Khallai main chini Satkara bali
bai-Phanano Chili bali.
Khallai main Toito Sutoi Tyakbai
Sotai Dasadanda Na Tilangdi.

(Oh, deity of the forest,
Oh, Buraha king.
you have cursed your son
I am offering you batasa,
Milk cake, banana and other fruits.
Please send all the evils of your son
to the western corner of the house).

Another deity is Banirok (Shani in the Hindu concept) who plays a major role in the life of the Murasing community. To propitiate this deity the Murasings arrange puja at about from 8 to 9 in the morning especially on a Saturday or any day as advised by the priest. The main reason to offer this puja is to get cured from diseases like Diarrhoea, Blood dysentery etc. Lairang (Forest Ghost) is responsible for injury or death due to sudden fall from the tree in the forest. It is also believed that this deity is responsible for the Jhum Crop. Toichakal (Water spirits) is a female deity according to their belief. She is responsible for water carrying diseases and that is why they do not cross a water reservoir at midday and mid-night. Toibuma goddess of water Ganga in (Hindu concept) is worshipped by the Murasings as the purification ritual. They also worship Toibuma for good rainfall during the Jhum season. The Murasings in no case sacrifice any animal or birds to please those deities unlike other tribal in Tripura. They only serve banana, batasa, sweets, potato and fruits. The time of worshipping Toibuma is early in the morning.

As a matter of fact Murasings since their conversion to Vaishnavism, do not observe the other tribal rituals of Tripura as they feel that Sri Krishna Bhagwan and Sri Chitannya are the supreme god. So for even lasting peace they are ready to observe and preserve the traditional rituals of Vaishnavism. Of course, a minor percentage of them shall perform rituals which the Tripuri Reang, Jamatia and Noatia do to ensure general family welfare, good health, longevity of the kin, clans, man ample crops, purification and for protection against attack of wild animals, evil deities, epidemics, diseases etc.

Religious Faith :-

The Murasings are Hindus. They are the followers of Vaishnavism. They strictly follow the principles of Vaishnavism and perform the rituals and observe the festivals

as instructed by their Vaishnab Gurus. Their ancestor, Sri Banamail Vaishnab, once went to Nabdewip Dham and had been there for twelve years to take lessons in Vaishnabism. After his return he propagated the principles of Vaishnabism among his community and among other tribals. The Vaishnab leaders are known as 'Mahanta Maharaj'. They generally visit the house of their disciples once in a year and give instructions about the Vaishnab principles. The Murasings worship Lord Krishna and Radha, Vagawan Sri Chitannya, and other Vaishnab Mahanta Maharaj. Out of their religious faith they do not take any non-vegetarian food.

The Murasings, before their conversion to Vaishnabism were animists as were the Tripuri, Jamatia, Noatia and other tribes in Tripura. They have belief in deities and also offered pujas to the sky, the forest, the water like other tribes in Tripura. The Murasings do not observe 'Garia' festival unlike the Jamatias and Tripuris. Though the Murasing community does not have faith in 'Shakta-cult' yet they believe in Goddess 'Tripurasundari'. They visit the temple of the Goddess Tripurasundari at Udaipur every year during the Diwali Festival. But they do not generally sacrifice any animal or birds before the Goddess Tripurasundari unlike the Jamatias, the Tripuris and the Noatias. They sacrifice he-goat only if they had kept a vow for the Goddess, otherwise, they offer puja with banana, batasa and flowers. They distribute the flesh of the sacrificed animal among the Achi or priests of the temple.

The Murasings as believers in Vaishnabism generally go on pilgrimage of the holy places of India once in a year according to their financial capacity. The places they visit are Nabadewip Dham, Brindaban, Gaya, Haridwar, Puri, Vanaras etc. and in other places of pilgrimage connected with Bagawan Sri Krishna and Sri Chitannya. Their main festivals are Janmastami, Doljatra, Rathjatra, Rashpurnima, Ekadashi,

Jhulan Jatra, Gura Purnima Annakut, Akhayatritiya etc. In each of these festivals, they organise Hari Kirtan (devotional song) and then a Vaishnab Mandali feast after observing the rituals as per vaishnab principle. They keep fast twice a month on Ekadashi days ritual as per vaishnab calender.

Death Ritual and Funeral Rites :

When a person dies in a Murasing family, the guardian members of that family invite the relatives and Vaishnab leaders of all clans. Then the Mahanta Maharaj and other Vaishnabs remove the dead body from the room to the courtyard of the house and place it at the Tulsitala (Basil plant) or Hari Temple after which the following funeral rites are observed.

Kuthui Shudha Khalaic :

The Mahanta Ma-Hanaj himself if washes the dead body with water carried by a kin or relative who is not a widow or of widower or woman in her period. Then the dead body is dressed with a piece of new cloth. If it is the body of woman it is dressed in Sharee or Pasra. Caste mark on the body with white mud according to the Vaishnab faith are given. On the eyes and mouth of the dead body, basil leaf are placed by the Mahanta Maharaj. He puts garland of basil leaf over the dead body and chants mantras.

The assembled young and old persons constructs a bamboo Machang (a stretcher like structure) to carry the dead body to the burial ground in a procession. Before the funeral procession starts, the women and nearest relative see the deceased person for the last time and follow the procession. The Mahanta Maharaj who leads the procession start sprinkling Khoi and batasa. Sometimes scented followers are also sprinkled. A party of singers of devotional song (Kirtan) also follow the procession. The followers repeatedly shout "Joy

joy Radha krishna, premananda, Hari Haribal "Ball Hari Ball" according to Vaishnab principle.

On reaching the burial ground, the relatives of the deceased person make a pit of 5 ft. deep 5 fit. length and 3 fit across. Then a shelf is dug out on wall of the pit, where the deceased person would be seated. The assemble persons then start kirtan loudly and place the deceased person in the shelf in the upright sitting position. The deceased person faces north. The assembled persons offer coin, flowers basil leaf, banana, kholi, new cloth etc, in the hole for the deceased person. The main reasons for donating the money, according to their faith is that with the help of the money, the deceased person reaches heaven after crossing the Tribani River (this river is regarded as heavenly river). Some also present "Bhagabat Gita" to the deceased person. After the ritual of donation is over the mouth of self is closed with a piece of wooden board. Then the hole is fitted with earth. To mark the burial spot and to help the deceased person to reach near the God a basil plant is planted by the Mahanta Maharaj on the grave. The assembled persons then sing kirtan for ever half an hour. Then they return to the house of the deceased person. There they and the relatives of the deceased person take a bath and a woman member of the family scatters cow-dung in the yard of the house, clear all utensils, wash the floor of the dwelling house. The Vaishnab Mahanta then sprinkle water a basil leaf to all corners of the dwelling house for its purification. The relatives of the deceased person then eat bitter leaf and basil leaf and they take only vegetarian food for the next seven days.

Kuthuimairo (offering of food to the deceased person) :-

This ritual is performed by son/daughter/husband/wife or the nearest relative of the deceased man or woman on the fifth day after the death. On that day the nearest relative of the deceased cooks rice and vegetables. The Mahanta Maharaj offers cooked rice first to the Bhagaban Chitannya/Lord Krishna and then offers it to the decease person on a plantain

leaf. A procession kirtan singers follows the Mahanata Maharaj who goes to the burial place. On the forty fifth day of death. A general feast is arranged for the after relations of the deceased person. On this occasion at least 3 to 7 Vaishnab are invited. On the forty sixth day, a non-vegetarian feast is also arranged. But only fish or dry fish curry is prepared. This ritual is know as "Fungbali". On this occasion all the invited Vaishnabs are offered new clothes. The Gita and money according to their financial ability of the sons of the deceased person. If this rite os for the deceased father the son must wash the foot of the assembled Vaishnabs of each clan. After getting new clothes, the Vaishnabs take bath and then begin the main funeral rite chanting religious mantras. Rice cakes are also offered to the deceased on that day. The Kirtan will be going on continuously. Finally a special vegetarian food is prepared to be offered to the deceased which is at first offered the three Vaishnab masters- Srinibash, Gadhadhar and Nityananda Goswami. After completion of offering a general feast starts for the Vaishnabs, the relatives and the guests. The members of the household eat after all the guests leave. There is no fixed time for observing this Post-Funeral rites.

Changes in funeral rituals :

In the Murasing Community certain changes in death rituals and funeral rites may be seen now-a-days. They now cremate the dead body of a person who is not devoted Vishnab. In such cases the bone and the ash of the deceased person is generally thrown into the nearby chara river by the kins of the deceased person like the Bengalies. According to the financial position the Murasings now throw ashes into the river Ganga and Falgu in Gaya like the Hindus. Previously fish or dry fish were not eaten by the Murasings but recently they take these as or served in the general feast. But if the deceased is a developed Vaishnab no vegetarian is served food. Yet the Murasings strongly believe that any omission of the old religious codes will not be beneficial to them.

CHAPTER -VI

Village Administration, Customary Laws and Changes:

The Murasing Community has a great group feelings and they are socially very much disciplined . Their social organization had four institutions of which three are not defunct at present. Of these the first is Rai and the others were Muluk Sardar, Shanoyan Karbari, and Khandul ka bari Respectively. Muluk Sardar is still functioning in different Murasing villages. Out of these posts Shonoyan Karbari and Khandal Karbari were treated as Assistants of Rai and Muluk Sardar respectively. By custom, all these posts were to be honoured by the Vaishnab Leaders . The Rai had the supreme power. He was generally appointed by the king.

With the strength of his administrative power, the Rai controls his council and ultimately the villages. Any dispute, by tradition, has to be first tried by the khandal karbari where the complainant has to institute his case i.e. the khandal karbari first tries to settle the disputes in consultation with the heads of houses of the village. But if he fails, the case is referred to the Muluk sardar. If no decision is reached there too the case be heard by the Rai. It is to be mentioned here that this council had jurisdiction to handle the cases of adultery, forcible marriage, molestation of women and divorce. Any dispute over land of land or shifting cultivation are also settled by the same council i.e. council of Muluk Sardar. The council decides over every case and imposes fine on the culprits. The head man and the members of the council of Muluk Sardar claim a share of fine realized in different cases. One has to pay a fine Rs. 130.50

for making a women pregnant illegitimately to that woman. Pre-marital conception is also treated as the same kind of offence. In the case of forcible marriage, a man is fined Rs. 500/- and for inter-caste marriage Rs. 700/- A murasing, who divorces his wife and marries an Bengali lower caste woman has to pay a fine of Rs. 300/- and a part of his own land to his divorced tribal wife and the children of that marriage.

The Murasings believe that adultery, molestation of women, forcible marriage etc. are immoral acts which pollute the perpetrator, for which they worship deities, like the Reang and other kok Borok speaking tribes.

The Rai was and important person in the Murasing society. He was not only a secular head but also a religious leader. He was responsible for general welfare of the community and was supposed to be associated with the ancestral world and his blessings were eagerly sought by his followers. But owing to the break down of the council of the Rai now association between the clan and sub-clan and the political system have broken down.

Now a days, only "Para Sardar" who is treated as Mahanta Maharaj by virtue of his religious faith exert influence on religious matters and community disputes and minor offences e.g. marriage, divorce, adultery, land dispute property right etc.

Divorce :

Divorce is known as a mutually agreed separation of a couple. Divorce is permitted in the Murasing Community according to custom only by the community chief. There are many grounds for divorce. If a woman seeks divorce then she first approaches the Baishnab leader called "Muluk Sardar" tells him her intention and the reason for it. First the Muluk

Sardar with his associates tries to settle the case and in the case of failure imposes fines and other conditions. In case of divorce, the wife's father has to refund the bride price taken by him and also one hundred rupees for each year of the married life. Passed by his daughter in the son in laws house. The children are generally distributed between the couple. The minor children can stay with their mother if they want so. A suckling baby is compulsorily given to the mother. The property if belonging to the wife, if any, is generally transferred to husband. The divorced women may get married for the second time after observing certain Baishnab customery/rituals of purification. On the other hand if the divorce is sought by the husband, the wife gets half of the property of the husband and also Rs. 120/- to 300/- in cash at a time and one mound of paddy (about 37 kg.) per month for ten months. In such case, the minor children if any, are divided between the couple by the Muluk Sardar off cause if the children are teenaged, they may have the choice to stay with their father or mother. If they want to stay with mother then a proportionate share of property of the father generally goes to the male child. The husband may also get married for the second time if he observes Vaishnab rituals and arrange "Vaishnab Bhojan" for vaishnab leaders of different sects.

Adoption:

Adoption of children is practised when the couple have no son or daughter, or when the Parents have no suitable sons/son to be come the heir or when the heir quarrels with his parents and run away. Sometime parents adopt an orphan not necessarily for inheritance. The adopted children enjoy the same status as that of the real children if they follow the customs of the community.

Succession:

Succession right generally goes to the male child of the

family. According to their customary laws, if a person does not distribute the property among his wife and daughter during his life time, they do not get any share of the property. After the death of the father, his property is equally distributed among his sons and if any dispute arises, the elders in the village tried to find out a solution and if they fail the "Muluk Sardar" of the community interfere. His decision is final. Property rights equally go the direct. Blood relations of a person if he has no issue. An orphan is generally fostered by the nearest kin and enjoys the property of the orphan, if any, till the orphan attains the age of 18 years.

Adultery and Crime Against Women :-

The Murasings are generally well disciplined in their personal life. The main reason is their conversion to Vaishnabism. But if any sort of raping or adultery taken place serious punishment is given and a fine is also imposed by the community Chief.

Changes in Murasing Society :

Once this Community had no separate entity and they were then known as "Puran Tripura" which was a sub-clan of then the ruling community of Tripura. During the early part of the 19th century they came in contact with the Noatias and the Jamatias who had accepted Vaishnabism. Hindu religious thought began to influence the Murasing culture since their contact with the Bengali Hindus.

Major Changes :

The Murasings by their pattern of social and economic life once were entirely dependent on shifting cultivation. But in addition, they have taken up plain land cultivation as a result of their contact with the Bengalee settlers. They are now well

acquainted with the economy of agricultural trading which has ushered changes in their material and cultural life.

The removal of the Chief or Rai who controlled the customary rules is a remarkable change. Its effects are wide and adverse. The new chief is regarded as a figure head only. His leadership and authority are ignored and the community rituals are not performed under his supervision. Even his council has no power to exercise over the community. They are now conscious about the present political parties of India. As a result, the cohesion between the clan and sub-clan has become impaired.

Once the existence side by side of the Vaishnabism and ancient animistic tradition could be observed in the religious practices of the Murasings. But at present observance of religions rites on Hindu deities like Laksmi, Kali Durga, Shani, Shiva etc, are not followed as before. Rituals connected with shifting cultivation are not observed. The community do not observe religions festivals like 'Harisava,' Astaprahar kirtan and other major rituals as before. A good numbers of them do not wear "tulsi mala" now- a - days though it was compulsory in the past. Visit to holy places in different parts of India are gradually decreasing.

Older form of marriage namely by capture, Intrusion and elopement are rare now. The custom of compulsory stay of a bride groom in his father in- law's house has now been modified.. After the marriage ceremony in the house of the bride parents used to stay for three days, but presently stay only one day instead of three days. The rituals of marriage are not strictly observed now according to Vaishnab principles. Instead, more and more people now follow Bengali customs in marriages. Bride-price is not given as in the old days. Cousin marriage is now on the decline. Inter-caste marriage is not

considered that much degrading now - a - days.

A positive attitude towards education is growing among them gradually. Parents are more conscious about the education of their children than they were in the past. Now it is also seen that they send their children to different states in India for higher and technical education. Now more Murasing children than before are seen in the village schools.

The cultural life of the Murasings is also changing as socioeconomic, socio-religious and politico-economic contact with the non-tribals living in the same hamlet grow.

The concepts and notions that once regulated individual conduct are changing. Consequently social bonds are getting weaker, incidence of divorce is on the rise, the formation of antagonistic group are taking place and belief in the tribal theology is decreasing. Social integration, group feeling, joint system are declining owing to lack of sound economic stability

Even then, the Murasing as a tribe or sub-tribe in Tripura have united attempts to develop themselves within their own heritage and culture embracing the fore father's faith & believe in Vaishnavism.

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