CHAPTER-II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TRIPURA
2.0: INTRODUCTION:

The territory of Tripura has had a very long history. The early history of the kingdom of Tripura is a complex blend of history with mythology. The origin of the name of Tripura is still a matter of controversy among historians and researchers. The historicity and chronology of the early kings of Tripura referred to in ‘Rajmala’. According to ‘Rajmala’ Tripura’s royal house trace their origin to the celebrated ‘lunar’ dynasty.

2.1: HISTORY OF TRIPURA

The origin of the name ‘Tripura’ cannot be conclusively traced back to any recorded source of history. According to Captain Lewin, the origin of the name of Tipperah is doubtful. Attempts in this regard do get invariably lost in the mist of legends and traditions. What may at least, be stated is only a variety of opinions.

The name of the state is believed to be coined in honour of the king Tripur who was the 46th descendant of Chandra dynasty, an emperor contemporaneous with Raja Judhistir. The early history of Tripura is clouded in mystery and romance. The tale is told in the Rajmala, the early parts of which were composed in A.D 1458 by Tripuri priest Durlabhendra and two of his Brahmin associates, Sukheshwar and Baneshwar. This is the oldest Specimen of Bengali writing extant and gives the story of the Tripura Kings and their subjects. In a report on the district of Tipperah by J. F. Browne C.S (1866) it was stated that the country which at one time was situated in the neighborhood of the Udaipur temple took its name from the Goddess Tripureswari in act of honour to the Goddess. The country had been known as Tripura even before the installation of the deity which took place at the time of Maharaja Dhanya Manikya in the first half of sixteenth century. What is more probable is that the deity took the name of the land. Apart from the traditional view, many researchers explain the name ‘Tripura’ from its etymological origin. The word ‘Tripura’ is a compound of two separate Tripuri words, ‘tui’ means water and ‘Pra’ means near. It is believed that originally the land was known as Tripura, meaning a land adjoining the waters. It is a fact that in days of yore the boundaries of Tripura extended up to the Bay of Bengal when its rulers held sway from the Garo hills to Arakan. It might be that the name appropriately derived its origin from its nearness to water. The geographical location of the state with its close proximity to the vast water resources of Eastern Bengal
Historical Background of Tripura

(present Bangladesh) coupled with the generic identity of the state's original inhabitants as 'Tipra' or 'Twipra' apparently justify this explanation of the state's name. An ancient name of Tripura is Kirat Desh (English: The land of Kirat), probably referring to the kirata kingdoms or the more generic term kirata. However, it is unclear whether the extent of modern Tripura is coterminous with Kirat Desh. The region was under the rule of the Twipra Kingdom for centuries. The Rajmala, a Chronicle of Tripuri kings which was first written in the 15th century, provides a list of 179 kings beginning with the mythological king Druhya and ending with the last crowned king Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya who breathed his last in November 2006.

The history of Tripura can be understood from two separate sets of record: first, the traditional period as described in the Rajmala or Chronicles of the kings of Tipperah, a history in the Bengali language compiled by Brahmans in the court of Tipperah, and second, the period since A.D. 1407, recorded by both the Rajmala and the writings of Muhammadan historians. From the two records, it was known that Tipperah was a very ancient kingdom. It had been ruled by Maharajas of Tripura for an unbroken period of thirteen hundreds years.

The boundaries of the Kingdom changed over the centuries. At various times, the boarders reached south to the jungles of the Sundarbans on the Bay of Bengal; east to Burma; and north to the boundary of the Kamarupa Kingdom in Assam. There were several Muslims invasions of the region from the 13th century onward, which culminated in Mughal dominance of the plains of the kingdom in 1733, although their rule never extended to the hill regions. The Mughals had influence over the appointment of the Tripuri kings.

Druhya, son of Yajati one of the lunar (Chandra) race of kings founded the kingdom. On his death his son Babru succeeded to the throne. He was crowned with the title 'King' by the sage kapila. Some Historians regard King Tripur, the 46th descendant of Chandra as a contemporary of emperor Juddhistir. The Tripura kings belonged to the eastern provinces where he founded the city of Tribeg on the banks of the Brahmputra. Drujho ultimately became a Sanyasi and abdicated his throne in favor of his son Tripur who unleashed a reign of terror and oppression. His subjects were so tortured that they fled in large numbers to Hiramba (Cacher) and returned
after five years with the Votaries of Lord Shiva who promised them a ruler by the widow of Tripura. In time the promised Prince was born named Trilochan. He was a good ruler and conquered many countries. On his death his son Dakshin succeeded to the throne. Tipperah Rajas belonged to Hindu Kshatriya caste but intermarriages with other tribes were not prohibited.

The Muslims attack on Tipperah started from 1279 A.D. but the Rajas of Tipperah had repulsed those attacks bravely for about three centuries. About 1620, in the reign of Emperor Jahangir the Mughal force under the command of Nawab Fatehjang conquered Tipperah. The capital Udaipur was taken, the Rajas taken prisoner and sent to Delhi. During the reign of Dharma Manikya the Nawab of Murshidabad captured a large portion of plain Tipperah and thereafter the hill Tipperah remained under the possession of the Raja.

The history of pre-Manikya Tripura is still shrouded in information gap. How the Tripuri tribesman migrated into the present territorial location known as Tripura and how the monarchy under the Manikyas evolved still remain an enigma as per as authentic material for constructing a worthwhile history is concerned. It is reasonable to believe in the light of the scanty historical document and sources that at least in the first part of seventh century Tripura or at least a part of it was under the suzerainty of Assam’s truly imperial ruler Bhaskar Varman, a contemporary of Harsha Vardhana (629-642), who also fought the powerful ruler of Gour (Bengal) Sasanka. No contemporary evidence of the existence of a Tripuri kingdom is available though we know that a small tribal kingdom set up by the Mogs existed at that time encompassing the present southern Tripura upto the south bank of the Gomati river, present Noakhali and Chittagong districts and southern parts of present Comilla districts of Bangladesh. The Buddhist Monks as well as the Chakmas who set up a kingdom in the present Chittagong hill-tracts of Bangladesh had migrated from Myanmar (Burma) through the Arakan region. The archaeological remains which still survive in south Tripura provide conclusive evidences of the existence of the Mog rulers and peaceful co-existence of a composite Hindu-Buddhist culture. It is significant that ‘Rajmala’ court chronicle of Tripura’s Manikya dynasty rulers composed in a phased manner over a long span of time, also refers to the existence of mog kingdom south of Gomati River.
In 1300s AD, Tripura came under the control of the Manikya dynasty, a family of Indo-Mongolian origin. In the early part of 17th century AD, Tripura came under the administration of the Mughals. But the local rulers (the Manikyas) continued to retain some of their power. After the British established their colonies in Kolkata, they conquered some parts of modern Tripura but applied no administrative control for more than a century. In 1765, when the East India Company obtained the Diwani of Bengal, Tipperah virtually came under the British rule. In 1808, the British Government recognized for the first time Durga Manikya as Raja and since this date every successive raja has received investiture from British Government and has been received to pay tribute on his accession. In 1871, an English officer was first appointed at hill Tipperah as political Agent in order to protect British interest and advice the Raja. In 1878, this post was abolished and in its place the District Magistrate of Tipperah (Comilla) in Bengal was nominated as the Ex-Officio political Agent of the British Government in Tipperah. Subsequently, a common Political Agent for all the eastern states including Tripperah was appointed by the British Government under the designation ‘Agents to the Governor General of India’ at Calcutta. During the British rule the Rajas of Tipperah successively governed the state as semi Independent princes.

During the British reign Tipperah was ruled by several Maharajas in Succession. Among the Rajas of Tipperah Birchandra Manikya, Radha Kishore Manikya (1897-1909), Birendra kishore Manikya (1909-1923), Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya (1923-1947) deserve to be mentioned. Tripura became a princely state during British rule in India. The kings had an estate in British India, known as Tipperah district or Chakla Roshnabad (now the Comilla District of Bangladesh), in addition to the Independent area known as Hill Tippera, the present-day state. Udaipur, in the south of Tripura, was the capital of the kingdom. According to Krishnamala, a book authored in poetic form by Pandit Ramganga Visharad, which chronicles king Krishna Manikya’s reign, the shifting of the capital from Udaipur to ‘Puran Haveli’ took place exactly in the year 1760 A.D. or 1170’ Tripurabda’ (Tripuri Era) when Krishna Manikya recommenced his reign after overthrow of Shamsheer Gazi from power. In fact after being driven out of Udaipur by Shamsheer Gazi, King Krishna Manikya had never returned to the old capital. The momentous event of
shifting Tripura’s capital afresh from Puran Haveli to present Agartala took place in the year 1838 during the reign of Krishna Kishore Manikya (1830 - 1849).

Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896) modeled his administration on the pattern of British India and enacted reforms including the formation of Agartala Municipal Corporation. During their reign education, health and culture flourished extensively. In 1923 Birendra Kishore Manikya expired and he was succeeded by Bir Bikram Manikya (1923-46). The condition of the people improved considerably initially under his reign. After the death of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya on 17th May, 1947 Her highness Maharani Kanchan Prova formed a regency council in order to carry out the administrative function of the state. In this period of vacuum in the royal palace, Chakle Roshnabad, the part and parcel of Tripura was snatched away by Pakistan forces to be added to East Pakistan (which is now Bangladesh). The last ruler of the princely state of Tripura was kirit Bikram kishore Manikya Bahadur who reign from 1947 to 1949. Then the Kingdom was merged with Indian union on 9th September 1949 and the administration was taken over on 15th October, 1949. Since the partition of India, many Hindu Bengalis have migrated to Tripura as refugees from East Pakistan.

Immediately after the merger with the Indian Union the state became a ‘C’ category state administered by a chief commissioner on 15th October, 1949. This was followed by election to 16 members Agartala Municipality on 5th November, 1951. The first general election took place in Tripura along with the rest of the country between 11th and 25th January, 1952. With the reorganization of the states in 1956, Tripura became a centrally administered territory. On 1st July 1963, a representative government was formed with a council of Ministers under the provisions of the Indian Government Union Territories Act, 1963. The Union Territory of Tripura gained more stature with the dissolution of the Territorial Council and formation of a council of ministers. The history of freedom movement in Tripura is marked by two distinct phases. The first phase commenced with the revolutionary activities directed, no doubt against the British Government in the first decade of this century. The second phase ultimately lost its local color and merged itself in a national struggle for freedom and continued till the territory was integrated with the Indian union in 1949. The state attained full statehood on 21st January, 1972 under the North Eastern Regions Re-organization Act, 1971 and democratic set-up got further stretched up to
the village in 1978 with election to the local bodies that ultimately culminated in the introduction of three-tier Panchayati Raj system. At present the state has a full-fledged Legislative Assembly of 60 members and a council of Ministers. Now keeping the administrative convenience in view, decentralization has been taken further ahead by forming 8-Districts, 23 Sub-Divisions, 58-Blocks, 591 Gram Panchayat, 8-Zilla Parishads, 9-Nagar Panchayats, 10 Municipal Councils and 1 Municipal Corporation. The geographic partition that coincided with the Independence of India resulted in major economic and infrastructural setbacks for the state.

2.2: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Tripura is a small hilly state in the North-Eastern region of India and a part of richest reservoir of biodiversity. Tripura became a full-fledged state on the 21st January, 1972 and is the third smallest state of the country. It was a princely state and it was ruled by the Maharajas of Tripura. Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya was the last king of Tripura. After independence, Tripura merged with India on 15th October 1949 and became a Union Territory without a legislature with effect from 1st November, 1956 and popular ministry was installed in Tripura on 1st July, 1963.

Tripura is bordered by the country of Bangladesh to the west, north and south; and the Indian states of Assam to the north-east and Mizoram to the east. The length of its international border with Bangladesh is about 856 Km (i.e., about 84% of its total border), while it has 53 Km. border with Assam and 109 Km. borderer with Mizoram. Geographical area of Tripura is 10,491 Sq.Km and about 70% area comprises of hill and hillocks. The recorded forest area of the state is 6,294 Sq.Km. which constitutes 60.02% of its geographical area. Out of the 10,491 Sq.Kms. of the state, Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council is 7132.56 Sq.kms. (68%) areas where indigenous tribal people are socio-economically backward and mostly dependent on forests resources. With a view to fulfill the aspirations of the tribes to have autonomy to administer them, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomy District Council (TTAADC) was set-up January, 1982 under the Seventh Schedule of the constitution of India. Later the council was brought under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of Indian constitution to entrust more responsibilities and power from 1st April, 1985. The people residing within TTAADC area mostly small, marginal
farmers and landless Jhumias. They are very much deprived of education, health care, irrigation, drinking water and basic needs of life. Tripura lies in a geographically disadvantageous location in India, as only one major highway, the National highway 44, connects it with the rest of the country. It is only on its north-eastern borderer that Tripura meets the states of Assam and Mizoram.

The state has become landlocked and hilly, with altitudes varying from 15 to 940 meters above sea level, though majority of the population lives in the plains. Its Geographical limits touch both national and International boundaries. Tripura has a tropical climate and receives adequate rainfall during the monsoons. It is located between latitudes $22^0 56'$ and $24^0 32'$ North and longitudes $90^0 09'$ and $92^0 20'$ East. It is bounded on the north by the Sylhet District of Bangladesh; on the south by the District of Noakhali and Chittagong of Bangladesh; on the east by the District of Cachar of Assam and the Mizoram and the west by the District of Comilla. It has a diverse range of topography, people, flora and fauna. It is a curved strip of land measuring about 183.5 Km in length from north-east to south and 112.7 km in width from east to west. Nature has made Tripura a prominent region somewhat tropical, generally hot and humid, with net-works of rivers and small streams along with lateritic soil and mixed forests.

Tripura, with its small geographical existence is one of the most incredible states of north East India. The surface of the land is dotted with hill and hillocks, shallow and narrow valleys. Its surface on the west tends to be plain and even due to juxtaposition with plain surface of Bangladesh, while eastwards it is tending to activity approaching to the mountainous surface of Assam and hill Chittagong. The hill ranges of the state cannot be given mountain status as the highest peak of this state rises only to 3200 feet high. The small isolated hillocks interspersed throughout the state are called tilla and the narrow fertile alluvial valleys, mostly present in the west are called Lungas. Most of the parts of the state are rural and about 74 percent of the state’s population live in rural areas. A number of rivers originated in the hills of Tripura and flew into Bangladesh. The local flora and fauna bear a close affinity and resemblance with floral and faunal components of Indo-Malayan and indo-Chinese sub-regions. The state is located in the bio-geographic Zone of 9B-North-East hills and possesses an extremely rich bio-diversity. There are 266 species of medicinal plants in the state. The prominent hill ranges of the state are Jampui, Sakhanantang,
Longtharai, Atharamura, Baramura, Deotamura, Belkum and Kalajhari. Betling Shib (939 meters), situated in the Jampui Range, is the highest peak of Tripura. There are many rivers in the state which rise from these hill ranges and after being fed by innumerable small cherras, flow through the valleys into the mighty rivers of East Bengal. The Gumati, Howrah, Dhalai, Muhuri, Feni and Juri are the major rivers which swell in monsoon but become shallow during the rest of the year. Economy of Tripura is basically agrarian and characterized by high rate of poverty, low per-capita income, low capital formation, in-adequate infrastructure facilities, geographical isolation and communication bottleneck, low progress in industrial field and high unemployment problem.

2.3: POPULATION:

Tripura is the home of a population numbering 36,73,917 lakhs over a total geographical surface of 10,491 Sq. Km. The majority of the population is Bengali Hindus domiciled from Bangladesh. The tribes constitute one third of the total population of the state. Agriculture is the main occupation of the bulk of the population. Unemployed refugees mainly from Comilla, Sylhet and Chittagong districts of Bangladesh have swollen the present population of the state to nearly four times the number of the original dwellers. The refugees at present constitute the main business group of the state and play a vital role in national economy and political affairs of the state. It is the official policy to favor the indigenous tribes in matters of social justice and economic affairs. So they are now given preference in public services, education, land grants, resettlement projects and many more matters.

In Tripura, the distribution of population is uneven. High densities and high rates of population growth are found in the better agricultural tracts. The towns with their outgrowth are situated in the plains and are mainly inhabited by the Bengali people where as the tribes prefer to live in hilly and rural areas in natural surroundings. In hills, scattered type of rural settlement is found where Jhum land forest products form the basic means of livelihood of the local population. In 1981, 10.98 percent of the total population of the state lived in urban areas. Most of the towns are service oriented and the bulk of the inhabitants are Government employees with a small proportion in private business. Agartala is the only city standing on the bank of the river Howrah and is also the state capital. The male and female population
of Tripura was 18, 74,376 and 17, 99,541 lakhs respectively as per 2011 census report. The data of census-2011 also shows that Tripura rank eighteenth in terms of density of population at all India level. Among the north–eastern states, Tripura remained the second highest populous state after Assam. The population density of Tripura in 2011 was 350 persons per sq. km., which means that more than 45 people live in a sq. km. area in the state then they lived a decade ago. The census-2011 data reveals that the sex ratio was 961 as against 948 in 2001. This is a positive improvement in sex ratio in the state and it rose from 945 (per 1000 males) in 1991 to 948 in 2001 and further 961 in 2011. Altogether 19 tribes are recognized throughout the state. Agriculture is the main occupation of the bulk of the populations.

2.3.1: Scheduled Castes

The scheduled caste population by and large lives inter-mingled with other communities in the same village. The state recognized 37 categories of population as scheduled castes. But the 1971 census reported only 29 scheduled castes in Tripura. Scheduled caste constitute about one tenth of the total population of the state. The majority of the scheduled caste population of the state lives in rural areas and earns its lively-hood by cultivation. The data of 2011 census shows that SC population of the state was 6, 54, 918 lakhs (17.8 percent). The total SC male was 3, 34,370 and SC female was 3, 20, 548 lakhs. The SC literacy rate has increased to 89.45 percent in 2011 from earlier level of 74.68 percent in 2001. The demography of the scheduled castes in the state is not confined to any particular paras or bastis. During intra-census period of 2001-2011 an increase of 14.77 percent is noticed for SC literacy. A sizeable proportion of the scheduled castes however are engaged in weaving, fishing, business and other occupations. Almost all scheduled castes are Bengalis and have migrated from Bangladesh to Tripura before or after the partition of India in 1947. Basically, all scheduled castes have followed their custom, culture and profession of their homeland where from they have originated.

2.3.2: Scheduled Tribes

The people of schedule tribes comprise about one-third of the population. There are nineteen sub-tribes among the ST population of the state with their own cultural identity. The total population of Scheduled tribes were 11, 66,813 lakhs in 2011 that consist of about 31.8 percent of total population. Out of this 5, 88,327 were
ST males and remaining 5, 78, 486 ST females. The total literacy rate of scheduled tribes was 78.50 percent, out of which males and females were 86.90 percent and 69.96 percent respectively according to census report 2011. The ST literacy rate has significantly increased during intra-census period of 2001-2011 in the state was 22 percent which was quite impressive. North-East India has a much higher proportion of tribal population than that of the country as a whole. The tribal people of Tripura are Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Uchui, Kuki, Lusai, Halam Khasi, Garo, Chakma, Mog, Lepcha, Bhutia, Munda, Orang, Bhil, Chaimal and Santal. The Tripuris and Reangs are believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the state; others are supposed to be the later migrants. Numerically, the Tripuris are the largest tribe belonging to the Bodo group of Indo-Mongoloid origin. These tribes belong to different ethnic groups such as Indo-mongoloid groups and the Indo-austroloid groups. The Bodos, who are spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal from the main bases of the present day population of the state. Traditionally, the Indo-mongoloid tribes have definite form follow the specific lifestyle, customs and religion of their own. They are accustomed to the cultivations of Jhum and also accustomed to forest life. Tribal are called the indigenous people of the land. Bengali of both Hindu and Muslims are the permanent immigrants for several centuries. The Kokborok is the mother tongue of eight indigenous tribes of Tripura having its separate identity and it is the language of about 10 lakhs people residing in Tripura. Kokborak language is mainly spoken by Jamatia, Reang, Tripuri, Uchoi and Noatia. The economy of Tribal people of the state is built upon agriculture which in tribal areas is mostly characterized by rain-fed cultivation and shifting cultivation. Food gathering economy is the prime activity of the tribal people of Tripura for many centuries. So food collected from the nearest forest area, forms their natural form of livelihood. The tribal farmers constitute about 30 percent of the farming community and control 37 percent of the agriculture holdings. The productivity levels are much below the level attained by their counterpart non-tribal farmers. The main problem related to agriculture was lack of cultivable land and poor irrigation facilities.

2.4: Education movement

The root of movement of literacy was laid on in 1940. The saga of peoples’ struggle in Tripura for the spread of education has a glorious history. Tripura was a tribal state ruled by monarchy for centuries. Bikram kishore Manikya was the last
king of Tripura during India’s independence and the state’s merger with India in 1949. During those days, the monarchy and the nobility had complete sway over the tribal masses. The tribal reeled under feudal exploitation and illiteracy. Loyalty to the king and illiteracy went hand in hand and thereby the king and his administration did little for spread of education among the tribes. So, few tribal educated youths in Umakanta School boarding at Agartala decided to lead a movement with the common people for acquiring education. In this milieu a group of young educated tribal formed an organization for mass education called the Jana Siksha Samiti in 1945. The main objective of Jana Siksha Samiti was to eradicate illiteracy and poverty. This organization was formed with active support of the common people who understood that without the spread of education among the tribal they can’t be made conscious of the oppression they are facing and thus cannot be mobilized for changing the system. In the year 1946, prior to state’s accession to the Indian Union, there were only five lower primary, six middle and one High English school for girls in the whole territory. The Jana Siksha samiti within three years opened around 488 primary schools across Tripura and declared that its fight is not merely against illiteracy but also against poverty and social injustice. This is arguably the first organization within the tribal people in India who took up the issue of education and brought that into the arena of public action and mobilization. This is the heritage that is being carried forward by the people of Tripura.

The literacy and education are reasonably good indicators of development in a society. The literacy rate in Tripura as per census 2011 reached to 87.22 percent for the population seven years and above. It was 73.20 percent in 2001 and 60.44 percent in 1991. The corresponding figures in 2011 for male and female literacy in Tripura were 91.53 percent and 82.73 percent, respectively. At the state level, gap in male-female ratio has been reduced to 8.8 percent in 2011 as against 17.01 percent in 2001. Tripura has achieved the first position in literacy among the states of the country from 13th position in 2001 to 1st position as on 08.09.2015 after Kerala, Mizoram and Goa. As per recent study conducted by the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata the literacy rate stands at 97.22 in 2016. The male and female populations are at present 97.93 percent and 95.71 percent respectively. The gender gap pertains to the state of Tripura has been 2.22 percent and this gap can be virtually ignored. The ISI, Kolkata
has also appreciated the present level of literacy including women literacy in the states.

2.5: Culture

Though Tripura is tiny in geographical aspect but the state has an ample resource and it is famous for its rich cultural heritage. The cultural sphere of Tripura involves an extensive range of multi dimensional features. Cultural and Natural diversity is the very essence of Tripura’s identity. The rich culture has drawn strength from its own tradition. The culture of Tripura people is the product of several thousand years. Now, the composite culture of the state, as a product of cultural exchange in this state form a rich tapestry. Tribal communities are mainly the forest dwellers who have accumulated a rich knowledge on the uses of various forests products over the countries. There are nineteenth different types of tribal groups with their linguistic variety live in the hilly region most particularly and plain as well. Amongst these nineteen groups Kokborok holds sway over nine tribal groups. The majority of the total population is covered by the Bengali people whose mother tongue is Bengali. Each tribe has their own norm, customs and traditions. The fundamental base of the society of Tripura was its tribal culture and beliefs. The folk culture is an expression which stands for traditional customs and belief including song, dance and regular festivals. Tribal peoples’ occupation, food habits, dress, customs, dance, music and even beliefs have been influenced by the forests. On one hand, their remote locations make their life hard and difficult; on the other the forests product provide them with the resources which help them to overcome these difficulties. The tribal people in Tripura are associated with the traditional knowledge and use of medicinal plants. In the present 21st century and in recent times the attitude and the outlook of the tribal people have changed with time.

Tripura had attained a high degree of material, cultural, industrial civilization evidenced from the architecture, archeological remains and from the popular rituals, crafts & arts, fashion in dressing, weaving and production of cotton and use of silver, gold precious metals. Tripura is a treasure house of traditional knowledge systems. Tripura is rich in ancient glory for its old sculptures, stone and inscriptions, architectural remains and magnificent arts and crafts.
2.5.1: Life style of tribes of Tripura

Originally a tribal state of Tripura does comprise a single or sub-tribe but comprise 19 different communities. The tribes are –

1. Tripura or Tripuri or Tippera
2. Riang
3. Jamatia
4. Chakma
5. Halam
6. Noatia
7. Magh
8. Kuki
9. Garo
10. Munda
11. Lushai
12. Orang
13. Santal
14. Uchai
15. Khasia
16. Bhil
17. Chaimal
18. Bhutia
19. Lepcha

The Tripuris: Generally the Tripuris expecting the dwellers in the plains live in a ‘Tongs’ or pile houses, on the hill tops. The hut which is built on bamboo slits is about 2 to 3 meters above the ground and looks like a house on a machan. Notwithstanding the spread of plough cultivation the Tripuris still stick to the age-old ‘JHUM’ or shifting cultivation on the slopes of hills. Their staple food is rice, pork; chicken, dried fish and vegetables are their main subsidiary food. The women folk make their garments from hand woven fabrics. Their cloths are known as Dubra and skirt, Pachhra and Saries. The Tripuris are very fond of jewellery and ornaments.
Important yearly worshipps of the Tripuris are Kherchi and Ker puja. The Tripuris have two type of priests e.g. Brahmin Pandits and the tribal Ojhai or exorcist. The Tripuri high priest is called chantai.

**The Riangs:** The original home of the Riangs is said to be Mayanithiang in the Lusai hills. The Riangs belongs to the Mongoloid racial stock and their dialect has been classified as belonging to the Austro – Asiatic group of Tribeto – Burman family. The Riangs are primarily an agriculturist tribe. They practice ‘Jhum’ cultivation like the Tripuris. Dance and music are an integral part of the Riangs. No other tribes in Tripura are so fond of dance like them. This love of music lends colour to their otherwise drab life. The traditional dress of the Riangs is very simple. The Riangs women are very fond of personal decoration and take much care in hair. They love ornaments and flowers. The Riangs are an endogenous tribe. They do not marry outside their tribal community. Their important religions festivals are KerPuja, Ganga Puja, Garia Puja and Matangi Puja etc. These religious observances are communal in nature and each family has to contribute money which is called ‘Khain’. The surplus collection of khains is spent on welfare of the society.

**The Jamatias:** Ethnologically they are a kin to the Tripuris and their physical characteristics also resemble. The dialect is the same. Economically they are more advanced than other tribal populace. They fall under the state of cultivations and agriculture is their main source of livelihood. They make their dwelling houses like those of their Bengali Neighbours. Speaking of religion they may be classified as Hindus divided into two main sections of Vaisnavas and Saktas. They worship Shiva, Durga, the Goddess Tripura Sundari and the Gommati (river). They also perform the ‘Durga Puja’ according to prevailing Bengali custom. The custom of marriage is similar to those of the Tripuris.

**The Noatias:** According to many other tribes, the Noatias are a hybrid race divided into eleven clans. Traditionally they are more or less similar to the ‘Jamatias’ expecting certain deviations with regard to disposal of corpse where they follow the Riang customs. The Noatias practice Jhum cultivations but plough cultivations and agricultural in conventional methods are becoming increasingly more popular. They weave their cloth and believe in making their requirement through loin – looms.
The Halams: The Halams are scattered all over the sub – divisions mainly in the central and northern areas of the state. The Halam dialect is akin to the Kuki-chin group of the Tibeto – Burman family. But most of the Halams are bilingual and can speak the Tripuri language fluently. Majority of them subsist on ‘Jhum’ cultivation. Their dwelling huts with mud plinths are becoming common especially among those who are settled near township. Their living standard is much below the Tripuries.

The Moghs: The local name of the Arakanese in Chittagong is ‘Mogh’ which was used to designate pirates in this part of the world. The Moghs have distinct language of their own with a separate script. The Moghs do not live in Tong houses but dwelling huts are constructed on mud plinths. Their staple food is rice, meat and dried fish. The degree of freedom allowed to their women folk is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Mog society. The Mogs are Buddhists expecting a very few who profess either Hinduism or Christianity. The family bond is very strong and they have Patriarchal system.

The Chakmas: The Chakmas are Arakanese immigrants as would be evidenced by their dialect which is an admixture of Assaam Burmese groups of languages. Jhum cultivation is their main source of livelihood. At present, however, they are opting for agriculture through plough cultivation on a permanent basis. With the spread of education they are taking various professions. Their dress shows similarities with the dress of Burmese. The social discipline of the Chakma community as a whole is very strict. The system of child marriage is not generally practised. The Chakma women like other tribes are adopted in weaving and use their own hand woven cloths. Ornaments used by the women folk are similar to those of the Bengalese. Educationally the Chakmas are going ahead day by day. Their food habits are to some extent comparable to those of the Kukis. They profess ‘Buddhism’ and have been Buddhist since long.

The Garoes: Anthropographically the Garoes are inhabitants of the Garo hills which lie between the plains of Mymensingh in East Bengal and the Khasia and Jaintia. The Garoes of Tripura with development of Trade and commerce, transport and communication have perforce for their own sake become bilingual. They speak Bengali as well. Garoes are mainly agriculturists and those who have land practice settled cultivation. Now a day they are involved in different services and business etc.
Their dwelling houses are made of plaited bamboo. Garoes are mostly Hindus but the
trend of conversion to Christianity has been increasing.

The Kukis: Their original home was the Lushai or Mizo hills. The emigration to
Tripura was mainly due to availability of plenty of Jhum land. The Kuki dialect is
more developed than Tripuri. The Kukis describe their high deity as Pathien Pu, or
God. One of the most important festivals in Shiva Puja. This God propitiated just
before harvesting. Many Kukis now profess Christianity. The Kukis do not believe in
the world beyond death and neither do they worship idols. Generally the Kukis both
man and woman wear only short piece cloth known as Pachhras wrapped round their
waists. The covering carpet woven by they are very artistic. The ornaments are carved
out of tusks of elephants and boars. The Kukis are very indiscriminate in their eating
habits. Generally the Kuki houses – which are built on bamboo platforms – are
clustered in a circle in the midst of a dense forest. The bond of unity among the Kuki
communities is very praiseworthy. The main traditional occupation is Jhum
cultivation and hunting.

The DeshiTripuries: The DeshiTripuries have originated as a result of admixture
between the Tripuries and the Bengali Hindus. Socially they are more akin to the
Bengalees and many of them are Vishnuits. They also worship ‘Sakti’ the female
principal of creation. Jhum cultivation is not known as most of them live in the plains.
Their traditional occupations are agriculture, animal husbandry and trades. They are
more proficient in agriculture than any other tribes.

2.6: Present educational system of Tripura

Tripura is a hilly state situated in the North-eastern region of the country.
Cultural and Natural diversity is the very essence of Tripura’s identity. Education in
Tripura has developed at a very fast pace since its formation on 21st January 1972.
The Government of state has taken few steps to develop the educational set up of the
state. “The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009” has come
into effect from April 2010 to provide free and compulsory education to children in
the age group of 6-14 years in a neighborhood school. The education system of
Tripura can be divided into four stages, they are primary stage which comprises of
classes I-V, the upper primary or middle stage consisting of classes VI-VIII and the
secondary stage comprising of classes IX-X, XI and XII classes are the higher
secondary stage of education. Education department of Tripura was established with the aim of enhancing the academic scenario of the state. Tripura offers immense opportunities for students from within and outside the region. Later, the department of education was further divided into sections namely Elementary education, Secondary education, Higher education and Social welfare and social education.

2.6.1: School Education

Over a period two decades, there has been a phenomenal increase of the number of schools in Tripura. The state government is making every effort for spreading education even to the grass-root level. There were 4850 government schools operating in Tripura which includes primary schools, middle schools, high schools and higher secondary schools. At present there are seven lakhs twelve thousand students in different level of schools in Tripura. English and Bengali are the primary languages used for teaching at the schools in Tripura. Some of the schools also teach Kokborok and other regional tribal languages. Schools in Tripura are run by the state government and private organizations, which includes religious institution. The schools are affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian certificate of school Education (ICSE), the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and the Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE). In Tripura 10+2+3 structure in education level are followed. After completion of secondary school, students enroll their name for two years in a higher secondary school affiliated either to the Tripura Board of Secondary Education or to other central boards. Students choose from one of the three streams—arts, commerce or science. As in the rest of India, after passing the Higher Secondary Examination (10+2 stage), students may enroll in general degree colleges such as bachelor’s degree in arts, commerce or science, or professional degree programs such as engineering, law or medicine. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme has been successful to significantly bring down the dropout rate at primary level. The state government has also introduced Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) for the improvement of secondary education.

The state’s education system covering from pre-primary stage onwards including adult literacy programs has been making efforts towards fulfillment of the commitment made by the State Government to achieve 100 percent literacy in Tripura. The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata an empanelled agency of Government of India was entrusted for final evaluation of the programs in August,
2013. The state government has constituted a State Equivalency Examination Board for its overall plan, monitoring and evaluation. As for educational infrastructures in the State of Tripura, provisions of school building, additional classrooms, separate toilet blocks for boys and girls, drinking water facilities, computers, science and sports equipments, ramps and toilets for differently able children have been put in place. The government has also constituted a Teacher’s Recruitment Board of Tripura for the recruitment of teachers at different levels of education. The compulsory and free education scheme launched by the government provides education to the students within six to fourteen years of age. Keeping the quality aspect in mind, the state government through the Tripura Board of Secondary Education has introduced the syllabi based on the NCF guidelines for Madhyamik level from 2014 and for H.S level from 2015 to enable students to face the ‘All India level Entrance Examinations’ for admission into professional courses. The overall quantitative growth has taken place in Tripura in the school education sector.

2.6.2: Higher Education

The state Directorate of Higher Education is entrusted with the task of providing opportunities to the students of the state for pursuing higher studies ranging from general education to technical education. Keeping pace with the technological development in the country modern classroom facilities with provision of internet has been provided in almost all the colleges and technical institutions to facilitate face to face mode of teaching and exchange of expertise between different institutions for betterment of the students. There has been marked increase in the number of establishments of higher education in Tripura. At present in the domain of higher education of Tripura, there are 3 (three) Universities, such as Tripura University (Central), M.B.B.University (MBBU) and ICFAI University. There are Twenty two government general degree colleges, two private colleges and seven polytechnics. Besides, the state government has given emphasize on technical and professional education and the state has two Medical Colleges, one National Institute Technology, one Tripura Institute technology, one Agriculture College, one Fishery college, one Paramedical college, one Law college, two institutes of Advanced studies, three private B.Ed colleges and one Pharmaceutical College in the state. Growth and expansion of general degree colleges of Tripura are decentralized and not directed towards the capital only. In higher education, for the study only 22 general degree
colleges is considered which are exclusively run by the state governments. The general degree colleges represent more than 80 percent student segment in higher education of Tripura. The state government has introduced Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for the qualitative development of higher education.

2.7: TOURISM

Tourism has emerged as one of the most important segment of the economics, the most significant aspect of which is generation of employment opportunities. The state government has established a Tripura Tourism Development Corporation Limited in June 2009 for effective managing the tourism industry in the state. The economic significance of tourism in the global market has led to earn foreign exchange. Tourism has significant linkages with other sectors of the economy leading to multiplier effect in output, income and employment. With the improvement of standard of living of people, tourism is gaining more importance. But the Legendary state with its natural beauty of lustrous green valleys, the hill ranges with its flora and fauna, the fascinating blend of cultural, glorious history and traditional unique craftsmanship is in a highly advantageous position for development of tourism. The entire state is having huge potentiality in tourism specially eco-tourism, religious, heritage and cultural tourism and water tourism. The most important tourist places are Ujjayanta Palace, Neermahal, Tripureswari Temple, Kamalasagar Kasba Kali Temple, Unakoti and Jampui Hills. The tourist’s locations are given below in brief.

Few Tourists locations of Tripura

2.7.1 Ujjayanta Palace

This palace was built by Radhakishore Manikya Bahadur. The Mughal and Indo Greek fashioned palace is located in the heart of the city. But due to massive earthquake it was destroyed in 1897 and reconstructed in 1901. A spectacular Mughal garden is the main attraction of this palace which comprises musical fountains, artificial lakes, verdant grassy blanket and the royal existence of majestic ancestry. The Ujjayanta palace is now used as State Museum and it is opened for all people.
2.7.2: Neermahal

The water palace is built on Rudrasagar Lake which is a royal palace with sway of Hindu and Mughal architecture. The castles, the moats and the bridges, the whopping towers here are simply breath taking. Neermahal is the only water palace in the North-east. The palace built by Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur as his summer resort. Light and sound program has been installed there for the tourists. This palace contains royal Andar Mahals, courtyard, guestroom and recreation room.

2.7.3: Unakoti

The most important tourism location in West-North circuit is Unakoti. One less than a core means Unakoti which indicates that number of rocks carvings and murals of Hindu deity are available here. Basically, it is a Saivite pilgrimage where Gods and Goddess are stoned by the curse of Lord Shiva. There are numerous rock-cut images available in the area and because of this it is a good heritage location for the tourists. Unakoti is considered as the largest Bass relief in south-east Asia.

2.7.4: Tripura Sundari Temple

Tripura Sundari Temple devoted to Tripura Sundari, manifestation of Goddess Sati. Tripura Sundari Temple is located at a distance of fifty five km from Agartala and three km from Udaipur which is the District Head-Quarter of the south Tripura District. This temple is one of the pilgrimage centres in the north eastern state of Tripura. Myth says that, toe of the right feet of Goddess Sati fell at the place and till date, it is regarded as one of the fifty one pithasthanans. The Temple was built by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya in 1501 A.D. Every year during the time of Diwali, devotees observe Kali Puja and visit the Temple complex. A grand Mela is organized which attracts both Tribal and non-tribal groups.

2.8: Effect of the Partition on Tripura

The partition of India in 1947 had an enormous effect on the process of social and economic development of the state. The partition deprived the state of its chief railheads in the west, south and north which fell in East-Pakistan so that the state was effectively cut off from the rest of the country but for a tenuous road link. This
resulted in a huge infrastructural and economic setback for Tripura. The state resources came under severe strain due to a heavy influx of refugees from East Pakistan right from the early fifties. This created tremendous pressure on an already over burdened land with little infrastructural facilities and insignificant supporting industries. Even after the upheaval of partition, migration from East Pakistan tended to swell the population of Tripura, especially during and immediately after the Bangladesh war. The Bengali immigrants came into Tripura in successive waves as communal frenzy displaced them, from time to time, from their native villages and cities of the then East-Pakistan. The displaced person now settled permanently in Tripura, is a dominant and volatile section of Tripura’s population. It witnessed a heavy influx of refugees into Tripura from erst-while East-Pakistan, now Bangladesh, who arrived with little wealth in hand. This tended to add to the population pressure on the state.

The initial decades after independence in Tripura were, therefore, typified by an economically poor populace within which the disadvantaged sections of ST and SC were even poorer and poor physical infrastructure. There was practically no inter-state communication in the absence of rail or road network, and even within the state the road communication infrastructure was highly inadequate. Many of the Sub- Divisional and block Headquarters did not have roads and to reach some of these places required travel on foot for several days. A large proportion of the population did not have access to health and education and were dependent on the forests for their livelihood. The economy was primarily agriculture and forest based without any manufacturing activity. The financial condition of the government was also quite unsatisfactory and it was hardly able to meet the requirements of a developing state. Agriculture was largely jhum (primitive shifting cultivation) based and therefore on subsistence levels. The partition thus aggravated the geo-political isolation of Tripura and indeed, of the entire north eastern region.

2.9: Rabindra Nath Tagore and Tripura

Nobel-laureate poet Rabindra Nath Tagore’s close relation with the princely state of Tripura and its four successive rulers forms an important chapter in the state’s history. This was of course a natural corollary to the liberal patronage extended to Bengali language and culture by the Manikya dynasty rulers of Tripura since the days
of King Ratna Manikya (1464-68). It was in the course of a political crisis that Tripura’s ruling monarch Krishna Kishore Manikya (1830-1849) got in touch with Prince Dwaraka Nath Tagore, fabled grandfather of Rabindra Nath. In his maiden letter to king Bir Chandra Manikya (1862-1896) dated 6th May, 1886 poet Rabindranath Tagore had referred to this familial relation while seeking ingredients of Tripura history on which he later based his celebrated novel ‘Rajarshi’ and dramas ‘Visarjan’ and ‘Mukut’. Even before that young Rabindra Nath had occasion to have a feel of King Birchandra Manikya’s magnanimity in 1882.

The Royal family of Tripura had a very high regard for art, culture and literary activities. King Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896) was charmed by the verse ‘Bhagna Hriday’ composed by young Rabindra Nath Tagore. Rabindranath’s relation with Tripura’s royal family did not however snap as he himself had feared with the demise of king Bir-chandra Manikya in 1896. Birchandra’s son and successors king RadhaKishore Manikya (1897-1909) also maintained a close relation with Rabindranath Tagore and it was during his reign that the poet visited Tripura for the first time in 1899. King Birendra Kishore Manikya also maintained a close but respectful relation with Rabindranath. After Rabindranath had won a Nobel Prize, Birendra Kishore organized a function to celebrate the occasion and the poet visited Tripura again in the year 1919. Rabindranath visited Agartala for the last time in the year 1926 when he was introduced to King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya (1923-1947). He was a devoted fan of the poet. Tripura gave the first royal facilitation to the poet before the country and the world could know him. Then the last king of Tripura Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur (1923-47) offered Bharat-Bhaskar title to Tagore in 1941. When the poet died with-in a few months a day’s official mourning was observed in Tripura at the behest of King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya. The poet had penned many a song and poem during his visits to Tripura and all the kings of Manikya dynasty from Bir Chandra to Bir Bikram kishore Manikya extended generous financial assistance to Rabindranath and his dream project of setting up a University at Bolpur in West Bengal. Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote his famous Novel ‘Rajarshi’ and dramas ‘Visarjan’ and ‘Mukut’. The Bhubaneswari Temple at Udaipur received due attention of the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore in his work “Rajarshi”. The episode in Tripura’s history was immortalized by Rabindranath Tagore in his famous
drama ‘Mukut’ Several times Rabindranath came to Tripura. He gave the names of Ujjayanta Prasad, Malancha Nivas and Nirmahal.

2.10: CONCLUSION

This chapter entailed a detailed discussion on the historical background of Tripura. Geographical location and its population are also discussed in this chapter. Tripura is the smallest state of the north eastern states of India having acquired the status of statehood on January 21, 1971. History of educational movement has been highlighted. The present educational system and different tourist places of Tripura have also been discussed in this chapter. Rabindranath Thakur’s close relation with Tripura formed an important chapter in the history of Tripura which is also mentioned in this chapter.
TRIPURASUNDARI
TEMPLE
NEERMHAL
UJJAYANTA PALACE
UNAKOTI