



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.08.43>

A STUDY ON THE FOLK CULTURE OF THE BENGALIS PEOPLE OF TRIPURA

¹Sri Abhijit Das and ²Sri Rabindra Sukla Das

^{1&2}Assistant Professor, Department of History

¹Government Degree College and ²Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar College

¹Dharmanagar, Dharmanaaar North Tripura and ²Belonia, South Tripura
Tripura, India

Abstract:

Tripura is a beautiful North-Eastern state whose culture is embroidered both by the native tribes as well as the Bengalis living there through generations. Presently out of the total population of Tripura Bengalis represented almost 70% of Tripura's population and the tribal population comprised 30%. The Bengalis of Tripura are populating from many past decades. These Bengalis migrated to this state from Bangladesh or East Bengal (as it was called by Pakistan) during 1947 and 1971 wars at large; when they wanted a refuge from the Pakistan warriors. The native traditions and customs have a lot of influence by the Bengalis started from the Manikya period. The influence of the Bengali culture in the society of Tripura proves the dominance of this particular community in the state. Bengali speaking people are found in almost all the corner of Tripura. From the festival to belief Bengalis have a major contribution towards the formation of today's Tripura State. Our main objective is to highlight the rich Bengali culture of Tripura which is gradually erasing in the present time.

Keywords: Tradition, Bengalis, Culture, Population, Community.

1. INTRUDUCTION: Tripura is located in the extreme southwest corner of the North-east. This hilly landlocked State spreads over a total area of 10,492sq km, covering approximately 0.29 percent of the entire North-east. This land of hilly slopes, flat lands, rivers, lakes, hillocks and forest stretches between 91.09° to 92.20° East longitude and 22.56° to 24.32° North latitude. Tripura shares 856 km long international boundary with Bangladesh and is surrounded by that country from the north, south and west sides. Tripura is connected with the rest of India by only one road connecting the state with Assam's Cachar District. Tripura was one of the exclusive independent units of India even in the days of British rule. Previously, Tripura was under the dominion of the famous Manikya Empire. In fact, the rulers of Manikya Dynasty governed Tripura from a considerable period of time. It was only in the year 1972 that Tripura had been recognized as one of the Indian states. The population of Tripura mostly divided into two categories, one is tribal and another is non-tribal. From the very beginning the Tribals were living here and they have divided into nineteen groups and in the non-tribal are comprise into Bengali, Manipuri, Muslim, Buddhist etc. In the present scenario, out of the total population of Tripura Bengalis represented almost 70%. Bengali speaking people are known to constitute a major portion of the total population of Tripura. The cultural domain of Tripura is rich with a wide gamut of various multi-dimensional features and it has a lot of influence by the Bengalis. The influence of the Bengali culture in the society of Tripura proves the dominance of this particular community in the state. Bengali speaking people are found in almost all the corner of Tripura. From the festival to belief Bengalis have a major contribution towards the formation of today's Tripura State.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY: Our main objectives of the study are-

- I. How Bengali folk culture originated in Tripura?
- II. To understand the rich Bengali folk culture in Tripura, which is gradually erasing in the present time.
- III. To highlight the contribution of the Bengali people on the cultural heritage of Tripura.

3. METHODOLOGY: This paper totally based on primary and secondary Source materials like books, articles and relevant website which are critically and analytically examined.

4. RISE OF BENGALI CULTURE IN TRIPURA: Bengali is one of the largest dominant communities in India. The community who basically speaks Bengali they are known as Bengali community. Bengali is an Indo-Aryan language which is come to the picture during 100-120 AD especially in the pala and sen period of Bengal area. The first evident of Bengali language are visible in charya pad. In India west Bengal (undivided Bengal) were the main area of Bengali community and their culture. Tripura is one of the small states of north-east India here the Bengali people and its culture also dominated over the local community. Spreading of Bengali language and culture is not a new phenomenon in Tripura it started very early period especially in the Manikya period when Tripura had good relation with Bengal (present Bangladesh). One of the main reasons to spread of Bengali language and culture in Tripura was the royal patron. The king of Tripura spends a large number of money to spread the Bengali language in Tripura. From the Manikya period Bengali was the official language of Tripura. Maharaja Birchandra Manikya takes first important step in this context.



Cover Page



He was the first person who honour Rabindranath Tagore in very beginning of his life when Tagore published his ‘Bhagnahridoy’ kavya. Tripura’s relation with Rabindranath Tagore was most important factor to spread Bengali language and culture in Tripura. Birchandra himself also fond of Bengali literature and write premmarichika, ucchas, jhulan etc. Not only Rabindranath, Birchandra brought many novels Bengali people for spreading the Bengali culture in Tripura. After Birchandra manikya the process of spread of Bengali culture also continue during the period of Radhakishore Manikya, Birendra Kishore Manikya and Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya. Rabindranath first came to Tripura during the reign of Radhakishore Manikya. Therefore, the impact of Bengali culture in Tripura is more dominated and which was continue till now. Ancient copper plate, coin and royal order of Manikya period especially in the 15th century gives detail evident on that. In 1914 Minister Brajendra Kishore Debbarman published a royal order where mention it is mandatory to every office, court and other place to follow the Bengali language and if anybody not obey this it is punishable. Bengali culture not only limited only royal court but it spread in large. It is visible that Bengali culture is flourishing all over the state with the support of Bengali beloved king. So, it is shows that the rise of Bengali culture in Tripura first spread because of the patron of king and gradually it spread every corner of the state.

5. LANGUAGE: Bengali language is the mother tongue of all the Bengalis of Tripura and it has occupied a place as the official language of the Tripura Government. More than 80% of the people in Tripura speak Bengali. Infect non-Bengali peoples who are living in Tripura are also know Bengali language. This language is prevalent in almost in Government School, College and other educational institutes in Tripura.

6. FOLK DANCE: Folk Dance is the integral part of culture. The Bengali of Tripura has their own distinct dance forms. Most of the folk dances of Bengalis are performed during festivals or on festive occasions and social events. Among the folk dances of Bengalis, the Gajan dance is famous in the rural areas of Tripura, celebrated in the last day of the Chaitra (Bengali month) month. In this dance people dress like God Shiva and goddesses Gauri. The dancers dance house-to-house and collect rice and money. Both men and women are performed in this dance. Another folk dance is Dhamail which is most popular in Tripura especially the district of North Tripura, Unakoti, Dhalai. It is originated in Sylhet, Bangladesh. Since this Sylhet region (Bangladesh) is adjacent to the border of Tripura, hence the culture of Sylhet influenced in Tripura especially the area of North Tripura, Unakoti, Dhalai, Khowai. Dhamail is a group dance performed by the women during marriages and other auspicious occasions. In some places of Tripura (North Tripura, Kumarghat, Khowai, Kailasahar etc) in the Bengali marriage this dance is a ritual to perform the day before the marriage. The main dress of this dance for women is saree. This Dhamail dance has its own song composed by the different writer in Bengali language, among them Radharoman Datta (born in Bangladesh) who is known as the “Father of Dhamail Song”. The musical instruments like mirdanga, kartals and many other traditional musical instruments are used for performing this dance. This dance form mainly relates the love of Radha and Krishna and the inner significance of this dance form is that the newly wedded couple must unite their souls in such fashion. In this dance the ladies move in circle, clapping their hands to the beat of the music. The songs are first sung by the leader and then the others join the chorus. The lyrics mainly relate to Shyam (Krishna) and Radha. Gradually the beat/tempo increases and finally reaches the crescendo. Breaks are then given so that the ladies can have paan and shupari and/or tea.

7. RELIGION, FAIRS AND FESTIVALS: Hinduism is the most practiced religion of Tripura and the Bengalis of Tripura follow Hinduism with ardent fervour. As per 2011 census, out of total population 83.40 % is follower of Hinduism. Since Bengalis are the mainly subjugated by the Hindus, the festivals celebrated here are quite common to the festivals celebrated in the rest of India. In addition to this, there are many festivals unique to Tripura. There are numerous religious festival tours organized throughout the year in Tripura with great pomp and show. Durga Puja is the biggest Bengali festival held in Tripura. During this time the complete Agartala town is decorated. Puja pandals all around and people leaving behind their religions and caste or creeds move together to enjoy the five days long celebrations unitedly. This also depicts the predominance of Bengali culture in this state. Moreover, Kalipuja is also celebrated whole over Tripura (Especially North & Unakoti district) with pomp and circumstances. During the kalipuja whole Dharmanagar, Kailasahar, Kumarghat etc. cities are decorated. Apart from Durga puja, Kali puja, Bengali celebrations such as Lakshmi Puja, Deewali, Jamai Shashti, and many others like Dol Jatra (Holi), Pous Sankranti, Ashokashtmi and Buddha Jayanti, and New Year. During Ashokashtmi there are special celebrations at Unnakoti. The Fourteen Goddess Temple tour in Old Agartala attracts a lot of visitors for its Karchi Puja, and so does Tirthamukh on the occasion of the Pous Sankranti Mela. Above that festival such as Rabindra/ Nazrul Jayanti, the boat race at Nirmahal, Melaghar also perform as a part of Bengali culture / festival of Tripura.

8. ART AND ARCHITECTURE: The art and architecture are the part of cultural fabric of Tripura. In Tripura, several archaeological sites have been found where the art and architectural activities of are visible i.e Unakoti, Devatamura etc. It is believing that the Hindu (as we know that the Bengalis are follower of Hinduism) philosophy was found in these sites. The word 'Unakoti' literally means one less a kuti (crore) in Bengali. It is situated in Kailasahar sub-division in north Tripura district. 10 kilo-meters away from Kailasahar and 20 kilo-meters away from Dharmanagar. Unakoti’ is a born bearer of exemplary work of art and culture of



Cover Page



ancient times. Ornamented with natural beauties, this pilgrim of Hindu religion is considered to have been built in 7th and 9th centuries AD. In Unakoti, the exact date of the beginning of the art is not known to us, because we do not get any reliable information pertaining to this period. The images found at Unakoti are of two types: namely rock-carved figures and stone images. Among the rock cut carvings, the central Shiva head and gigantic Ganesha figures deserve special mention. The central Shiva head known as Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava is about 30 feet high including an embroidered head-dress which itself is 10 feet high. On each side of the head-dress of the central Shiva, there are two full size female figures - one of Durga standing on a lion and another female figure on the other side. In addition, three enormous images of Nandi Bull are found half buried in the ground. There are various other stone as well as rock cut images at Unakoti.

Devtamura (or Debtamura) is a hill range in South Tripura district of Tripura, India. It is known for an archaeological site of rock sculptures, a panel of carved images, on the bank of Gomati River. The stone images are reported to mark the revival of Brahmanism during the 15/16th century when influence Buddhism waned in India. The site includes colossal carvings of the image of Devi Chakrakma. The purpose of the carvings and the artists who carved them are unknown. The statues are carved on the steep sloping rock exposures of the Kalajhari Hills which drains into the Gomti River. There are in all 37 rock cut images which also include images of Ganesha, Kartikeya, Mahishasuramardini, Durga and many others

9. FOOD AND CUSTUMES: Bengali people are considered to be great foodies and the appreciators of good taste. The staple Bengali food comprises of rice and fish. Fish recipes also form a part of every festive celebration in Tripura. In every corner of the state, one can get Bengali food. Cooking oils commonly used are mustard oil and used for both deep-frying and cooking. Other vegetable oils are also used. Ghee is used for cooking special occasion foods. Important spice and ingredient are mustard seeds and paste, chillies (both green and red), Panch Phoran (a mix of five spices), yoghurt, coconut, maize, gram flour are also common ingredients. Milk and dairy products play a huge role in the preparation of sweets.

Bengali women commonly wear the shari (sari), often distinctly designed according to local cultural customs. In urban areas, many women and men wear Western-style attire. Although the Men also wear the traditional costumes like dhoti, panjabi, kurta, sherwani, pyjama are seen during weddings and major festivals.

10. CONCLUSION: Lastly, we conclude to say that the culture of Bengalis of Tripura is considered to be one of the richest cultures in Tripura. Tripura is justly proud of its rich cultural heritage and Bengalis Peoples play an important rule for this. Apart from Bengalis, the non-Bengali people have also been living for a long time. Hence, a mixed culture has been emerged in Tripura. Although the culture of the Bengalis of Tripura is quite different from the other communities or tribal communities, yet they have merged well with people of other faith. This shows that local Bengalis had the perseverance to cope up with the existence communities. It is believed that the Bengalis are one of those communities that have existed in the state peacefully along with many other groups from several past centuries.

11. SUGGESTION & FINDING: This paper tries to analyse the Bengali folk culture of Tripura which is mosly followed in the Society of the Bengali community in Tripura, but it may not be cover all the folk cultural activity of Bengali community in all part of tripura and there is a chance of missing their origin and changes on present senario. But this paper broadly analyse the Major folk culture of Bengali community which give major impact on the cultural activity of this particular community.

Reference

1. Devi Indubala & Anirban (ed) (2010). Amazing North-East, Tripura, New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd.
2. Dey Ranjit, Tripurar Loka Sahitya Charcha: Atit o bartaman, Agartala, Tripura Bani Prakashani.
3. Sengupta Nitish, (2008) History of the Bengali- speaking People, New Delhi, UBS Publishers Distributors Pvt. Ltd.
4. Chakraborty Sudip, (2017) The Bengalis a portrait of community, New Delhi, Aleph Book Company.
5. Ratan T, (2003) Encyclopaedia of North-East India, New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House,
6. Bera Gautam Kumar, (2010) A Cultural and Religious History of Tripura, New Delhi: Spectrum Publications
7. Palit Projit Kumar, (ed) (2004) History of Religion in Tripura. New Delhi, Kaveri Books,
8. Das Ratna, (1997) Art and Architecture of Tripura, Agartala, Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura.
9. Chaudhari DK, (2000) The Political Agents and the Native Raj, New Delhi, Mittal Publication.
10. Gan Chaudhuri, Jagadish, (1985), A Political History of Tripura, Inter India publication.
11. Bera Gautam Kumar, (2010) The Land of Fourteen Goods Ethno- cultural profile of Tripura, New Delhi, Mittal Publication.