CHAPTER II: Education and Social Education
during the days of the Maharajas.

1. Structure of Education.

(i) TRIPURA
(a) Spread of Education;
(b) Beginning of Modern Education;
(c) Post Independence Era;
(d) Culture and its connection with the main stream.

(ii) CHAR:
(a) System of Education;
(b) Beginning of Modern Education.

2. Social Education of the Period.
(i) Social Education among the Tribal
dealt with separately.
CHAPTER II
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL EDUCATION
DURING THE DAYS OF THE MAHARAJAS

TRIPURA: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Covered by picturesque hills, forests and verdant fields, Tripura is situated in the easternmost part of India. Previously it was a princely State and the Royal family ruled over Tripura for more than a thousand years. Despite repeated Mughal invasions and British attempts to annex the territory Tripura remained a Princely State.

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'. In British Political parlance Tripura was known as 'Hill Tipperah'. A Common belief is that the name Tripura was originated from 'Tripurasundari', the deity of the land. Others treat Tripura as a derivative form of Tripuram, meaning a land of three cities. There is another opinion which states that Tripura has been coined from two Tripuri words - 'tui' and 'pra'. In Tripuri 'tui', means water and 'pra' means near. It is believed that originally the land was known as 'Tuipra',

3. Sanskrit t o y a ( = water )
meaning a land adjoining the water. This 'Tjuipra' has subsequently been corrected into 'Tipra' and from 'Tipra' developed 'Tripura'. It is relevant to note that even to-day the hill people pronounce the word as 'Tipra' and not 'Tripura'. Of all the views the last one appears to be quite probable and appropriate.

The history of Tripura as an administrative unit dates back to the days of Rajas when the territory was a native State. Although a native State, Tripura enjoyed a special status among the Princely States of India, because there was no treaty obligations between the Tripura Durbar and the British Indian Government. It is significant to note that although Tripura was conquered by force of arms in 1761, no Political Agent was appointed in the State till 1871. Thus Tripura became an independent administrative unit under the Maharaja even during the British Rule.

The history of Tripura may be divided in two periods. One traditional period as described in Rajamala and another since 14th Century. Dharma Manikya (1431-1462), and Dhanya Manikya (1462-1515) were two great ancient Kings of Tripura. Dhanya Manikya was a great patron of Art and Literature and built several Temples including the

famous temple of 'TRIPURA SUNDAHI' at Udaipur which is known as one of the 51 'PITHASTHANS' of the Hindus. The famous linguist Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee points out that the early Tripura Kings bear Sanskrit names and also names ending with PHA ('father') and MA ('mother').

Khatna Minkya II (1685-1712) was the first King of Tripura who exchanged diplomatic relations with the Raja of Assam. Raja Swargadeva Rudra Singha, the greatest Ahom King sent two envoys Ratna Kandali and Arjunadasa Bairagi to the Court of Tripura with a mission to obtain support and co-operation of the Raja of Tripura in building up a confederation of Hindu Rulers against the Mughals. The envoys left an account of Tripura entitled 'Tripura Deshar Kathar Lekha' (account of the country of Tripura) in 1734 A.D. The envoys made an important reference to the early history of Tripura. There is an interesting observation made by these two envoys. It runs thus (in Assamese):

'Purve ihatar rajan nam naikichil,
amuk pha tamuk pha ame nam achil'.

(originally they did not assume the title of King, their names ended with the word 'Pha')

This is too revealing to require further comments.

6. Tripura Welcomes the Prime Minister, P3, Agartala, 1966, published by the Govt. of Tripura.
The Account of Ratna Khandali and Arjuna Dasa, however, throws a flood of light on the economic and political condition, social customs of the territory and presents a lot of information about the Raja and his Durbar at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Though the Raja was assisted by Dewan, Ujit, Najir and Kakoon Kotwal etc. he wielded absolute power and in all matters the final say rested with him.

The title of *MAHARAJA* as a hereditary distinction was conferred upon King Birendra Kishore Manikya Bahadur on January 18, 1919. In 1936, Tripura came in direct political relations with British Govt. and was included in the Eastern States Agency.

GROWTH OF POPULATION:

The present area of Tripura is 10,066 sq. Kilometre. According to 1971 sensus, the population of Tripura is 15,56,342 about 29% of whom are tribals. It is interesting to mention that the population of Tripura during the time of Native Rulers in 1923-24 was only 3,04,437. The population was 5,13,010 in 1941; 6,45,707 in 1951 and 11,42,005 in 1961. Such abnormal rise in population was due to heavy influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The population of Tripura as on 1.4.1971 was 15,56,342 which is an increase by more than 4 lakh during the decade. It shows a rapid increase of population.

8. The profile of Tripura, p5, Agartala, 1975, published by Department of Publicity.
by pointing out the decennial growth rate of 30.32% whereas India records only 24.57%. The density of population was 149 per sq K.M. in 1971 while in 1961 it was 107 per K.M. It is interesting to note that during the time of Native Rulers in 1911 the density per sq. K.M. was only 9.

The Population trend in Tripura will be available from the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (1)</th>
<th>Total population (2)</th>
<th>Increase (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1,73,325</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>2,29,613</td>
<td>56,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>3,04,437</td>
<td>74,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>3,82,450</td>
<td>78,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>5,13,010</td>
<td>1,30,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>6,39,029</td>
<td>1,26,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>15,56,342</td>
<td>4,14,337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Census Report of 1971 the rate of literacy was 30.86% as against 20.25% in 1961. It is most interesting to note that during the time of the Maharajas the percentage of literacy in 1901 was only 2.3%.

The population in the State comprises mostly Tribals. The prominent tribal communities are Tripura, Chakma, Reang, Halam, Jamatia, Mog, Noatia, Garo Lushai. Their...

11. Also called 'Tripuri', Tipra, the term Tipra is often used to denote all tribal peoples of Tripura.
12. for details vide Appendix II.
customs and languages differ. The tribals are mostly villagers and live on Jhuming from time immemorial. Now, they are changed to a great extent and have taken to plough cultivation. They generally live in 'Tong-ghar'. Most of the tribal people follow Hindu religion. But the Chakmas and Mogs follow Buddhism and a large number of Lushais and Garos are Christians.

I. STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION

(1) TRIPURA

Social Education in the present form is hardly to be met with during the period of the Maharajas. There were no adult schools or night schools of the present type. Neither were there schools for children of the age-group 3-5. If by Social education we mean the education of infants and the old as is the case in the present system there was little Social education in those days. But Social education cannot be confined to these narrow limits. It is after all education of any member of human society. In this broad sense, it covers all education and in this sense it is present in any age.

In ancient days, the rulers and other thinkers certainly tried to spread education among the masses in 'Tong-ghar' - for the meaning of this term details vide Appendix - II.
their own humble ways. Their aim was education of the society and hence whatever result they achieved can certainly be called Social education of the day. What schools and other institutions they organised worked to that end. We know that in the schools of those days there were no restrictions to admission on the ground of age. Even old people and very young children were freely admitted. There was no necessity of starting separate adult schools and infant schools in addition to the general schools as in the present system. The ancient schools were thus multi-purpose and amply served the purpose of modern Social education too.

In this chapter, therefore, it will not be out of place to launch in a discussion about the system of education prevailing in the days of the Maharajas of Tripura and Coochbehar in order to glean whatever is available in this respect in those days of manyfold hardship and backwardness of the region. An account of all the schools, pathsalas, tols, maktabs etc. will therefore, be taken up here as providing education and Social education (in the narrow sense) to the population.
(a) SPREAD OF EDUCATION:

The territory of Tripura had a very long continued history but no information is available on education upto medieval times. The report about the education of Tripura as found in the Bengal Administration Report, 1874-75 shows that the prospect of education in Tripura was far from bright and very little attention was paid to its improvement. The Report observes that:

'With an estimated population in the plains and in hills of nearly 75,000 souls there are about 103 boys undergoing instruction at the two existing Schools. The school at Agartala has been in difficulty for want of funds, which, however, were supplied by the Rajah, at the close of the year.'

The number of schools in 1879 was 25 against 18 in 1878 and 6 in 1877; the number of pupils attending schools in 1879 was 700 against 430 in 1878 and 186 in 1877. With the exceptions of schools at Agartala, all the schools were Elementary Vernacular Pathsalas. Of the 700 pupils, 30 were of Thakuras, 52 Tipperahs, 232 Manipuris, and the remaining 288 were Bengali Hindus and Muslims of the 57 girls attending schools, 3 were Tipperahs and 54 Manipuris.

15. Bengal Administration Report, 1880-81, P 15
It shows that amongst all communities Manipuris were much eager for education and in the next year all the 64 pupils attending the existing four Girls schools were all Manipuris. But due to lack of interest from the State Officials in education, the number of pupils began to decrease. Another reason was that the teachers were most irregularly paid and there was hardly any supervision of schools which was left with an officer on a Salary of Rs. 20/- per month.16

During the following years the state of education further deteriorated; the number of schools came down from 28 in 1882-83 to 15 in 1883-84 and of these the students decreased from 692 to 441. The state of education prevalent in the State during this period will be more evident from the fact that, with the exception of schools in subdivisions, all the rest are mere Pathsalas.17 Upto 1889-90 this state of things continued. But during the year 1890-91 the number of Schools again raised from 16 to 19 and the number of pupils also increased. Some English Schools were up to the Entrance Examination standard of Calcutta University.

It is learnt from records that in view of the status and economic condition of the people of the State residing

16. loc. cit.
17. ibid, 1885-86, P -7.
in places other than the capital, it was taken for granted that only primary education would be helpful to them. Hence to man the Pathshalas it was decided to hold a special class in the vernacular school of the capital to train teachers of Pathshalas. The minimum qualification fixed for such teachers was ability to understand the text of Bodhodaya, a Bengali Primer introduced in primary schools. The teachers were selected from Tripuri, Manipuri, Bengalee, Halam and Kuki Communities. The salary for these trained teachers was fixed @ Rs. 5/- per month and in addition they would get whatever might be available by way of income from tuition fees of the students.

(b) BEGINNING OF MODERN EDUCATION

From the time of Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896), the modern era of Tripura began. He marked the beginning of modern education in Tripura. He was a versatile genius, a linguist and musician and composed many lyric poems. He extended his patronage to such eminent personalities as Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen and Pandit Ramparayan Vidyaratna of Murshidabad. He has been acclaimed as the Vikramaditya of the present age by no less a person than the eminent historian Dr. Suren Sen. It was Birchandra who first gave recognition to the genius in poet Tagore. The well-known lyric of Rabindranath known as 'Bhagna Hriday' had deeply impressed
the Maharaja who conveyed congratulations and thus began
the friendship between the Raj family and the Tagore
family.

His son Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya (1897-1908) was
an erudite scholar and an intimate friend of Tagore
and made liberal donations to Viswa Bharati. He estab-
lished many educational Institutions of various cate-
gories. He spent huge sums of money for the spread of
education. He established new High schools. Sanskrit Tels,
Girls' schools and Primary Schools. Maharaja opened a
Free Boarding House for the Thakur Students and the
Kumaras of Raj Family. This is an example of His
Highness's' solicitude for the education of the nobles of
the State and the scions of Raj family.

But inspite of these attempts made by the King
the position did not improve much as will be evident from
the following account.

'Education is very backward, and in 1901
only 2.3 percent of the population could
read and write. In 1903, the number of
public under instruction was 3125 (boys
3008 and girls 117). The number of Schools
in the same year was 103 including an Arts
College, a Secondary School, 99 Primary
Schools and two Special Schools.'

18. The profile of Tripura, P5, Agartala, 1976,
published by the Directorate of Public Relations and
Tourism.
19. Thakur, a title of the princes of Tripura Raj family.
The title was first conferred by Maharaja Kalyan
Manikya.
In such condition, a circular was issued in 1920 from the Department of Education, urging upon the Department of Education, urging upon the Darogas, Nayabs and Tahsildars, to take special interest in the matter of increasing the number of students and helping the teachers and inspecting staff in meeting the requirements of the schools. This is really a novel system introduced by the Maharaja for improvement of education.

But the greatest achievement of Maharaja Radhakishore was the foundation of a 'Free College' at Agartala in 1901 with a group of distinguished scholars as professors. The College proved a great success and soon acquired first grade status. This caused an alarm to the then British dominated Calcutta University which insisted on a fee being levied. At this Maharaja decided to abolish the College rather than 'Sell' education against the hoary traditions of India and his dynasty. As a result the students were deprived of free College education and British fiscal policy is to be held responsible for this. Radhakishore contributed Rs. 10,000/- for the research work of Acharya Jagadish Chandra Basu and also donated Rs. 20,000/- in England for publication of his discoveries to the scientific world. Maharaja

22. A.C. Bhattacherjee, Progressive Tripura, 1st Ed. p.7
Agartala, 1930.
cautioned Jagadish Chandra not to disclose it to anybody. It is only after the demise of Maharaja that the scientist mentioned this in course of his speech.

'It was a special request of the late Maharaja that he wished to remain unknown in this connection. He is now passed away and it is permissible to speak now of one who stood by me at the time when friendship was most needed.'

The next native ruler of Tripura was Maharaja Birendra Kishore. He was convinced that until the people were scientifically trained in Agriculture, the conditions of the subjects could not be improved. So, he opened a Model School for the education and training in Agriculture and Sericulture. For the growth of weaving Industry a sanction was given in 1921 to the proposal of teaching weaving in Artisan School and all other High Schools in the State.

The virtually last ruling prince of Tripura was Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya (1924-1947). He was very popular and versatile genius.

24. The artisan school was meant for vocational training institute in which carpentry, brass and iron work were taught. This was also known as 'Silpasram'. 
His plans of Agartala Town is highly appreciable. But his most important scheme was 'Vidyapattan', which was a plan for a Rural University at Agartala. This Vidyapattan plan envisaged the establishment of an Arts College, a Science College, an Agricultural College, a College of Technology, a Medical College, a College of Physical culture and a College of Fine Arts and Music etc. But this novel plan could not be materialised due to premature demise of this great patron of learning. However, his dream for a College for general education became fulfilled and is known to-day as Maharaja Bir Bikram College after its founder. He started it, but could not live to see its completion. On the occasion of 80th birth anniversary of Poet Rabindranath in 1348 B.S. the Maharaja conferred on him the title of 'Bharat Bhaskar'. This shows the Maharaja's great love for learning and the learned. Had the Maharaja lived the normal span of life Tripura would in all probability have been blessed long ago with a full-fledged University in the form of his much cherished 'Vidyapattan'.

25. Tripura welcomes the Prime Minister, Publicity, p 5, Agartala, 1969.
COMPULSORY PRIMARY:

A very bold step seemed to have been taken during the regime of Maharaja Bir Bikram in 1932-33 when Compulsory Primary education was introduced in the State Capital, Agartala, under the State Act 2 of 1932. But as the scope of the Act was confined only to Municipal area of the town covering the students of only four Primary Schools, it is doubtful whether the Act served its real purpose. After a few years it was decided to expand its scope upto the Valley of Howrah and to the linked areas of the Sub-Division towns.

After 13 years from the introduction of compulsory Primary education in 4 selected schools of Agartala, there were found as many as 917 students in all these schools taken together.

But from the table given below, it will be evident that the educational facilities even at the Primary stage did not increase in proportion to the increase in population. The table however, does not give the yearwise population which was necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of schools</th>
<th>No. of pupils</th>
<th>Percentage of Primary children to total school going children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>4,011</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-17</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>4,842</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>4,215</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>5,110</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>5,115</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. These four Primary schools were No. I Umakanta Bhoykumar, No. 3 Nhokom and No. 1 Makor Palli.
28. Table 1907-08 to 1943-46.
SECONDARY:

The picture of secondary stage was not very bright either. Agartala High School which was established in 1890 and renamed as Umakanta Academy in 1904 after the name of Rai Bahadur Umakanta Das, the late Minister of Tripura, remained the only High School in the State till 1916 with two feeder Institutions at Belonia and Kailasahar, running up to class VIII. Besides, there were 4 middle English Schools and two High Vernacular Schools for boys and one High Vernacular School for girls, namely Maharani 'Tulshibati Girls' school during the same period. The B.K. Institution at Belonia and the R.K. Institution at Kailasahar were raised to the standard of High English school in 1916-17. The number of High Schools in the State rose to 5 in 1925-26 as two other schools, one each at Sonamura and Dharmanagar were opened. Till 1943 the State had not a single girls High School. There had not been any appreciable expansion of education in State for the next two decades and as a result at the time of accession in 1949, the State had 9 (nine) Secondary Schools in all with an enrolment of 2397 pupils. These were all Govt. managed schools and no privately managed schools are reported to have existed.

Prior to independence Tripura had no facilities for imparting Collegiate and Technical Education.

29. Dr. J.C. Banerjee; Administration of Education in India, P 595, Baroda, 1962.
The Native rulers of Tripura used to patronise Sanskrit scholars and learning by granting stipends and rent-free lands. Prior to independence there were four Chatuspathhis and after independence 15 tois were started. A few years back a Sanskrit College was started at Agartala by amalgamating those 4 Chatuspathhis. There were also some Maktabs and Madrassas for imparting religious instructions and teaching Arabic to Muslim boys and girls.

As regards inspection of schools, the arrangement remained unorganised for a long time. The only High school at Agartala was first inspected by the Govt. Inspectors of Schools of the Chittagong Division on being deputied by the Calcutta University in 1908-09. An Inspector of Schools was first appointed in the Maharaja's administration as late as 1915-16 and a new post of Sub-Inspector was created in 1925.

The average annual expenditure on Primary education, which seemed to be the main item of expenditure in the budget, hardly exceeded 11 percent of the total education budget. In the wake of a constitutional reform introduced in the administration of Tripura by constituting a Mantri Parishad in 1939, the portfolio of education was placed -
under the charge of a minister who as Head of the Department was responsible only to the Maharaja. The regime of the Maharaja continued till the end of 1949. It is, therefore, essential to continue our discussions for a considerable period even after independence.

SOCIAL EDUCATION:
FORMAL AND INFORMAL

As regards development of Social Education in those days though we do not find any apparatus for imparting this form of education still the customs, usage, culture, heritage and the religion of the people contributed a great deal in this field. About all these a detailed reference is made in the last part of this chapter.

(C) POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

After the accession of Tripura to Indian Union in 1949 a new chapter in the history of education in Tripura seems to have started. A separate Directorate and an Inspectorate were set up. The Tripura Territorial Council started functioning in 1957 and some changes took place in the Education Department. Nine Inspectors, One Special Officer and some Assistant Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors were appointed in this period. A remarkable progress regarding expansion of education in various stages was done. The Tripura Legislative Assembly came into
force in 1963 and the first popular Ministry was formed in that year, Tripura attained full-fledged statehood on 21.1.1972. As a result of these changes, the progress in the development of education in all spheres has all more been remarkable. Two Deputy Directors and one Inspector of Social Education were appointed.

Whether it is in regard to the number of schools, students, teachers, or expenditure, it would be found that during the last 30 years there has been huge extensions on all sides. Only in primary stage the number of students increased ten times. In 1947, only 8% of the school-going children attended primary schools and at present the number increased to 85%. As regards secondary stage there were only 9 high schools in 1947 and at present the number rose up to about 150.

HIGHER AND TECHNICAL ETC.

Prior to 1947, Tripura had no provision for imparting Higher Education beyond School level. It has already been stated that Maharaja Radhakishore started a College at Agartala in 1901 but he had to close it down due to the then British fiscal policy. The Maharaja maintained a Boarding House at Comilla (now in Bangladesh) for the scions of the Royal family prosecuting-

studies in the Comilla Victoria College where the celebrated Vaishnava scholar Dr. Radhagobinda Nath was Principal. Occasionally some Princes were sent to Ajmere or Santiniketan. In 1949, there was only one Degree College namely M.B.B. College in the State and the number rose to 6 in 1970 and 10 in 1979. A Post-Graduate Study Centre was started at Agartala in 1976. This centre in due course is expected to take the shape of a full-fledged University.

Prior to independence there was no institution worth the name in Tripura for Technical Education. At present there are 2 Industrial Training Institutes, one Polytechnic and one Engineering College in the State. A college for the training of secondary school teachers, 2 Basic Training Colleges, one Music College, 2 Institutes for physically handicapped, one Institute of Physical Education, one Secondary Education Board and one State Institute of Education were also set up in this period. One each of Medical College, Agricultural College, Law College, Veterinary and above all a University of its own are yet to be established in Tripura.

It can be fairly concluded that after independence the growth in the number of educational Institutions

31. Music College, for details infra vide, Appendix-II
and enrolment of students has become phenomenal. There are now ten Degree Colleges, two Technical Institutions, one hundred and fifty High and Higher Secondary schools, two hundred Senior Basic Schools and 1371 Primary Schools with total enrolment of 2,31,074 which represents one eighth or 16.5% of the total population.

Annual Administration Reports published during the Raja's days show that just on the eve of transfer of power in 1947 Tripura had barely 125 Primary Schools. To-day the situation is radically changed .... Once a tiny Native State in an obscure corner of the Country, Tripura has, within a brief span of 30 years craved out for herself a place of pride in the educational map of the Country and is one of the forward looking States of India in all spheres of education including Social Education.

SOCIAL EDUCATION:

Regarding development of Social Education the period is most important. It is in this period that Adult Literacy and Balwadi Classes, Craft classes, Rural Libraries and Youth Clubs, Mahila Samities, Sishu Rangas etc. flourished to a great extent. Discussions on all these have been undertaken separately in Chapter V. Again,

in the later part of this period some new developments such as Non-Formal Education, Farmers' Functional Literacy Programme, Integrated child Development scheme and National Adult Education Programme took place. For them too, separate treatment has been done in Chapter VII.

(d) CULTURE AND ITS CONNECTION WITH THE MAIN STREAM:

Tripura has a long tradition of its culture. The distinctive cultures of Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists converged together to give share to a unique culture. Tripura's achievement in the field of art and culture has been summed up by the great linguist Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in the following words:

'Their achievement in architecture was of no mean order. Witness the number of five old temples and Palaces in Tripura State, now unfortunately mostly in decay .... Tripura's contribution to the History and culture of Eastern India, particularly East Bengal has its own unique place.'

33. Tripura the Enchanting Land, p 26, Agartala, 1971, published by the Publicity Department.
Tripura has its deep rooted link with Bengal. It was King Ratna Manikya who brought from the capital of Gour some eminent Brahmins and Kayasthas and gave them important posts in the State and thus Hinduism made a significant dent into the predominantly tribal Society in Tripura. The Modern era in Tripura began from the reign of Bir Chandra (1862 A.D) who first gave recognition to the genius in Rabindranath. His son Radha Kishore was a great friend of Tagore and his Grandson Maharaja Bir Bikram conferred upon Tagore the title of 'BHARAT BHASKAR' as already noted. The Royal Durbar of Bir Chandra was adorned with a galaxy of talented persons in the field of music and literature. Amongst them we may mention the name of Alauddin Khan, Jadu Bhatta, Kasem Ali Khan, Jadav Mitra and Radharaman Ghose. After integration of Tripura into Indian Union in 1949 all the tribal people and Bengalees coming from erstwhile East Pakistan contributed to the development of a new culture in Tripura which may be called a composite culture.

Tripura is famous for its own folk acts, folk-song, folk dance and folklore. The Native rulers of Tripura were great patrons of handicrafts. Of all the local Industries, loin-loom weaving occupies the pride of Tripura.

34. ibid.
35. Tripura Welcomes the Prime Minister, publicity, P25, Agartala, 1959.
The Manipuris who have colonised this State are also masters in this craft.

'Riha' or 'Risha' (ri-cloth, sha-somehing small) is the most remarkable piece, textile and it is woven in local handlooms. Besides these, Cane and Bamboo works also occupy a most prominent place.

Amongst many festivals 'Kharchipuja' which is the worship of 14 (fourteen) Gods is the pride of Tripura. Tripura is also called the Land of fourteen Gods. Ker Puja, Garia Puja and Ganga Puja are other traditional tribal festivals. Durga Puja, Dewali, Jhulan-Jatra and Ratha-Jatra are some other festivals for the Hindus. Id and Buddha Jayanti are two great festivals for the Muslims and Buddhists respectively.

Rich in flora and fauna the state of Tripura claims a prominent place in the tourist map of India for her natural beauty spots and the old monuments. Amongst them mention may be made of Ujjayanta Palace, Neer Mahal, Dambur Falls, Sipahi Jala, Unkoti and Tripura Sundari Temple.

36. A breast garment of the tribal women. They weave Ribas generally in their own loin-loom.
37. For details vide Appendix -II
Cachar is a district of Assam occupying the upper basin of Surma river and bounded on three sides by hills. This is alluvial and bears heavy crops of rice next to which in importance is tea. The North Eastern Railway serves the district including the headquarters town and trade centre of Silchar. The area of Cachar is 6,962 sq.k.m. and the population is 17,13,316 (1971 census). The district is the most thickly populated in Assam.

Reasoning from all analogy the country called Kachar takes its name from Kachari tribe. The origin of Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference in absence of an authentic history. They seem to be very closely to Mongolian type according to Major Fisher.

The people of Tiparaha are of the same origin as the Kacharis and the similarity of their religion, customs and appearance makes this probable. The tradition is that they conquered Kamrup more than 1,000 years ago and they were turned out of it by the Koch princes who were in possession till dispossessed by the Mohammedans on one side and by the Ahoms on the other.

38. Also spelt as 'Kachar'.
Pemberton tells as that:

'The population of Central Kachar in the days of its last Rajahs Krishna Chandra amounted to about 14,000 souls of whom 6,000 were Kacharis, 7500 Koochis and the remainder Lalongs.'

The Kacharis were perhaps the earliest known inhabitants of Brahmaputra Valley. They call themselves Bodo or Bodo Fisa (son of Bodo) in the Brahmaputra Valley and Dimasa (son of the great river) in the North Cachar hills. They were also known to the Ahoms as Timisa, a corruption of the word Dimasa. From the Ahom Buranji it is learnt that the capital of Kachari kingdom was once Dimapur which was also known as Hirambapur. The term 'Kachari' is of modern date; the proper name by which the people call themselves is 'Rungsta'.

Until the Ahom invasion in 1228 A.D. Kachari Kings were established in upper Assam but following a succession of defeats by the Ahoms they moved to Dimapur. About the middle of sixteenth century the Ahoms succeeded in capturing and sacking Dimapur. The Raja thereupon removed his court to Maibong (much paddy) where the

44. ibid.
45. ibid.
46. ibid.
47. This in the Garo language and in Boro or Kachari language means heavenly. The Assamese also called their royal race 'wavegiya' heavenly.
dynasty would seem to have maintained itself for some two centuries.

Finally, however, under pressure of an attack by the King of Jaintia the native Kings of Cachar Shifted their capital from Maibong to Khaspur in the plains of Cachar. The capital was further transferred from Khaspur to Haritikar in 1824 by the last King Gobinda Chandra.

The British did not take any interest in Cachar till the twenties of the 19th century. In 1765, there was a Burmese attack on Cachar. In 1796 the Kachari King Krishna Chandra addressed a letter to the then Governor General praying to abolish restrictions in the Cachar-Sylhet border. In 1799, the Mughal invader Aga Muhammad Reza attacked Cachar and King Krishna Chandra being unable to resist appealed to the British authority who sent some sepoys in Cachar and Aga Muhammad was defeated and captured.

But inspite of occasional bitterness created on the question of boundaries and trade the king was fully dependent on the British for safety and security. After the death of Krishna Chandra in 1813 his younger brother Gobinda Chandra became the King. He was probably-

48. Maibong - Once the capital of Kachari Kings, for details infra vide, Appendix-II
49. Khaspur - ancient capital of Cachar, for details, Appendix -II
most unhappy of all Kachari Kings. He ruled Cachar for 1813-1830. There was, however, a gap for 6 years when being ousted from the kingdom he took refuge in the adjoining British district of Sylhet. On the death of the last kind Gobinda Chandra without heir the British took over the administration of Cachar in 1832 A.D. But his Commander-in-chief, one Tula Ram was allowed to remain in possession of a portion of the Sub-division now named as North Cachar which was once known as 'Tula Ram Senapati's Country'.

Since the last mentioned migration i.e. from Maibong to Maspur about 1750 A.D. the Kachari Kings seem to have come more and more under Hindu influence until about 1790 the Raja of that period, Krishna Chandra and his brother Gobinda Chandra made a public profession of Brahmanism. They were both placed for a time inside the body of a large copper image of a cow and on emerging thence were declared to be Hindus of the Kshatriya caste.

(a) SYSTEM OF EDUCATION:

During the days of Native rulers there was hardly provision of any education not to speak of Social education either public or private in any part

51. U.C. Guha: Kacharer Intibrittta, P 169, Gauhati, 1971
of Cachar at least in permanent way. In this connection reference may be made of some communications made by the Superintendent of Cachar district with the Commissioner, Dacca Division during 1834-38.

From these letters we may gather some valuable informations regarding the condition of education of that time.

The Raja sometimes spent small sums for the education of some Brahmins and Kayasthas prosecuting studies outside the territory especially in Bengal. Occasionally, the Raja patronised a few pundits who imparted instruction in Bengali and Sanskrit to students of their own caste. The condition of education in Cachar at that time was very backward which is evident from the following account:

"The little learning extant in Cachar is strictly confined to Brahmins for, though the Mohammadan portion of the population is the most numerous it is a State of complete ignorance as the bulk of the same persuasion in Sylhet." 54

Only a few individuals possessed a moderate knowledge of the oriental classic tongue. Gradually the business of public instruction was considered to be the duty of the State.

53. A specimen of such letter is cited in Appendix-I
For prosecuting studies under more advantageous circumstances some scholars were sent to Calcutta, Serampore and some other places outside the territory with the hope that on their return they would exert great influence among their countrymen. The entire instruction in the district was conveyed in Bengali.

At that time education among the masses was quite negligible. The population in Cachar was estimated to be 50,000 and Government for the first time, wanted to make some expenditure on education in 1837. Accordingly, the first proposal for starting schools in the district was made in 1838 which is found in the following reference. 55

The places most suitable for schools in Cachar are the 3 Thanas viz, Silchar (Sudder), Hyliakandee and Kattegora and the large Pargana of Sonapoor. The spots are the central and accessible to scholars from the neighbouring Parganas except during a portion of the rainy season.

In this connection reference has been made regarding difficulty of getting suitable teachers among the natives of the district and a proposal for recruitment of competent persons from the adjoining district of Sylhet was made. Rs. 20/- was considered to be sufficient as monthly salary for a teacher and a consolidated sum was proposed for the expense of teaching equipments and stationery.

We may mention here the brilliant reference of a letter addressed to the Commissioner, Dacca Division on 25th April, 1838 in which a sincere attempt was made to start at least one school in the Silchar Sub-division of Cachar. The relevant extract runs as follows:

'I would recommend beginning with one at the Sudder station as an experiment. As there will be many candidates for admission on part of the families of the Amla and hangers on here as also from Sylhet. I wish to be informed if the school is intended only for the natives of Cachar or whether all applying indiscriminately to be admitted.'

Before the introduction of modern education in Cachar by the British, institutions of various types were organised by the people themselves here and there. Inspite of local diversities and poverty the village Pathsaia were housed usually in strawbuilt structure and run by teachers who were little respected and poorly rewarded. The democratic nature of these schools was exhibited by the presence of scholars and teachers from all communities including backward classes and Mohammedans.

56. Letter from J.C. Burns, Superintendent, Cachar District to E.M. Gordon Esq., Commissioner of the 15th Division, Dacca, dated 25th April, 1838 as quoted by D. Datta, Cachar District Records, p. 52, Silchar, 1969.
The Mohammedan institutions known as Maktabs laid a natural emphasis on the teaching of Quran and put little importance on Arithmetic and Vernacular (Bengali) and other means of practical instruction. The Arabic schools which were very few in number were conducted by 'Kath Mullahs'. Higher education for Hindus were imparted in the Tols. In the absence of State patronage these institutions depended mainly on spasmodic private philanthropy.

POST MAHARAJA PERIOD:

The report about the education of Cachar during the days of native rulers as found in Cachar District Records shows that the prospect of education was very limited in Cachar and very little attention was paid for its improvement. Even after thirty years from this period i.e. in 1963 the schools were very few in number. As to the reason it may be said that in Cachar there was no Zaminder who could patronise education. People used to come from the adjoining district of Sylhet and engaged mostly in cultivation and took little interest in education. Among Kachari Dimacha and Barman who were the planners.

original people of the land too no student was found to attend school.

The first High School in Cachar known as Government High School was founded at Silchar town only in 1863. But till 1945 the district had not a single girls' High school. There had not been any appreciable expansion of Secondary Education before independence and as a result at the time of partition there were only ten High schools in the district with an enrolment of about 2,500 pupils.

POST INDEPENDENCE ERA:

But after independence a new chapter in the history of education in Cachar seems to have started. An Inspectorate was set up during the period to strengthen the work of co-ordination, control and supervision. A remarkable progress regarding expansion of education in various stages was done. The number of Primary schools increased to about two thousand with an enrolment of one lakh and fifty thousand pupils while in Secondary stage the number increased to some seventy five and number of pupils too increased accordingly.

To provide facilities of Oriental studies a few maktabs, madrassahs and tols were started. Among them the most noted one is Banskandi High Madrassah. These -
Institutions receive regular grants from the Government.

Under the State Elementary School Board three Elementary Boards in three Sub-divisions of Cachar were formed and for the training of teachers of Basic schools three basic Training Colleges at Udharbandh, Kaligonj and Hailakandi were started.

As regards higher education prior to independence there was only one Degree college known as Guru Charan College at Silchar in the district of Cachar. But the number rose to 15 at present. In addition to this at present there are one Law College, one B.T. College, one Music College, and one Normal Training Institute for the training of vernacular teachers of M.V. and M.E. schools of the District.

Before 1947 there was no institution worth its name for Technical Education in Cachar. But after independence some industrial centres for training of displaced persons were opened.

A full-fledged Polytechnic Institute started functioning at Meherpur near Silchar in 1961 providing three years' course in Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. To provide further facilities for Technical Education the Regional Engineering College was set up at Silchar in 1978 in Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering courses. To facilitate Medical Education, the Silchar Medical College was started at Ghungur, 8 K.M. away from Silchar in 1973. One each of Agricultural College, Veterinary College and above all a full-fledged University of its own are yet to be started in Cachar.
2. SOCIAL EDUCATION OF THE PERIODS

We have so far discussed about the condition of education in general of both Tripura and Cachar during the days of Native Rulers. As our thesis is concerned with Social education it is essential to find out the picture of Social education too in both the territories during those days.

In the State of Tripura though we do not find record of any recognised adult school prior to 1917 still Tripura had a rich tradition in the field mainly owing to the benovolent patronage of the Maharajas and some great work done by many Voluntary Organisations viz. Ramkrishna Mission, Tripura Baptist Christian Mission, Adimjati Sevak Sangha, Harijan Sevak Sangha, Janamangal Samiti, Chhatra Sangha, Bhratri Sangha (later known as Tripura Rajya Gana Parisad), Milan Sangha, Matri Sangha, Tripura Rajya Moslem Praja Majlish and Dharmanagar Hitasadhani Samiti etc. Mention may also be made of Tripura Rabindra Parisad Saratkya Basar and Ramaprasad Research Institute. They used to do educational, Social, cultural and philanthropic work and thus contributed a great deal for the development of Social education in the State. The Native Rulers were
great patrons of education. They spread ancient sanskrit culture amongst the masses by publishing the 'Bhagavat Puran' in several volumes with commentary which was one of the most important text books for mass education at that time.

Above all, the contribution of Tripura "Rajya Jana Siksha Samity" towards development of Social education in the State is worthmentioning. The samiti was formed on 27th March, 1945 (11th Pous, 1355 T.E.) with 19 educated youngmen as members. Amongst them President, Vice-President and Secretary were Sudhanya Deb Barma (now Speaker Tripura Legislative Assembly) Dasarath Deb (at present Minister of Education, Tripura) and Hemanta Deb Barma respectively. Biren Datta (now Revenue Minister of Tripura), Aghore Deb Barma, Nilmani Deb Barma and many others were members.

The organisation had an important role in spreading mass education in Tripura in those days. With this end in view they started about 200 free Primary School in Sadar, Khowai, Kamalpur and Udaipur Sub-Divisions especially in the areas mainly inhabited by tribal people. In addition to literacy work, they did many things of Social Welfare and Social reform. In Cachar too similar –

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58. Gomti, 4th issue, February, 1979, P 7-9, published by the Govt. of Tripura.
59. Dr. J. Ganchaudhuri, Tripura – The Land and its People, PE 40-41, Delhi, 1980.
60. These were venture schools not recognised by the Govt.
other voluntary organisations contributed in the field.

Besides the recognised institutions of education one cannot lose sight of the various impalpable but none the less living agencies through which culture could be widely diffused among the illiterate masses. The Jatra (open air drama), the Kathakata (reading and recital from Holy books), the Kirtan (congregational and devotional songs), the Kavigan (metrical duel with lyrical interludes) -- all combined to enliven the mind of the people of Tripura and Cachar with a rich tincture of culture and redeem it from the sterilising influence of illiteracy. On the whole they stressed on cultural education which is intimately connected with the Social Education Programme to-day.

The heritage and culture of a land has no direct but an indirect effect on the education of the people and education which is un-intentional but concerned with the tradition and culture of the people may be of great help for Social education. The native rulers of Tripura and Cachar were both Hindu and contributed a lot for the development of language, culture and religion as has been mentioned earlier. The culture of this region developed in a manner which made intimacy --
between the people of hills (Tribals) and the plains. The assimilation of these two elements by their close contact permeated the culture, civilisation and society of these territories. In fact these cultures are the sum total of the primitive and advanced culture contributed both Aryan and Non-Aryan-elements.

Here mention may be made of 'Carit Puthis' and 'Mantra Puthis'. The Carit Puthis were nothing but biographies of the Saints. Amongst mantras Sapdharan Mantra (Charms for catching snakes) and Bhuter Mantra (Spells for exorcising evil spirits) and incantation for curing diseases were famous. These books practically bear no literary value but they were important documents of popular belief of the time. These mantras were utilised by the people in their day to day life to cure snake bites, to drive away evil spirits and to cure diseases etc.

Those who mastered this art were known as Ojmas (from Skt. Upa dhy a, teacher). These popular mantras have their origin in hoary past in Atharva Veda itself. All these things had and still have much educative value. In such books some high ideal or an ethical virtue was set before the public as a highly beneficial means for prosperity. Further, proficiency in these was looked upon with high honour and as such many people tried to learn these things either by oral teaching -
or by reading written texts. This resulted in the spread of some education among the masses especially amongst adults. Finally, there is reason to believe that the people by virtue of the folk songs, proverbs and riddles prevalent in this region are being educated. Even to-day the rural people depend on them more than upon modern instructions.

It is clear from the above discussions that cultural activities especially meant for popular amusement and the customs, manners and folklores of the people have some far reaching effect upon the social life of the people in these territories. It is useful not only for social unification but also for recreation and leisure of common people. In broad sense, therefore, it may be said that these helped in the growth and development of Social Education in Tripura and Cachar in those days, to a great extent. In the present day context also it may be suggested that, if exchange of such cultural activities can be made between different States it may help in the great task of National Integration which is an important factor to be covered by Social Education Programme.
(1) SOCIAL EDUCATION AMONG TRIBAL DEALT WITH SEPARATELY;

In fine, a word or two may be added. We have so far discussed the Social Education of Tripura and Cachar as prevailing among plain-dwelling people. The Social education of the Tribal peoples in the form of cultural activities we reserve for the next chapter inasmuch as they have some distinctive features of their own and also because a separate treatment of the activities of the high-landers is expected to catch the eye more effectively.