

Environmental Cultures of Tripuri Tribe

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ABSTRACT

Numerically as per 2001 Census they are 5, 43,843 person in the State and Tripuris numerically highest in number among all the tribal groups. Tripura was under rule of Tripuri Kings till it is merged with Indian Dominion in the year 1949. Ethnically Tripuris belong to Indo-Mongoloid origin and linguistically within the Tibeto-Burman family. They speak in Kok-Borok as like as other 7(seven) tribal groups of Tripura. Tripuri has two synonyms - 'PuranTripuri' and 'DevVarma'. The dynasty has ancestral relation with the lunar dynasty of the Mahabharata. They are found all over Tripura though the western and northern parts of the Tripura are the main concentrated areas. This is one of the oldest tribes of the land which comprises almost 50 percent of the total population of Tripura (Debbarman, January2006). The social structure of this community is quite simple which largely depends on agriculture for its subsistence. Tripuris are the largest tribal community in Tripura. They have first migrated in this territory and could be introduced as aboriginal tribe of Tripura (Majumder, January, 2013).

Tripuris are mainly Hindus. They follow both the Shakti Cult Vaishnavism. Beside they have belief in different deities, rites and rituals traditionally followed by them from time immemorial. Garia, Kharchi, Ker are their main festivals. They have colourful folk dances like, Garia, Lebang, MusakSurmani, Tangbiti and Mamita(Debbarman, January2006). These dances are invigorated with sweet molodies of folk songs and music of flute, Sarinda, Champreng and other string instruments. Once Tripuri society was controlled by the regional social councils, which had power to exercise on over all social and economic disputes among the community members. In fact the chief of these councils were selected by the then kings of Tripura. But due to democratic set up, now a days, these councils have no existence. All sorts of minor problems are worked after by Village Panchayet or by other Legal Bodies.

Due to social transitions in all sphere of life particularly in the field of Agriculture, Socio-Cultural life, economic life, educational and health awareness, elite role etc. Tripuris are now treated as an advanced tribal community among the tribes of Tripura. They practice the Jhum or shifting cultivation. They generally make their home on the slopes of hilly terrains. The women wear hand-made breast attires known as Risa. They also wear Pachra. The festivals of the Tripuri tribe are generally related to the cultivation process. LebangBoomani is the popular folk dance of the tribe. The indigenous Tripuri people comprises various hill tribal communities viz., Tipra, Reang, Jamatia, Kaipeng, Noatia, Koloj, Halam, etc. who migrated to this land in successive waves in the ancient past. They grew in isolation and were sometimes subjugated by one another. Each community had its own elementary social and administrative organization starting from the village level and up to the chieftainship of the whole tribe (Debbarman, January 2006).

The tribes enjoy their traditional freedom based on the concept of self-determination. The relation between the king and the subject tribes was as Maharaja (king) of Tripura-Missip

or liaison officer Roy of Headman of the tribe - Sardar of chief of the village-the individual. The Tripuri people are considered part of the Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group. Originally they migrated from near the upper courses of the Yangtze kiang and the Hwang Ho Rivers in Western China. They had left China long before the Sui dynasty came to power. At the time of migration they were animists. So it may be reasonably assumed that they migrated before 65 AD, the year Buddhism was introduced in China (Majumder, January, 2013).

1. Indigenous water reservoir:

During dry season the Tripuris tribal people of Chittagong Hill Tracts make earthen cross dam for reserving water out along the streams (locally called Goda). Tripuris use this water for irrigation and domestic purpose. This tribal people maintain vegetation cover at the upper catchments without any disturbance of the vegetation. The vegetation at the catchments are a ensures continuous flow of water (Roy, 2011).

2. Indigenous insect resistant method for timber:

The Tripuri farmers first girdle in the trunk by removing bark and sap wood of the tree at about 60cm above the ground. After one or two months of girdling the tree is harvested. This method reduces the starch content of the sap wood portion due to disconnection of water transportation system. Thus, wood becomes resistant to insect attack due to reduce content of starch materials in sap wood portion. This method is more scientific and effective to hilly areas. This also helps to prevent the insect attack with any extract cost (Sarkar,2014)..

3. Sacred groves as an indigenous culture:

The tribal's are the only people who still follow their tradition and practices as well as wisdom. They are the only people who still conserve medicinal plants; they are the only people who still use indigenous variety of seeds along with hybrid variety (Debnath,2015). There are sacred groves in

almost all tribal villages under which they place their deities and they are the people who still worship nature. This is the method how they conserve biodiversity through their day to day practice. The tribal's fully depend on forest for their livelihood but they do not cause much harm to forest (Tagore, 2017).

4. Indigenous Medical knowledge and application of floral species:

The Tripuri living in the forest or in close proximity of the forest are dependent upon herbal practices due to lack of communication and negligence from both sides, cost of allopathy and have deep faith upon their old treaties and tradition (Singh et. Al. , 1997). The plant parts such as root, leaf, flower, fruit and seeds are used by Tripuri as a medicine and their knowledge of practice has come down through generations (Deb, 1968). But now-a-days this flow of indigenous knowledge from elder Tripuris to younger generation is interrupted as the young generation is reluctant to learn about traditional medicinal practices (Himangshuet. Al.,

2009). The younger Tripuris often leaves their villages because of the profound economic changes. Indigenous practices and knowledge regarding the sustainable harvest and utilization of plant resources as medicine should be documented and preserved before they disappear (Majumdar et al. ,2006).



Table : Some ethno-medicinal plants used by Tripuri tribe

Botanical name / Family/Collection No.	Vernacular name (Bengali- B; Kokborak- K; Tripuri-T; Reang-R; English-E)	Availability status	Part(s) used	Ailments	Dosage and mode of administration
Alpinia allughas Rosc. Zingiberaceae/HBD, 102	Tara (B); Taruku (K); Taru (R)	Occasionally cultivated	Stem, Rhizome	Bronchitis and rheumatic pain	About 10 g of stem and 10 g of rhizome are boiled in 8 cups of water, reduced to half and strained, 10 g of powdered Moong pulse is boiled with this decoction by adding small amount of asafoetida (Hing), and it is prescribed to children for twice a day for one week to cure respiratory troubles. The same formulation is also prescribed during rheumatic pain.
Amomum dealbatum Roxb. Zingiberaceae/HBD, 124	Alach (B), (K); Alachi (T)	Rarely cultivated	Fruits or Seed	Muscular rheumatism	Fruits or seeds are powdered and half teaspoonful powder is mixed with equal amount of honey and taken once a day for about one month in case of muscular rheumatism.
Chenopodium ambrosioides Linn. Chenopodiaceae/BKD, 233	Bara bathu sag (B); Bara Bathua (K); Batto (R)	Wild	Leaves, stem	Scabies	Leaves and stems are boiled in water, strained, cooled and then sponged all over the body.
Litsea glutinosa (Lour.) C. B. Robins/ Lauraceae HBD, 161	Menda (B); Kukurchik (K)	Wild	Leaves, bark	White discharge	Fresh leaves are pounded and 1-2 teaspoonful mucilaginous juice is taken early morning in empty stomach for one week in case of white discharge.
Meyna spinosa Roxb. Rubiaceae/DR, 190	Monkata (B)	Wild common	Tender leaves	Skin irritation	About 40-50 g of leaves crushed with little amount of ginger, the paste is rubbed on the infected areas.
Mussaenda roxburghii Hook. f. /Rubiaceae/DR, 171	Mussaenda (B); Kuthoikhum (K)	Wild	Leaves	Bone fracture	Some hard materials (bamboo stick). After Approx. 100 g matured fresh leaves are crushed and one egg (Hen's) mixed with it and made into paste, warmed up and then applied on the fractured area of the body and covered with a young banana leaf and bandaged with seven days bandaged should be open and repeat the treatment with the above formulation at least three times or more.
Neptunia prostrata (Lamk.) Baill. Mimosaceae/HBD, 178	Haraisag (K); Panyalajuri (T)	Wild	Young shoot	Acidity, gastritis and constipation	Crushed twigs are mixed with paste of unboiled rice (Atapchal) and made into large sized pills, fried and taken orally or with mealsto prevent gastritis, acidity and constipation
Passiflora foetida Linn. Passifloraceae/DR, 116	Ban kamala, FokFokgula (R)	Wild	Leaves, fruits	Blood purifier, burns and scabies	Ash of the leaves mixed with ghee and applied in burns and scabies, to heal the wounds and immediate relief from pain. Ripe fruits are prescribed to take raw as a blood purifier.
Phyllanthus acidus (Linn.) Skeels	Horboroi (T)	Cultivated	Fruits	Liver problem and	Fruits are taken either raw or dry as liver tonic. Some time dry fruits are preserved and taken with

Euphorbiaceae/BKD, 211				blood purification	warm water for the same purposes.
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Source: Field Survey, 2016-17.

5. Garia puja and nature:

The Garia puja begins usually in the spring season on the last day of Chaitra and continues for about seven days. According to the instruction of the Ochai ,the house holder brings the upper portion of a bamboo pole along with its branches and leaves and plants it in the north or east side of his courtyard. Afterward a beautiful garland is fastened to it which is prepared by cotton thread and flowers (Bhatt, 2006). Garia is the natural benevolent god of the household who looks after the increase of production. Garia is called "Garia Raja" who always prefers welfare of his inmates by giving the wealth, peace and children (Raatan, 2006). On The whole garia represents the character of the benign nature and he always does well to people.



Plate 14:Garia puja

6. Lebangboomani dance nature:

Following Garia, there is a lull in agricultural activity as the Tripuris await the monsoon. During this time hordes of colorful insects called lebangs descend on the hill slopes in search of the sown seeds. The dancers depict how bamboo clappers are used to catch them..

7. KER:

KER literally means austerity in English. This Puja is celebrated 14 days following the end of Kharchi puja. It is the strictest puja ever performed by Tripuri people.

8. Kharchi Puja :

The word Kharchi is derived from two Tripuri words 'Khar' or Kharta meaning or Sin, 'chi' or si meaning cleaning. Final meaning is cleaning of the sins of the people or the kingdom. Some says Kha means Earth, Archi means burning flame. According to Rajmala, Hirabati the queen of late king Tripuri is worshiped the fourteen Gods and Goddesses to get a child.



Plate 16: The view of Kharchi Puja

9. Ganga or TUIMA Puja :

After Navanna; Ganga or TUIMA Puja is celebrated in March-April every year. This is another remarkable tribal festival (Roy choudhury, 1983). The goddess Tuima and God Sangram are identified with two major forces of nature: the water and the mountain. They are worshiped jointly in every occasion. Tuima as a water Goddess performs her defined role and ensures her protection to her worshipers. Ganga or Tuima, it may be recalled, is one of the fourteen deities of the land. Like Garia Puja, this too is a community festival (Pannalal, 1997).



Plate 18:Tuima puja which is decorated by bamboos

10. Crop Plants Conserved as Source of Food:

The ethnic and indigenous people have conserved several plants and endangered cultivars of agricultural crops such as rice, maize, millets, grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables which have originated under diverse agro-ecological climates in Tripura, central and peninsular region of India, the indigenous communities have their abode, e.g. some of these indigenous cultivars of rice such as Pattambi, Champara, Valsana are conserved by Kurichya, Pariyar, Khasi, Jatin and Garo tribes in Tripura. These cultivars are genetically superior than existing cultivated rice varieties in characters like aroma, grain quality, protein content, digestibility and also found resistance to insects, pests and diseases.

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