

# KUKI LIFE AND LORE

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Assam.*

**NORTH CACHAR HILLS DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**Haflong : Assam**

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# INTRODUCTION

By

**J. K. Thaosen**

Principal Secretary,  
N. C. Hills District Council.

Sri Tarun Goswami's monumental work on the life and lore of the great Kuki people living in the North Cachar Hills Autonomous District, which Shri Goswami has very aptly entitled as *Kuki Life And Lore*, is at once a deep, resonant note of the renaissance of tribal thought and ideals and a treasure-house of tribal folk lore, music, poetry and crafts, notwithstanding the fact that in this particular volume Shri Goswami is basically concerned with the life and lore of the Kuki tribe of the N.C. Hills District. Indeed, it gives me much pleasure to have the opportunity of writing a few introductory lines to this unique work of Shri Goswami and what's more, this volume, sponsored and published by the N.C. Hills District Council, fulfils one of the major responsibilities of the Council towards resuscitation, preservation and propagation of the great cultural heritage of the tribal people.

It has been one of the objectives of the North Cachar Hills District Council to arrange for the safeguard and preservation of the cultural heritage of various tribal communities in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution, which had been very clearly brought out years back in the sixties in a Report Of The Committee On Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks appointed by the Government Of India under the chairmanship of late Dr. Varrier Elwin, from which I would like to quote the following lines :

'A man's culture is what he is, the totality of his life and interests. The tribal people express their culture in their social organization, their judicial and youth institutions, their religion with its attendant festivals, their language, their architecture, their art—song and dance, dress and ornamentation. Their culture grows out of the soil and is based on Nature

herself. It gives a high place to women. Its society is divided, it is true, into clans and tribal groups, but it has no idea of caste. It is free, independent, natural and distinctive.'

' . . . Tribal culture can be encouraged and developed firstly on the negative side by not doing anything that will discourage or destroy it. We are not to interfere, not to impose customs and ways of living that will make the people a second-rate copy of ourselves. We have to achieve a difficult policy of non-interference in one way and yet helping them with technical improvements, wise and tactful guidance in the other. There is, of course, no idea anywhere that the people should standstill. But it is our policy that their development should be organic, the growth of a tree rather than the building of a house.'

The North Cachar Hills' District Council also felt all along that any comprehensive effort to project the typical features of tribal culture showing its close and harmonious relationship with the main currents of our national culture and tradition will involve a systematic effort to collect and codify the varied segments of tribal culture in a meaningful way. The comparative absence of elitism in the make-up of tribal culture has been responsible for the evolvement of a social order in which social inequalities are practically non-existent. It has also created society which is basically democratic in nature. But, for the very reason that tribal culture has been a process of popular participation, the need for codification, documentation, formalisation and standardisation has not arisen as in elitist cultures. This has resulted in comparative lack of ready materials for a student of tribal culture.

As long as the different art-forms continue to be the tradition, the researchers' job is comparatively easier. Today, however, many of the art-forms are showing signs of disappearance. Indeed, it is anybody's guess how many have already been lost. With the spread of modern education and life-styles, and under the strain of the tensions of life in the modern world, the old-world values along with the old art-forms, folklore, folk-music, dances, behaviours and mannerisms are slowly disappearing as the generations who are the repositories of tradition are

dying out slowly. And with this the most important source of the study of tribal culture will also be lost. In such a state of affairs the N. C. Hills District Council felt the vital need to have a Directorate of Cultural Affairs of its own and to entrust it exclusively with the imperative need to collect, collate and study the widely scattered data on all the various dead and dying art-forms, as also those which, though living, have only a very uncertain future. The author of this volume, namely, Shri Tarun Goswami who is a trained musicologist, composer and folklorist, joined the Directorate as its Director and from the very first day got moving ahead with his assigned job with singleness of purpose and perseverance.

Incidentally, the District of N. C. Hills being a mosaic of tribes, it is the policy of the District Council to bring out similar books reflecting the life and culture of other tribes like Dimasa (under print), Jeme Naga and Hmars etc. inhabiting this district.

I feel very thankful that I have been requested to introduce the book to the reading public and, what's more, I very sincerely hope that this unique study on the life and lore of a distinctive tribal people, namely the Kukies, fulfils its noble purpose.

12.8.85

