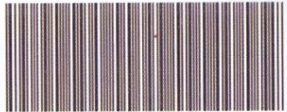


*Dresses and Ornaments of the Tribes of Tripura*

MOUSHMI DEBBARMA



TRIBAL RESEARCH AND  
CULTURAL INSTITUTE



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THE TRIBES OF TRIPURA**

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# DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS OF THE TRIBES OF TRIPURA

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&

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Under the supervision of  
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## MESSAGE



The State of Tripura is enriched with colourful traditional life of Tribals. The State takes a great pride of Tribal dresses and ornaments. One can get a very clear picture of the state's costumes through the various traditional dresses worn by the Tribes of Tripura. Weaving had been always a matter of pride for the Tribal people of Tripura. The varying designs of Tribal dresses and ornaments provide a great scope of using it for different purposes.

I hope that the readers will find this publication interesting and informative about all the nineteen Tribes of Tripura. This book will also be of immense help to those Tribes whose traditional dresses and ornaments are on the verge of extinction.

I heartily appreciate the work of the Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura for taking an initiative in bringing out this publication.

Agartala,  
The 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Naresh Ch. Dev Varma', written in a cursive style.

Naresh Ch. Dev Varma

## FOREWORD



The state of Tripura is very rich in its culture. Tripura is also famous for its incredible handmade costumes and authentic traditions. The jewellerys of Tripura have a very unique design. Henceforth this becomes an all-time favourite of all the tribes of Tripura as well as the tourist.

This book is an endeavour to describe the ethnic features of tribal dresses and ornaments with colourful photographic glimpse. In this book the author Moushmi Debbarma attempted to explore the colourful dresses and beautifully designed ornaments of different tribes of Tripura.

I hope the attempt of the Tribal Research Institute will be very helpful to all the concerned to know a little about tribal dresses and ornaments of Tripura and study for further.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Debbarma'.

**(S. Debbarma)**

Director

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018

Place: Agartala

Tribal Research & Cultural Institute,  
Govt. of Tripura.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



I am grateful to the Tribal Research and Cultural Institute for giving me an opportunity to submit this research project which will be helpful to preserve the almost extinct dresses and ornaments of almost all the 19 tribes of Tripura. I am also thankful to the Director and other faculty members of the Tribal Research and Cultural Institute for their guidance and assistance in various ways and the financial support means for the completion of this work.

I express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Nengneithem Kipgen and fellow colleague Mr. Hebel Koloï for their help and inspiration without which this work would not be completed. Thanks to Mr. Soilal Gangte for his abled help in the editing work without which this project would not be able to see the light of day.

I am indebted to Binoy Debbarma, Rabindra Kishore Debbarma, Parimal Debbarma, Kabita Jamatia and Bishudev Koloï for their invaluable assistance and suggestions.

I also owe my gratitude to my family especially my husband for his support and encouragement in this regard. Last but not the least, my thanks goes to all my friends who have helped me during this research project.

Agartala, Tripura  
1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018

Moushmi Debbarma

## PROLOGUE



Enriched with nineteen tribes and their many sub tribes, Tripura despite its small size offers a myriad of colors, vibrant and fascinating and therefore offers an interesting area of enquiry to delve deeper into this richness of traditions. The people can be divided into two main groups: the Tribals and non-Tribals. This project deals with the former and an earnest attempt has also been undertaken to include all the nineteen tribes and in some cases their sub tribes wherever possible to acknowledge the presence of the many tribes notwithstanding their numbers.

This project is an attempt of its first kind to compile and have a glimpse of the rich traditions in the form of dresses and ornaments of all the nineteen tribal groups inhabiting the State. An attempt is also made to include those of the sub tribes if there exists any differences with their main tribes.

This research project is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which includes the objectives and the methodology while from the second to the eight chapter is chapterised according to the linguistic group. The Bodo speaking people which includes the Tripuri, Jamatia, Reang, Uchoi, Noatia, Murasing, Koloi, and Rupini are discussed in the second chapter. The Kuki Chin linguistic group which also includes the different sub clans of the Kukis, the Lushai and the different sub clans of the Halams are dealt in the third chapter. The fourth chapter deals with the Lepchas and the Bhutias who are mostly Nepalese speaking community in the State. The Chakma and the Mog are discussed in the sixth chapter and they both belong to the Arakanese

linguistic group. The two tribes from Meghalaya- Garo and Khasia are discussed in the fifth chapter. The seventh chapter deals with the four immigrant tribes from Central India while the eight chapter deals with the endangered Chaimal tribe. The last chapter ie the conclusion includes the observation from field work experience, the importance of both tradition and modernity which needs to go hand in hand and also describes and explains how traditional wear over the years have slowly and gradually evolved and adapted according to the change of times from the way it is worn, how they are commercialized to make it more attractive to the youngsters by adding new designs and patterns.

\*\*\*\*\*



# Chapter- 1

## Introduction

The Tribals of Tripura are classified as per order of the President of India in 1956 into nineteen scheduled tribes. The table below shows their demographic distribution from the first time census was taken. The total scheduled tribe population has increased from 5.83 lakhs in 1981 to 11.66 lakhs in 2011 which is more than double.

From the table below, some interesting facts are the double increase in the population of tribes like Noatia, Orang and Chaimal while tribes like Tripuri witnessed an increase of almost 40,000 people. There has also been an increase of more than 23,000 in the Reang population, Jamatia and Halam with an increase of almost 10,000 while the Chakmas witnessed an increase of more than 10,000. Despite the general overall increase in the population across all the tribal groups, decrease in population is also witnessed by tribes like Kuki and Khasia while there has been a decrease in only one person amongst the Bhils.

Among them, the Tripuris, the Reangs, the Noatias, the Halams, the Jamatias, the Lushais, the Kukis, the Chaimals, the

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

Uchois and the Mogs have been residing in the State since long past. The other remaining tribes: Garo, Munda, Oraon, Santal, Bhil, Bhutia, Lepcha and Khasis came much later. These nineteen tribes can be divided into three different groups on linguistic basis: the Bodo groups which includes Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Murasingh, Koloj, Rupini and Uchoi. These groups mainly speak the Kokborok dialect which falls under the Bodo linguistic group. This group is said to be the aboriginal tribes of the State.

**TABLE 1: Census of Tribals in Tripura 2011**

Sl.No	NAME OF TRIBE	1981	1991	2001	2011
1	TRIPURI	3,30,872	4,61,531	5,43,843	5,92,256
2	REANG	84,003	1,11,606	1,65,103	1,88,256
3	JAMATIA	44,361	60,834	74,889	88,307
4	NOATIA	7,182	4,158	6,655	14,298
5	UCHOI	1,306	1,637	2,103	2,447
6	KUKI	5,501	10,638	11,674	10,965
7	HALAM	28,869	80,499	47,345	57,310
8	LUSHAI	3,734	4,910	4,777	5,384
9	BHUTIA	32	47	39	28
10	LEPCHA	106	111	106	107
11	KHASIA	487	358	630	366
12	CHAKMA	34,797	96,096	64,293	79,813

## INTRODUCTION

Sl.No	NAME OF TRIBE	1981	1991	2001	2011
13	MOG	18,331	31,613	35,885	37,899
14	GARO	7,287	9,860	11,180	12,983
15	MUNDA	7,993	11,547	12,418	14,544
16	SANTHAL	2,736	2,796	2,351	2,913
17	ORANG	5,217	6,751	6,328	12,011
18	BHIL	838	1,754	2,336	3,105
19	CHAIMAL	18	26	226	549
20	GENERIC	0	0	7,098	48,356

SOURCE: CENSUS 2011, RGN NEWDELHI

The second group are the Halam, Kuki, Molsom, Darlong, Kaipeng and Lushai who belongs to the Chin Kuki linguistic group. The Mog and the Chakma can be classified in the third category and their dialect belongs to the Arakanese linguistic group. Apart from the above three groups, there also reside the immigrant tribes from Central India- the Bhils, Santals, Munda, Orang and the two tribes from Meghalaya- the Khasi and the Garo.

### 1.1 OBJECTIVES

The project attempts to look into the following five objectives:

1. To know and have familiarities with different names and varieties of dresses and ornaments worn by the tribals of Tripura.
2. To distinguish the similarities and dissimilarities of their

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

dresses and ornaments and the quality they used.

3. To know the different dresses and ornaments worn by male and female at different occasions by different tribes.
4. To preserve the rich cultural heritage of the tribals in the light of modernisation and cultural assimilation.

### 1.2 METHODOLOGY

The project basically employs the descriptive method to attain its objectives. It includes describing the different varieties of dresses and ornaments of the tribal groups, the way of procuring the materials used and their colours to make the different clothes. It also included collection of information from elders and older generation about the names and stories behind some of the ornaments, patterns of the dresses as one of the tribal ways of life is the absence of written records about their history and the only way of storing their past information is only oral. A number of field visits was also concluded to collect not only information but also pictorial representation by taking pictures of one couple each from all the tribes. The use of books as secondary sources was also employed mainly as a reference particularly from those research projects granted by the Tribal Research Institute, Agartala on specific tribes.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter - 2

# Bodo Linguistic Group

### TRIPURI, REANG, JAMATIA, NOATIA, MURASING, UCHOI, KOLOI AND RUPINI

#### 2.1 TRIPURI

The *Tripuris* are the largest tribal community of Tripura. They belong to the *Tibeto Burman* race. As per the 2011 Census report, there are 592,255 *Tripuris*. Being the largest community in the state, they live in almost all the districts. They also take the surname ‘*debbarma*’ as conferred by the King of Tripura. *Tripuris* entered their present country through its north-eastern corner, settled there and gradually expanded their settlement and suzerainty over the whole of Tripura. They were able to expand their influence as far south as Chittagong, as far west as Comilla and Noakhali (known during the British period as ‘plains Tipperah’) and as far north as Sylhet all in present Bangladesh. The ruling dynasty passed through several vicissitudes of history and ruled Tripura for several centuries till 18th century, after which it became a colony of Britain. On 14 October 1949, Tripura was merged into the newly independent India.

#### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

The Tripuri people mainly speak various dialects called *Kokborok*, the standard dialect of the *Debbarma* tribe spoken around Agartala and the second official language of Tripura. There are estimated to be 1,000,000 speakers of the various dialects of Tripuri in Tripura, others being in Mizoram & Assam in India and Nepal, Sylhet and Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. The main Tripuri tribes are: *Debbarma*, *Tripura*, *Reang* or *Bru*, *Jamatia*, *Koloi*, *Noatia*, *Murasing* and *Uchoi*.

The Tripuri belong to the Indo-Chinese stock with an admixture of Aryan blood. Along with the *Jamatias*, the *Noatias*, and the *Reangs* they are commonly known as ‘*Kshatriya*’. The tradition and history of the Tripuri are contained in the *Rajmala* which is popularly known as the historical state record book particularly of the Kings of Tripura and their rule.

The Tripuri women folk wear the *rignai* (lower garment), *risha* (upper garment), and the men wear *dhuti borok/dhuti mikhomchok* (lower garment) along with *kutai/kanchwli borok* (upper garment).

Mr. Binoy *Debbarma* stated that for the last fifty years the *Tripuris* have used the same pattern of cloth. *Khool*(cotton extracted from the tree) was their main source of weaving. The Tripuri women were best known by their *Bothai*(design), some of those are like *Lakhapati Rignai*, *Chamathwi Bar*, *Thaipolog Bar*, *Sai Rongkho*, *Hengra Bar*, *Rignai Khamjang* etc. The *Lakhapati Rignai* had 26 *pola*(steps of design). The *Lakhapati Rignai* was waved by those who were expert in *Bothai*. The Tripuri tribe uses *takborok*(indigenous garments) for agricultural purpose. He had also mention that the Tripuri women uses colourful dresses on joyful days.

Various ornaments worn by the women are *bajuban* (armlet), *buati* (bangle), *rang bwtang* (necklace made of coins), *wakhum* (earring), *surang* (hairpin), and *chandrahari* (multichain necklace).

## BODO LINGUISTIC GROUP



**Pic: Traditional Tripuri Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Tripuri Ornaments**

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

### 2.2 REANG

The Reangs are the second largest group of tribals in the state next to the Tripuris. They belong to the Mongoloid racial stock and live in the subdivisions of Kailashahar, Kanchanpur, Amarpur and Belonia. Apart from Tripura they also live in Mizoram and the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh. The total Reang population as per the latest 2011 census is 1,88,256. They call themselves as *Bru* which means man. The original home of the Reangs is said to be in Mayanithlang in the Lushai Hills which however cannot be ascertain. (S.B.K Dev Varman, 2012) There are other arguments that they migrated from the Shan state of Myanmar to Tripura in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. (ibid) both linguistically and ethnically the Reang are akin to the Tibeto Burman tribes of North Eastern India. Scholars like Grierson, Guha, Chattapadhy and others have argued that the original homeland of the Tibeto Burman speaking dialects including the Reangs may be located in the South West of China near the headwaters of Yangtse and the Hwang Ho. It was from this place that they move in different batches and in different times South Eastward to settle in parts of Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Burma, Chittagong Hill Tract, Tripura and northern Bengal. (Choudhury Jagadish Gan, 2011)

#### Attires:

The traditional dress and attires of the Reangs are also simple like the other tribals and do not differ much from them. The Reang men wear a loin cloth mostly hand woven, and a piece of cloth as shirt for the upper portion of the body. They also wear *pagri* like any other Indian tribes. The women wear a long piece of cloth for the lower part of the body known as *passra* or *rignai* and a smaller, short piece of cloth as breast garment call *ria*. The Reang women are particular about their ornaments most of which are made out of silver coins and other

## BODO LINGUISTIC GROUP

metals. The *rangbutang* and *anchali* is worn around the neck, *tar* in the forehead, *youhchowchecha* in the fore arm, *kharu* for the legs, *jhumka* in the ears, *chandrahar* in the neck and *taiya* etc. this signify how elaborate and detailed the Reang women are when it comes to ornaments.

Weaving is closely connected with the Reang women and they make their own clothes through this process, the cotton for which is grown in the Jhum field. The cotton flowers are collected in the month, sundried and stored in the month of October and November. The shells and the skins are then peeled off while the flower is put to a ginning machine which separates the cotton from the seeds. The cotton then is carded with a bow and striker, then rubbed against the thigh and made into several wicks as a preparatory process to spinning. The next process is the dyeing where two main colours are prepared, red colour from a tree called *Achu* and black colour from a plant called *Lela*. Weaving actually starts only once the desired colours are dyed. The women weave only a few kinds of cloth such as the *Rinai*, *Risa*, *Basei*, *Pandri*, *Kutai*, *Rikatu*, *Baki* and *Kamchai*. *Rinai* is women's cloth worn around the waist. Sometimes it is raised to cover both the breast and the waist. *Risa* is narrow but long piece of beautifully decorated and thickly woven cloth used to cover the breast only. *Basei* is a narrow and long piece of ordinary cloth fastened diagonally above one shoulder and below one arm to carry babies. *Pandri* is a napkin used by men around the waist. What is *Pandri* to a man is *Rinai* to a woman. *Pandri* is shorter than *Rinai*. *Kutai* is shirt and the pattern of weaving and stitching being uniform can be used by both male and female. *Rikatu* is a wrapper rectangular in shape and so is also *Baki* which is however a little heavier than *Rikatu*. *Kamchi* is a turban made of an ordinary piece of cloth.

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS



**Pic: Traditional Reang Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Reang Ornaments**

## 2.3 JAMATIA

The Jamatias are the third largest tribal community in the State. As per the 2011 census, there are 83,347 Jamatias in the State. They live largely in Udaipur, Khowai, Amarpur and some



**Pic: Traditional Jamatia Couple**

Due to their military service to the King, they were exempted from the Ghar Chukti or house tax and given special privileges.

Ethnologically the Jamatias too are similar to the Tripuris and their physical characteristics also resemble those of the Tripuris. Though the Tripuris, Noatias and Jamatias speak the same Kokborok language, the Jamatia follow a middle course between the Tripuris and the Reangs in their pronunciation. (Bhattacharjee, Pradip Nath, 1995)

### Dresses and Ornaments

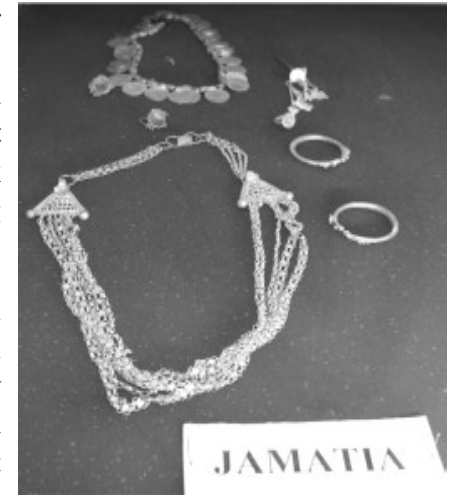
The pattern of dresses and ornaments of the Jamatias have a striking similarity with that of the Tripuris and the other tribal

areas of the Sadar Subdivision of West Tripura district. They are believed to have a common origin with other Tibeto Burman tribes of the State and speak the Kokborok language. Their origin according to Kailash Chandra Singha, is that they are a pure branch of the Tripuris. They were the chief army of Tripura during the ancient period. So it is evident that they were an important fighting tribe of Tripura during the reign of the early kings.

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

communities. Men wear dhuti, shirt, vests etc. the use of *Kanchwlwy Borok* (a kind of traditional jacket worn at the time of agricultural work is very common among them.

The Jamatia women mostly weave their own clothes which are beautifully designed. The Jamatia women uses different bomol(design) in their



**Pic: Traditional Jamatia Ornaments**

garments. Among their garments the *Rinanybaorok* (which is a piece of cloth for covering the lower part of the body-waist downward) and the *Risa* (a piece of cloth to cover the breasts of the girls) are common. The design of the *swastik* symbol is a very common design in their *Rinanyborok* and *Ritukuk* (a kind of *chaddar*, mostly of white colour) the use of black cotton vest was also in vogue among their women folk. The Jamatias prepare the colour for their yarns in their own indigenous process. They prepare these colours by boiling the fruits, barks and leaves of various kinds of wild trees and plants. The black colour is made from the fruits of *Neta* tress, red colour from the fruits of *Aswang* tree and yellow from *Denfal* fruits. (Bhattacharjee, Pradip Nath, 1995) They know the technique to make these colours permanent. However, with the increase use of machine to weave the clothes, traditional techniques are declining due to the time consuming process.

The ornaments worn by the Jamatia women includes a chain or thread studded with coin for wearing round their necks called *Rangbwtang* and *Chandra har*. Brass or silver ear rings called

## BODO LINGUISTIC GROUP

*Brindabanful, wakhum* and *Jumha* are also worn. Thick bangles made of different metals called *Baliya*, and a hair clip used to bun their hair called *Sanggeyng*. The *sanggeyng* have club heart diamond and spade shaped designs attached to them. Strings of beads in different colours are also worn and were very much in common. They also wear nose rings called *Nakfu* and *Bali*. *Yasitam* is also a ring worn in the finger.

Mrs. Kabita Jamatia was of the view that despite its unique beauty, the traditional dresses of Jamatia are on the verge of extinction. Hence she requested all the educated person to use the traditional items in their day to day life. This is mainly because she believed that the educated people are more likely to be an idol of other people of the society. She had also requested all the men to help the women in weaving.

### 2.4 NOATIA

The Noatias are most similar to the Tripuris and as per 2011 census they numbered 6,655. They mainly settle in South Tripura at Belonia, Sabroom and in some areas of Amarpur, Kamalpur. They are also known as Nowa-Tripuri. The word Noatia means 'newcomer' and they are also known as Katal which also means new. They speak Kokborok dialect called *tipra* or *murang* but are also influenced by the Mog and Chakma as a result of their long stay with them in the Arakan and Chittagong Hill tracts.

Their dresses and ornaments are simple. The men like most other tribal men use a loincloth to wrap around their waist which is called *gamchatakbarak* while the upper garment is called *chumcholoji* and the turban is called *rikharak*. They mostly stay without shirt indoors and generally would wear a shirt when venturing out of their house. The *rignai* or *pachhra* is worn by the women which is the lower garment while the *ria* or *risha* is worn to cover their upper body.

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Ornaments used are earrings worn mostly by the Noatia women are (*dheri, taiya* and *wakhum*), necklaces (*kanthi, hashi, rangtang, sat-lahari, panchlahari, rangbak* and *mala*) bracelets (*kasar* and *kuri*), nose rings (*kali* and *bali*) and finger ring called *yasitam*.



**Pic: Traditional Noatia Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Noatia Ornaments**

## 2.5 MURASINGH

The Murasingsh are a less known tribe of Tripura and belong as a subtribe under the Noatia tribe.

There is no marked difference between the Murasingh community and the Tripuris or the Noatia tribes. Most of the children below 5 years of age do not wear any cloth. Every adult male wears a piece of cloth around the waist and occasionally wear a shirt on the upper part of the body whenever they go out of their houses which suggest they do not normally wear shirt in their houses.

The women wear two piece of cloth called *riya* and *passra* generally woven by themselves. Shoes are not worn except on special occasions. The Murasingh women are said to be fond of ornaments and flowers. The wear *jhumka* on their ears and *kharu* on the legs.



**Pic: Traditional Murasingh Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Murasingh Ornaments**

## 2.6 UCHOI

Uchois are a small tribe in Tripura, settling in Amarapur and Belonia subdivisions. Their major settlement areas are Tirthamukh, Jatanbari, Bara Bari, and Depa Charra of Amarapur. They are also found in Jampui Hill and Dasda areas of North Tripura. The Reangs and Uchois have common identity and belong to the mongoloid stock and their language also is similar to Kok-borok which is a major tribal language of Tripura. There are 2,447 Uchois in the state as per 2011 census.

**Dresses and Ornaments:** The Uchoi female wears *rinai* which is a wrap around for the lower part of the body. The way it is worn is very much similar to the other tribal groups, however each have their own unique and distinct style of pattern and colour combinations. The *risha* is like the blouse worn to cover the upper part of the female body.



## BODO LINGUISTIC GROUP

*Kutai tak bro* is the garment worn by the men as shirt, while the *kasho tak bro* is worn as a lower garment. Kasho or turban is also worn by men.

The Uchoi women use different kinds of ornaments. They have names for different kinds of earring like *wakho*, *nabak* (hanging earring), *warek* (earring put on top of the ear), *rangbak* which is a necklace made of coins, *chandrahar* (multi chain necklace), *Uchoi loko* (small necklace). *Tro* is an armlet which is cylindrical in shape while bangles called *yaksderai* which is also cylindrical in shape is also worn. *Sangadukuang* is an ornament worn on the hair. The picture mentioned below are some of the primitive of way of dressing.



**Pic: Traditional Uchoi Couple(Primitive)**

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

### 2.7 KOLOI

The Koloï is listed as one of the scheduled tribe of Tripura and have always been counted under the Halam. However, they



**Pic: Traditional Koloï Couple(primitive)**

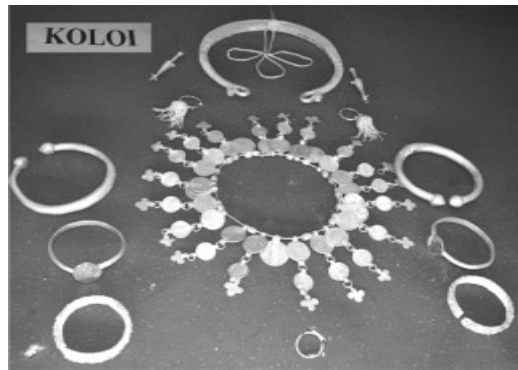
are listed here in this chapter only on the justification made on the basis of their language which has closer affinity to the *Kokborok* than the Kuki Chin Mizo languages. The community has seven subgroups- Waplam, Rajogoi, Wabbar, Kushu, Charai, Abit and Bukam. (Bareh Hamlet, 2001) The name Koloï means ‘soft’ and the community mainly settles in the Amarpur subdivision of West Tripura. Before the

influence of Christian missionaries, they mostly were Hindus and claimed that they belonged to the Kshatriya status of the Hindu varna system.

The Koloï women wears the *rignaibarak* which has broad white stripes horizontally in the edges. The *rishais* used as a blouse which is tied around from below the shoulder till the navel, while the men wears *dhuti* called *pwidri* and *gamliborok* to cover the upper part of the body. The collar of the *gamli borok* is different in colour with the rest of the dress. *Rangtang* (necklace) made of coins, *mala* which is a simple necklace, *chandrahar* (multichain used as necklace) *wakhum* (earring), *surang* (hair ornament), and *changduk* (ornament tied around the waist) are the ornaments use a Koloï women.

## BODO LINGUISTIC GROUP

Mr. Bishudev Koloï stated that the white colour in their garments symbolizes the purity of their heart. He had also urged the youth to respect one's own traditional dresses, because he strongly believes that respecting one's own traditional dresses means respecting one's own mother.



Pic: Traditional Koloï Ornaments

## 2.8 RUPINI

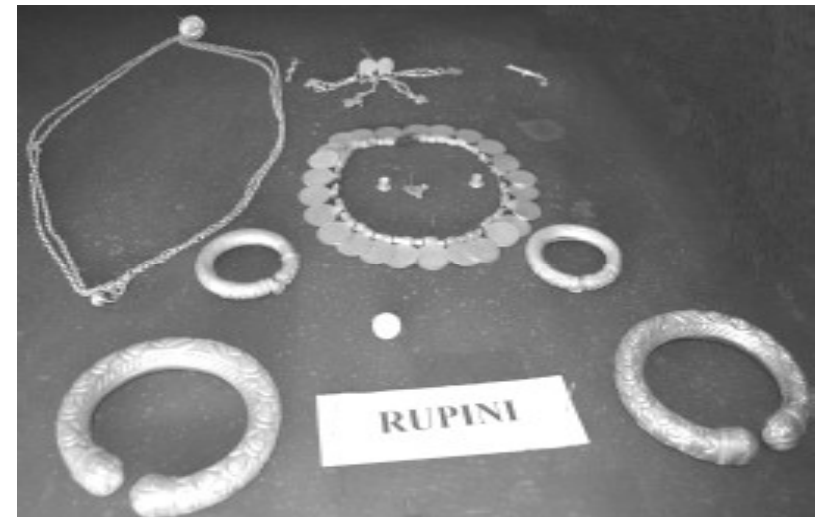
The Rupini men wear *Uti* which is a dhoti-like garment and *kanchiliborok* to cover the upper part of his body. The *Pokri* is a turban worn around the head. The women wear what is known as *eknai* for the lower part of the body and *esha* for covering the upper part of the body. These are made and woven mostly by the women folk themselves using designs of wild flowers reflecting the richness of natural beauty around their settlements.

*Rangtang* is a necklace made of coins worn by the women, cylindrical-shaped bangles called *mathiawashung* is also worn by women, and *shurik*, *surang* is used on the hair for beautification. *Wakhum* and *twaya* are earrings, *yasitam* is the finger ring, while *bitan* and *bali* are the nose ring. Anklet worn on the leg is called *faru*.

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS



Pic: Traditional Rupini Couple (Primitive)



Pic: Traditional Rupini Ornaments

## Chapter - 3

# Kuki Chin Group

### 3.1 KUKI

The Kukis are also one of the autochthonous tribes of Tripura. They belong to the Mongoloid racial stock and they settle in most Northeastern states, Bangladesh and Myanmar. In Tripura, the Bengalis called them as Kukis while they call themselves as *Hre-em*. The Kukis of Tripura are broadly divided into two major groups like Darlong Kukis and Rokhim Kukis. Darlong Kukis are *mar-mi* means men of the North while Rokhim Kukis are *sim-mi* means men of the South. According to the 2011 census, there are 10,965 Kukis in the State. They are mainly concentrated in Sadar, Khowai, Dharmanagar, Kailashahar, Kamalpur, Udaipur and Amarapur subdivisions.

It is a general belief that the Kukis of Tripura came to the state in different waves in different times. The first waves of Kukis were faithful subjects of the Tripura Rajahs and hence the name “Halams” or *Mila* Kukis were given to them till date. The latter wave of them is probably the Darlongs and the Lushais. The Kukis today live in other North Eastern States like Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, and in Myanmar as well as in Bangladesh particularly the Chittagong Hill tracts.

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

In the olden days the Kukis were generally nude and seldom cover themselves except for one long piece of cotton cloth and a turban called *mosol-rem*. Gradually they started wearing shirt called *pom-pur* and dhuti called ‘*pon-seng*’. The women folk like other tribal women wear *pon-jel* on the waist till the knee and *pon-sil* on the body. Most of these traditional attires are woven by the women who are known to be good weavers.

When it comes to ornaments, the Kuki women adorn herself with a special kind of garland called *misi* or *rathoi*. It is made of a glass like reddish glass like material and is a favourite of the women folk. They wear earrings made of bamboo strips called *nabe* which signifies the intricate connection with the tribal and the use of the bamboo in many aspects of their life.

Some of the ornaments worn are *thwibe* (necklace worn by women), *tangkanabe* (round earrings made of silver worn by women) *mizotal* (worn by wrapping around on the head normally for men) and *tawite* which is a crown like ornament for the head adorned with colorful feathers and worn by the women folk.



**Pic: Traditional Kuki Couple**



Pic: Traditional Kuki Ornaments

### 3.1.1 DARLONG

The Darlong are one of the Kuki groups residing in Tripura. Even though few they are one of the most advanced tribal community of the state. They have very close traditional, cultural and linguistic affinities with the Halam Kuki communities of Tripura, Mizos of Mizoram, the Hmars and other Kuki groups of Northeast India. The original home of the Darlongs appear to be Sinlung of China as argued by Darliensang, author of 'the Hmars'. This argument is accepted and believed by other communities like the Lushais, the Hmars and the Kukis and as such they all have common origin.

#### Attires

The men wear simple dresses consisting of a cloth that rests on the left shoulder and under the right arm across the chest. They also wear a piece of loose white shirt with a vertical opening in the front mostly woven by the women folk. When at work the men wrapped the cloth around the waist letting the

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

end hang down in front. They also used a turban like twisting of cloth round the head with two projections, one above the forehead and the other at the back. During festival, or any special occasions, the men wore stripe cloths and the usual shirt with glistening wing cover of green beetles. During war, the men generally dressed themselves exquisitely tied their waist with a piece of cloth and with a gun or spear and a *dao* in the hands. Each one has his own haversack hanging over their shoulder. The dress of the chief is much the same with that of the common men, except on occasions of ceremony or festival when they wear dark blue cloths with red lines of particular pattern, and plumes made of tail feathers of the king crow in the hair knots. The cloth referred to above could also be worn by anyone who gives certain feasts on special occasions. (Darlong Letthuama, 1995)

The women also wear almost the same costumes as the men. A dark blue cotton cloth with its exquisite designs of the same colour, long enough to be wrapped around the waist called *puanzem* and is held up by a girdle of brass wire or string called *khutkhi* which served as a petticoat and reaches till the knee. *Puanzems* are of various types- *hmar-am* with square designs, *kawkcha* dawn zia with a design of fern leaf, *ngaru zia* with a design of fish bones placed obversely and reversely facing each other, *salivate* and *zemdum* which is a plain piece of cloth without any designs. Another piece of cloth is used to cover the breasts only. Besides these, the women like the men folk occasionally put on white shirts.

During festivals the women put on full sleeves dark blue shirt which they decorated with wing cover of green beetles while the comb remained planted in the hair knot. They decorated their head with feathers of parrots at the end of which they suspended the wing cover of green beetles.

### Ornaments worn by men

The men keep their hair long in knots at the nape of the neck and used hair clip made of brass, or a hard wooden or bamboo piece. The clip used is hard and strong and was also used as a weapon in the absence of normal weapons. The hair comb is made of a piece of bamboo about four inches long, a centimeter thick and two inches or so wide. Men pierced their ears and wear small wooden studs with flat heads about two third of an inch in diameter, and coloured red, or red beads of the same diameter. The beads called *theibuang* were also suspended by piece of string. The beads are highly valued and a good number of folk tales depict its value and importance. The men used bangles called *bala* made of silver but women never used them. The men also wear necklaces made of beads and amber are usually worn by the well to do, while the common men and children wear tigers' teeth and grains of job's tears round the neck as ornaments.

### Women ornaments

Every young girl gets her ear pierced where small wooden plugs are inserted which gets replaced gradually by larger ones until the real earring *tangka kuarbe* which is a silver disc of eight centimeter diameter could be inserted. Widows who abandoned all thought of re marrying slit the lobes of their ears and removed their earrings.

Women are also fond of wearing necklaces called *rithei*. *Thi tak* made of red beads with the biggest one in the middle, *tangka thi* with a silver coin after a bead also called *thival*, and *khuaihmur*, a costly necklace made of valuable stones are some of the most popular types of necklaces used by Darlong women.



**Pic: Darlong Traditional Troop**



**Pic: Traditional Darlong Couple**

### 3.2 HALAM

Halams are one of the major tribal community of Tripura. 2011 Census numbered them at 57,210 from 47,245 in the previous census. The Halams called themselves as *Hre-em* or *Hriam* which means 'man'. Different scholars pointed out that they belong to the Old Kuki groups ethnologically and linguistically. However, the term Halam is used only in the State of Tripura. According to Dr. D.N Goswami in his book, "the Korbong of Tripura", referred that in Halam language 'Ha' means soil and 'Lam' means owner, which when interpreted means owner of the soil or earth. However, this meaning of the term Halam has been contested by others saying that there is no such term in Halam. In Tripuri language, 'Ha' means earth and 'lam' means road which means road to earth. It is believed that the Maharajah had given the title 'Halam'. And they are believed to be those Kukis who accepted the suzerainty of the Kings of Tripura. They are said to have migrated from a place called 'Khurpuitabum' which is a place supposed to be somewhere in South Central China.

The Halams are divided into thirteen dafas or clans according to the Rajmala

1. Morchum or Molochh, 2. Rangkhoh, 3. Koloi, 4. Kaipeng, 5. Rupini 6. Kap/Deb, 7. Khulong 8. Chadai, 9. Langai, 10. Bongcher, 11. Mochhrang, 12. Korbong, 13. Phutilangla

Again in 1931 (1340 Tripura bda) census, there are 19 Dafas: these are as follows:-

1. Molchhom, 2. Rangkhoh, 3. Korbong, 4. Koloi, 5. Kaipeng 6. Kulu 7. Bakhulu 8. Kaireng, 9. Chadai, 10. Kap/Deb, 11. Thangachep, 12. Sakachep, 13. Chaimal 14. Nabeen 15. Bongcher, 16. Murasingh, 17. Rupini 18. Longai, 19. Langsu etc

### Dress and ornaments

The traditional dress of the Halams can be classified into the general daily wear and those for specific or special occasion. The everyday wear of a Halam male consists of a simple piece of loincloth, commonly white in colour. It is worn round the loin and the two ends dangle loosely in front. Sometimes one of the ends is passed between the thighs and tucked at the back while the other end is tucked in front. This loincloth is locally called *puidiri*. In winter the Halam male uses an upper garment called *rikutu*, which is thicker in texture and sometimes made of coloured yarn. To protect the head from the scorching heat of the sun during summer, a Halam male puts on a head cover known as *pakri*. It is a long piece of cloth often wrapped around the head leaving the crown or a greater portion of the top of the head bare. (Bhattacharjee, Suchintya 2003).

During celebrations, the Halams use a longer piece of cloth called *gamcha*, a term borrowed from the Bengalees. Besides, an open breast white coat or coarse cotton is also worn. The hill people call it *kam-chili*. Children of both sexes upto the age of seven or eight rarely wear clothes, and that too a short strip of cloth like *puidiri* which is called *richa-rignai*.

### Ornaments

Jhumeke is an earring worn by the Halam women, while *taja* is inserted into a hole made in the upper part of the ear lobe. *Sumrui* or *anchili* is the common necklace normally made of silver, and those made from beads are worn by the poor.

The Halam men and women wear several strings of fruit beads on their neck. Necklaces made of silver or copper coins of various denominations are very popular with the Halams and they are fond of wearing those. Wearing of these coined necklaces also signifies and indicates the affluence of one's family. Bangles

## KUKI CHIN GROUP

called *bala*, armlets called *madali*, bracelets called *bajiban* is worn to beautify oneself. However, these are all bought from the market and do not traditionally belong to them unlike the textiles which is indigenous.

### Textile Weaving:

Like other tribal women, weaving is common amongst the Halam women as well. Most families own a loom to weave for all the family members and the raw material used for this purpose is cotton which is procured from the *jhum*. They also practice the art of dyeing and the colours generally used are chocolate brown, black, dark blue and green. These colours are produced from flowers, leaves, herbs and even stones. The yarn obtained from cotton through the spinning wheel is initially dipped in rice gruel and then dried in the sun. (ibid) Once it gets dried, the yarn is then dipped into the liquid colour for two three hours after which it is dried again. Using the loom called *ri-thanthi*, the women starts the weaving of the yarn into different clothing purposes. However, this was not commercialized and was meant only for the household needs.

What has changed over the years is due to the easy availability of varieties of yarn in the market, the women have started producing these textiles making it available in the markets for consumers. This has not only helped in making their crafts get recognized but also help them in generating income.

### Hairdressing

The hairdressing of the Halam men is more or less similar with that of the other northeastern tribes, cropped around the crown, the line of the trimming running about an inch above the ears with the aid of a bamboo or wooden comb. The use of water mixed with *chakhui* (ashes of bamboo) for cleaning the hair was practiced. Also, growing of beard is not a common sight amongst the Halam.

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

The women generally combed their hair, part it in the middle and bind it together at the back to form a chignon. However, youngsters today both boys and girls do not necessarily have any particular hairstyle rather they follow the latest styles of their style gurus most of them either from the Bollywood or Hollywood fraternity.



**Pic: Traditional Halama Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Halam Ornaments**

### 3.2.1 Molsom

The Molsoms are a small tribal community mainly concentrated in the Udaipur and Amarpur sub-divisions of South Tripura district. They are also referred to as 'Morchhom' or 'Morchhum' or 'Mualthuam'. They also settle in Kamalpur and Sadar Sub-divisions of North and West Tripura districts. The Molsoms are also one of the subtribes of the Halams. The name Molsom is said to derive from the words 'Mol' meaning hillock and 'Som' meaning ten, ie the people of ten hillocks. (Singh, K.S It is believed that they originate from *lungsirkek* which is the same with the word 'khurpuitabum' (Halam Thomas, 2014).

#### Attires

The female dresses are more colourful than those of the males. *Puanzel* the waist garment and the *Risa*, the breast garment are two female dresses woven with colorful cotton threads. The width of the *Puanzel* is found in two sizes-from waist to knee and waist to ankle.

*Takbrok* is the male waist garment, *Pardari* the loin cloth and *Lukum* the turban constitutes the male dresses of which *Takbrok* is widely used. *Lukum* is occasionally used during social visit or in ceremonies and the *Pardari* is mainly used during work time.

During winter time, *Ponpui* the warm cloth is used by both men and women. All the traditional dresses of the men are white in colour but some colourful threads are used especially for weaving *Takbrok*. The common colours of the *Puanzel* and the *Risa* are red, yellow and black. Dying of colours is done by the women themselves extracting colors from the local roots *rumum*, turmeric seeds and seeds of a local tree. This practice today is rare due to the abundant availability of these threads in the market.

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

Ceremonies are performed when a boy or girl wears cloths for the first time. The wearing ceremony for the boys is known as *Takbrokmi* and that of the girls is known as *Punmizel*. The ceremony takes place generally in the evening when parents leave the house and young boys and girls are invited for it. They drink the local alcoholic beverage called *Zukola* and enjoy in merrymaking. The boys help the boy or girl to put on a new piece of loincloth who initially would try to resist but would then wear the garment forcibly. This indicates that from thence, he or she can start wearing dresses (Sen, Ramendranarayan, 1996).



**Pic: Traditional Malsom Couple**

When a girl steps into puberty, a ceremony called *risabomb* is performed where for the first time the girl wears *risa*, the breast garment. In the presence of many boys and girls, two strong boys tie a new piece of *risa* around the breast of the girl. After *risabomb* a girl is formally accepted as a young girl locally known as *nungak* by the society and her parents are allowed to arrange for her marriage. This puberty

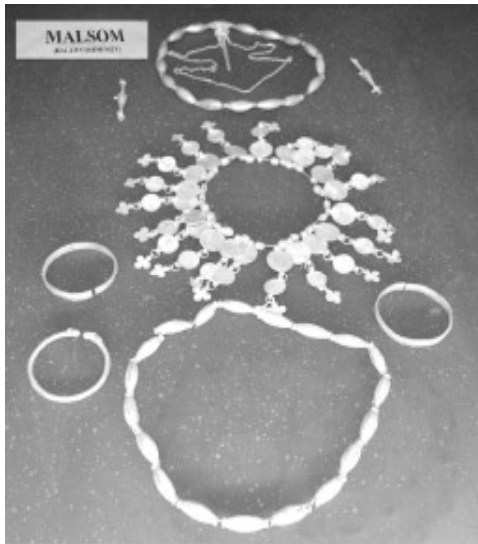
ceremony is not perform for the boys, and this practice of the Molsoms is unique in that other tribes do not have such similar ceremony except the Mogs (ibid).

A variety of ornaments are worn by the Molsom women on their nose, neck and ears. *Naper* and *tola*, the ear rings are



## KUKI CHIN GROUP

put on the lobe and upper part of the ear respectively. The nose ornament called *noth* is put on the bridge between the nostrils and *ruthoi* the necklace is made of wild banana seeds known as *matchi*. The other ornaments are made of silver, brass and beads. Except *ruthoi*, the Molsoms do not know the technique of making any other ornaments and are generally collected from the plain people.



**Pic: Traditional Malsom Ornaments**

### 3.2.2 Kaipeng

Kaipeng is also one of the clans of the Halam community and represent one of the most primitive settlers of Tripura. It is believed that they originated from 'Sialsu Vawnrang' which is said to be located somewhere in Myanmar or China<sup>1</sup>. In Tripura, they are mainly concentrated in Gomati and Sepahijala districts. The Kaipeng clan is divided into as many as six sub clans: *Dourai, Kuarset, Lunthung, Sengkei, Senghor* and *Sunjang*.

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

The *Ponzel* is worn by the Kaipeng women to cover their lower part, and the *rasha* (upper garment) while the men wear *luma kanchili* (upper garment), *pardri* (lower garment) and *lukom* which is a turban.

The women folk wear different ornaments like *anjali* (ring put on the neck), *sumroi* (necklace made of coins), *chandra har*, *zildena* (multi chain), *rwthaizil* (small chain), *bala* (worn on the lower arm), *kutsabi* and *zumkha* which is adorned on the hair. The ear ornaments include *banta*, *kardu* and *twaya*.



**Pic: Traditional Kaipeng Couple**

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<sup>1</sup> *Halam Samuel: Contribution of the Baptist Church to the Halam Tribe – A Thesis submitted to the Senate of Serampore College (University) for the Degree of M.Th, p 19*

## KUKI CHIN GROUP



**Pic: Traditional Kaipeng Ornaments**

### 3.2.3 Hrangkhawl

The Hrangkhawl women wear *punbom* which is wrapped around from the waist till the knee or the ankle, and *rwsha* which is a blouse like for the upper covering. The men wear dhuti along with *rwm kanchwli* and *lukom* which is a turban.

Necklace made of coins called *sumroiis* worn by the women, *anjali* is worn around the neck, and earring called *kuordai*, *sharcoring* is porcupine's thorns used widely to adorn the hair of the women. *Kerkol* or anklet is a common ornament for both the men and women.



**Pic: Traditional Hrangkhawl Couple**

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

### 3.2.4 Ranglong

The Ranglong like many hill dwelling tribes of the State Tripura mostly live in Dharmanagar Subdivision of North Tripura District. Some of their villages are Jhangnang, Joytang, Jarul Muda, Duiganga, Kathua Cade, Candpur Mujiram Para, Ujan thang nang, Nayagang, Chankhalla among others. Their physical features have much similarity with the Halams, the males are of medium height, slightly roundish face with less beard. Their nose is a bit flat like any other Indo-Mongoloid race. Their eyes are a bit small and slightly pressed. As far as their language is concerned, it falls under the Kuki Chin division of the Tibeto Burman class. Many writers like Hunter, Mr Gearson placed the Ranglong dialect belonging to the Halam group which is a part of the Kuki language.

#### Dress

The Ranglong traditional dresses are *dhuti*, *kultai*, *loke* and *potduri* made by the women mostly done through weaving. The *kultai* is used as a shirt, while the *loke* is the cloth for turban and the *potdure* is used as cloth. The dresses worn by the women are also made by them. The *nikni* is a *pachda* used for covering the lower portion of the body. The *risa* is used to cover their bosom and the *kangkhit* is a belt for the waist. The *Nupang oke* is a turban used by the females, and the *puannai* is a piece of cloth used for carrying infants mostly by women from their neck. A coarse cloth called *Riemkultai* is generally worn while working in the Jhum field. Another cloth called *Kamsais* a turban which is also normally used as a pillow while sleeping. The dress of the men is normally simple stitched by the women mostly.

The shirt worn by women is called *khemachi* which is usually full sleeves and *nikni* with a stripe design at the border is tied at the upper part of the breast which is broad enough to

## KUKI CHIN GROUP

cover the lower part of the body upto just beneath the knee. In order to prevent the *nikni* from falling and loosening another small cloth is tied around tip of the upper part which is called *kongkhit*.

The women through the practice of weaving weave clothes for different occasions for the entire household. The technique of dyeing is used to make colours and the Ranglong women were fond of using variety of clothes and dresses. Two variety of coloured cotton are produced in the jhum. One is white and the other is slightly reddish. As they knew how to prepare only black colour, they usually used reddish thread with white and black threads to make clothings. The leaves of a plant called *Ramua* planted in the Jhum is collected and soaked overnight in an earthen jar with water to which an adequate quantity of *changal* is added the next morning. The white threads are then dipped to this solution to get the black. The yellow dye is prepared from the roots of the *Ralum*, which is also a plant with reddish roots. The bark of the plant is first removed and then the root is chopped into chips. This is boiled in water and the thread is slowly dipped into the boiling mass and allowed to boil for some time after which it is dried (Halam, Thomas,2014).

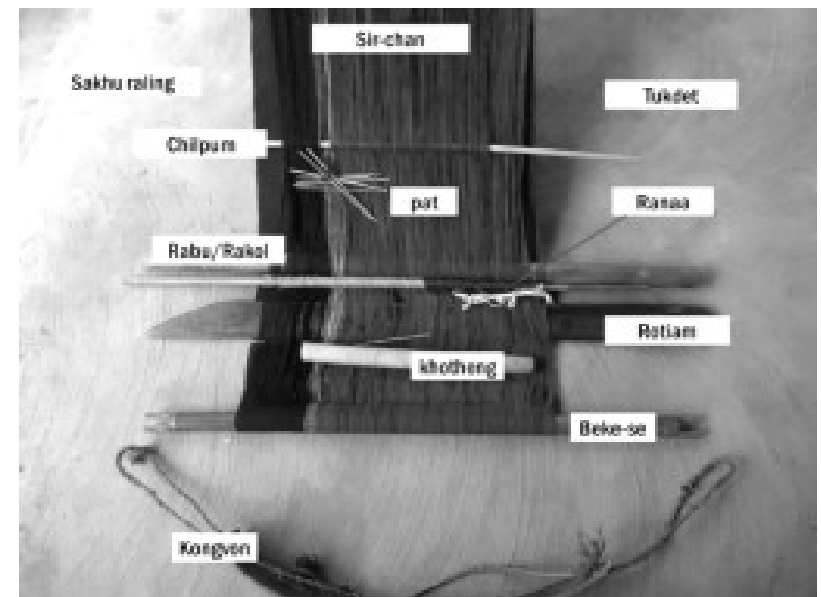
### Ornaments

The Ranglong women like other tribal women are fond of ornaments and they used different metallic articles to decorate their bodies. The ear is decorated with various kinds of ornaments and the upper lobe of the ear is hollowed out and a ring made of silver, copper, iron metal called *benchi* is inserted and on the lower side *kuarbet* is fitted. *Benchi* is made in such a way that flowers can be tucked in it. Some of the necklaces used by the Ranglong women are *Maduli*, *Mohanmala*, *Sumri* and *Chondorhal* mostly made of silver.

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS



**Pic: Traditional Ranglong Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Handloom commonly used by most tribal groups**

### 3.2.5 Karbong

The Karbongs are a small group of people belonging to the Halam community. And so, their language, custom and culture show very close affinity to the other Halam sub tribes.

The dress of the Karbong men is Dhutibarak and Kamcaulani. The kamcha covers the lower portion of the body while the *Kamcaulan/lwima kanchili* is used as shirt to cover the upper portion. These are mostly cotton and white in colour.

The female wears the *ponbom* to cover the lower portion of her body and the blouse like is called *omkhok* which is mostly white in colour to cover the breast. *Ponbom* is generally made of black yarn while the *omkhok* is a combination of different colours.

The females are fond of their ornaments and their necklaces are mostly made of silver coins, pashas are their earrings and



bangles made of colourful glasses. Necklace is called *sumroi* and earring is called *karbet*. They also used chains of small balls of glass and flowers, and each young girl wear a flower on her hair.

**Pic: Traditional Karbong Couple**

### 3.2.6 Bongcher

The Bongcher are a sub tribe of Halam and one of the scheduled tribes of Tripura. They are called as Bongshel or Bonshi. They have very close affinities with other Halam sub-tribes like Kaipengs, Molsoms and Rangkhols. However, they do have their distinct traditional dress patterns even though it has certain similarities with these other sub tribes.

The Bongcher men wears a white thin cloth (dhoti) in their waist covering the whole of posterior upto the knee called *poidriand* do not wear shirt in their houses. The shirt called *kanchili* is worn for work or for going out is made of thick cotton cloth which is normally woven. It is a full sleeve shirt without bottoms but twisted yarn is used.

The dresses of the women are also hand woven, a blouse and a wrap around, tied at their waist which is called *puanbawm*. It does not have a distinct colour design, mostly woven with entire black colour yarn and red strip was added at the edges. However, today there are different varieties of colour combinations and do not necessarily confine to the original pattern. The blouse worn by the women is called *risa*. It is a small in breadth and long cloth to cover their breasts resembling the blouse.

#### Ornaments

Men do not use ornament while the women wear minimal ornaments. They wear beads, and earrings made of ivory. The beads worn are called *andili sumrui* while the earring is called *kawrbet*. They borrowed other ornaments from the Tripuri tribe like *bala* ie bangle, *toia* i.e upper earring and *nakphul* i.e nose ring.

## KUKI CHIN GROUP



**Pic: Traditional Bongcher Couple**

### 3.3 LUSHAI (Mizo)

The Lushais belong to the Mongoloid stock, and called themselves as Mizo. The present Indian state of Mizoram (literally “Mizoland”) was called the Lushai Hills and was defined as a district of Assam in the British Raj and independent India. And so, today most of the Lushais settle in Mizoram. They also live in the southern part of Manipur and also settle in the Jampui hills of Tripura. Upto 1921 Census Report, the Lushai of Tripura were included under the Darlong Kuki. Their combined population in 1921 census was, 7547. In 1911, their population decreased to 2,281 and this increased to 4,005 in 1921. A further look at the census in 1931 shows their separate population with

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

the Kukis as 1479 and the Lushais as 2175. The latest census of 2011 numbered the Lushais in Tripura as 5,384. They mostly live in the Jampui Hills of Northern Tripura.

Like other subtribes of the Mizo, the Lushai also claim how their forefathers came out of a mythical cave called *Sinlung*, the legendary rock cave. The exact date of when the Lushais migrated to Tripura is difficult to say. (Chakravarti Mahadev, 1988) However, from different records, it is evident that with the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when Hrang Vhunga, son of Sailianpuia and grandson of the legendary figure Sukpial settled down in the Jampui Hills along with a thousand follower, since then it has become a home for the Lushais till date.

### Dresses and Ornaments

The Lushai women wear *puanchei* (lower garment) along with *Kawrchei* (blouse like shirt) and *vakiria* which is a crown



**Pic: Traditional Lushai Couple**

### KUKI CHIN GROUP

like ornament adorned with feathers. The men wears *thangchhuahkawr* which is a shirt and Mizo *Puandum* for the lower part. A turban like called *thangchhuahdear* which is a piece of cloth is also worn on the head.

The necklace called *thi* made of beads and mostly red in colour is used as ornament along with earring called *bengbeh*. The men folk do not wear ornament.



**Pic: Traditional Lushai Ornaments**

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## Chapter - 4

# Bhutia and Lepcha

### 4.1 BHUTIA

Bhutias are Himalayan tribe and negligible in Tripura. They are similar to that of Lepchas in terms of racial identity, Linguistic affinity and religious activities. In Tripura, Bhutias once were used to be engaged in the Royal Army for their warrior character and physical strength. But in course of time they left Tripura to their original homeland. 2011 Census recorded 28 persons in Tripura which was 29 in the previous census. Most of the Bhutias in Tripura are in Govt. job like paramilitary. Few families are however permanent residents of Tripura.

The Bhutia are a community of people of Tibetan ancestry, who speak Sikkimese, a Tibetan dialect fairly mutually intelligible to standard Tibetan.. Bhutia here refers to Sikkimese and Nepalese of Tibetan ancestry; in contrast, the Bhotiya are a larger family of related Tibetan peoples in northeastern Nepal of which the Bhutia are one member group.

The traditional outfit of Bhutias is the *bakhu* (similar to the Tibetan *chuba*, but sleeveless), which is a loose cloak type garment fastened at the neck on one side and near the waist with a silk/cotton belt. Male members array the *bakhu* with loose

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

trousers. Womenfolk wear the *bakhu* with a silken full sleeve blouse called a *honju*; a loose gown type garment fastened tight near the waist with a belt. In the front portion, a loose sheet of multicolored woolen cloth with exotic geometric designs is tied. This is called the *pangden* and is a symbol of a married woman. This traditional outfit is complemented by embroidered leather boots worn by both men and women.

Bhutia women enjoy a much higher status than their counterparts from other communities. Both women and men have a weakness for gold in its purest form and, traditional jewelry is mostly made of 24 carat (100%) gold.



**Pic: Traditional Bhutia Women**

### 4.2 LEPCHA

Lepchas are one of the tribes living in the Himalayan range of North-East India. They largely resides at Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Sikkim and Darjeeling. In Tripura, Lepchas are only 157 persons as per 2011 Census which is an increase of

## BHUTIA AND LEPCHA

a mere 52 people and they mainly reside in Dhalai District of Tripura. Lepchas are Mongoloid tribe. Their language is a mixture of Nepalees and Sikkimise languages which is very familiar with Indo-Chinese language. They themselves call *Rong*.

Lepchas live on rearing large number of cattle and milch cows besides cultivation of Agricultural and Horticultural crops. Originally Lepchas were the nature worshiper and had belief in witch-craftship and spirits. But in due course they embarrassed Buddhism. In Tripura they are commonly known as Nepalees and their social and community relationship also bounded with Nepalese. Both Lepcha men and women have got unique collection of dresses. A male dress is known as *Thokro-Dum*. While a women wear a dress which is named as *Dumdyam* or *Dumvum*. One vital dress which makes a total *Thokro-Dum* is a white pyjama that goes only upto the 'calf' resembling the attire of a Karate sports player. It is almost always 'coarse', rough and quite 'durable' appropriate for the living in the open field and dense forests. A Lepcha *Dumvum* comprises of a dress, which reaches up to the ankle. The female dress is made from soft materials and worn out in the style that looks really stylish.

The Lepcha women are deft weavers. They weave '*Dum - praa*', their men's dress. Each village produces '*Dum - praa*' for their men. '*Dum - praa*' has dual roles; during the day time, it is worn as a garment by men and at night it is used as a blanket. Although there are many Lepcha patterns or designs when weaving a '*Dum - praa*', the following three patterns or designs are very much sought after:

a. *Tagaap*. This is the oldest Lepcha pattern or designs. It is woven with a floral designs or patterns. b. *Khemchu*. It is a scissors design or pattern. c. *Tamblyoak*. It is based on the butterflies patterns or designs.

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

A man's dress is basically called *Dum - praa*, however, it is also known by three other names by its materials, make, and design:

a) **Koojoo Vaadoah**: This is the oldest kind of Lepcha dress for men. It is made from *Koojoo*, as the name implies, nettle plants. It is light and soft, but always in a plain colour without any pattern or design. No dyeing or any pattern, embroidery is applied and used in *Koojoo Vaadoah*. It is of dark cream colour, its natural colour. Today *Koojoo Vaadoah* dress is not made and available or used for two reasons; firstly, nettle plants are not available in plenty, and secondly, cheap cotton fibres are easily available in the market.

b) **Thokroah**: This dress is made from thin, soft fibres. *Thokroah* can be easily distinguished or recognised by the absence of embroidery. Although it is multicoloured with typical Lepcha patterns and designs and some '*Thokroah*' are in stripes, normally it is black and white; embroidery is markedly absence at the top end of the '*Thokroah*' dress.

c) **Menchhyo dress**: It is recognised by its beautiful embroidery at the top end of *Menchhyo* dress. The Lepchas put on *Tago*, meaning a loose shirt with stiff high neck at the back and slightly opened in the front. When going to the woods for hunting or fishing in the rivers, the Lepchas do not put on *Tago* with *Dom - Praa*.

*Tomoo*, the Lepcha trousers, are worn. They reach up to the calf, between the knee and ankle. *Tomoo* is also designed to easily pick off or get rid of leeches in the fields or woods during the Monsoon. The Lepchas put on *Tago* and *Tomoo* when they are working in the field or at home. *Tago* and *Tomoo* are usually made of thick cotton fibres and white in colour. In the old days, the Lepchas never put on shoes but today shoes are worn by the Lepchas to protect their feet from broken glass,



## BHUTIA AND LEPCHA

blades, and unhygienic condition in towns and cities. In the villages, they still go bare foot.

A bag popularly known as '*Tanggyip*', is a part and parcel of the Lepcha dress. The old name for a Lepcha bag is '*Takvyoal*' meaning a hanging bag and its pattern or design is called '*TaakTik*' meaning marked with spots. By Lepchas going to the fields, rivers, woods, market or any such place, a *Tanggyip* or *Takvyoal* is always carried, hanging by his side.



**Pic: Traditional  
Lepcha Woman**



**Pic: Traditional Lepcha Men**

## Chapter - 5

# Garos and Khasias

Both the Garos and the Khasias are major tribes settling in the Northeastern State of Meghalaya. Their presence in Tripura is minimal and most of them are present due to work related reasons. Despite their lesser presence in the State when compared with other major tribes, their recognition as one of the scheduled tribes of Tripura adds colour and vibrancy in making the State a truly multi ethnic State.

### 5.1 GARO

The Garos of Tripura are one of the migrant tribes from Bangladesh and Meghalaya. They settled in the vicinity of Agartala in areas like Nadannagar, Indranagar. They also settle in different areas like Monainagar, Nagichara, Mahishkhola and Pratilata in the Sadar subdivision of the state. They also belong to the Sino-Tibetan group and have ethnic and linguistic affinity with the Kacharis, Rabhas, Kochs, Mikirs, Tipperas and many other tribes of the North eastern region. As per the 2011 Census, there are 12,952 Garos in the state.

*Dokmanda* (wrap around) and *shola* (blouse) is worn by the Garo women while the men wear *dokmanda* (lower garment)

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

and *dhugrang* which is the turban. The women wear *phosa* (ear ring), *sangang* (bangle), and mala which can be single and multi-chain too. They also wear chain on their waistline.



**Pic: Traditional Garo Couple**

### 5.2 KHASIA

The Khasias or as more popularly known as Khasi are the indigenous tribe of Meghalaya which is a home to the majority of them. They also settle in parts of Assam bordering Meghalaya, certain parts in Bangladesh and few here in Tripura. They called themselves *kikhunuhynniewtrep* which means “the children of the seven huts”. The language used is called Khasi and

## GARO AND KHASIA

categorized under the Austroasiatic family stock. One unique feature they are known for is their matrilineal system of descent and inheritance which indeed is rare and interesting a case to study. In Tripura, most of them are here due to their work or in some cases married to the other tribes.

The traditional Khasi male dress is a *Jymphong*, which is a longish sleeveless coat without collar, fastened by thongs in front. During festivals or on ceremonial occasions, they wear *jymphong* and sarong with an ornament waist band and they also wear a turban.



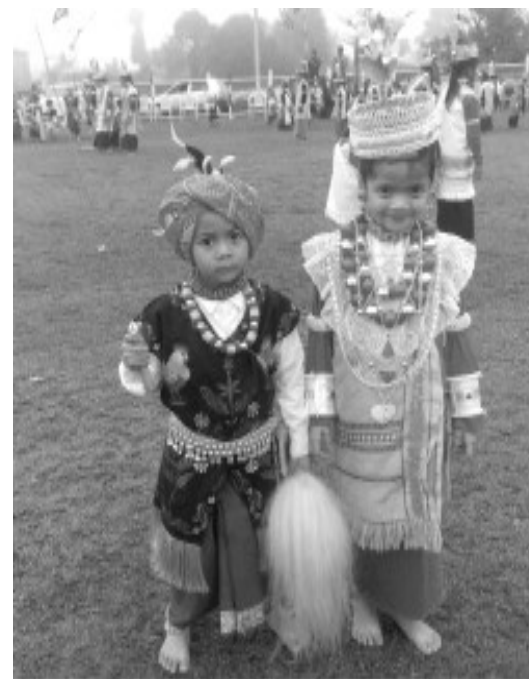
Pic: Traditional Khasi Dress

The traditional Khasi women wear what is called *Jainsem* or *Dhara*, which coordinate with several pieces of cloth, giving the body a cylindrical shape. They wear a crown of silver or gold on occasions. A spike or peak is fixed to the back of the crown, corresponding to the feathers worn by the men. Khasi men of Meghalaya are seen wearing unstitched long cloth

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

wrapped around their waist, similar to Dhoti, paired with jacket and turban or headgear. The *Jainsem* consists of two pieces of material fastened at each shoulder. The '*dhara*' consists of a single piece of material also fastened at each shoulder. The *jainsem* is not stitched but needs to be covered around the body to wear it. It is designed and woven from the mulberry silk which is cultivated. Their ornaments are mostly gold or silver, and a popular pendant called as *KynjriKsiar*.

*Muga* silk of Assam is well known among women who love to wear these clothes. Mostly senior women of the tribe could be found wearing *Jainkup*, which is a piece of woollen cloth. Khasi females accessorise and beautify themselves with pure gold or silver ornaments



**Pic: Traditional Khasi Kids**

## Chapter - 6

# Chakma and Mog

### 6.1 CHAKMA

The Chakmas of Tripura are one of the tribes of Indo-Bangladesh sub-continent. They belong to a branch of the Tibeto-Burmese tribe and originally belonged to the Mongoloid race. 2011 Census recorded 79,813 Chakmas in the State which is an increase of 15,520 from the 2001 census. The origin of the Chakmas is the hill tracts of Chittagong and in India, they settle in parts of Assam, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Tripura.

The Chakma language belongs to the Aryan group of languages and also has close relations with the languages of the tribes of Tibeto Burmese living in the North Eastern Region of India. According to an eminent German anthropologist, Dr. Heinz Bechart, the Chakmas belong to the people of Southeast Asia and their dressing ways show close affinities with the Burmese and Shan people. A number of their customs shows hint of animism which is again very similar to that of the Burmese and Shan group before their conversion to Buddhism and its ways. (Heinz Bechart, 1968). This has been supported by others like Dr. Dulal Choudhury, H.H Risely and Dr. Nihar Ranjan Roy.

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

The Chakmas of Tripura came in the early Muslim period of Bengal and during the reign of the Chakma Queen Kalindi there was a major exodus of the Chakmas into Tripura. There are reports that in 1884, more than 4000 Chakmas came to Tripura from Burma or Myanmar (Majumdar Pannalal, 1997).

#### Dress

Even though the influence of modern life is evident among the Chakmas, the women folk still practices and preserved the traditional way of weaving their different attires with the use of handloom beautifully woven in a myriad of colours and combinations.

The following would describe the different attires of the Chakmas:

*Pinon* is a female dress weaved in loom with no sewing. Its designed on one side is *chabugi*. These are *jeidchabugi*, *bijanfulchokhchabugi*, *dhanchhara*, *mawn –awchabugi* etc. the cloth of *pinon* is generally of black colour comprising of two colour with four inches bordered vertically. *Khadi* is weaved in loom for breasts covering cloth for the women and is of numerous colours. There are two types of *Khadi*: *Rangakhadi* is generally used by young girls, and various designs and flowers of many patterns are designed on a red coloured cloth. *ChibiktanaKhadi* is weaved in black and red threads, has no designs and is for common use. *Khavawng* is a head cloth or turban, white in colour. The female *khavawng* is more than four hands and the breadth is one hand. *Karjal* is a kind of bag and is knitted with various colours of thread. *PanaKholya* is a well decorated smaller bag made of cloth to keep betel leaf and nuts. *GanjaKhani* is a cloth generally used by the poor. Various designs of flowers are made with various colours of threads. *Borgi* or *Gilap* is generally made of white colour with red borders of the two sides. Such two pieces are stitched together and is used as a kind of chaddar and is used in winter.

**Male Dress:**

*Kani* is a loin cloth for males to be worn by tucking it tightly between one's leg like a suspensor. It is of two kinds namely *JummoGanjha* and *LechcharKani*. *JummoGanjha* is used in times of working in the Jhum cultivation and it is weaved with threads of darkish colours. *LechcharKani* is used for attending in social functions or feasts. It is weaved with white colour, and its length and breadth are six to seven hand and three to a half and three hands respectively. It is hung from the waist to the heels or below the knees. *Shilum* is a kind of sleeveless shirt, of two kinds namely *JummoShilum* and *KamijShilum*. It is used for working in the Jhum made of coarse thread generally dark colours. *KamijShilum* is weaved with fine threads with delightful colours. *Khabang* is a white cloth with colourful ends and is used as a turban. *Hattabar* is a wrapper with various colours and designs. *JummaChhilum* is weaved loin loom. *Jummachhilum* is of two kinds- one is used by the males, simple with no designs. The ones with various designs and colours are used by women and are called *Tannchawinya*. These are worn for jhum cultivation. *Fa-Dhari* is generally used by the *Tongchongya* group of females. It is weaved in loin loom of using wist belt. This is somewhat like a napkin but its breadth is smaller than a napkin. There are light coloured designs at the two ends of it. The *Tongchongya* females use *Fa- Dhari* to keep *Pinon* tightly at the waist. *Kagoi* is blouse like black coloured female dress.

Apart from the various types of dresses, others are also made mostly hand woven by the women folk: *Borgi* is a kind of wrapper use in winter season, made from coarse thread and is of various colours and designs. *Chibar* is made for the Buddhist monk and is offered with great reverence, and is yellow or red ochre in colour. *Ful-Tangon* is a colorful designed cloth to

beautify the room of the pagoda in which the idol of Lord Buddha is situated. *Fhaora* is used in the funeral ritual, the thread of which is made by the innocent teenage girls, and is of different colours with various designs.

The list of ornaments used by women includes: *Cholkata* for the hair, *Jumbuli* and *Haiful* for the Ear, *AlChara*. *Ajuli*, *TangaCharra* for the neck, *HojiHaru*, *BalaHaru*, *Bajuare* the hand ornaments, *Andikis* used for the finger. The waist is adorned sometimes with *KumarShikal*, the leg with *TangtaKharo* and the nose wear is called *Nakful*.

These above mentioned clothes and dresses are not much in common. Modern Chakma male and female are more attracted to the abundant clothes in the market. The women mostly wear Saree with blouse made by modern textiles. However, with education the importance of preserving traditions through ones' own unique dress has been emphasized. And so even though outside influence is there on the dressing sense amongst youngsters, at the same time we observe a parallel importance given to promote the beautiful traditional attires and costumes.

Handloom is commonly used by the Chakma women, and cotton obtained from the Jhum fields is made into yarn through the process of spinning after which the yarn is dyed into different colours before they are woven into different forms of textiles. The process of dyeing of threads is called *Gabdena*. Different colours are made from the leaves and barks of various trees. For instance, red colour is obtained from the bark of the *Rong* tree, while that of the *Karma* tree is used to make the blue colour which is grown in the Jhum fields. *Rogochkuyo* is a kind of juice of wild fruits to make the colour purple. To make black colour, the bark of *Jarul* tree is used and *Suyokali* is made from the smoke. Yellow colour is obtained from the juice

## CHAKMA AND MOG

of the leaves of the *Rong* tree with turmeric. Brightness in the colours of the cloth are obtained from the juice of tamarind and edible acid fruit. Most of the designs and patterns of the cloths woven are that of different flowers and hence the designs are called *ful* (flower) (ibid).



**Pic: Traditional Chakma Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Chakma Ornaments**

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

### 6.2 MOG

The Mog are also one of the recognized tribal group of Tripura. They are mainly concentrated in Sabroom and Belonia towards Southern Tripura. They are Arakanese descendants who also live in Bangladesh and are known as *Magh* or *Marma* people. They are reported to be present in three countries- India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Mog have close affinity with Burmese Buddhism in all socio-cultural and religious aspects. The dialect that the Mog people speak is similar to that of Burmese and Arakanese (Rakhine) language with little variation in pronunciation, but the script is the same Burmese script. It belongs to the Tibeto Burman group of languages. They had been mentioned in the royal chronicle of Tripura, the *Rajmala*. There were instances and records of wars between the Arakan king and Tripura kings. They were fierce fighter, and the Mogs was inducted in the Tripura royal forces, there were many soldiers belonging to Mogs community in the past. It is presumed that the Mogs started settling in Tripura since then, almost 5-6 centuries. (tripura.org.in) 2011 census recorded 37,893 Mogs in the State. In English dictionary the words Mog, Mogen, Mouge have been shown as surnames to the inhabitants of Arakan in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Bengalis of course refer to the inhabitants of Arakan as Mog. The people of Mog community claimed to have come from Arakan and settled down in Tripura in 957 A.D. Majority of the Mog community are the followers of Buddhism.

### Dresses and Ornaments

The woven cloth worn by the Mog women to cover her lower part is called *thabuing*, and *bedeh* is the blouse. The men wear what is called *longi* for the lower covering and the *rangi* which is a shirt. They also wear *gongbong* which is the turban on their head.

## CHAKMA AND MOG

Necklace is called *rwirusu* worn by the women, *yari* (earring), *lokok* (bangle), *khrikhiang* (anklet) *khugrubeng* which is a multichain also worn by the women on the waist. *Wophri* (comb), *pong* (flower), is used on the hair and *thii* (umbrella) is also used by the women.



**Pic: Traditional Mog Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Mog Ornaments**

## Chapter - 7

# The Four Immigrant Tribes

## MUNDA, ORANG, SANTHAL, BHIL

The Bhils, Munda, Orang and Santhal tribes from Central and Eastern India came to settle in Tripura with the set up of tea gardens for the first time in 1916-1917. The need for workers in the tea garden led the administration to recruit coolies from outside. And so the administration encouraged the recruitment of Bhil, Santal and other tribals for this purpose. Apart from being labourers in the tea gardens, they also work in brick factories, farm labourers and cultivators. 2011 census recorded 3,105 Bhils, Santhals numbering 2,913, Mundas as 14,544 and Orangs as 12,011. The traditional dressing style of the above four migrants are discussed as follows:

### 7.1 MUNDA

The Munda female way of dressing is the same to that of what is generally known and worn by most Indian women known as the blouse and *saree*. Blouse is worn to cover the upper part while the *saree* adorns the lower part of the female's body. The upper garment of the men is called Punjabi and the lower garment is called dhuti. Turban is also worn by the men which is called as *gamcha*.

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

Necklace called *mala* is worn by both men and women. *Pairi* is an anklet by the women and *Hasli* is worn by female on their neck. They also wear *Sribandi* which is an ornament worn from the ear to the head. The *Munda* women wear *Khongso* which is an ornamental artificial hair for beautification.



**Pic: Traditional Munda Couple**



**Pic: Traditional Munda Ornaments**



## FOUR IMMIGRANT TRIBES

### 7.2 SANTHAL

Similar to that of the Mundas, the Santhal women also wears the blouse and *saree* while the men also wears the *dhuti*



**Pic: Traditional Santhal Couple**

and turban which is called *darshi*. The men also occasionally attached ell which is a bird's feather on their turbans. A bracelet called *todar* is also worn by the men. The women are also not devoid of ornaments. They wear an anklet called *bhak*, bangle called *sakom*, mala on their neck and *jurjuri* on their ears. The Santhal women are fond of using flowers as ornaments to beautify their hair.

### 7.3 ORANG

The Orang women wears blouse and *saree* and the men wear dhuti and *genji* as upper covering. *Pakri* is the turban worn around the head normally by the men. *Sribandi* (chain like ornament used from nose to forehead), mala is the necklace, *churi* or bangle.



**Pic: Traditional Orang Couple**

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

### 7.4 BHIL

The Bhil women wear blouse and saree, while the men wear Punjabi (an upper garment normally a loin cloth made of cotton) and dhuti for the lower part. The women folk use ornaments like mala (necklace), *churi* (bracelet), *dul* (earring), *kongso* (hairpin), and *torpot* (ornament for the forehead).



**Pic: Traditional Bhil Couple**

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## Chapter - 8

# Endangered Chaimal Tribe

### 8.1 CHAIMAL

Chaimal or Saimar are an endangered tribe of Tripura with the 2011 census recording only 549 of them in the entire State. Even though they are minimal in number when compared with the other tribes, their number has increased to almost double even though this is almost double increase from the previous census of just 247. They reside in areas like Gonta Cherra, Janthum and Nightingale under Kulai Bazar and Salema Bazar in Dhalai District of Tripura. Most of them have merged themselves amongst the Halam and hence the reason for their less in number.

The lower garment worn by the women is called *Pounbom* while the upper garment is called *rishi*. The men wear *dirthei* which is the lower garment, and *poukong zaku* which is the upper garment. Wearing of turban is common amongst the Chaimal like the others and their turban is called *lubom*.

Oraments is worn by the women alone, which is simple like the necklace which is called *mohanbala*, the necklace made of coins is called *sumroi*. The earring worn is called *korbe*.

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

From the names of their dresses and ornaments, the similarities of the Chaimal with the Halam group can be easily recognized and on the basis of their linguistic affinity, this tribe can very well be placed under the Halam tribe and at the same time, proper and immediate attention needs to be given to them to protect them from extinction.



**Pic: Traditional Chaimal Couple**

## Chapter - 9

# Conclusion

### SIGNIFICANCE OF DRESSES AND THEIR EVOLUTION

What has been observed across most of the traditional tribal ways of clothing is the simplicity in design, pattern and the same kind of material i.e cotton being used by almost all the tribes. One reason being, the easy availability of cotton in their *Jhum* fields since *Jhuming* was a major source of livelihood attached with the tribal ways of life. The second reason why cotton was the common material used for making the different garments could possibly be, the comfort it provides especially for the tribals who then were mostly cultivators, food gatherers, hunters and into other agrarian related activities. And therefore, these kind of activities need not require formal ways of dressing as what mattered most was how comfortable the clothes were, for working in the fields and in the forest.

Another observation could also be the economic backwardness of the tribes due to high levels of illiteracy resulting in a life of lowest levels of simplicity. This in turn could also be reasons of owning the simple handloom which is mostly hand – made to weave the textiles required for their own household. What could also be assumed was the deep interior location of

### DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

their villages, making accessibility an issue due to lack of infrastructure like absence of roads, schools, electricity which are parameters of modernity.

However, what is interesting to observe at the same time is the gradual change, modification and continuity of the traditional dresses, due to the influence of what we called today as globalization and modernization.

### INFLUENCE OF GLOBALISATION AND MODERNISATION

Modern ways of life has huge influence on the dressing styles of youngsters today, and so the pattern of dress and ornaments are also fast changing. Except the aged and the elderly, most youngsters today prefer the western style of dressing. This is so because of the easy availability of those clothes in the market, and also because of the wider influence of education and modernization and the influence of Christianity. Young girls prefer wearing metal necklaces, bangles and earrings particularly of gold or silver to the traditional jewellery made of coins or beads. The current generation of youngsters wear jeans, shirt, jacket, coat, etc. whereas the girls wear salwar, skirt, top, jeans pant, etc. at home, out of home or on special occasions. The easy availability of readymade garments from different brands offers the tribal buyers a lot more choice according to their needs, choice and price and hence the option to go with the global style which are contemporary making them a part of the modern society.

The comparative increase and improve in the living standards of the tribals, with many getting employment in the tertiary sectors, the migration and movement from their rural interior habitation closer to urban settlements coupled with the gradual development of their own villages, due to the different governmental schemes and programmes targeting their upliftment

## CONCLUSION

has indeed brought about changes in many aspects. To adapt to the modern ways and times, what we have observe is the presence of varieties of colour combination in the traditional attires, especially true for the women wear. To give a modern and popular touch, most of the tribal women in Tripura wear the *risa* and the *passra* like the way the *saree* is worn by the Bengalis. The presence of the Bengalis as a majority community in the State could also be one reason whereby the tribals are influenced by the Bengali culture and lifestyle or what we today termed as acculturation or assimilation.

Not only the dressing pattern but the ways of hair dressing is also very much modern where youngsters follow those of their models and change them according to the latest fashion. Thus, most of the traditional ways of dressing even though still followed is not a common sight except on occasions like marriage. However, the older generation still prefers these traditional attires with much pride and elegance.

As fashion images in magazines, music videos, films, the Internet and television speed their way around the world, they create a “global style” (Kaiser, 1999) across borders and cultures. Blue jeans, T-shirts, athletic shoes and baseball caps adorn bodies everywhere from Manhattan to villages in Africa. Asian, African and Western fashion systems borrow style and textile elements from each other. Large shopping malls in wealthy countries house all these styles under one roof. Like high-tech global bazaars, they cater to consumers of every age, gender, ethnicity, profession, and subculture.

The middle aged adults males and females mostly wear traditional dresses (*dhoti*, *kurta* and *risa* for male and *righuchador* for female) on social, religious and cultural occasions. But, in their daily life the males wear shirt, pant, coat, etc. and the females wear sari and *righuevador* alternatively.

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

But, barring a few, the aged males and females wear their traditional dresses invariably. Thus, the new generation is modernizing fast whereas the old generation continues wearing their traditional dresses. What is noticed is that the middle aged women mixed the traditional tribal and Indian dresses. Some of the older women keep the traditional ornaments which are valued due to their originality and lack of easy availability in the market, but they do not wear them.

Some of the modern ways of wearing are as attached below where one can see a distinct and visible change in the clothing pattern, from the typical tribal ethnic wear to a much more contemporary and updated version without compromising much on the very essence of being a tribal in a much globalized world of today.



**Pic: Modern Chakma Couple**

## CONCLUSION



**Pic: Modern Debbarma  
Couple**



**Pic: Modern Reang  
Couple**

## DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

### IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING IDENTITY THROUGH ETHNIC ATTIRE

As the *Saree* symbolises Indian culture and India or the *Kimono* that of Japan and the Japanese, likewise it is equally important for the tribals to preserve, promote and protect his or her identity and one of the most important way is to preserve the age old ways of clothing. However, through the course of fieldwork, what was observed in most of the cases was the apparent ignorance and lack of knowledge amongst the younger generation about the names of their costumes, and the ornaments. Reason for this could be mere lack of awareness amongst younger generations to understand the importance of preserving one's own identity. Another reason could also be the outdated traditional attires for the youngsters today, and not suitable to the place and location of their workplace. One example could be, the way the men then was mostly bare chested, and only occasionally they would wear a shirt or the *dhuti*, for instance would make the younger generation feel uncomfortable. What was also found was that even the original costumes were not easily available and hence one had to enquire around and collect from several households.

### TRADITION WITH MODERNITY

In an ever increasing globalized world where on the one hand, there is the idea of one world, one citizenship and one human kind is emphasized, humanity is also faced with the challenges of asserting and giving prior importance to one's identity than the larger global context, there is the continuous tussle between tradition and modernity. What we called modern today is a product of the past and so forgetting one's own identity in the name of modernity or clinging on to the past alone again would not be congenial. Most of the highly developed societies of the world blend in both tradition and modernity and what comes out of it is a culture that is modern but at the same time rich in traditional values and ethics.

## CONCLUSION

The same would be the best and most ideal for the tribes of Tripura in preserving their own unique and distinct traditions through keeping alive their rich ethnic wear, both dresses and ornaments. Hence Mr. Parimal Debbarma requested all the highly knowledgeable and skillful person to make the tribal garments and ornament more attractive in order to draw the attention of younger generation and also to compete with the market products. He had also clearly mention that the uses of traditional item in the form of tie, waits coat, mobile pocket etc could be one of the best way to preserve our tradition. Mr. Rabindra Kishore Debbarma opined that the existence of tribal dresses and ornaments depends on its present uses. Therefore he urges the government and non governmental organization to take the matter seriously to preserve the rich cultural identity of the tribes of Tripura. Even as the current generation is busy keeping up their toes with their counterparts elsewhere in their pursuit of a better life, it is also equally important to uphold their traditions- language, customs, culture and ethnic attires to prevent them from extinction or gulped down by a larger identity, but also equally important is the need to preserve one's own God given identity because of the simple reason that therein lies one's self respect, dignity and pride.

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