

**TWO DAYS STATE LEVEL WORKSHOP ON "INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE
SYSTEM AND PRACTICES OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES OF TRIPURA"**

Organised by

**Social Science Departments
Holy Cross College, Agartala**

March 12th, 2021

Report

Twelve (12) resource persons have delivered their lectures in the Two-Day State Level Workshop on "Indigenous Knowledge System and Practices of Tribal Communities of Tripura" in twelve highly enriched technical sessions and enlightened the hearts and minds of the fifty (50) participants, who also played the constructive role of patient and disciplined listeners.

Chief Guest, Day – 1, (Inaugural Session)

Smt. Krairi Mog Choudhury is an eminent literaturist, researcher, novelist, folk dancer and singer as well as a choreographer. Madam achieved gold medal from 'Indian Women Development Society' and the Ministry Of Culture, Government of India. In 2008, madam received Radha Mohan Thakur reward from TTAADC, Government of Tripura and in 2010 received "Matri Bhasha Sanman" award. In 2015 madam was awarded with Presidential award, Government of India. Madam is a well known translator who published many novels like Gitanjali in Mog language. Many stories, poems, folk tales and folklores were also published by her.

The speaker of the first technical session, on 12th March, 2021 was **Dr. Arobindo Mahato**, Assistant Professor, Department of Rural Studies, Tripura University. He has spoken on the topic of 'Civilization Process of Tribals In Tripura'. The Resource Person started his speech with the development of the tribals in Tripura. He argued, there were two major products/resources of Tripura wools and elephant teeth till 1947. Britishers developed road/transport facility because of which, the price of elephant teeth was only rupee one (1), whereas the price of the same was in between rupees two hundred (200) to three hundred (300) in other states. It shows how the resources were pulled up from the state to outside in a very cheap price.

Cultural aspect of tribal community as a whole was dominated by languages, which was the by default deciding factor of the country. Other nations are having one language for the whole nation. But in India we have many languages in many states. The common threat to India is that we have many identities. Western philosophy believes in clearing doubts, but the Indian system is based upon belief systems.

There are two important components inherent in the Indian belief system, which are values and ethics. The belief is same in all parts of India. In West, kids are not staying with parents, but in India it is difficult. We follow the path with belief.

By the name of modernity we follow the path of west. Indigenous people are also doing the same. Chuhar movement was the first freedom movement of India – the longest struggle between Janajati tribals and the British, which continued for almost thirty years. It is also known as Paikers Movement (horse care takers are known as Paikers), which started on 1774 AD.

Why the elephant it was selling in only at one rupee while it was selling in higher price in other states of India? which we believe for last 5000 years. Now these things are becoming models for development, where belief and faith is the most important element

Because of the division among tribes others were taking the advantages, so that the price was too less. Modernity is bringing division among the community which was there in Chuhar movement.

Nangiri movement near - Thiruvanthapuram - one travel woman stopped Haider to attack that Kingdom. Nangiri was the girl who stopped the breast tax. We need to study cultural integrity instead of diversity. We need to rethink about our culture on the basis of our belief and faith

The Speaker of the second technical session was – Sri. Sunil Kalai and his topic was – ‘Centering the Indigenous community within indigenous Methodologies’.

Sir Sunil has highlighted the following points in his deliberation, which are as follows:

- Interrelationship between the man and nature
- Auto-atnography
- Rituals - Chipko movement - high respect of nature.
- Importance of bamboo:

- ❖ It is used for many reasons like making house, worship, making ban.
- ❖ They are very aware to protect the nature.
- Indigenous nation - it is not like what Nehru and other have talked about.
- Social life of culture
- Kalai Brandi
- Different from the research goals, conducted by institutions supported by nation-states
- Indigenous community also needs to open their minds
- Belief
- Collective indigenous estates
- Organic alarm

The third speaker of the day one of the two day workshop was **Smt. Krairi Mog Choudhury**:

Madam Krairi Mog Choudhury discussed about the folk culture of mog community in her topic 'Mog Jana Jatir Loka Sanskriti' (in Bengali). She discussed about the folk culture and tradition related with nature centric dependency where many trees, birds, imaginary folktales was discussed. She explained the mog culture which is related to evolutionary changes from hunting and food gathering society to the agricultural society. Mog communities have traditional folk music, dance and short stories related to nature, animals and environmental relationships among the people. Summarize many short stories and folk tales and folklore which is directly related to its social issues, social relationship. Smt. Krairi Mog Choudhury also highlighted the importance of pangkham and oral songs which is related to many romantic conversations along with laughable comic humorous act.

Fr. Binoy John, CSC, was the resource person of the next technical session of day one of the two day Workshop. Fr. has started his discussion with providing explanation on Biological Quotient, Intelligence Quotient, Emotional Quotient and Spiritual Quotient. He emphasized on the saying of Blessed Basil Moreau for inculcating values in students.

He said that indigenous people are compelled to exist with the standard society. They find it difficult to adjust. However, recently there have been improvement in the field of education and other basic amenities, although still there are some serious problems with regards to political, administrative and linguistic issues. Here comes the role of emotional intelligence, which provided us the ability to understand their capabilities. Unfortunately, there are very rare studies on the

emotional intelligence of the tribal students. It is very important to understand indigenous students and their behaviors. Our approach towards education should be holistic and not only on Intelligence Quotient. In a year more than one (1) lakh students die by committing Suicide. Fr. also said that, modernization has impacted indigenous communities in multiple ways.

The next resource person in the fourth technical section of the two day State level workshop was **Mr. Jarmajoy Hrangkhawl**, who is a Curendero, which means, traditional healer and shared about his experiences on treatment of various patients with fractured bones and other diseases, as a result of road accidents and other various mishaps. He also sheared a few pictures of treating the patients using traditional methods and how broken bones are joined with the help of his ayurvedic medicine. His presentation includes images of various patients who were treated by him as well as the fractured bones.

Day Two of the Workshop dated: 13/03/2021

In the day two (13th March, 2021) of the two-day State Level Workshop, **Dr Lincoln Reang**, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Tripura University was the first Speaker, who has spoken on 'Indigenous knowledge and Conservation Practices in the Tribal Society', where he discussed about the community reflections and beliefs related to various traditional practices/temperaments. Sir mainly focused on the usage of bamboo, which may reflect as an useful plants but from the perspective of indigenous traditional knowledge, bamboo is having significant socio cultural as well as religious significance.

Resource Person: - Dr. Vanlalmuana Darlong

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science.

Tripura University.

Topic- Religious Believes and Practices of the Darlongs of Tripura.

It is my pleasure to introduce my own community, but the objective of the study is not only to confine our self in such a small community, through this we will try to understand the relationship between religion towards social change of a community, and secondly we will try to link up the

relationship between culture and religion which are very prominent aspect of the tribals particularly in our state.

First of all let me briefly introduced to the world of Darlongs, secondly I will be introducing some of the practices, and thirdly we will try to sum up with some observation. Some of us may be hearing of the word Darlong for the first time, so let us see. Who are the Darlongs? They belong to the Kuki Chin family and they have a long connection with the state of Tripura, who are now basically scattered in three district of Tripura Dhalai, Unakoti and North Tripura. the Darlongs have their own way to describe their present habited they call it the "Sim Bial" the south division and "Mar Gial" the north division. There are 13 villages in southern division which may not be in line with the political map, and 11 villages in northern division.

Coming to the social life of Darlongs, the word "Tlaw" which cannot be actually described is very familiar to all the Darlongs, but if I come to translate in English it can be a combination of simplicity and the willingness to help others.

The religion, the Darlongs did have their own history and basically the study was made through oral tradition, collecting from different sources through the aged man. We tried to understand some of the gods and goddess, they believed in some of the evil spirits which they used to worship some of them are "water gods" and also there are so many others who are basically evil spirit. However with the entry of Christianity in 1917 and being baptized in 1919 after coming in contact with New Zealand Christian Baptist mission and they just celebrated their 100 years of Christianity in 2019.

Taking you back to the story of earthquake, the Darlongs have been believing that the two world exist, the earth and the underworld, and this is just one story there are so many other. The cause of the earth quake was narrated, the insect beetle rolled down to the underworld when the people of the underworld the beetle, the beetle told the people of the underworld that all the people above have all died, so basically the earthquake is used by the people of the underworld to test if the people on earth are still alive or not. This is why we often hear during earthquake the Darlongs shouting "we are still alive".

Some of the customary practices, we don't have customary laws, which are followed by different committees from 1935 till date, and the latest edition is 2012, lets us see some of the common practices among the Darlongs, they prefer exogamous marriage system, which is to marry someone

outside their own clan and traditionally monogamy is enforced. However what is important is the price of the Bride, we call it "Hman" which is mandatory till today, even after 100 years of Christianity Bride price is still prevalent today. Today it cost Rs. 1100 to marry a girl who has not married to anyone else, Rs. 900 to marry a widow and Rs. 50 to marry a divorce woman which is all administered by village elders.

Essential payment for different occasion's fees, these are not considered as penalties which are again administered by the village administration, every village have established village council supervised by the apex body or the elders of the village. We also have divorce system which is divided into two types, the normal divorce and the divorce due to adultery. Fines for social offence, crimes and penalties usually settled down at first stage by village council if not then it is referred to apex body which I was also the member for quite some time. We are coming to some important practices of what we call "Sehrutuk Puan" which is the cover of the bride's bedding, which is taken to her in law's house and this bedding cover is given to the father in law, no other person is eligible to receive that particular piece of cloth used to cover bride's bedding. Next practice is called "Sadar" or "Zuardar" that is the shoulder bone of the animal killed in the bride's marriage feast, us taken to her in law's house after the marriage. This signifies the relation between two families.

The next practice is "Kir-Lem" the practice of temporary return of a widow to her paternal or brother's home which is mandatory, but in some rare cases the widow is not given permission to return to her in law's or her children. "Maklut" is popularly known as 'ghar jamai' which is very rare but we still have instances where the boy sheltered in law's house in the exemption of the payment of "Hmanpui"

"Hringtha" is the practice of establishing a relation between maternal uncle and nephew, the set rate for this is Rs.200, and it is believe that if we do not pay this amount, they will ask this price even after our death. In this practice the uncle will do his best to please his nephew, with utensils, cloths and food. It is basically a bonding process between the uncle and the nephew. The practice of "Zan Hri" or witchcraft is still prevalent in Darlong community even after embracing Christianity; there is still a belief that evil spirit prevails, in recent time a lady was murdered on suspicion of practicing witchcraft. "Tui Rihli" an act of stealing of evil water, people believe in old days when I was a child that when a person is sick aged people use to come and test the pulse

of the sick person and inquire about where the sick person has taken bath last, then the elder of the family is asked to go and steal the water in early morning, but this person must not come across anybody in the process, the water is stolen along with little bit of sand or mud which is brought back home and get placed on top of the fire, and as the water dries up, the sick person is expected to get better and the evil spirit is expected to leave the body of the sick person. "Raminhuai" which means place of evil spirit. It is believe that the spirits are present in certain trees, this spirits are summoned to recover sick person from illness. The spirits are offered chicken in the presence of "Thiam Pu" which mean priest in the middle of the night.

Resource Person:- **Dr. Mousami Debbarma**

Assistant Professor, Department of Geography.

Tripura University.

Topic- Agricultural Knowledge System and Practices of Tripuri Community

The presentation was not only on shifting cultivation, but on the agricultural knowledge system and practices of tripuri community, here Tripuri community includes all indigenous communities of Tripura and not limited to people with surname of Debbarma and Tripura. There is different kind of agricultural system practice among the indigenous communities of Tripura which is not limited to shifting cultivation. But here, in this session I will be limiting myself to shifting cultivation.

It is not only practice in Tripura, but in other parts of the world as well, and know by different names, and among the kokborok speaking communities it is known as "Huk". Slash and burn technique is used in this kind of cultivation within a particular plot of land, and after the fertility of the soil is depleted, they shift to another plot of land. When we speak of shifting cultivation, it is mainly associated to negative perception, such as; it is a primitive mode of life, the agricultural return is very low and it causes deforestation as well as soil erosion. In short it is an unsustainable agricultural system.

So, how far is it true? From the view point of mainstream development concept, if everything is true, all the forest in Tripura should have been depleted by now, 60% of forest in Tripura is located in the hilly areas, where shifting cultivation has been practiced for a very long time. So how forest

has survived in those areas where shifting cultivation is still prevalent and how the Tripuri community has survived till today if this agricultural system was unsustainable. Shifting cultivation has been practiced in Tripura since the discovery of agriculture. It is not only common in Tripura, but it is mostly practice in tropical rainforest all over the world, like in Central Africa Congo, Central America Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil and in Southeast Asia in countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, China and Northeast India.

The characteristics of the area where the shifting cultivation is practice are hot and humid areas and heavy rainfall (above 200cm annually) and due to the heavy rainfall there is growth of the natural vegetation, even if the vegetation is destroyed it takes lesser time for the vegetation to grow back again. We find that shifting cultivation is mainly practiced in hilly areas, so the amount of land suitable for cultivation is very limited due to its geographical limitation. The irrigation system is not easy to maintain due to the elevated features and rigid terrain of the hilly areas. At the time when the shifting cultivation first developed market system was not there, hence less opportunity to generate income was available. Because of all these reasons the Tripuri Communities had to resort to shifting cultivation for subsistence of family survival. And as it was only for families self consumption the resources were not exploited.

In shifting cultivation mostly mixed cropping or crop diversification is adopted in order to check the soil erosion as well fertility of the soil, they also had the knowledge about the biodiversity, without which the ecology will be disturbed. The different crops which are grown in a small piece of land are harvested in different points of time of the year, so this gives different kinds of food throughout the year. So we can say that shifting cultivation has led to high degree of economic development, and from ecological and biological point of view it brings balance in the ecology. We can also say shifting cultivation is a response to environmental and climatic condition and it represents intricate relationship between ecology, economy and society of Tripuri community as shifting cultivation does not only provide food but it also determines food habit, housing types, political system and economy system.

Time has changed; the shifting cultivation once called sustainable agricultural system is no longer sustainable due to growth of population, so now we do have shifting cultivation alone, we have other agricultural system in low land. Through the first kokborok film Langmani Haduk the positive effects of sedentary cultivation was shown and it was encouraged to leave shifting

cultivation through showing its adverse effect, so the government has taken several to change the cultivation system of tripuri communities so that they can benefit from better agricultural system. New government policies which are carried out to improve the life of Tripuri community have resulted into use of chemicals to increase the productivity which leads to over use of resources mostly for commercial resources. The uses of chemical have led to harming the land, soil and water resources and also human health, it also resulted to mono-culture and loose of biodiversity.

The Tripuri community was self reliance, now they are depending on the market for food, so government policies also have led to unsustainable agricultural system. Therefore the government policies are only partly successful. In order to have sustainable development in terms of food security, there is need to replace both shifting cultivation as well as present unsustainable land use system gradually with alternative locally suitable land use system.

Title : Sustainable Development through Indigenous Knowledge

Resource Person: Dr. Bindu Ranjan Chakma

Narrative Report: The speaker spoke about the integration of indigenous knowledge and development in the modern world. In his address he first explained about the idea of indigenous knowledge and how it is linked to the concept of sustainable development. He spoke about the introduction of the notion of sustainable knowledge in the 1970s primarily to deal with environmental problems and to sustain knowledge systems. To address emerging issues of poverty and environmental dangers, sustainable development came out as the only solution. In this regard he also mentioned about Brandon Commission Report and the Gandhian philosophy of environmentalism. In the second phase of his discussion he explained how indigenous knowledge is related to sustainable development. He pointed that indigenous knowledge is related to nature and it in turn conserves biological diversity, agricultural practices et.al. He mentioned that environmental conservation, social security and development are the pillars of sustainable development. In the final phase of his discussion he points out some of the problems and challenges faced by indigenous knowledge. The idea of globalization, environmental changes like global warming, practice of mono plantations are some the challenges mentioned by him. In this regard he also provides some possible solutions to address these challenges. He recommends to create community level knowledge bank to preserve indigenous knowledge, since most of the indigenous knowledge is passed on orally and so written record is necessary. Knowledge gardens might be

created to bring many traditional knowledge systems under one umbrella. In his concluding remarks he called for having a participatory approach to address the challenges and bring possible solutions to achieve sustainable development through indigenous knowledge.

Sri. Anthony Ranglong, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Holy Cross College, Agartala was the resource person of the next technical session. Sir has spoken on the topic of 'Ranglong Traditional Information System'. Sir first briefly provided a genealogy of the Ranglongs and made a mention that, the Ranglongs are a tribal group, belong to the Tibeto-Burman ethnicity and linguistically belong to Kuki-Chin language family. There is very little information about their origin, so as the information about the traditional life of the Ranglongs are based on oral tradition. The Ranglongs are fond of merriment. The special feast celebrated on a ground scale among them is called 'Zubuol'. The community is fairly liberal and encourages endogamy. They are a migratory race, living their life by engaging in the 'Jhum Cultivation' and clearing the dense forests.

The Ranglong community embraced patriarchy. The role of the women in the family also is as important as men. The tribe favours a joint family system. War and chase run are look upon as the noblest pursuit of man. warrant clash they looked upon as the novelist pursuit of man.

The next resource person was **Dr. Rumki Nath Sen**, Assistant Professor and Dipankar Debbarma Department of Zoology, Holy Cross College and delivered a talk on the topic of "Practice of Entomophagy by The Different Tribes Residing in Sepahijala and South Tripura District of Tripura, North East India." In her presentation, madam said, edibles insects are natural renewable resources that provide food and economic safety to many ethnic groups in India including Tripura. Consumption of edible insects or entomophagy is quite common in tribal areas of Tripura and it prevents the loss of rich traditional information that has been passed from one generation to other. Apart from being a source of high protein rich diet, edible insects are also a part of culture of different tribes in Tripura. As such there is a need to focus on the studies related to edible insects. This project aims to document the practice of entomophagy amongst the different tribal communities of Tripura. From this study it was found that 33 species of insects belonging to 7 different orders (Orthoptera, Hymenoptera, Hemiptera, Blattodea, Coleoptera, Lepidoptera & Mantodea) are used as traditional food item principally consumed by the tribal people of Tripura.

The last speaker of the two day State Level Workshop was **Dr. Susmita Saha**, Assistant Professor, Department of Human Physiology, Holy Cross College, Agartala. The topic of madam's presentation was 'Parkia javanica, used by indigenous community is a promising therapeutics for diabetic wound healing', where madam emphasized on, Parkia javanica, of leguminece family, has age old ethno-medicinal history. The indigenous people of North-east region of India widely use different parts of this plant to cure various ailments including cutaneous wound. The present study was designed to scientifically validates the potentiality of Parkia javanica on diabetic wound healing. Results showed that, Parkia javanica significantly stimulated proliferation and migration of skin fibroblasts and keratinocytes in a time and dose-dependent manner. The increased expression of collagen I and pro-inflammatory cytokines were detected after treatment. In case of in vivo study, Parkia javanica treated Swiss Albino mice showed faster wound healing compared to placebo control group. The results convincingly showed the wound healing property of Parkia javanica and the age old ethnomedicinal use of this plant by indigenous community for diabetic wound healing has been scientifically substantiated by this study.



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