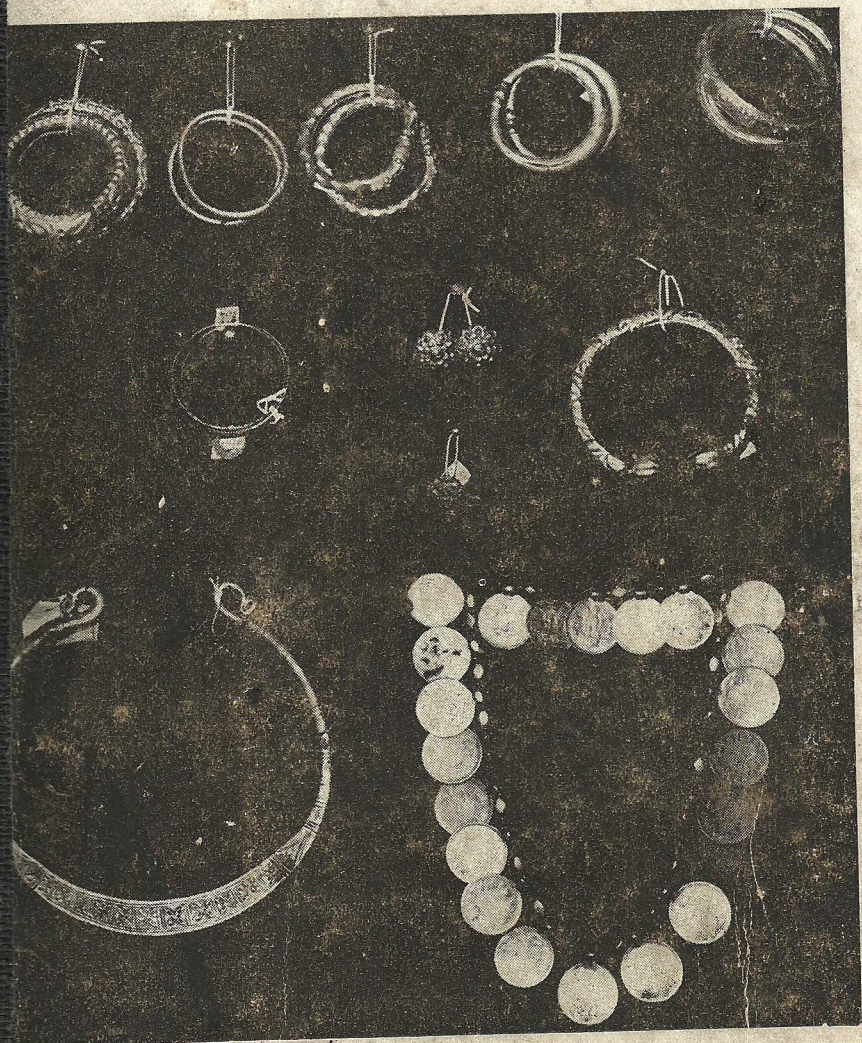


TREATISE ON
TRADITIONAL SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS
OF THE
TRIPURI COMMUNITY



BY

Shri Debapriya Deb Barman

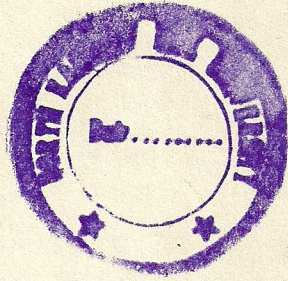
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DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH
OF WELFARE FOR SCH. TRIBES & SCH. CASTES,
GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA.

1983.

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FOREWORD

In every developmental effort of the tribals, special attention needs to be paid to the study of the people as a whole especially of the tribes, their ethnic groups, culture, social structure, economy and political organisation. Preparation of monographs on different tribes had been taken up with the aforesaid purpose in view. "Treatise on traditional social institutions of the Tripuri Community" is one more addition in the series of monographs on different tribes, which have been published by the Directorate of Research, Government of Tripura.

2. This monograph envisages a clear picture of modes, moods and manners of the Tripuri Community which forms 55.57% of the tribal population in the state. The study is based on various datas collected from field studies with a view to apprise others about this important component of state population. We are thankful to Shri Debapriya Deb Barman, Linguistic Officer for having completed the study in addition to his duties in the Research Directorate.

3. In fine this is a commendable effort for a monograph and would surely be of considerable use to all those, who are interested to know about the Tripuris, who are largest in number among the tribals in the state.

Agartala, the
11th October, 1983.

S. R. NANDY
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH,
GOVT. OF TRIPURA.

Treatise on Traditional Social Institutions of the Tripuri Community

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INTRODUCTION

The North Eastern region of India is composed of seven hilly states. Tripura is one of them. It is in the farthest corner of the country and three fourths of its boundary has run contiguous with Bangladesh. Its total area is 10,477 sq. km.

Here in Tripura, 19 (nineteen) scheduled tribes are found to dwell. Among all the tribal communities the Tripuri is the largest in number. I myself belong to this community. Being born and brought up in a contrastive environment (Tribal and non-Tribal) of this town, I have been inquisitive since boyhood about my community and cherished always a desire to know its origin, history, development and socio-religious cultures. That dream or rather a desire-long cherished in mind-suddenly met with the opportunity to materialise when, after my joining in the Directorate of Research under the Government of Tripura, Sri C. S. Chattopadhyaya, former Tribal Welfare Officer, invited me to work on the subject.

“Treatise on traditional social institutions of the Tripuri Community” is an attempt to provide with an account of the Tripuris. Their traditional social institutions and their implication are focussed on. In this study, it has also been mentioned where they have accepted the customs, rites and rituals of other races alongwith their own traditional ones. Some striking differences are also noticed between the rural and urban Tripuris in observing their rites and rituals.

Different methods, viz. interview, sampling, observation etc. have been taken to collect data and information. The Tripuris residing in all the three districts have come under this study through sampling. It has to be mentioned that no inhibition or difficulty was faced in collecting the data and other information. Notwithstanding the wide scope, many aspects, specially the economic condition, political attitude, and educational status have remained out of the perview of this discussion for many limitations.

Economy plays the key role in a society or community which is true for the Tripuris also. In the past, their economy was based on shifting or jhum cultivation. Today it has taken a new dimension due to shortage of arable land, increase of population and with the advent of various modern implements of settled cultivation. As a result, landless hill people have come to the plains in search of livelihood. Diversity of occupation for the survival is found common to them now. Some of the Tripuris are found to earn their livelihood by pulling rickshaw at Agartala town. Even some are earning by rowing boats at Dumbur water reservoir. Such adoption of diversity in occupation may be considered as epoch-making revolution in the tribal economy of Tripura.

The people of this small state in the remote corner was not outside the national mainstream of political struggle. Their political life has also undergone changes since monarchical period. Though the common people had no political conception and their chieftain or sardar was their

representative in the royal court, many of them were politically conscious of the system and organised themselves to revolt or fight against the authority. The Jamatia revolt of 1863, the Rieng unrest of 1942-43 and few more such incidents testify it. With the progress of time, monarchy has gone off to make room for democracy.

The educational status of the Trpuris has gone up in comparison with the early days but even then it is not significant enough. The dropout percentage of the students in the primary level is very high. The guardians in most cases, cannot afford to send the children to school for their poverty. When their parents remain busy in cultivation or earning, their children collect fire wood, fetch water, graze the cows or look-after the little brothers or sisters.

The above cited aspects which I could not bring under this study may encourage and inspire many researchers to come forward to work on them to highlight the aspects of the community. Over and above, I must confess that there have been many deficiencies due to limited scope and preoccupation with other activities. I expect the indulgence of readers in this regard. Any suggestion will thankfully be accepted and acknowledged.

To complete this monograph I have been indebted to Sri C. S. Chattopadhyaya for his initial guidance. I must thank Capt. N. C. Deb Barma, P. N. Bhattacharya and N. C. Deb Barma of Agartala for their hearty inspiration and cooperation. I would also like to thank T. Deb Barma of Khowai, S. Deb Barma of Chowmanu and Aswini Deb Barma of Kanchanmala for their cooperation. I am grateful to my teacher Shri P. C. Dhar of M.B.B. College, who has spared his valuable time in going through the manuscript and offered me valuable suggestion. I also express my sense of gratitude to Shri R. G. Singh for his cooperation and inspiration. Special thanks are due to Dipak Kumar Dutta who helped me with his knowledge and valuable guidance. Last but not the least is the help from Smti. Kaberi Deb Barma whose unfailing encouragement and painstaking efforts to type the whole lot of study papers expedited its entrance into the press. My thanks are due to her too.

D. P. Deb Barman.

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