CHAPTER VII

STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN OF ASSAM

7.1 Introduction:

From the very beginning, Assam was the land of heterogeneous racial strains and cultures of both hills and plains people. The land is considered by the anthropologists and sociologists as a paradise for its colourful variety of castes and tribal population. According to Kailash Sharma (Seminar NEICSSR, August, 1994), Assam is a museum of a large number of human species ever found on earth. Assam is situated in "one of the great migration routes of mankind". Since time immemorial people of different ethnic groups from various parts of the world while migrating through this land at different periods and different routes left their substratum in both the hills and plains of this region. In course of time Assam has become a melting pot where races as diverse as the Indo-Burmese, Indo-Tibetan, Mongolian, Negroid, Aryans etc. drawn from diverse hives at different points of time were blended and shaped into the vivid Assamese people. No wonder, such perfect fusion of culture and heritage of her numerous races, tribes and sub tribes gave birth to Assamese...

886. Sipra Sen, Tribes and castes of Assam, p. 25.
culture – a rich tapestry woven with multicoloured yarns of distinct heritages, traditions, lifestyles, faiths and beliefs.

Earlier the name ‘Assam’ represented a vast area. The area of Assam was almost one-third times bigger of its present area. Till 1962, the entire Northeast India, which now represents seven different states, was known as Assam (except former princely states of Manipur and Tripura). In the gigantic area of Assam, a huge number of tribal populations inhabited. These tribes drifted to this region at different intervals of time and settled in various provinces of this land several hundred years ago. It is very difficult at the present juncture to make presumption about the foremost settlers of this region. But one thing is clear that the successive immigrant had merged up with the early settlers. The different tribes were discernible from each other by their socio-cultural traditions and dialects, which varied from each other. Not only this the different tribes were secluded from each other for several hundred years due to lack of interaction among them. But one affinity found in the tribal population of Northeast India is that they belong to the similar bigger ethnic group known as Indo-Mongoloid. The Indo-Mongoloids were referred to as the Kiratas by the Vedic Aryans.

The Mongoloids are characterized by yellow or yellow-brown skin colour, and black stretched or flat wavy and coarse head hair,

889. B.M. Das, ‘Some aspects of Physical anthropology of the tribes of Northeast India’. In The Tribes of North East India, edited by S. Karotemprel, pp. 43-44.
890. B.M. Das, ‘Some aspects of Physical anthropology of the tribes of Northeast India’. In The Tribes of North East India, edited by S. Karotemprel, p. 44.
their eyes are black or dark-brown in colour. The eye-slit is oblique. One of the typical characteristics of the Mongoloid is the presence of Mongolian fold in their eyes. Their face is broad and zygomatic arches are very prominent. Another important feature is scanty growth of facial and body hairs.

It is very important to note that the non-tribal plainsmen of Northeast India are mostly of Caucasoid origin who also migrated to this region long past. Therefore undoubtedly, it can be said that certain Caucasoid ethnic strains have mixed into the tribal populations of Northeast India, particularly in those tribes, who are living in the plains and in the neighbouring areas of the non-tribal populations due to protracted contact between them through intermarriages and assimilation. In certain areas the intermingling between the Mongoloid and the Caucasoid populations had taken place to such an extent that it was very difficult to distinguish one from the other.

It is said that the Indo-Mongoloid tribes of Northeast India were actually the settlers of Northwest China near the Hwang-Ho and the Yangtse Kiang rivers, wherefrom they migrated southward. Somewhere in North Burma the group became diversified. One group migrated westward along the sub-Himalayan ranges. Another group entered the Brahmaputra valley by the North-eastern route, while one more group moved southwards to reach as far as Southeast Asia.

891. B.M. Das, 'Some aspects of Physical anthropology of the tribes of Northeast India'. In The Tribes of North East India, edited by S. Karotemprel p. 44.
892. B.M. Das, 'Some aspects of Physical anthropology of the tribes of Northeast India'. In The Tribes of North East India, edited by S. Karotemprel, p. 47.
Linguistically, the Indo-Mongoloid populations of Northeast India belong to the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. This family has been divided into two broad branches — Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese. One of the sub-divisions of the Siamese-Chinese branch is Thai. The Ahom, Khampti, Khamyang, Aiton, Phakial, Turung, etc., living in different parts of Northeast India speak languages belonging to this Thai sub-division. Except the Khasi and the Pnar, the other Indo-Mongoloids of Northeast India speak languages of Tibeto-Burman branch. Again, the Tibeto-Burman language group is divided into two sub-branches — North Assam and Assam-Burmese branch. The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and some tribes of Assam speak the languages of North Assam branch. Mention may be made of the tribes like Adi, Aka, Mishing, Nishi (Dafala), Mishmi, Miri and Abar etc. The Assam-Burmese branch, another sub-division of Tibeto-Burman has been divided into many groups and sub-groups. They are: i) the Naga dialects — Ao, Angami, Sema, Tangkhul, Sangtam, Konyak, Lotha, Mao and Kabui, etc., ii) the Bodo speeches — Bodo, Mech, Rabha, Garo, Kachari, Tipra and few more, iii) the Kuki Chin speeches of Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram, the most important of which is Meitei or Manipur which is quite an advanced literary speech.

Apart from the other tribes of the region, Khasis with their sub-groups speak dialect of the Mon-Khmer linguistic group of the Austro-Asiatic language family. The present homeland of the Khasis is the state of Meghalaya.

The Indo-Mongoloid tribes of Northeast India had been broadly grouped into six categories on the basis of few aspects like linguistic affinities, cultural parity, biological variations and geographical setting\(^{894}\). These six groups are:

1) Arunachal tribes,
2) Nagas,
3) Bodos,
4) Lushai-Kukis
5) Khasis and
6) Others.

All these various groups of indigenous tribes are presently scattered in the entire northeastern region. A large number of Mongolian tribal populations got refuge in Arunachal Pradesh. The major tribal communities are the Monpas, Sherdukpen, Akas, Khowas, Mijis, Bangnis and Sulungs of Tawang, East and West Kameng Districts; Apatanis, Nishis, Hill Miris, Tagins and Nas of Upper and Lower Subansiri Districts; Adis, Membas, Khambas, Bangros, Chakmas, Deoris, Khamptis, Khamiyangs, Mishmis, Noctes, Singphos, Tangsas and Wanchos etc. Some of these major tribes are further divided into sub-tribes mainly on the basis of dialectical differences. Each tribe has a distinctive culture, customs language and traditions of their own. The cultural similitude is found among the Mishing of Assam plains and the Adi tribes of Arunachal, whereas some of the customs of Naga tribes are found among the Noctes and Wanchos\(^{895}\).

\(^{894}\) B.M. Das, Some aspects of Physical Anthropology' in The Tribes of Northeast India, edited by S. Karotemprel, p. 47.

Broadly, the term ‘Naga’ is a generic name for a group of tribes occupying the land of Nagaland, northern Manipur and bordering districts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Of the main Naga tribes, mention may be made of Angami, Sema, Rengma, Ao, Lotha, Chang, Konyak, Chakesang, Khianngan, Phom, Sangtam, Yimchungre, Zeliang, Pochury, and Kabui. A large number of cultural and dialectal disparities among the various Naga groups and sub-groups are found to exist. These dissimilarities can be seen in their physical features, culture and dialects. This difference is perhaps due to the geographical condition of the territory, prolonged inbreeding and lack of intermixture within the Naga group of tribes. Many sub-tribes of Nagas have marked affinities with the Bodo tribes.

The major tribe of the Brahmaputra valley or present Assam is ‘Bodo’ tribe. The Bodos at one time had formed a solid block of a Mongoloid people and ruled over the entire Brahmapurta valley and spread in the west up to North Bengal, and in the south they occupied Cachar, Sylhet and Mymensingh districts. Actually the word ‘Boro’ symbolizes a lingo, but usually it is used to represent a broad ethnic group. The important members of the ‘Bodo’ groups are Kachari, Koch, Mech, Rabha, Chutia, Lalung (Tiwa), Moran, Hajongs, etc. apart from the Bodos themselves. The Garos of Meghalaya, Tripuris (Tipperas) of Tripura and Dimasas of North Cachar hills also speak Bodo language. Before

the arrival of the Ahoms in the Brahmaputra valley, Bodos used to rule the greater portion of the region in the form of kingdoms like those of the Kacharis and the Chutiyas. Besides, the Bodo group of tribes, the other major tribal inhabitant of Assam is Mishing, Deori, and Karbi tribes, who had settled in the Mikir hills, which is currently known as the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. According to some scholars, the Karbi language has some similarities with certain Naga dialects on the one hand and Lushai-Kuki dialects on the other.\footnote{B.M. Das, ‘Aspects of Physical Anthropology’ in The Tribes of Northeast India, edited by S. Karotemprel, p. 51.}

Another tribe known as Lushai-Kuki tribes, who are closer to Chittogong and Burma, occupies South Manipur and Mizoram\footnote{P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 87.}. The major tribe of Mizoram is the Mizo. Besides the Mizo, some other smaller tribes like Biate, Chakma, Hmar, Lusei, Mara, Pang, Pnar, Riang, Tlau, Bawm, Gorkha, Hualngo, Magh, Paite, Pawi, Lakher, Thado-kuki, and Ralte are also found in Mizoram. The Meithei of Manipur valley is dominating people of Manipur who shows intermediate characteristic between the Naga and the Lushai-Kuki\footnote{I.J.S. Jaswal, ‘Tribes of Northeast India: Ethnic and population aspects’ in The Tribes of Northeast India, edited by S. Karotemprel, p. 29.}. Besides, some Kuki-Chin tribes like the Aimol, Chothe, Chiru, Kom, Purum, Gangta, Hmar, Paite, Thado, Vaipheis, etc. and also Naga tribes like the Kabui, Kacha Naga, Maring, Anal, Mao, etc. live in the state of Manipur. The most numerically dominant original inhabitants of Tripura are the Tripuri (Tippera), Riang, Jamatia, Noatia, Halam, Chakma, Mag and Uchai. The homeland of Khasi, Garo and Pnar is Meghalaya. It is also important to note that Khasi society
is matrilineal in nature, which indicates that the position and prestige of women were exceptionally high in that society.

To know the status of women in different tribal societies in ancient and medieval Assam, we have to go back to the remote past. But unfortunately the history and pre-history of the different tribal societies acquainted to us is not so older. At the very beginning the tribes, mostly the hill tribes, were not so civilized. Consequently they were unable to inherit their own history. Since several centuries, the tribal population was living an isolated life. They were unaware of the region other than their own inhabitant, and had a spectacular, ingenious style of livelihood. Even the Varman dynasty of Kamrup that ruled the region in the 4th century A.D. had little knowledge about the different tribal people living in the neighbouring areas. It was only British administrators, military personals and some tourists, who for the first time revealed the existence of the different tribal groups inhabiting the hills and forests of the Northeast region in front of us. The hills or rivers are known by the name of the tribes inhabiting there.

The various Indo-Mongoloid tribes of the present Northeast region, used to stay under one common territory known as Assam in ancient and medieval period. We have already mentioned that the earlier physiography of Assam had changed and most of the major tribal populated areas like Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh had already isolated themselves from Assam to get the status of independent states. These independent states, along with already existent states of Manipur
and Tripura in which almost one-third of the populations are tribal, form a common region that are presently known as Northeast India. Each tribe of the region has a distinctive culture, customs, language and traditions of their own. Yet, some affinity and assimilation of culture have been observed among many of them. On socio-cultural aspect, tribe endogamy and class/clan exogamy, bride price are the common principles of marriage. The religious beliefs and practices are speciality of the respective tribes. The societies of the people are governed by some traditional unwritten and non-codified customary laws, which are executed by the village councils. Agriculture with jhum method of cultivation is the traditional means of livelihood for most of the tribes.

Regarding the status of women, it can be said that unlike the conservative Hindu society, womenfolk of tribal societies were given many privileges. They were given liberty in different spheres of life. Women were independent to take part in all the social, religious and cultural functions. The society sanctioned them to move without restraint within and outside the village. They could profusely mix with the boys and select their life-partners without any social obstacles. In spite of these privileges, they have not been given equal rights in social, political, judicial as well as economic fields. After sharing almost equivalent responsibilities in day-to-day activities right from child rearing, household duties to agricultural activities, the practical utility and gravity of labour they put and share are equally not appreciated. But before we go into the detail about the position of women in tribal society, it would be appropriate to know the social structure of different tribes.
7.2 Social and family structure of the different tribes of North East India:

The social organization of some of the tribes is found to be patriarchal and some of them are matriarchal and few are both patriarchal and matriarchal. All the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland and Assam except Lalungs and Dimasas follow the patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal structure of society. The Hill Lalungs of Assam, Garo and Khasi of Meghalaya follow the matriarchal structure of society, whereas the Dimasas follow both patriarchal and matriarchal form of society.

Let us first observe the social structure of patriarchal tribal societies. In these tribal societies, descent is recognized through male line. Generally father is regarded as the guardian of the family. In the absence of the father the eldest son, if an adult, should the responsibility and takes full charge of the family. The mother is the mistress of the house next to the father and is much respected. The smallest unit of the society is the family consisting of father, mother and their children. Both joint family and nuclear family are prevalent in the different communities of tribal society. In the joint family system, the wife joins her husband after marriage and the latter generally lives with his own parents and brothers. Most of the tribes have a traditional custom that the sons set up their independent residence after marriage and that is why the son constructs a house of his own before marriage and after marriage the bride goes straight to her husband’s house, and not to her father-in-law’s house.
Among some tribes like the Adis, Noctes, Wanchos etc. of Arunachal Pradesh, married girls live with their parents in a joint family till the birth of the first child. After childbirth, they construct their own house with the help of the parents and other members of the family. Due to the unitary family system, the boy and the girl generally marry when they become mature to arrange for their own livelihood and handle their own family. When a joint family breaks up, custom demands that either the youngest or the eldest son continues living in the parental house to support the family and his old parents. All members of a joint family live in the same household, take their meals from a common hearth, perform rituals and ceremonies together and the expenses are met from the wealth earned or acquired by common efforts. The authority of all movable and immovable property lies with the father, which is inherited by the eldest or youngest son, or by all sons equally after his death. The daughters have no claim over family property, but they share the property of their mother like cloths, ornaments, and utensils etc., whereas the customs and the social and family organizations of the matriarchal societies of Lalungs of Assam and Garo and Khasi tribes of Meghalaya is quiet different from the patriarchal societies.

In the matrilineal societies of the Hill Lalungs, Garo and Khasi tribes, the descent is counted through female line and it is women who inherit the immovable parental property like house and lands. The children take the clan name of the mother. In these societies, the son after marriage leaves his parental house and settles either in the wife’s village or in her house. Generally one of the daughters, either elder or younger
is given the major share and made the inheritress of the property who used to stay with her old parents after her marriage. In the Khasi and Jaintia society the youngest daughter (Ka Khadduh) is made the custodian of the family property. The other daughters were also given share of the parental property to set up their independent home in her parent’s village. Therefore the matrilineal society of household consists of a father, a mother and a daughter and resident son-in-law known as Gobhia in Lalung society and Nokrom in Garo society and their children.

Another tribe, which is neither fully patriarchal nor matriarchal, is Dimasa tribe of Assam. The Dimasa society has its uniqueness and peculiarities in its clan system. According to Danda, "The Dimasa system of descent is rather unique in this part of India as no other tribe inhabiting the area has double descent". They follow both patriclan (Sengfong) and matriclan (Julu) system of descent. Every man or woman of Dimasa tribe bears allegiance to two clans. A man primarily reckons his descent from his paternal grandfather and inherits his secondary affiliation from his maternal grandmother, whereas a woman primarily reckons her descent through her maternal grandmother and then from paternal grandfather. But her secondary affiliation changes when she gets married. She is transferred to her husband’s patriclan by observing a ceremony called Madai Khilimba, but her primary affiliation of matriclan however remain unchanged.

As the Dimasas have double clan system, so the daughters and never daughter-in-laws inherit the properties of mother and sons inherit

902. Dipali G. Danda, Among the Dimasa of Assam, p. 51.
the properties of father. But there are no such restrictions that forbid the
daughters to inherit the properties of parents. In the absence of sons, the
properties of father are inherited by daughters. Since the Dimasa custom
does not permit women of different matriclans to live in the same house,
therefore, after marriage a boy has to leave his father’s house and has
to set up a new family life after marriage. So, a Dimasa family is of nuclear
type consisting of father, mother and their unmarried children.

7.3 Social status of tribal women of North East India:

The status of woman in a society is recognized by the roles
she plays in a family and in a society through different ways in the different
stages of her life cycle. She contributes her roles in the family from her
childhood to womanhood as a daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law,
mother, mother-in-law and as a widow woman. In every stage of her life
there are different responsibilities that a woman had to shoulder in a family
and society. Therefore, her rights, obligations and duties, authorities and
control give her status in her family and in her society by virtue of her
rights and duties. Thus, the status and role of women in a family and
in a society is governed by their own social norms, values, customs,
attitudes and social behaviour etc. as in every society an woman’s roles
and her rights, duties and obligations are related to man. In the same way,
the different tribal societies of North Eastern India have their own tribal
norms and customs according to which woman have been given various
roles and accordingly her status is determined. In fact, the status of the

903. ‘Motilal Nunisa, Status of women in Tribal Societies’ in The Tribal woman, edt. B.C.
Bhuyan, p. 82.
woman usually centers around her family and society. Let us scrutinize her position in the different role she plays in a family.

7.3.1 Position of a girl child in a tribal family:

The position of a girl child depends according to the descent and inheritance system of the tribes she belongs to. Among the male dominated and patriarchal societies, though the daughter is not neglected and brought up with same affection and love, but son is more preferred because daughter is considered as a transient member of the family as they leave their place of orientation after marriage, whereas son is regarded as the preserve of the family lineage and support for his parents in their older age. But if the parents do not have any son then the tradition has the provision that the youngest daughter could stay at her parent’s house along with her husband904.

In the matriarchal societies of Garo, Khasi and Lalung societies, where the descent is traced through female line, birth of a female child is preferred rather than the male one to continue the family and clan. Inheritance of property also goes to the female. Gassah opines about the Garo custom that, “a female child ensures the continuation of the family tree and saves such a family or clan from being looked down by others as an extinct one905. The girl child is also preferred, as she also becomes the support for the parents in their old age. In the Khasi and Garo societies, the boy is the temporary member of the family, since after marriage he

leaves his parental house and goes to stay with his wife either in her house if she is inheritress of her parental property or makes his new residence in the village of her wife.

But the custom is quite different in the matriarchal society of Jaintias. The husband after marriage remains member of his own mother's house and does not go to live in his mother-in-law's house, he only comes to visit his wife. Gurdon states that "The husband comes to his mother-in-law's house only after dusk and that he does not eat, smoke, or even partake of betel nut there, the idea being that none of his earnings go to support this house and therefore, it is not etiquette for him to partake of food or other refreshments there". But his children will be member of his wife's family. However, it is clear from the fact that in the matrilineal social system, the girl has more important social position in comparison to the position of boy.

A girl child in either of the tribal families, be it patriarchal or matriarchal, is no way neglected because she is considered as an economic asset for her parents. She not only serves the family in the home but also constitutes the major toil in cultivation, which is the primary resource of subsistence in the tribal society. Besides, parents of the girls get a substantial amount as bride price during her marriage in most of the patriarchal tribal societies. It is generally seen that a girl from the age of ten onward usually helps her mother in the household and agricultural works. Since mother is found to be so busy in the day-to-day domestic

as well as agricultural activities therefore the grown-up female child takes the responsibility of the minor children. Even in the present days, the female child in the hill societies is seen to be carrying her younger brother or sister on her back with the help of a piece of cloth. Hence, we find that in the tribal family, the girls from her childhood begins their contribution of works whereas a boy child is not pressurized by the parents to share the responsibility of the family affairs until he becomes matured. Hence, the girl child is always considered as a valuable asset for the parents and after marriage for her husband.

7.3.2 Job of women in tribal societies:

It had been found that the division of job regarding household duties, home management and family affairs was divided sex-wise in the tribal societies. The burden of the domestic chores within the household right from cooking to food gathering from the early morning till late evening apart from helping the male-folk in the agricultural works had to be abided by women. The men-folk is assigned with some hard work like cutting trees in the jhoom plots, cleaning jungle, hunting, fishing etc., which are not possible on the part of a female. The entire maintenance and earning of livelihood of a family depend upon the male. The latter very seldom helps women in household chores. But in times of need, for e.g. when women fall ill or go out of the village, men are bound to do the household duties.

Tribal women play the major role in the daily life then the menfolk. If we compare the daily activities of women of tribal societies
and non-tribal societies, we can say that former is much more hard worker in comparision to the latter. Their works include a large area. Apart from doing their day-to-day household activities, they go to the cultivating fields and help their men-folk in agricultural activities. Hence, they do more work than their male counterparts also and get exposed to a good amount of strain in terms of physical work. If we consider the total number of working hours, then it appears that the female force is way ahead of the male force. This can lead us to the conclusion that the female force is the potential pillar and asset for their families, who not only gives birth and nurtures the future generation, but also drifts the society towards progress with their sincerity and commitment to both in-house and out field work.

Their busy routine begins at the crack of dawn till late hours of the night. Their daily activities begin with husking and pounding of rice and millet, cleaning of cattle shed, milking the cows, rearing and feeding of domestic birds and animals, cleaning of house, washing clothes and utensils, fetching of water from water source, burning of firewood, cooking morning and afternoon food for the entire family, preparing of rice-beer. After cooking, she feeds the breakfast to men and children. After finishing the domestic works, they pack the midday lunch and tubes of beers for their own and their male partners and hasten to the fields. In the agricultural field right from sowing to harvesting, women do the entire work. While returning back to home from agricultural field in the evening, they collect basketfuls of vegetables, paddy and fuel from the forest. On reaching home, they feed the domestic animals, fetch water and prepare the evening meal, beer and serve the family members. Apart from doing
the normal daily domestic activities, women also entertain the guests by making special foods and wine. In the busy schedule of their day-to-day routine, they do not forget the role of mother. They take special care of the health and education of their infants and children. They spend their leisure time in spinning and weaving. It is apparent from the preceding deliberations that women of the tribal societies work relentlessly without taking any rest. They neither neglect the domestic activities nor the agricultural works because both the works are important for them. Therefore, tribal women were regarded as precious assets by their families for their valuable contributions.

In spite of doing the major part of work of the family, women are not given rights and respect in same proportion by the society. Dominant and prestigious position in the society is occupied by men. Women are not entitled to play the authoritative role in her family. Her consultation is taken regarding the family affairs, but the final judgement is vested with men. Even in matter of family economy or any other serious matters, the male members of the family do not think to take the suggestion of women. But the things are changing fast. With the spread of education and employment opportunities among women of Arunachal Pradesh, the status of women has improved. The attitude of the hill society towards the working women is changing. In the previous days, women were regarded as housewives and helper for their husbands in the agriculture. But their work were not provided any economic value. Therefore, they were dependent on men. But in the present days the women also occupied the salaried jobs, therefore they directly supported the family economy.
Therefore, the educated working women were able to snatch the equal position in the family and society as those of male. Now they got every right to take decision regarding the important family affairs like family budget, children's education and marriage etc.

7.4 Marriage:

The marriage system is recognized as one of the most vital social institutions among the people of the tribal societies. Marriage is not only the amalgamation of two individuals but also union of two families in a network of social compulsion. For a girl, the marriage serves as the base stone in her life because her new roles begins as wife, as daughter-in-law, as sister-in-law and most important of them is as mother. Marriage is a crossroads in the life of an individual because with the marital relationship a girl and a boy enter into a new relationship of a husband and a wife and thus forms an individual family unit. The responsibility of this new unit had to be shared by both of them. The number of member of this new unit increases, when children are born to the couple. The children stays in the family till they grow into adults and are married in their turn and establish their own family.

The different tribes of North-eastern region follow different types of marriage customs, rules and regulations while establishing marital relations. The tribal marriages are contractual in nature and the ritualistic aspects are somewhat insignificant. The marriage customs are quite simple, the marriage being more social than the religious aspect of the union. About the marriage-rites of the Riangs, Tipras and others of Chittagong hill tracts,
Lewin remarks that, at marriage there is no particular ceremony, but a great deal of drinking and dancing. A pig is killed as a sacrifice to the deities of the wood and stream. Then the girl's mother pours out a glass of liquor and gives it to her daughter, who goes and sits on her lover's knee, drinks half, and gives him the half; they afterwards crook together their little fingers. Presently, monogamy is generally prevalent among the different tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya but in the earlier days, polygamy was practiced by different communities of tribal society. Polyandrous families are prevalent among the Monpa tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Clan plays the main role in regulating the marriage of the tribal societies. The communities are expected to follow endogamy but exogamy regarding the clans. Bride price is customarily prevalent among all the patriarchal tribes, which are paid in cash and kind to the brides' parents by the groom. This price varies from tribes to tribes and even differs among the sub-tribes of the same tribe. Marriage is possible with some close relations under some conditions. Levirate and Sororate are permissible among the tribal population of North-East India. The peculiar custom of marriage with stepmother and stepdaughter is permissible among few tribes. Pre-marital sexual affairs were socially sanctioned among some of the different sub-tribes of Adi, Aka, Nishing, Sulung, Memba, Wancho and Nocte tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. Widow remarriage is also prevalent among all the tribes. Let us go in depth regarding the different marriage customs prevalent among the different tribes of North-East.

7.4.1 Clan exogamy:

The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland strictly adapt the rules of clan exogamy. But few tribes of Manipur and Tripura follow clan endogamy. Clan is counted through male line, who follows the patriarchal system of descent and through female line, who follows the matriarchal system of descent. That is all the members of the same clan in the male line are thought to be descendants from a common ancestor and on the reverse in the female line are considered as descendants from a common ancestress. So, the clan members are considered as brothers and sisters. Therefore, marital relationship within the race would mean the marriage with his or her own blood relation and hence considered as incestuous, immoral and illegal. Therefore, these types of marriages were declared unlawful who strictly follow the rules of clan exogamy and if one does this illegal act, he will be liable to serious sin in the eye of religion and socially cut off from their own tribe. Among the matriarchal tribes of Khasis and Jaintias, “The clans are strictly exogamous, marriage within the clan is the worst sin that a Khasi or a Synteng can commit. Both men and women become “Sang” (Taboo) and are excommunicated for this crime”908.

7.4.2 Clan endogamy:

Clan endogamy is widely prevalent among the Mizos or Lushais. Shakespeare opines, “A Lushai can practically marry any woman

he chooses except his sister or mother. Clan endogamy is mostly practiced among the mizo chiefs because a chief generally establishes marital relations with another chief who very often belong to the same clan. Kukis of Mizoram and Manipur are also not fully exogamous. Mao, Koirog, Tarao, Gangte, Hmar tribe of Manipur and Reang, Rupini and Mag tribe of Tripura follow clan endogamy though the sub-clans of Tarao and Gangte of Manipur and Mag of Tripura are exogamous. With some kind of preventable relations between parent and child, uncle and niece, aunt and nephew, brother and sister, marriage within the same clan, lineage and even within an extended family is permissible among the Reangs of Tripura. Among Nagas, only the Konyak Naga chiefs are not so much strict about the clan exogamy. The reason is that the chiefs considered themselves as sacrosanct and so the principal wife is brought from the same clan though not from the agnates.

7.4.3 Cross-Cousin marriages:

Marriages with one's own cousin are popular and recognized customs among most of the tribes of North-East India. Marriage with the mother's brother's daughter/father's sister's son or father's sister's daughter/mother's brother's son is defined as the matrilineal and patrilineal cross cousin marriage respectively. Among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Mikir and Mishing tribe of Assam, Aimol, Kom, Tarao, Kukis of Manipur, cross-cousin marriage is not only the general rule but also given immense

910. Dr. Jagdish Gan Chaudhuri, The Riangs of Tripura, p. 46.
preference. The custom in the past had assumed a prescriptive form, so refusal to marry a mother’s brother’s daughter led to the payment of some sort of compensation by the avoiding party. Among the Kukis, sister’s son is bound by custom to marry mother’s brother’s daughter known as ‘Neinu’ (i.e. to be married to) and in case he fails to do so, he not only forfeits all his rightful claims and respect, indulgence etc. that he commands from his mother’s brother and his daughter but he is also supposed to give fine of one ‘Mithuni’ to his mother’s brother. Similarly the Mikir custom envisages that a boy must marry his mother’s brother’s daughter, “and if he does not, the maternal uncle could beat the lad as much as he liked; but now they can do as they please.” Most of the tribes of Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur follow the matrilineal cross-cousin marriage and avoid Patrilineal cross-cousin marriage i.e. marriage with father’s sister’s daughter/mother’s brother’s son. Describing about the inclination towards the matrilineal cross cousin marriage among the Tangsa tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, Dutta writes, “In the cross-cousin marriage the mother’s brother’s daughter is considered to be the potential wife of the father’s sister’s son. In the absence of the mother’s brother’s daughter or the father’s sister’s son, either party can take partners from outside according to their choice. Marriage with the father’s sister’s daughter is strictly prohibited.” The matrilineal cross cousin marriage is permitted among the matriarchal societies of Garo and Khasi of Meghalaya. But there is a different rule of cross-cousin marriage in both the societies. A Khasi can marry his maternal

914. Parul Dutta, The Tangsas, p. 49.
uncle's daughter only after the death of the maternal uncle. Gurdon orate that this is probably the maternal uncle, or *kni*, in a Khasi household is regarded more in the light of a father than of an uncle\(^9\). Among the Garos, a girl is bound to marry her father’s sister’s son due to the custom of *nokrom* system. Choudhury opines in his paper that “Among the Garos, it is the rule rather than exception, and cross-cousin marriage may be viewed as having a structural relation to the Garo institution of the *nok*”\(^{10}\).

Both types i.e. Paternal and Maternal cross cousin marriages are permissible among the Monpa, Ramo, Pailibo, Wancho, Hill Miri and Aka tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Mishing and Dimasa tribe of Assam (though not preferred), Ao tribe of Nagaland, Rabhas of Assam Chakma tribe of Tripura and Mizos. Mishing tribe of Assam considers marriage with mother’s brother’s daughter or father’s sister’s daughter as a matter of prestige for both the families\(^{11}\). Among the Khasis, a man can marry his father’s sister’s daughter or mother’s brother’s daughter provided the bride’s father is dead at the time of marriage. Among the War Khasis, marriage with the daughter’s of father’s sister is prohibited. But among the Garos, it is custom for every family that the heiress daughter has to marry the son of her father’s sister who is known as *nokrom* of his father-in-law.

The reason for popularity of cross-cousin marriage seems to be that it becomes easier to adjust for the bride and groom with their

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spouse as well as their family because they are familiar with each other’s behaviour, taste, standard of living as well as each other’s family atmosphere. As Dutta said, “In cross-cousin marriage considerable socio-economic significance is attached. The prime considerations for such a marriage are mutual help and co-operation and compatibility of temperaments”\textsuperscript{918}. Similar is the presumption among the Mate tribe of Manipur that “the well-known traditional conflict between mother in law and daughter in-law can perpetually avoided because the daughter in-law is mother in-law’s brother’s daughter. Being related so, she will look after the old people of the family without ever deserting them”\textsuperscript{919}.

7.4.4 Parallel cousin marriage :

Marriage with father’s brother’s children and mother’s sister’s children is known as parallel cousin marriage. Though this type of marriage is prohibited among most of the tribes, but it is permissible among the Sherdukpen and Ramo-Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizo tribes, Halam, and Reang tribe of Tripura. Among the Noatia and Chakma tribe of Tripura, Pailibo of Arunachal, there is a custom of parallel cousin marriage between the children of two sisters, but marriage between the children of two brothers is prohibited.

7.4.5 Widow marriage :

Custom of widow remarriage is prevalent among all the tribes

\textsuperscript{918} Parul Dutta, The Tangsas, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{919} Langsun D. Mate, The Mate tribe of Manipur, p. 27.
of North-East. But there are certain rules among different tribes. Widows of the Khasi and Jaintia community can not marry before one year of the demise of their husbands. Various forms of widow marriages are prevalent among different tribes such as custom of Levirate marriage, Sororate marriage, Stepmother marriage and Daughter-in-law marriage. Let us first go through the custom of Levirate marriage.

7.4.5.1 Levirate marriage :

The custom of Levirate marriage is the most common marriage custom still prevalent among all the tribes of Arunachal, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur (except Meithei tribes), and Assam. According to the levirate custom, the widow after the death of her husband is allowed to marry one of the elder or younger brothers of the deceased husband as per customs of the tribe to which her deceased husband belongs. The tribes of Mizoram and Assam, Akas, Singphos, Tangsas of Arunachal Pradesh follow only senior levirate i.e. the widow can marry the younger brother of the deceased husband but not the elder brother, who is regarded as a father figure. On the other hand, the tribes of Nagaland follow junior levirate, which means that the widow can inherit only by the elder brother of the deceased husband while marriage with elder brother's widow is prohibited, since she receives the respect of a mother. And most of the tribes of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh follow both senior and junior levirate i.e., one can inherit the widow of the elder as well as younger brother. Among the Anal and Mate tribes of Manipur, the widow may marry her deceased husband's younger brother in case he is unmarried; otherwise
she is permitted to marry any other person keeping the rule of exogamy\textsuperscript{920}. But the custom of Levirate was strictly prohibited among the Meithei tribe of Manipur and Tipperas, Noatia, Uchai tribe of Tripura.

The reason behind the levirate marriage among the tribes seems to be the bride price system. Since she is purchased by her husband from her parents by paying the bride price during her first marriage, therefore she becomes the legal property of her husband. In case of the death of her husband, the brothers of the deceased husband hold a legal claim over her. Among the Kukis, an unmarried man, be a mere child, on coming of his marriageable age is bound to marry the widow of his deceased elder brother, however old the widow may be\textsuperscript{921}. Mitkong while discussing about the widow inheritance among the Adi tribes said, "As per social system, of the Adis, a wife of a man is considered as the property of the clan to which he belongs. ...... On the death of the husband the widow has to be inherited by a kin of deceased husband either for her security or for sexual need as per norm laid down by the clansmen"\textsuperscript{922}. Though the choice is left to the widow but she has to accept any one as her husband from the in-laws family. She can only be free from this bondage, if her parents agree to return back the bride price to the brother of the deceased husband, which they have taken during her first marriage. If the parents are not in the position or do not want to return back the bride price; then she is bound to marry one of her brother-in-law after

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\textsuperscript{920} Langsun D. Mate, The Mate tribe of Manipur, p.25.
\textsuperscript{921} C. A. Scopitt, A short account of the Kuki-Lushai tribes, p.15.
\textsuperscript{922} "N. Mitkong, Customs and Laws of widow inheritance of the Adis" in Aspects of culture and customs of Arunachal Pradesh, edited by Dr. P.C. Dutta & Dr. D K Duarna, pp. 223-224.
\end{flushleft}
her husband's death. However, Srivastav also mentioned that she could be free to return to her parents or marry someone of her choice only if her brother-in-law does not like to marry her or if the second husband agrees to pay the bride price spent on her marriage along with compensation to her husband's brother. Among the Singpho tribes if the brother disagrees to marry the widow of his deceased brother and also does not want to take the responsibility of the children of the latter, then he has to pay a fine of 140 rupees and a buffalo to the parents of the widow in a ceremony called 'Moroang Ro'\textsuperscript{923}. After this ceremony no marriage can take place between these two families.

7.4.5.2 Sororate :

Sororate is another popular marriage custom, which is widely followed by the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh, Kukis of Mizoram, Kacharis of Assam and Garos of Meghalaya. According to the custom, a man can marry any of the unmarried sister of wife only after the death of the latter. Marriage with wife's sister after the death of her husband can also take place. Among some tribes, only junior sororate is practiced and some follow both senior and junior sororate. Normal marriage rituals are generally not performed in such marriage.

7.4.5.3 Stepmother marriage :

One peculiar form of marriage prevalent among few of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland i.e., marriage with the stepmother

\textsuperscript{923} Parul Dutta, The Singphos, pp. 74-75.
after the death of father. This form of marriage is found among the tribes like Singphos, Hill Miris, Idu Mishmis, Nishing-Bangnis, Gallong Adis of Arunachal Pradesh and Semas of Nagaland. But marriage with the stepmother is permitted only after the death of the father. “During the lifetime of the father it is never allowed and even sexual relationship is considered as serious crime”[924]. The marriage with the widow stepmother is performed after payment of a nominal bride price by the proposed groom to the guardian of the stepmother. The bride price varies from tribes to tribes and also according to the age of the stepmother. The previous issues of the stepmother even after marriage are regarded as brothers and sisters though she is considered as wife. The reason for the custom of marrying the stepmother is due to the economic cause. As a wife, she can get care and security from her new husband, which she can not expect as a stepmother and on the other hand the new husband will get experienced and additional helpful hand for his agricultural works[925]. However, the widowed stepmother or the stepson is not given force for such union. The union also depends upon the age of the stepmother, number of issues from her previous husband and most importantly the wish of the woman as well as the stepson.

7.4.5.4 Daughter-in-law marriage:

Another peculiar custom of marrying one’s daughter-in-law is prevalent only among the Singpho tribe of Arunachal Pradesh[926]. This

system is activated only if the deceased son is the only inheritor of the family and if he dies leaving behind no issues. But when there is an issue, this sort of marriage is not considered legal. In such situation, the father-in-law marries the widow daughter-in-law only to keep the generation alive. The children who take birth from such union will be regarded as grand children. The parents or the guardian of the daughter-in-law are informed and the father-in-law pays a nominal bride price.

7.4.5.5 Marriage with widow mother-in-law and step-daughter:

This custom is prevalent only among the Garo tribes of Meghalaya. When the household head dies leaving behind his widow, nokna (inheritress daughter) and nokrom (resident son-in-law), the nokrom marries the widow, thus assuming the anomalous position of husband to both mother and daughter, where the mother assumes the position of the principal wife (Jik mongma or Jik maming) of the nokrom and nokna i.e., the daughter becomes the co-wife (Jik gite). On the death of mother, the daughter assumes the role of the principal wife. On the other hand, if the household head dies leaving behind his widow and unmarried daughters, the widow is supposed to marry one of the nephew of her deceased husband, who accepts the old widow as his principal wife and her inheritress daughter as a co-wife which may be termed as step-daughter marriage. If the widow refuses to marry the nephew of her deceased husband and marries another man, the nephew may claim compensation from both of them. This custom of marriage among the Garos is governed by the law of ‘Akim’ according to which once such a marriage is contracted
either bride or the groom never becomes free to remarry person of another clan, even after the death of either spouses.

7.4.6 Marriage forms:

Several forms of marriages were found to be prevalent among the different tribal societies of North-East. These are: Marriage by Exchange, Marriage by Service, Marriage by Capture or Elopement, Marriage by inheritance, marriage by mutual consent and Marriage by Negotiation. Let us go through these different modes of marriages for the paternal tribal societies for acquiring life partners.

7.4.6.1 Marriage by Negotiation:

Negotiation between parents of the two parties is the regular and common rule of marriage of the tribal people of North East India, which of course depends upon the reciprocal choice of the would be couple. Negotiation is initiated from the boy’s side. Marriage proposal comes hardly from the girl’s side. The boy usually communicates to his parents about his marital choice through some relatives or friends. The parents, after seeking the approbation of their son’s choice from the members of the community, express their desire to the parents of the girl through a mediator. The parents of the girl then consult about this proposal with their relatives and the other villagers and also sound the girl about her own reactions. After taking the approbation of the girl and other people of the community, the parents of the girl then proceed to settle the bride price. Normally, the

bride price is to be settled up by the go-between on behalf of the boy’s parents with the parents of the girl. Generally after negotiation, the groom visits the bride’s house. Marriage through negotiation involves a lengthy procedure with a number of formalities and rituals that vary from tribes to tribes.

7.4.6.2 Marriage by Exchange:

This is one of the most primitive modes of marriage in Arunachal Pradesh. About this form of marriage, Roy gives his opinion. “a boy desirous of marrying a girl undertakes to fill the gap in her family by supplying a suitable girl for a marriageable boy in exchange. By this method, the difficulty sometime felt in paying the are (bride-price) is solved. In case the marriage in exchange does not take place on account of unwillingness of the girl, who may run away with someone else, the bride-price that would have been due had there been no exchange, has to be paid”928.

This system is popular among the Padams and Minyongs, two sub-tribes of Adi, Miri and Singpho tribes. Regarding the marriage customs of the Miris, Hamilton records, “The Miris, for example, never countenance a betrothal, unless at the same time a female belonging to the bridegroom’s family is promised for some male member of the bride’s”929. It does not necessarily mean that the marriages take place simultaneously. If the groom’s family has no female of marriageable age at that time then they had to promise to give female from his own family in future to the bride’s.

family. But problems arise when the family of bride-takers is unable to fulfill their promise due to some reasons. In such case the bride-giver takes back his married daughter from the groom although she may have children by him, and again marry her off to boy of other family, who promises his sister or some other female relative, in exchange for her. If the second family also fails to fulfill his part of the contract then again the bride's father takes her away from there and gives her to third groom and so on.

7.4.6.3 Marriage by Service:

Marriage by Service is an alternative pattern of acquiring mate among the Abor (Adi), Dafla, Sulung, Miji, Sherdikpen, Aka, Khampti and Singpho tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Lotha tribes of Nagaland, Mizo and Kuki tribes of Mizoram as well as also among the Garos of Meghalaya. The reason for the system of marriage by service is due to the non-affordable position of the bridegroom to pay the bride price. Sinha while discussing about this system among the Akas opines that when a man is too poor to give even the minimum bride-price, then the boy may get a wife of his choice in conformity by putting up service at his would be father-in-law's house for a couple of years in lieu of the bride-price. He is, however permitted to cohabit with the girl even before marriage and during his period of service. It may also happen that, by the end of his service period, two or more children are born to him. After the service period is over, after a formal ceremony, he is accepted as the husband of the girl and he separates from his in-laws house along with his wife.
and children to find his individual family\textsuperscript{930}.

Among the Ramos, one of the sub-tribes of Adis, sometimes when the bridegroom is not able to pay the full amount of the bride price, then the marriage by service is converted into marriage by exchange through a girl child born to the couple\textsuperscript{931}. She is given to the grandparents in lieu of the bride price, which means that the bride price of the girl will not go to her parents but to the maternal grandparents. Among the Sherdukpons, the father of the girl generally adopts this method of marriage, when he does not have any boy child or other male relation to help him in his cultivation works. In such situation the would-be son-in-law is asked by the girl’s father to provide service for some months in agricultural operations during which his potentialities, moral fiber and working ability are cautiously observed\textsuperscript{932}.

But it is an essential custom and condition of marriage among the Anal, Aimol, Chiru, Chothe, Kom and Puimei of Manipur, Darlongs, Reangs, Tipras, Naotia, Jamatias, Uchais, Halam, Mags of Tripura, Kacharis and Mikirs of Assam. After the final negotiation of marriage between both the parties, the groom before his marriage has to stay in bride’s house for a certain period before his marriage like a son of his would be father-in-law and extends his assistance in agricultural activities as well as attends various duties of that house. After completion of this period, his parents come to take their son and daughter-in-law. Obviously, there are some

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930. Raghuvir Sinha, The Akas, p. 84.
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conditions of the service. If the boy leaves before the completion of the period, he has no right to marry the girl, who is free to marry anybody else but there are some relaxation too, such as some other person can serve on behalf of the groom in the girl’s house if bride’s father agrees933. This service is called Loh and Nuhmeihle respectively among the Chothe and Kom tribes of Manipur, Jamai Khata among the Tripuris and Noatias, Damad Utha among the Halams, Khamatoore among the Mags, Chamarai among the Riangs and Maklut among the Darlongs of Tripura. The period of service varies from tribes to tribes and according to the agreement of the parents of the two parties. Among the tribes of Tripura (except Uehais, where the period of servitude is for three to four years), the period is usually for one-year.

Among Kacharis of Assam, the period of service, which is commonly known as ‘Olao ghar-jiya’ is from three or four years to an upward limit of twelve or fifteen years934. Cohabitation, however is allowed after about twelve or eighteen months’ service, and at the conclusion of the full period, the young people are free to depart whithersoever they will. The service of the bridegroom in the bride’s house among the Kacharis of Darrang known as ‘mal ghar-jiya’ and Kamrup known as ‘Khasrot-thakaghari-jiya’, the period of service is life-long. According to Endle, “the prospective bridegroom severs all connection with his own family, and identifies himself completely with that of his bride, in whose house he serves until the death of her

parents, when with his wife he entitled to the whole or the usual share of their property. On that of his own parents or relatives he retains no claim whatever. Similarly among the Mikirs, if the daughter is the only child or heiress, the groom stays with his father-in-law’s house for lifetime. But presently the educated youth does not like the custom of marriage by service and bride price is paid in lieu of such service.

7.4.6.4 Marriage by Elopement:

Marriage by elopement is considered as the romantic way of acquiring a mate. In other words, it can be said as love marriage. This type of marriage is in vogue among all the tribes. This mode is only resorted to, when the young lovers meet with parental objection or when there appears a third person in between the boy and the girl, who is likely to stand in their way, because of his being a serious contender to win the hands of the girl in marriage, or when the economic consideration that involves in the event of all formalities of the marriage are to be fulfilled in the case of either the boy or the girl being in abject poverty, or even when the girl is impregnated by either of the lovers. In all these cases marriage by elopement is resorted to. If, however, the boy is caught, he is made to pay a heavy fine by the village council besides the bride price. The bride price in such marriages is usually higher than in normal marriages. The Miris used to resort to abduction when the demand of the bride price was exorbitant. Hamilton tells, “Where the price demanded for the bride is in excess of what the youthful swain can afford to pay, the girl arranges

936. Dr. S.T. Das, Tribal life of North-Eastern India, p.208.
that she shall be abducted. By special request, her lover and a few of his friends are in waiting at some appointed place, when she is captured and carried off amidst tears and lamentations, Marriage quickly takes place, whereupon, as the groom has over-come all obstacles and is in possession of the prize, the bride's parents usually find it politic to come to terms."937.

But among the Kacharis, the traces of this practice are found to survive in the ordinary marriage ceremonial938. Among the Lalungs (Tiwas) and the Mishings, this type of marriage is known as Gandharva marriage, which is widely prevalent form of marriage among them. Dr. Thakur elaborates about the Gandharva marriage of the Lalungs939. In this marriage, the lover takes away his beloved on a stipulated night. Next morning the lover's relatives approach the girl's parents and if terms and conditions laid by the parents of the girl are agreeable to the parents of the boy, the parents of the girl give consent to the marriage. In such marriages, the bride price is nominal. The Gandharva marriage, which is known as Dugla-lunam among the Mishings940, the bride is taken away by the boy and is received in a little ceremony. The girl's parents are informed and the matter is settled in a gathering known as Orai Binam. The bride price is usually demanded higher in such marriages.

Among Riang and Darlong tribes of Tripura, marriage by elopement known as Tooi Khaimi and Intlun or Di thandan respectively. This sort of marriage is given approval after 'armit en' i.e., by killing

938. For details, see S. Endle, The Kacharis, pp. 43-44  
the red cock before the elder of the village court.

7.4.6.5 Marriage for the poor:

There are some less expensive and abbreviated types of marriages, which are taken recourse to by the poor. One such marriage is *Joron Biya*, which is prevalent among the poorer sections of the Lalung society of Assam. In this type of marriage, the boy just brings one rice-beer jar, one basketful of rice/rice cakes, two gourds and some betel leaves and nuts to the girl’s house and takes away the girl with him to his house. After three or five days, the couple visits the girl’s house bringing with them one *bhar* (two basketful of rice, betel leaves and nuts etc.) and five fowls. During this visit, the elder people of both sides are invited who formally recognize the couple on that day. The two type of marriages that are prevalent among the poorer section of Dimasa Kacharis are known as *Habriba* and *Hablaba*. The rites of this type of marriages are limited and take place inside the house. In the former type, the bridegroom is allowed to enter into the kitchen to meet the bride on the marriage day. The latter type of marriage, though rarely occurs, is prevalent among the Dimasa Kacharis. When the groom is extremely poor and cannot spend anything for the ceremony, then he simply bows down to the bride’s father and pays Rs. 5 as a token of bride price. If the bride’s father accepts that money, then the boy and the girl get recognized as the husband and

941. Letluama Darlong, The Darlongs of Tripura, pp. 149-150.
943. Dipali G. Danda, Among the Dimasa of Assam, p. 55
wife and then onwards they are allowed to live together.

7.4.6.6 Marriage by mutual consent:

This marriage is very common among the hill Lalungs. According to this marriage, the boy and the girl decide to get married after long intimacy. Then the boy sleeps with the girl for one night in her house and then both are accepted as husband and wife. The boy also becomes the resident son-in-law and the next day this information is given to the villagers and the parents of the boy.

7.4.6.7 Marriage by force or capture:

This marriage is though not popular, but is not uncommon among the tribal society. Among the matriarchal society of hill Lalungs, when the boy makes intimacy with the girl and yet not serious about his marriage with the girl, in such cases the villagers of the girl force the boy to enter into the wedlock with the girl and to become a resident son-in-law in the house of the girl. Among the Vaipheis Kukis, this mode of marriage is called Nungaak-Gu or Thepthaak, where the girl is kidnapped by the boy with the help of two or more of his accomplices and the marriage is performed without any prior understanding or agreement. Of course, the punishment is very heavy, if found guilty. Same is the case with the Khemungan Nagas. When a boy desires to marry a particular girl he narrates his choice to his parents and relatives and they raid the girl’s house and

944. Birendra Kumar Gohain, The Hill Lalungs, pp. 43-44.
945. Birendra Kumar Gohain, The Hill Lalungs, p. 44.
abduct her and thereafter they start living as husband and wife without any formalities or bride price.

7.4.7 Marriage forms among the matriarchal tribes of Meghalaya:

The matriarchal tribal societies of Northeast are different from the patriarchal tribal societies regarding their various customs of marriage, divorce and inheritance laws. Among the Garos, marriage proposal always comes from girl’s side. But among the Khasis and Jaintias, the offer for marriage come from boy’s side. Marriage ceremonies in regard to details and formalities differ from tribe to tribe. The most remarkable feature of the Khasi marriage is that it was customary in the earlier days for the husband to live with his wife in his mother-in-law’s house his wife gives birth to one or two children. After that they generally establish their separate household. But if the wife is 'ka khadduh (youngest daughter), then she becomes the inheritress of family property. Among the khasis, the boy generally goes to the girl’s house after the marriage. Similar is the rule among the Garos. Other than the nokrom (husband of the inheritress daughter), all other son-in-laws establish their separate household with their wives. But among the Jaintias, the case is different; the husband after marriage does not go to stay with his wife in his mother-in-law’s house but visits his wife only in the night. Let us find out the marriage customs and rules of these societies. Various forms of marriages are in vogue among the matriarchal tribes of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia society. In the Garo and Khasi society many types of marriages are prevalent, some of them are

947. Prakash Singh, Nagaland, p. 44.
legal and some are illegal though they were made official later on. These marriages are:

7.4.7.1 Marriage by negotiation:

It is the recognized and most common and honourable form of marriage among the Garos and Khasis. Among the Garos, both the contracting parties assemble in bride’s house and the priest consults the omen by killing a hen and a cock and predicts whether the marriage will be happy one or not. This marriage is known as Dośia (Do - fowl and Sia - die) among the Garos\textsuperscript{948}.

7.4.7.2 Marriage by service:

This custom is prevalent among some of the divisions of the Garos. It is the reverse system of the service of the groom in the girl’s house, which was in vogue among the Mizos and the tribes of Tripura. According to the custom of marriage by service, which is known as Chaśenga (Cha – eat and Senga – wait), the girl goes to stay in the house of the boy and helps him and his family in all the household works. If the boy and his parents are satisfied with her performance, marriage is arranged\textsuperscript{949}.

7.4.7.3 Seka or elopement:

In this case, the boy and the girl run away from home and after few days they return to the girl’s house and live as husband and wife\textsuperscript{950}.

\textsuperscript{948} Milton S. Sangma, History and culture of the Garos, pp. 197-199.
\textsuperscript{949} Playfair; The Garos, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{950} Jobang Marak, The Garo law, p. 50.
7.4.7.4 Marriage by capture :

This marriage was in vogue among the Garos and Khasis in olden days and is almost extinct presently. Among the Garos, when a girl of marriageable age wished to marry a particular boy, he was suddenly captured by the girl's party, whenever he was found alone and was forcibly confined with the girl for more than one night in the girl's residence. Major Playfair mentions that it was the custom among the A'bengs and the Matabengs Garos that if the boy indicated his refusal to marry the girl by absconding and concealing himself, then he was again hunted and was forcibly brought back by the girl's party. Now he was kept under strict vigilance, but if the boy would have flown for the second time by applying various tricks, he was again captured for the second time also. But if he would have escaped for the third time, then he would have been released as it pinpointed that he was really not interested to marry the girl\textsuperscript{951}. But if the girl was found to be seduced by the boy while they were alone together for two or three nights, then the latter had to give fine of certain amount to the parents of the girl, who shared this amount with Nokma and other relations\textsuperscript{952}. Marriage by capture was prevalent among the Kongor Khasis. Often the Kongor male was captured by the female syiem's (ruler) party and was compelled to enter the marriage ceremony sometimes against his will. But there was a provision that if he was not interested to stay with the girl, he could have released himself by submitting an appropriate fine\textsuperscript{953}.

\textsuperscript{951} Playfair, The Garos, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{952} B. N. Choudhury, Some Cultural and linguistic aspects of Garos, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{953} Dr. H. Barch, The History and culture of the Khasi people (3rd edition), p. 294.
7.4.7.5 Marriage by temptation:

This custom was prevalent among the Garos. According to this custom known as Chamejika (Chame – friend and Jika – to bait), pairs of boys and girls sing romantic songs to tempt each other and present rice beer, betelnuts and tobacco or biri to their desirous life partner during certain festivals, such as Wangala, Mangona, etc. This process continues for one night or more until they are satisfied that they are fit for each other as life partner, otherwise they part\textsuperscript{954}. Among the Atong Garos, the pairs, after the entertainment are permitted for making physical connection, but this does not bind them to marry each other. The young girl never incurs obloquy for going to bed with the boy or on account of her lapses from the path of virtue, unless she is found to be an expectant mother\textsuperscript{955}. This custom is presently not in practice, as the educated and respectable people do not countenance it.

7.4.7.6 Marriage by secretly becoming sleeping partner:

This custom is prevalent among the Garos. According to this custom known as Tunapa (Tu – lie down and Napa – enter secretly)\textsuperscript{956}, either the girl or the boy whoever is interested for the other becomes sleeping partner for the other at night, when all others in the house are asleep. If the partner is accepted by the other, the couple sleeps together and before the dawn goes to their own house. Marriage is then arranged after negotiation but if the partner is rejected, then the machong of the

\textsuperscript{955} Playfair, The Garos, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{956} Jobang Marak, The Garo law, pp. 50-51.
suitors have to pay fine. Sometimes the tunapa is done by the consent of parents and relatives.

7.4.7.7 Marriage by offering food:

This custom is prevalent among the Matchis Garos. When the girl is in love with a boy but not sure about the boy’s agreement, then she proposed the boy by sending him a dish of cooked rice in the nokpante (Bachelors’ Barrack) by her sister or any of her female relations. The girl also pursues them but did not come forward to avoid the insult or shame if the boy refuses her offer, but if he started eating the food, which means acceptance of the proposal, then the girl comes out of the hiding place and eats with him. Marriage would then be arranged after negotiations. This form of marriage is known as Cha’dila (Cha – eat and Dila – to make a start)957.

7.4.7.8 Marriage with nephew or nokrom:

This custom is prevalent among the Garos known as On’songa and On’chapa marriage. According to On’songa marriage (provide continuation), when the father expires, it is essential for the nokrom to marry his widowed mother-in-law to assume the full liability of the household, as the mother-in-law is the de jure owner of the family property and according to On’chapa (additional gift) marriage, if the householder dies, then the nephew of the dead person has to marry the widow, but if the age gap is longer between the nephew and the widow then the nephew

is permitted to marry any of the daughters of the widow and become the *nokrom* of that house\(^{958}\). *On’songa* and *On’chapa* marriage custom is the privilege only for the *nokrom*, but not for the other son-in-law.

### 7.4.8 Bride price:

The custom of bride price is in vogue among the patriarchal tribal societies of Northeast India. But there is no custom of bride price among the matriarchal tribes. Marriages in patriarchal tribal societies involve an obligation on the part of the bridegroom and his people towards the bride’s parents. This obligation he tries to accomplish by making some payment to the parents of the bride, which is known as bride price. The bride price is the guiding factor of a tribal marriage. The bride price is known by varieties of name by the different tribes and sub-tribes. The bride price is compulsory. The payment of the bride price can be postponed in case the boy is not in a position to pay it. But the marriage is not recognized by the society till the bride price is paid. Dutta writes about the bride price of Tangsas, “In Tangsa society, the possibility of a marriage is virtually determined by the amount of bride-price which is demanded by the parents of the girl. The rituals, performed in the marriage, appear to be of secondary importance. The price is the main factor, and a high price makes a Tangsa father proud of his daughter”\(^{959}\).

The bride price is paid either in cash or in kind. The latter generally includes cattle, clothes and utensils. The bride price depends upon

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\(^{959}\) Parul Dutta, *The Tangsas*, p. 60.
many things such as status of the girl's parents, economic position of the bridegroom, age of the girl, working capacity of the bride in the cultivation work as well as in the household work, form of marriage etc. If the girl belongs to a rich family, the amount of the bride price will be higher. If the girl is young then the parents of the girl expect a high bride price from the groom's party. In case of cross-cousin marriage, the bride price is less than the normal price and in case of levirate and sororate marriage, a nominal bride price is given to the bride's parents. But in case of capture or elopement marriage, the bride price is high comparison to the marriage through negotiations.

The bride price is usually required to be paid at the time of marriage but its amount has to be in any case decided well in advance, and on its settlement only, the marriage is supposed to have been finalized. Marriage negotiations are likely to break off, if the two parties cannot reach any agreement with regard to the bride price. In case, a man is not able to pay the whole amount of bride price in one installment, he may be permitted to pay a part of it at marriage and the rest afterwards, if the bride's parents agree to the arrangement. If the boy is too poor and is not in the position to arrange for the required bride price for the girl he wants to marry, then the bride price is paid by the groom through his service towards the bride's parents.

The nature and amount of payment vary from tribe to tribe.

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Generally, the bride-price offered by a Kabui Naga consists of 7 buffaloes, two daos, two spears, two strings of hoes and for Tangkhul Nagas it is two dogs and two daos, for a Mao Naga, it is a pig and spear; for the Anals and the Purums of Manipur, it is a pig and hoe, but the price of a Vaiphei girl of Kuki tribes varies from two to ten Mithuns whereas a Hmar fixes it within three to seven mithuns, one hoe, a pair of cloth and a jar of rice beer. The price of a girl belonging to Lamgang tribe of Kuki is fixed for three pigs or buffaloes or cattle, a necklace of conch-shells, one bracelet and a black or blue cloth and the price of a Mate Kuki tribe is ten mithuns, two necklaces, two Mate poundum (Mate tribe traditional cloth) and two gongs. The price of a Thadou Kuki girl is the highest among all other tribes of Manipur. It is generally fixed between two and ten mithuns or pigs, two large gongs, two sets of ordinary gongs and two beads whereas the price of Chiru girl is only a gong, which is considered to be the lowest.

Among the Hmar Kukis, the bride price is divided into various shares such as Man-pui (lion share of bride price goes to the bride’s parents), Panghak (a portion is given to bride’s parents kinsmen), Pusum (a portion given to bride’s maternal uncle called Pu), Nisum (a portion given to the bride’s father’s sister) and Zuorman (a small portion given to the bride’s friends and cousins). Similarly among the Mizos, the bride price is shared in various parts. They are: Manpui (the main price) paid to the father or brothers of the bride, Pushum (given to nearest male relative

on the mother’s side who is chosen as the bride’s ‘pu’ or protector), Palal (friend of the bride who is expected to look after her interests throughout her whole married life), Niaman (Aunt’s price which is equal to Pushnum which has to be paid to the bride’s aunt on her father’s side, in case the aunts are more than one then the eldest takes the ‘naiman’ of the eldest niece and the second aunt that of the second niece and so on), Thian (female palal, but she receives a small sum from Rs. 10/- onwards) and Nau Puan Puak Man (Price of carrying the younger sister in her cloth)\textsuperscript{962}. These sums are not paid at one time, in fact the tradition is that some of the amount remains unpaid for many years, but it is the custom to pay a certain amount of manpui before the marriage, which is called ‘sum hma hruai’ i.e., ‘the price before taking’. Among the Darlong tribes of Tripura, the bride price is shared among Pu hrang (the paternal uncle/grand father of the bride), Nu hrang (the mother of the bride), Ni hrang (sister of the bride’s father), U hrang (brother/sister of the bride), Palai hman (negotiator) and Cham hman (friend of the bride)\textsuperscript{963}.

Among the Naga tribes, the bride price for the Sema Nagas is the highest. Among them also, the bride price is shared by the different relatives of the bride apart from her father. The amount is distributed between three male and three female relatives of the bride. The lion’s share i.e. two-third of the price paid for the bride is kept by the latter’s father or guardian. The remaining one-third price is shared between bride’s elder or younger uncle, elder brother on the male side, eldest sister of the bride,

\textsuperscript{962} Lt Colonel J. Shakespear, The Lushai-Kuki clans, p.51.
\textsuperscript{963} Letthuama Darlong, The Darlongs of Tripura, p. 146.
eldest sister of her mother and bride’s youngest sister. There is a deep philosophy in sharing the bride price among the relatives, which is explained by Ghosh in his paper ‘Sema marriage’. According to him\textsuperscript{964}, the selection of the bride’s uncle from father’s side who would be given the bride price depends upon uncle’s physical and economic condition. The young and economically solvent uncle will be chosen to get the bride price, because he will be able to protect and help with men and money the newly married couple if the son-in-law or girl falls sick or faces danger. Before giving him the amount, the groom accepts him as $Afa$, that is, father. The same purpose is implicated on the other members of the recipient of the bride price. Thus, with the bride price, the promise of help is purchased.

The bride price is for the reason that daughter is considered as an asset and symbol of affluence for the family, since she is an earning and helping hands to the parents as well as to the whole family. The marriage of a daughter is a loss for her parents and helpful for the groom’s party. Adding a female member in the groom’s family means an additional hand for cultivation works and increase in the production and consequently the wealth of the family. Hence, the system of bride price is present in the tribal society. It seems that one of the intentions behind the bride price taken by the bride’s father from the groom’s party is to compensate the loss of service of the girl to her family after her marriage. That is the reason why in the matrimonial market, the would-be bride’s working capacity is assessed rather than her chastity\textsuperscript{965}. Due to the bride price,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{964} \textit{"Dr. B.B. Ghosh, Sema marriage"} in \textit{The tribes of Northeast India}, ed. by Sebastian Karotemprel, pp. 139-140.
\end{footnotesize}
marriage in Arunachal Pradesh is more a display of one’s financial status than anything else. The rich, who can afford the bride price, marry off their sons at a very early age whereas the poor people, who cannot afford the bride price, remain unmarried for a long period or adopt other substitutes of marriage like marriage by service till they manage bride price. The bride price among most of the tribes is not paid at once but paid in installments. Often it is found that the son-in-law throughout his life pays the bride price, and even his sons pay it off. This is a kind of social binding for lasting relationship between the two families.

7.4.9 Marriage gifts:

Like the bride price, the payment of marriage gifts is also compulsory to be given to the girl by her parents during her marriage. The gifts that are given generally consisted of one pig, variety of ornaments, beads of various shapes and sizes, utensils and clothes etc. according to the financial position of the girl’s parents. All the marriage gifts are personal property of the girl and so she brings these gifts with her when she comes to her husband’s house. The marriage gifts depend upon the bride price. Larger, the amount of bride price, the marriage gifts are also larger and valuable.

7.5 Polygamy:

Monogamy is the ideal and general practice among most of the tribes of Northeast India but Polygamy is also socially and legally recognized type of marriage. But there are also certain causes, which indulge polygamy, such as if the first wife is barren or if there is no male
issue. But the main motivation behind polygamy is one’s economic and social status. It is more popular among the rich section of the tribal society because paying the bride price for second time is beyond the capacity of common people.

In Nagaland, except Angamis, all the tribes practice polygamy. Presently many influential person of the Sernas in Nagaland could be found to have more than one wife. The rich man of Lhota Nagas usually takes a second wife and the Chang Nagas are permitted to keep four to six wives. Due to the custom of marriage by capture, polygamy is very common among the Khemungan Nagas. If the man has got enough cultivable land, then marrying more than one woman means the advantage of getting more hands for agriculture. Also, more wives means the increase in the number of children who in turn increase the number of working hands or brings more wealth in terms of bride price.

Among the Wancho, Nocte, Singpho tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and Konyak Nagas the privilege of polygamy is restricted to the chiefs only. The first wife, known as wangsa dong, should be the daughter of chief of another village and the others are from commoner's class known as wangsa nadi or wangmu. Polygamy enhances a man’s status in society since it is indication of his economic strength to afford for more than one wife. But the position, rights and privileges of first wife always remain supreme. Co-wives, however living under the same roof never create any

966. Krishnashankar Maitra, Nagaland darling of the Northeast, p,70.
domestic strife or inconvenience in any way. A Lamgang or Anal of Manipur with three wives must share his company in rotation for five nights with his first wife, for four nights with his second wife and for three nights with his third wife. But there are such tribes also, where monogamy is practiced strictly. Tangsas (except the Mosangs and the Lungris) and Sherdukpen tribes of Arunachal Pradesh cannot have two wives at the same time under any circumstances. Apart from these conditions, sororal polygny also prevails among some of the tribes like the Akas, Singphos, Sulungs, Hill Miri, Adi, Apatani, Bangni, Khowa, Membas, Mishing, Monpa, etc. But most of the tribes follow sororal polygny only if the wife is barren.

7.6 Polyandry:

Polyandry is restricted among most of the tribes of Northeast India. But a peculiar custom of fraternal polyandry is prevalent among the Gallong-Adi tribes and Ramo-Adi tribes, Membas, Hill Miri tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. In these tribal societies, the married woman is bound to allow sexual access to all the brothers of her husband. This custom is known as Hego Bonam or Nyame Bonam by the Ramos. The man who actually performed the marriage ceremony is recognized as the father of the children born out of such relations though he may not be the biological father of the said children. The main reason for practicing

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973. P.T. Nair, Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, pp. 54-55.
this type of polyandry is lower sex ratio of females and also the economic problem of paying bride price. Because of less number of female in comparison to male members in the society, the demand of female in marital affair is supposed to be high, so the system of polyandry prevails in the society. Due to the lower sex ratio the bride price is high. Since the real brothers are unable to pay the bride price for individual wives they bring a wife for one brother and other brothers are permitted to get sexual pleasure with the sister-in-law.

7.7 Female chastity:

Unlike the Assamese Hindu society, premarital chastity is not measured as the indispensable excellence of the bride in most of the tribal society. The tribal people have a very scientific liberal attitude to all matters concerning sex. Unmarried girls and boys are not interfered with in their lovemaking and even the bearing of children out of wedlock before marriage is not strongly frowned upon. Since the grown up girls are not only cramped to the household chores, but also they have to go to the cultivated fields to assist their parents in the agricultural works, therefore it is always not probable for the girls to protect their chastity. Even sometimes when a girl is captured by an enemy, she offers her sex to protect herself from the enemy. Hence, fornication, infidelity, premarital sexual relation etc. are not regarded as serious transgression.

Nagaland, Mizoram and Tripura are very liberal in allowing a lot of freedom to young boys and girls to mix freely with each other without any restriction. In fact, some of the tribes like different sub-tribes of Adis, Wanchos, Tangsas, Singphos, Membas of Arunachal Pradesh and Konyaks and Phoms of Nagaland enter into matrimonial alliance after some amount of premarital understanding and even some amount of cohabitation. Among the Konyaks and Phoms of Nagaland, sexual liberty is given to both the sexes sometimes to prove the child bearing capacity of the boy and the girl, which is a pre-condition of formal marriage. For these purpose two institutions namely Musup and Raseng, (male and female dormitories) respectively were created among the Padams, looppong (boys dormitories) and loops or likpyas (girls dormitories) among Tangsas, of Arunachal Pradesh, Longshim (boys dormitories) and Ngalalong (girls dormitories) among the Tangkhul Nagas. The grown-up boys and girls sleep at night in the respective dormitories. About these two institutions of Arunachal Pradesh, J. Nath comments, “In addition to many other socially important functions performed by these two institutions, these create congenial atmosphere for free pre-nuptial sexual relations between the boys and the girls. The Raseng serve as a place for premarital sexual relationship and mutual understanding and to test each other’s potentiality to produce children”. Sachin Roy while dealing with the courtship of boys and girls before marriage in the Raseng writes, “After adolescence, a girl really starts her romantic life and in the Raseng, she starts her courtship which leads

her to choose her mate in future life. Young boys from different *Mushups* come and join the girls in the *Raseng* in the night. A girl is free to entertain any boy of her choice and there is no reflection in the character of the girls or the boys for doing so" 977.

Among the Lushei Kuki tribes, there is no female dormitory, but in each house there is a separate sleeping place for the young girls known as *kumai*, where the young boys are permitted to enter at night. Shakespeare narrates, "If a young man is found on *khumai* nothing is said to him, .................................. If a girl becomes pregnant, the man responsible is at once surrounded by her relatives, who demand a *mithun* as the price of his indiscretion. This is called ‘*sawn man*’, ‘the price of the bastard’. This has to be paid even in the case of the child being born dead and in case of premature births, where the legs and arms are complete. When the father has paid the *sawn man* he can claim the child as soon as it is old enough to leave its mother" 978. The Mizo society is also very liberal in the matter of female chastity. There is a peculiar system of engagement among them known as *zawl-puan-phah* means preparing the lover’s bed among the Mizos. If the negotiated marriage is postponed for some reasons, the boy and the girl are allowed to make physical relation in the girl’s house and surprisingly girl’s mother prepares the bed for such relation and if the marriage is cancelled due to some reasons after *zawl-puan-phah*, the boy has to pay a fine of four *mithuns* immediately at single

installment. Premarital sexual affairs are encouraged in the Dimasa society in turn to reduce the bride price. If the boy makes the girl pregnant, then the girl becomes bound to marry the boy and the latter has to pay a nominal bride price besides a fine for the offence imposed by the village council.

Among Nagas, all the tribes are not so tolerant to give sexual freedom to the boys and girls. Hutton remarks about the chastity of the Naga girls, “While the Ao girl is bound to admit men to the girls’ house at night, chastity before marriage prevails among the Semas, where the marriage price of a girl is reduced at least 50 per cent, by the fact of her having had an intrigue. The Angamis would seem to fall somewhere between the Ao and the Semas, .......... Accurate information about the precise degree of chastity observed by Angami girls is very difficult to obtain.” About the premarital chastity of the tribes of Tripura, Captain Lewin remarks, ‘great freedom of intercourse is allowed’ among the Puran Tipperahs, Noatias, Jamatias, Riangs and Uchais of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The first state of marriage starts with the sexual affairs developed between a boy and a girl, but this does not necessarily mean that particular couple engaged in the sexual affairs is bound to marry each other. Nath remarks, “In case a particular pair find sexual maladjustment or sexual impotency of one or the other, both the boy and the girl are

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980. Dipali G Danda, Among the Dimasa of Assam, p. 31.
at liberty to seek other partner. If the girl conceives during this probation period she delivers the issue without any social castigation and is free to marry any boy of her choice. The pre-marital child is not seen as illegitimate but is given the name of the baby’s father if the child is the boy and of the mother if it is a girl. The child becomes a member of the above family according to its gender. The restriction only given to them is clan exogamy.

7.8 Adultery:

Though pre-marital sexual relation with either sex is allowed in tribal society, but it customarily becomes a punishable offence when someone is found to be involved in sexual affairs after marriage. In case of the husband, the wife may even seek divorce by restoring the bride price paid. In case of the wife, the husband may demand heavy compensation besides the bride price paid by him from the male co-adulterer or the parents of his wife. Among the Nagas, “In the very extreme case of an unfaithful wife, after having deprived of her jewellery and personal property, her hair cut off, her nose clipped or split upon with a spear, she is returned to her parents or relatives.” If this happens within three years of marriage, the husband can even demand the full return of the bride price. The adultery cases are generally solved by the village council.

7.9 Divorce:

Divorce is a rare occurrence among the tribal people of Northeast India. The main reason behind this custom is the bride price. This implies a sort of purchase of the girl by her husband’s family/clan. Generally a husband never thinks of divorcing his wife without any reasonable fault because in such case the chances of getting back the bride price is very less and marrying second times means again he has to pay bride price for the second wife, which is very difficult if the groom belongs to a family of feeble economic background. And in case, where the wife asks for divorce without any fault of her husband, she or her parents have to return the bride price to the husband or his family. Usually, the parents, who have exhausted the bride-wealth for their daughter, are not desirous to give back the same. Mills gives his opinion about the adjustment among the Rengma couples, “He knows that if he makes life intolerable for her he will lose both her and the marriage price he has paid. And she knows that if it becomes impossible to live with her husband, she can be turned out and her relations made to repay what they received for her. All this makes for reasonable give and take, and so for stability and happiness”985.

In spite of all these barriers both the husband and wife hold the right to divorce their spouse on certain specific grounds. The husband can divorce his wife if she is very notorious, defiant, ill tempered, argumentative, unskilled in agricultural operations, sterile or found to have some illicit relation with other man or misbehave him or other members

of the family. Similarly, the wife is at liberty to divorce her husband if he is not honest to his wife, short-tempered, gambler drunkard, impotent, deserts his wife, gives no security to his wife, tortures his wife or have illegal connection with other woman. But among all these reasons, adultery is considered to be the main cause of divorce from either side. Among the Kuki-Lushai tribes, divorce is not permissible except for adultery and even it is rarely resorted if the couple had children. In such cases the adulterer is given the punishment of heavy fine. The barrenness of a woman is not the cause of divorce in all the tribes. According to the custom of the Ramo-Adi tribes, if a woman is not able to procreate any child throughout her life, she cannot be sent back to her father’s home and the bride price cannot be reclaimed but the husband can go for second marriage in her presence.

Among some of the tribes such as Singphos, Sulungs, Buguns of Arunachal Pradesh, if the divorce claim comes from wife’s side, the bride price, which the husband has already paid is to be returned to him under any circumstances and the wife can not claim any compensation from her husband for her future life and if the divorce claim comes from husband’s side and the wife is found to be guilty then the father of the girl has to pay double of the bride price paid for her. But in Miji society of Arunachal Pradesh, if termination of matrimony is initiated by the husband then he has to pay a mithun to his father-in-law as marriage

986. C.A. Sopitl, A short account of the Kuki-Lushai tribes, p. 15.
compensation, but on the other hand, if divorce is to be initiated first from the wife's side for the reason of her husband's second marriage but without her knowledge and consent then he has to forfeit the bride price, which he has already paid to his father-in-law, but if a wife divorces her husband without assigning any reason, then she is to return the full bride price to her deserted husband. But nothing has to be paid to each other of the couple if divorce takes place with mutual agreement.\(^{989}\)

According to Shakespeare, among the Lushai-Kuki tribes of Mizoram, "The bonds of matrimony are extremely loose and are very easily slipped off. If a couple disagree they simply separate. The woman returns to her parents and the man renounces all claims to any portion of her price, which he may have paid, unless the woman agrees to its being partially returned. If the man turns the woman out for no fault he must pay up her full price, if he has not already done so. If a woman commits adultery or leave her husband against his will, however unfaithful he may have been, the whole of her price has to be refunded.\(^{990}\)"

The Darlongs of Tripura had some special divorce laws apart from the common ones.\(^{991}\) If \textit{Inma} or \textit{Inthen} (divorce) is commenced from husband's side and the wife is "thisen pal" means has children from her husband, then the husband pays Rs. 70/- as \textit{faruang} (share of the children) to retain the children and if he divorces his wife during her pregnancy, the child in the womb belongs to the mother and the husband has to pay.

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991. Letthuama Darlong, The Darlongs of Tripura, pp. 111-112, 153-155
Rs. 30/- as ‘maktha’ (fine for divorce); on the other hand, if the first move of divorce is from wife’s side, she has to refund the full bride price to her husband and if there is any children, even the womb one also belongs to her husband, but the wife is not required to pay any ‘maktha’. But nothing has to be paid to each other and divide their property as they wish if divorce takes place by Hlawmbang (mutual agreement). If the divorce occurs through Nupui rawkhal (abandonment of wife and family), then all his properties goes to his wife and in case the husband returns after a long gap, the wife has the right to accept or reject him. Another type of divorce is found among the Darlongs known as ‘Ralimma’, where either of the lover refuses to marry the other which is known as ‘divorce before marriage’. If the man divorces his lover before marriage, he has to pay a fine of Rs. 50/- as ‘maktha’, whereas if the girl divorces her male lover she is not required to pay any fine. A special provision of divorce is known as ‘Thihnung inma’, which is divorce after the death of husband. If the wife finds it difficult to continue to live with the relatives of her deceased husband, she can be free to return to her parents’ house with all her share of property given to her by her husband after paying Rs. 30/- as ‘maktha’ to her deceased husband’s family. If the divorced husband and wife want to marry each other then the husband has to pay Rs. 200/- as ‘Hmanpui’ to the parent or guardian of his wife.

Amongst the Nagas, the marriage system of the Sema, Lotha and Rengma Nagas is based upon bride price, therefore, the divorce is rare, but Angamis, Aos and Konyak Nagas do not have any bride price, therefore divorce is very common subject for them because they do not
have to return any large amount after divorce. Mills opines about the Ao Nagas, "What marriage price there is very small. This is good in that it prevents parents from selling their daughters against their will, but it also tends to make divorce easy, for the husband has paid little for his wife and loses little if he parts with her. Divorce is amazingly common. In fact it is very rare that one meets an Ao man or woman of any age who has only been married once. Couples part on the least provocation."992.

Among the Sema Nagas, if the divorce takes place within three years of marriage on the ground of adultery, the husband can claim the marriage price from her paramour and also some considerable fine from the parents of the girl, but if the divorce takes place for the reason other than adultery within three years of marriage, the husband may claim back a part of the price, but not after that date. Though he can claim it if the wife leaves her husband on her own will but if she leaves her husband's house for maltreatment without cause, the husband does not get back anything.993.

Divorce is easy to be obtained among the matrilineal society of Khasi, Garo and Jaintias of Meghalaya. The Garos and the War Khasis get divorce without the mutual agreement between both the parties. Among the Garos, divorce is allowed almost automatically on payment of the customary dai of sixty rupees or so. And among the Khasis, the party requesting for divorce without his or her consent may get divorce by paying a compensation called ka mynrain or ka thnem which is literally a

humiliating compensation to the other side$^{994}$. There is a rule among the Khasis that the couple once divorced cannot remarry with each other afterwards, but they are permitted to marry in different families$^{995}$. The children in the matrilineal society belong to the mother's *kur* and therefore, remain under her custody in case of separation.

Traditionally, the divorce ceremony is very simple among the Khasis and Garos. The divorce ceremony of the Khasis are performed in the presence of the senior members and some relatives of the community as witness, preferable the *Ksiangs* (negotiators) from each side who recite the marriage contract and the *Kni* (maternal uncles) of both the parties. The husband gives five cowries or pices to his wife and the latter returns them adding five more cowries or pices to her husband who throws them on the ground and this completes the divorce after which a crier (*u nong pyrta shnong*) then goes round the village to proclaim the divorce$^{996}$. Among the Garos, the divorce ceremony known as *Bolseki Den'a*, the husband and the wife each take some dust in their hands and swear by Mane, the Earth, to have no dealings with and claim from each other in future in front of the village assembly. After the oath, the priest takes a sword, chopper or spear provided by the man whose marriage is being annulled, and strikes with it the Bolseki tree and calls upon it as a son of the Earth to be a witness to the oath which has just been taken$^{997}$.

$^{994}$ P.R.T. Gurdon, The Khasis, p. 79; H. Bareh, The History and culture of the Khasi people, p. 295.

$^{995}$ P.R.T. Gurdon, The Khasis, p. 79.

$^{996}$ Ibid, pp. 79-80; H. Bareh, The History and culture of the Khasi people, p. 295.

$^{997}$ Milton S. Sangma, History and culture of the Garos, p. 203.
The divorce cases of the patriarchal tribes are generally settled by the village councils of the respective couples to which they belong. The village council cautiously deliberates on the faults of the partner, who is accused by the other partner and then gives verdict of permission/fine as per their customary laws. Generally in the tribal society, the children of the dissolved marriage stay with the father. But among few tribes such as Digaru Mishmi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, if it is daughter then during her marriage, one-fourth of the bride price shall have to be given to the mother. Among some other tribes, like Padam, Minyong, Bokar Adis, Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh, Dimasas of Assam, the rule is that the father has legal right over the male child, whereas mother gets the responsibility of the female children. In Aka society, the right over the children of the dissolved marriage is generally settled through the village council. The decision about this depends on the economic status of the husband. After divorce the social status of the woman almost remains the same as before due to the provision of remarriage. By separating from her husband, she also loses her claim over the husband’s property. But according to the tribal custom of Monpas, the wife get a share of her husband’s property if she is not at fault and the divorce is initiated by the husband.

7.10 Economic position of tribal women:

The tribal women of Northeast India play a vital and major role to build the economic configuration of the family as well as that of

society. Their valuable contribution can be observed by their engagement in a variety of economic activities to increase the family wealth and income. Their economic share in the family can be scrutinized by their different fundamental and non-ending activities of household such as pounding the paddy, food preparation, collection of firewood from the jungle, cleaning and washing clothes and utensils, child bearing and caring, family management, water carrying, rearing and feeding of domestic birds and animals and a host of other activities associated with the house. Outside the household too, tribal women carry out many tasks such as selling of vegetables and fruits in the market. Besides, they engage a substantive proportion of their work force in the cultivation work. It is especially more meaningful in the context of agrarian society of the tribes of Northeast India where men and women take equal responsibility of labour in the agricultural work. Therefore, it becomes very necessary to make a comprehensive and expedient study of the contribution of women in the economic activities of their societies. To find out the economic contribution of women, let us analyze in brief the economic structure of tribal society and the role of women in it.

7.10.1 Agriculture and contribution of women:

The economic organization of the tribal people of Northeast India centers around agriculture and the subsidiary means of livelihood like the collection of forest produce, fishing, weaving and hunting. It also includes their trade within their own communities as well as with other people. Agriculture is their primary source of occupation, which keeps them
busy throughout the year. In this agricultural society, the role of women is very important. The very success of its operation depends upon women, as they are the one who carry out most of the work from beginning till the time of harvesting. There is no division of labour as such between married and unmarried women and all the tasks are discharged by both married and unmarried women. Since majority of the tribes are hill-dwellers, its people prefer jhum or shifting type of cultivation. Jhum cultivation involves two phases of agricultural activity, the first involving the preparation of a tract of forest land for cultivation after clearing the forest growth and putting them into fire. The second phase of Jhum cultivation compriseses of the main cultivation work. Agriculture of this type involves hard labour and thus often necessitates corporate activity. Men and women join together to share the toil.

The first phase of jhum cultivation begins with the clearing of the patch of forestland from January and continues till April depending upon the availability of manpower and the size of Jhum-field. The clearing of the forestland is done jointly both by men and women. The nature of work is divided sexwise. Men do the more arduous tasks and women are assigned with easier but endless work. In the first phase, felling of big trees and removing the logs are done by men whereas women engage themselves in rooting out the medium and small size trees and bushes, setting of fire to dry stem and branches and cleaning of the lower vegetations, etc. The second phase of Jhumming starts in the month of April or May with the beginning of the actual cultivation work. In the main cultivation work, women play a significant and major role. From
sowing of seeds to harvesting and then husking and winnowing of crops all these jobs are primarily entrusted to women. Generally the crops that grow in their jhum cultivation are mustard leaf, maize, millet, paddy, pulses, cucumber, pumpkins, beans, chillies, garlic, ginger, onion, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cotton, tobacco etc.

7.10.2 Weaving:

Apart from agricultural work, the other economic activity performed by the tribal women is weaving. During the month of December and January, when there is no agricultural work, women devote their spare time in weaving. Weaving is the traditional occupation of tribal women of Northeast India and they are well versed in this art. Their expertise in the art is manifested in their choice or selection of the colour for the fabrication of embroidery and the shape, size as well as designs of their costumes. All the women irrespective of their age except the minor girl know weaving. It is also proved as one can find that loom is an essential commodity for every house. In fact, some of the tribes, such as Singphos of Arunachal Pradesh consider their house to be incomplete without the loom in front of it. Women generally use the indigenous loom for weaving which they make themselves. Normally, their loom is simple, light and portable so there is no fixed place for weaving, nor are fixed structures required. It can be set up in any convenient space of the house. The tribal women manufacture their own as well as beautiful apparels for their own as well as family members. Every Naga wife weaves a shawl for her

husband and if someone fails, it becomes a misery for her as the entire community laughs at her incapacity. The different tribes and sub-tribes use different objects such as cotton, *Muga* yarn, wool, bark of local plant etc. for spinning and weaving. The Singphos grow cotton in their house and spun the yarn themselves. The Sherdukpen obtain yarn from the bark of plants known as *hongchong* and *hongche*. The Sulungs use the fibres of a shrubby nettle plant called *Hyek*. The Idu Mishmis use nettle fibre along with human hair to make the thick coats of men, which also serve as a defensive covering against the thrust of a hostile arrow. E.T. Dalton comments about the Idus that, “They were probably the first people on this side of the Himalayas to discover the valuable properties of the *Rhea nivea* and many others of the nettle tribe; with the fibre of one of these nettles they weave a cloth so strong and stiff that, made into jackets, it is used by themselves and by the Abors as a sort of armour.” The women not only make the wearing apparels for their family members but they also make woolen blankets and handloom clothes with attractive designs, towels, sarees, *dhottis, lungis*, shawls, bags, mattresses, carpets etc. which they sell in good price. Apart from selling the handmade accessories, the tribal women make income by selling milk of cows and buffaloes. Hill Lalung women make subsidiary income by selling home made spirits. In this way they contribute their valuable share through agricultural and weaving.

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work in the economy of the family and society. Besides, they inherit some properties also.

7.10.3 Inheritance of property:

Among the Patriarchal tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam and Tripura, the laws of inheritance of property are governed by the customary practices of each tribes and sub-tribes. The customary laws give incredibly limited rights to women in the ownership and inheritance of the family property. As mentioned earlier, except Garo, Khasis of Meghalaya and the Hill Lalungs of Assam, all the tribes of Northeast India are patriarchal, partrilocal and patrilinear and hence inheritance descends through male line only. The son gets all the movable and immovable properties, whereas the daughter never inherits any immovable properties like land and house. They are entitled only to make use of it. But the customs permit the daughters to inherit the ornaments of mother, which are passed as heirloom from mother to daughter. According to the customary laws of Sherdukpens, Mijis, Sulungs, Boris, Digaru Mishmis, Padam and Minyong sub-tribes of Adis of Arunachal Pradesh, the lion share of mother’s properties are inherited by the eldest daughter.1008

Apart from the properties of mother, the unmarried daughter have absolute right over her own earnings derived from different activities

1008. R.N. Bagchi, Family System and inheritance of property among the tribes of Arunachal, Published in RESARUN, the journal of Directorate of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Vol. V, No. 1, 1979. Also published in Dr. P.C. Dutta & Dr. D.K. Duarah, Aspects of culture and customs of Arunachal Pradesh, pp. 4-5.
such as poultry, piggery, bead works, weaving, embroidery, etc., but after marriage the ownership of her properties is generally shared also by her husband. But she has the absolute right over the properties that she gets from her parents and relatives as marriage gifts. These gifts are in the form of ornaments, utensils, clothings, domestic birds and animals that she reared at her parent’s house.

The custom of inheritance of property by the widows in Arunachal Pradesh differs from tribe to tribe. According to the customary laws of the tribes of Digaru Mishmi, Idu Mishmi, Miju Mishmi, Sherdukpen, Apatani, Wancho, Nocte, Nishi, Miji, Aka, Khowa, Nishing, Tangsa, Sulung the inheritance rights of widows in the deceased husband’s property is usufructuary. She can inherit the husband’s property on behalf of her minor sons i.e., she will only be the custodian of the property for her minor sons provided she remains widow and stays with the family of her in-laws. A Singpho or a Khampti widow having no male child is entitled to get a share in her deceased husband’s property, whereas in the society of Monpa and Hill Miri, a widow gets the absolute right over her husband’s property provided she remains unmarried and stays with her in-laws family. But she does not have the right to transact the real properties without the approval of her in-laws. Among the Digaru Mishmi and Miju Mishmi tribal societies, if a widow has a male child and she does not want to marry, then her rights over her deceased husband’s property is not usufructuary but absolute.

In Nagaland, a widow is entitled to use her husband’s lands and house during her lifetime if she does not remarry but in case of remarriage, she has no right over her first husband’s property\textsuperscript{1011}. Among Rengma Nagas, the cattle are also inherited by the male heirs. Though the cattle remain in the possession of the widow after her husband’s death but she cannot sell these animals without the permission of the male heirs. She could sell an animal only if she can prove to the male heirs that it is essential for her maintenance and part of the price goes to the male heir\textsuperscript{1012}.

Among the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia society of Meghalaya and Hill Lalungs of Assam, inheritance is purely matrilineal in organization. Descent is traced through the mother only, not through the father. All properties belong to the woman, and is passed on from mother to daughter. Male children cannot receive or even claim any part of the property, which they themselves may have acquired by their own labour. The Khasi and Jaintia laws of inheritance are almost identical. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the inheritance of all real property passes from mother to the youngest daughter (\textit{Ka Khadduh}). The other daughters however, on their mother’s death, are entitled to get a share of their mother’s property, but the youngest daughter gets the lion’s share of the family property e.g. the family jewellery and the family house and the greater part of whatever is there in the house. Because it is she, whose duty is to perform the family ceremonies, looking after the property, old aged parents and propitiate the

\textsuperscript{1011} M. Horam, Social and cultural life of Nagas, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{1012} J.P. Mills, The Rengma Nagas, p. 144.
family ancestors. But she cannot dispose of the house without the unanimous consent of her sister\textsuperscript{1013}. If there is no daughter, then inheritance would pass by the "knight's move" to the sister's youngest daughter, who would be succeeded by the youngest daughter of the latter and so on and failing sister's daughters succession would go to the mother's sisters and their female descendants\textsuperscript{1014}.

Similar is the case with the Garo inheritance. Among the Garos also, all the daughters of a family do not equally inherit properties but one of the daughters, not necessarily the youngest one, is selected inheritress (\textit{nokna}) by the parents. If a couple die without leaving any daughter, the \textit{Chatchis} select a \textit{Nokna} or inheritor for the family\textsuperscript{1015}.

7.11 Political status of women:

The present political system was unknown to the tribal societies in the beginning. From the time immemorial; the different tribes formed traditional village councils, which dealt with the customary laws that ran the village in a systematic way. Only the males were allowed to become the members of the of the village councils Women of the tribal community of Northeast India were not permitted to be the members of the village councils. They could not give their opinion in any public affairs whether it was decision making for marriage, divorce, dispute or planning strategies for war and raids, kidnapping etc. They were thought to be

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1013} P.R.T. Gurdon, The Khasis, p. 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{1014} P.R.T. Gurdon, The Khasis, p. 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{1015} Capt. B.S. Rana, The people of Meghalaya, p. 202.
\end{itemize}
incapable in the process of decision-making and were considered fit only as the in charge of household works and co-worker in the agricultural activities.

But the Aka society was different from the other tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh. In Aka society, ‘Rani’ system was found to be prevalent and even the two important Aka villages jamiri and Hushigaon both still have Ranis. The ancestors of these Ranis used to rule the Aka villages in the past days. As successors of the royal lineage, the Ranis are given high social honour and privilege in the entire Aka society even in the present days. The Ranis not only captured the respectable position, but also commanded influence in the political life of the village. She used to be present in all the vital meetings of village council and her opinion was also given due weight in any important decision-making process of the village. As inheritor of the ruling dynasty, the Ranis were expected to help the poor and needy people of the village. These reflected their superlative position in the political life of the Aka society in the past days.

7.12 Religious status of women:

In the tribal society of Northeast India, the traditional religion is Animism, spirits of ancestors and nature. They believe in one supreme God, who is the creator of every thing in this world. The supreme God is known in different tribes by different names such as Pathian among the Mizos, Ragung among the Nagas, Pantheon among the Garos, U Blei Nong-thaw among the Khasis, Pala Konwar among the Hill Lalungs. The

tribal people do not have any idol or place of worship. They believe in good and evil spirits and other godheads dwelling in rocks, forests, groves, streams and rivers. They have fear of the infinite and have respect for nature. From this arose the practice of ceremonial offerings and sacrifices. The tribal people worship evil spirits also in order to save themselves from certain sickness like mania, ill luck and a variety of other calamities. There are also other rituals, ceremonies, prayers, incantations, taboos, gennas that are performed by the different tribes to have a religious, moral and philosophical life, to prolong life, to ward off evil, to obtain children and to destroy or harass sworn enemies. In earlier days, the tribal people use to please their gods and goddesses by offering human sacrifices. Nowadays, however, fowls or other animals take the place of human victim1017.

The hill Lalungs have thans (shrines) for the gods. Other deities are Botolmaji, Moramuji, Rungshu Konwari, Sumai Mora, Lukhumi (Goddess Lakshmi). In addition, each clan has its clan gods called khul devata1018. The household deities of the Kacharis are Bathaubrai or old Bathau, Mainao or Bhulli Buri, Asu Mainao, Sali Mainao, Song Raja, Song Brai, Bura Bagh Raja, etc and the village deities of the Kacharis are Mero raja, Bura Mahadeo, Bura's gosain, Jal Kuber, Thal Kuber, Ih Kuber, Bih Kuber, Kuber brai, Kuber brui, Sila Rai, etc1019. The main religion of the Mishings of Assam is known as Kewalia or Kalhanghati or Nishamlia. They are mainly worshippers of Uyu or spirit and their main god is Donyee-Po:lo (the Sun and the Moon)1020. The Dimasas worship six gods. They

are Shivray, Alufaja, Naikhuraja, Wooraja, Gunyung Braiyung and Hamiado™21. They also worship the evil spirits during any disease or when a misfortune befalls them.

The Garos believe in the existence of benevolent and malevolent spirits, commonly called Mite™22. The Principal Mites, who are worshipped by the Garos, are Tatara-Rabuga, Saljong, Nostu-Nopantu, Chorabudi, Goera, Kalkame, Susime, Asima-Dingsima, Tongrengma and Nawang. Besides they also worship the Sun and the Moon. The spirits worshipped by the Khasis and Syntengs are U'lei muluk, U'lei umtong, U'lei longspah, U Ryngkew or U Basa shnong, U Phun u kyrpad, Ka Rih, Ka Khlam, Ka Duba, Ka Taroh, etc™23. Besides they also worship natural beings and ancestors.

The Mizos mainly worship supernatural beings. The most important ones are Pu Vana (God of nature), Vanchung Nula (Goddess of rains), Vanrika (God of science and learning), Khua-nu (mother of nature), Ramhuai or Phung (Ghosts), Lasi (angels), etc™24.

The tribes of Arunachal are divided into three zones on the basis of socio-religious affinities™25. The first group of tribes professes Buddhism. They are the Monpas, Sherdukpen, Membas, Khambas, Khamptis and Singphos. The second group consists of tribes like the Akas, Khowas, Mijis, Bangnis, Solungs, Nishis, Apatanis, Hill Miris, Tagins,

Adis, Mishmis, Tangsas, etc., who worship the Sun and Moon God, namely Donyi Polo. The third group comprises the Wanchos and the Noctes, who are associated with the cult of head hunting. The religious rituals of all the tribes largely coincide with the phases of agricultural cycles. They also invoke natural deities and make animal sacrifices. Except among the Miji, Wancho, Nocte and Aka tribes, women of all other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are allowed to act even as priests provided they have sufficient knowledge of the procedure of the different religious ceremonies.

The Manipuris are presently Hindu Vaishnavas. But before the introduction of Vaishnavism, they had a separate religion of their own called maiba. The maibas used to worship many kind of gods. The main gods were Lamlai, Umanglai, Imunglai and ancestors of each tribe. Other deities were Panthoibi, Sanamahi, Noongshabu, Yumthailai, etc. At present the Manipurs are found to be the followers of Gaudya Vaishnavism, which was preached in the time of Jai Singh.

7.13 Culture of tribal societies:

7.13.1 Festivals:

The main festivals of tribal people aim at fertility corresponding to the different agricultural seasons. The festivals among all the tribes are similar to each other and rest upon a common background of beliefs. Men and women together participate in the festivals. Besides the main festival of three Bihus, some of the main festivals of the Mishings of Assam are

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1027. Jyotirmoy Roy, History of Manipur, pp. 197-199
1028. Sipra Sen, Tribes and Castes of Manipur, p. 28.
Po:rag, Ali-ai-ligang, Taleng Uyu (festivals concerned with agriculture), Dabur, Ashi Uyu, Yumrang Uyu (pujas for the deceased) and Dodgang, Urom Apin (pujas for ancestors). The most important festival of the lalungs is Bohag-pisu, celebrated in the month of April. Before it commences, the women weave new wrappers and stoles. These are presented to their husbands, children and near kins on the occasion. The most important festival of the Dimasa tribe is busu, the annual harvest festival. There is no fixed date in the Dimasa calendar for the observance of busu. It is observed sometimes between November and March of the following year, depending on the harvest seasons of the particular locality.

The different tribes of Nagas celebrate the festivals similar to each other that are connected with agricultural activities. The main festivals of Angami Nagas are Tseikranyi (seed sowing festival celebrated in February), Ngonyi (close of the seed sowing celebrated in April), Kdrunnyi (transplanting of paddy seedlings during May), Tsnyi (celebrated in July or August), Theyuukhupfu (children’s festival during August), Chandanyi (path clearing festival during July), Thekenyi (opening of the harvest), Liekhwenyi (reaping of paddy), Vate or Tekede or Keva Kete (preservation of grains), Terhunyi (after the harvest is over in December) and Sekrenyi (in February). The main festivals of Chakhesang Nagas are Khilunyie (harvest festival during last week of November), Therine (paddy husking) and Sakrinyi (biggest festival closes during the beginning of the new year). The main festivals of Rengma Nagas are Ngadah (harvest

1030. Dipali G, Dartda, Among the Dimasa of Assam, pp. 115-117.
1031. Gazetteer of India: Nagaland, edt. Dr. H. Bareli, pp.68-76.
festival celebrated in the last week of November) and Tśichye (tilling of the soil at the jhum field in March). The Zelianggroung Nage’s main festival is Melengi (paddy husking celebration) and the Pochuri or Sangtam Naga’s main festivals are Nitsokhu (burning of jhums in April), Nizakhu (supplications are held to the deities in the May), Rasa (ceremonial plucking of the young crops), Tsatekhu (harvest rite in August), Khuthei (in November), Kate (close of the harvest season in November and December), Alakakhu (chasing away the epidemic), Vikhukephru (a hunting ceremony), Khuthe (celebration of house thatching in January) and Nazhu (end day of the year). Ao Nagas observe mainly Moatsu (after sowing) and Tsungrem Mong (eve of harvest in August). The main festival of Lotha Nagas is Tokhu Emong celebrated in first week of November.

The festivals celebrated by the Mizos are Pawl Kut, Chapchar Kut and Mim Kut1032. Pawl Kut is celebrated at the end of the harvest when the year ends and new year begins. Chapchar Kut is celebrated before the jhums are burnt. Mim Kut is performed when the first crop, other than paddy in the field is reaped and such crop is offered to the manes.

The festivals of Arunachal are connected with agriculture and celebrated with ritualistic gaiety, either to thank God for the providence or to pray for bumper harvest. Some of the important festivals are Mopin and Solung of the Adis, Lossar (new year festival), Chaskar (celebrated after harvesting in the moth of September-October) and Dungyru of Monpas and Sherdukpenes, Boori Boot of Hill Miris, Dree of Apatanis,

Si-Donyi of Tagins, Nyokum Yullo (celebrated in February at the advent of new agricultural season) of Nishis, Reh of Idu Mishims etc. Animal sacrifice is a common ritual in most festivals.

The main festivals of Manipuris are connected with Vaishnavism such as Dolyatra, Rathyatra, Jhulan, Janmashtami, Durga Puja, Diwali, Govardhan Puja, Ras Purnima, etc. Besides, the Meitei tribe celebrates Chairaoba (new year festival) in April.

The principal festival of Darlong tribe of Tripura is four annual community festivals called Kut, which make four different stages of their agricultural processes. These are: Ramzu In or Chapchar Kut, which is celebrated after cutting and burning their jhum towards the end of January and beginning of February. Kangdai Kut is observed during jhum burning in April. Thlantawi Kut is observed in remembrance of their loved ones who have left the world. Tharlak or Mim Kut is observed during the harvest of maize crop after the completion of weeding work in the rice fields in July and is observed in honour and remembrance of the dead and the gods.

7.13.2 Folk songs and Folk dances:

The folk songs and folk dances are the main features of the tribal culture. All the tribes have their own songs and dances. The folk songs of the Mishings are of eight varieties. They are A:beng, Kaban,

1033. Sipra Sen, Tribes and Castes of Manipur, p. 33.
The pure form of Mishing dance is called *Pagso monam*, which is seen only in the festivals like *Ali-ai-ligang* and *Po:rag*\(^{1036}\). Along with expression of musical instruments like *dhol*, *tal*, *pepa*, *dendum*, *tapings*, the girls express the different stages of nature through their movements. Among the Dimasa tribes, dances are performed during the *busu* festival. The different kinds of *busu* dances are *Madaikhilimba, Jaobani, Namalaiba Baimiung* along with the war dances\(^{1037}\). The Garo folk dances in which the women take part are called *dokru sua, amber-ruria, kil-pua, doregna*, etc\(^{1038}\). The folk dances of Ao Nagas are *tsungsang, angokazu* or *anga malu* (fish dance), *Moya yari* (sema dance), *Miri yari* or *Mechung tsungsang* and *yita kazu* or *lata malu* (moon dance)\(^{1039}\).

The Mizo also have their traditional dances. Their most popular dance is the Cheraw (bamboo dance), where twelve girls use to participate. There are other dances also, such as *Chheih lam, Chailam, Railu lam, Solakia, Sarlammai, Parlam and Pawnto*\(^{1040}\).

The Garo have various kinds of folk dances, martial and other dances, which are performed during ceremonies like *Gama* or investiture of a *Nokma, A'song Kasi* or annual worship at the site of the sacrificial stones, agricultural, *mangona* or during the post-funeral, etc. Other kinds of dances also are performed during the *Nokdongga* or the inauguration of a new house, *Nokpante Nokdongga* or the inauguration...
of a bachelor's house, etc. The dances performed during the Wangala and other festivals are the Do'kru Sua dance, the Ambare-ruara or Shaking of Hog-plum dance, the Kil Pua or Planting of Cotton dance, Chambil Moa or the Pumelo dance. The funeral ceremonies consist of a great number of dances like Matchu-Rodila or tending the cows, Delang-Soa or dancing with the bones of the dead, etc. Besides there are many other dances also among the Garos for different ceremonies and also for their own recreation, such as Gaewang roa, Do'me gonga, Sipai awit roa, Nomil Kambe toa, Jik seka, Chame mikkang nia, Ambretong kola, Chambil Moa, Me'mang mi su'a, Dama Jonga, Salam Ka'a, Nomil nipila, Chamo Changa, Buda rateta, Chu kanna, Jik sekako rim'a, Nomil Donnua, Chawari sika, Nomil do'me suala, Nomil jajong nidoa.

Different tribes of Arunachal vary from each other. During the Dungyur festival, the women and men of Monpa tribe perform various dances such as Pha-Chham or Abor dance, Jam-Cham, Grei-Chham, Lo Chham, Ja Pho Mo, Khimdak-Peki, Geychin-Namseko, Damchin-Chhoige, Ara-Khankyoy, Ngan-Chham or Kya-Chham, Durdak or Dudodam, Lham Tsokor, Locker-Chhungi, Gelong-Chham, Chham-Chin. The Noctes and Wanchus perform religious dance dramas of the Buddhists. The Adis have varieties of songs such as ponung, Delong, bari, nitom, mopin-songs and dances such as popir tegnu, nyida-nunam, jajin, etc.

1046. Dr. Tal Nyori, History and Culture of The Adis, p. 253.
The dances of Manipur are very popular in the rest of India. Manipuri dances are divided into two categories, classical and folk. *Rasa Nritya* falls into the classical group. Of the folk dances, mention may be made of *Thabalchongba, Laiharaoba, Khamba Thoibi, Kortal Cholom, Mridanga Cholom Naga* dance, etc.

Song and dance are very important parts of the culture of Tripura. The Riangs have various types of songs for different occasions. Their songs were classified by Dr. Chaudhuri in five categories. They are: Love songs, work songs, ritual songs, political songs and song describing natural phenomena. The different tribes have their own dances performed during ceremonies and festivals. The *Garia* dance is very much popular among the Tripuris. Balance-dance by the Riangs and the Chakmas are popular. The *Lebang Booman* group dance is also enjoyed by everyone. *Dailo Mairang Phawrmai* is the popular dance of the Reangs. *Parkam, Chem lam, Fahrel inkan, Riki Fachawi, Pualvachang hem, Sate tual infai, Arte tual phit, Vathu indi, Khullam or Thlangrawte lam, Salu lam and Silai lam* are the dances of Darlongs.

7.13.3 Food and drinks:

As regards food, the main and staple food is rice among all the tribes. The Garos and the Khasis also eat millet, maize, job’s tears and Tapioca. During scarcity, they eat jungle yams and some other jungle
roots\textsuperscript{1051}. The Nagas in the time of scarcity subsist on millet, maize and 
taro (\textit{kachu})\textsuperscript{1052}. Though Rice is the staple food of the Adi tribes of 
Arunachal Pradesh, but due to the less production of rice in the northern 
region, the Bokars, Ramos, Ashings and other eat more food of maize, 
Job's tears and millet\textsuperscript{1053}. The Garos, the Khasis, the Nagas eat meat of 
almost all the wild and domestic animals. The Garos even take non-
poisonous snakes and lizards, etc\textsuperscript{1054}. The Khasis eat field rats and a kind 
of monkey. The Naga people eat the meat of \textit{mithun}, elephant, tiger, bear, 
dog, snake, field mouse, cat and vulture\textsuperscript{1055}. Some of the tribes observe 
some food taboos. The Khasis abstain from the flesh of the dog. Some 
of the synteng Khasis do not take pork and beef due to the influence of 
Hinduism\textsuperscript{1056}. The Hill Lalungs and Kacharis avoid beef or buffalo meat. 
They use to take the meat of pork and chicken. One of the delicate foods 
of Lalungs, Kacharis, and Garos is dried fish, which is called \textit{Na'kam} 
by the latter.

The \textit{jhum} fields and the forests provide the tribes with a 
number of vegetables and roots for their curry. Bamboo shoots are esteemed 
as against delicacy and are eaten as a vegetable or used after special 
preparation. The tribal people in earlier days did not use oil or ghee to 
cook the curries or meat or fish. They preferred to take the boiled or roasted 
food. The Garos used a kind of potash to cook their curries, which is

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{1051} Milton S. Sangma, History and Culture of the Garos, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{1052} B.B. Ghosh, History of Nagaland, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{1053} M.M. Dhasmana, The Ramos of Arunachal, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{1054} Milton S. Sangma, History and Culture of the Garos, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{1055} B. B. Ghosh, History of Nagaland, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{1056} P.R. T. Gurdon, The Khasis, p. 51.
\end{footnotesize}
obtained by burning dry pieces of plaintain stems or young bamboos, and the ashes of bamboos are dipped in water. This water is called *Katchi* and takes the place of oil. The Nagas are very fond of chillies. Of the fruits, the tribal people produce best kind of banana, pineapples, watermelons, cucumbers, oranges and pumelos. Betel nuts and leaves are common articles among them, which they generally offer first to any visitor as a kind of hospitality.

The Naga and Mizo women also smoke tobacco and *Birts*. Many of the old men and women are addicted to smoking *Hooka*. In fact, a pipe is must for every man and woman among the Mizos and the pipe used by woman is known as *tuibur*. Even small Mizo children smokes freely in the presence of the elders including their parents. They avoid taking milk or tea. All the tribes are habituated to consume rice beer, which is known by different names among the different tribes. The Mikirs call it 'Hor'; the Khasis call it *Ka’iad hiar* and *Ka’iad um*; the Nagas call it *Zutho, Ruhi and Dzutse*, the Manipuris call it as *Ju*. This drink is made by boiling rice. It takes at least two to three months for making it ready for consumption.

7.13.4 Dress and Ornaments :

The dresses and ornaments of the different tribes and sub-tribes were different from each other. The dresses of hill Lalungs and Jaintias are similar because of the long association of the hill Lalungs with

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the Jaintias in the past\textsuperscript{1059}. The common dress of a lalung woman is colourful skirt with a border of flowery design. The upper garment is called \textit{phaksai}. In the cold season lalung women wear thick wrappers. The Mikir women put on a petticoat known as \textit{peni}, which is fastened round the waist with an ornamental girdle of old silver coins called \textit{vankok}. Another cloth known as \textit{pekok} is used the upper part of the body. This cloth is tied under the arms and drawn tight over the breasts. The hair is combed straight and tied in a knot called \textit{chubi} on the head\textsuperscript{1060}.

The dress of the Garo woman consists of a piece of cloth eighteen inches long and just broad enough to meet round her waist in the form of a petticoat, which is fastened at the top, on either the right or the left side by two strings of the same material as the garment, which allow it to remain open on the thigh. This garment is known as \textit{riking}\textsuperscript{1061}. On their shoulders, the woman wears a shawl of blue and white cotton. During dancing and festive occasions, the Garo woman wears a dress named \textit{marang-jasku}, which is worn draped round the body, passing under the right arm and tied in a knot on the left shoulder. It is long as the knees and is open at the left side\textsuperscript{1062}.

About the dress of the Khasi women in the earlier days, H. Bareh writes\textsuperscript{1063}, the Khasi women wore \textit{ka jainpien}, a single garment girded at the waist, looping downward to the knee which was a cloth of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1059} Birendra Kumar Gohain, The Hill Lalungs, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{1060} S.T. Das, Tribal life of Northeastern India, pp. 228-229.
\item \textsuperscript{1061} P.C. Kar, The Garos, p. 25.
\item \textsuperscript{1062} P.C. Kar, The Garos, p. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{1063} H. Bareh, The History and culture of the Khasi people (3rd edition), pp. 312-314.
\end{itemize}
spur (cotton) or khyrwang (endi) variety and no stitching was necessary for this dress. Another cloth called ka kyrshah (apron); a kind of sheet with coloured (khyrwang) or plain (ryndia) type made of endi threads was worn over it, which was suspended from the shoulder. For outdoor use, a long piece of cloth known as Jainsem, made of muga silk was worn by women with its upper ends fastened on both sides of the collar bone crossing one another at the breast portion and stretching down as far as the knee, covering the whole body, but leaving bare the arms. The Pnars used the Jaintoh khyrwang in place of jainesm. There are minor variations in the way of the Synteng wearing of Jainsem as one end is tied over one side of the collar bone while another end is fastened below the left arm pit. In addition to the above, women used the tapmoh (head and neck cover). Over the whole body, another cloak (jainkup) was draped around the body, its two ends were fastened at the chest and it covered the body shoulder to knee. Jainkup was not used by the Pnar women. Salu ion or Desu a kind of black skirt girded at the waist and reaching the ankles were commonly used by the Pnar women in the interior with a kyrshah sem, draped over it from the shoulder. During dancing, virgin girls put on treasured costumes, their jainsem called kyrshah dhara was laid over a grey mukmur garment of velvet, of which the part covering the arms was more visible and underneath the jainsem, a skirt, ka jainpien hanged down towards the feet.

Nagas are known for paucity of their wear. The Naga women’s principal dress is skirt, which is a sheet of cloth that is rolled along the waist, which loops down to cover the legs. A bodice covers
the breast. An apron is worn by fastening either on both the sides of the collarbone or one end is fastened along one side and the other is suspended below an armpit. Women girdle a shawl by suspending it from one of the shoulders. The Zeliangroung skirt is blue or white but during dancing they wear a ceremonial custom of multifarious colours\textsuperscript{1064}.

The Mizo women in earlier days used to wear the only apparel, which was a kind of skirt called \textit{siasuap}, a small piece of cloth, woven from the reeds or bark of trees and more than one piece would be worn together, tied round the waist reaching only above the knee\textsuperscript{1065}. Later on \textit{dowlrem kawr} and \textit{kawppui zikzial}, a one piece black colour cloth of greater breadth and length with embroidery using white thread was added to the women’s attire. \textit{Zikzial} was a dress of honour, and any Mizo mother would be proud to bequeath it to her daughter\textsuperscript{1066}. On gala days the only addition to the costume is a picturesque headdress worn by girls while dancing\textsuperscript{1067}. This consists of a chaplet made of brass and coloured cans, into which are inserted porcupine quills, and to the upper ends of these are fixed the green wing-feathers of the common parrot, tipped with tufts of red wool. At the back is affixed a horizontal bar from which hang strings of glistening wing covers of green beetles.

The dresses of the women of different tribes of Arunachal Pradesh vary from each other in pattern, design and colour. The Singphos make their dresses themselves. The dresses of the Singpho women consists

\textsuperscript{1064} Gazetteer of India: Nagaland, ed. H. Bareh, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{1065} L.B. Thanga, The Mizos, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{1066} L.B. Thanga, The Mizos, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{1067} Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, The Lushei-Kuki clans, p. 11.
of Pukang (skirt) of various colours and designs, a beautiful designed scarf, a waistband, and a turban\textsuperscript{1068}. The Adi women wear two items namely Omekedung and Japong\textsuperscript{1069}. Omekedung is a small coat-like garment made of wool, which is beautifully designed by red and blue woolen stripes. These coats cover the body from neck to waist and are half sleeved and open in the front. Japong is a wrapping cloth woven in the home. Formerly it was made of wool. It covers the lower part of the body from waist to knees or may come down a little lower. The Sherdukpen women\textsuperscript{1070} dress themselves in loose, collarless and sleeveless shirts, which cover the body from shoulders to knees. Over it, they sometimes wear small full-sleeved coats made of mill-cloth. Besides they tie a coloured sash, round their waists known as mukhak. They also wear round their calves, a white cloth about 20 inches long and 12 inches wide with its two edges sewn together. Its upper end is tied below the knee with thread or bead strings and lower end hangs loose up to the ankle. The Nocte woman's usual dress is a skirt hanging from waist to the knee\textsuperscript{1071}. Over the skirt a red cloth of about two yards in length is worn as a shawl to cover the body. The Aka woman wear a long garment over the body known as pol, which hangs from the shoulder up to the ankles and is usually in dark red colour\textsuperscript{1072}.

The Manipuri woman's traditional dress is choli, which is used to cover the upper portion of the body and a skirt type garment called fanek, which is wrapped around waist up to the ankles\textsuperscript{1073}. Dress of Mate

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{1068} Parul Dutta, The Singphos, pp. 21, 24, 25.
\bibitem{1069} M.M. Dhasmana, The Ramos of Arunachal, pp. 69-70.
\bibitem{1070} R.R.P. Sharma, The Sherdupkins, p. 19.
\bibitem{1071} Parul Dutta, The Noctes, p. 60.
\bibitem{1072} Raghuvir Sinha, The Akas, p. 27.
\bibitem{1073} Chander Shekhar Panchani, Manipur: Religion, Culture and Society, p. 44.
\end{thebibliography}
woman consists of a kilt shaped piece of cloth reaching from the navel to half way down the thigh called nik. Over the breast another sheet of cloth is worn reaching above the knee called pounve.  

Among the various tribes of Tripura, different types of dresses are worn by women. The woman of Darlong tribe wears a dark blue-cotton cloth with its exquisite designs called puanzem, which is just long enough to go round the wearer’s waist with a slight over-lap and held up by a girdle of brass wire or string called Kutkhi that serves as a petticoat, which only reaches the knee. The other piece of cloth is used to cover the breast. During festivals, the Darlong women put on full sleeves dark blue shirts decorated with wing cover of green beetles while the combs remained planted in their hair knots. They decorate their heads with feathers of parrots at the end of which they suspend the wing cover of green beetles. The Riang woman’s dress consists of a napkin called rinai or ranai, a decorative piece of breast cloth called rssa, a shirt called kotai and a turban called kamcai burai and during winter she uses a big piece of cloth called ritrag.  

Dress without ornament is incomplete. Women’s ornaments are earrings, wristlets, bracelets and necklaces. Different tribes use the ornaments of different metals and beads. Lalung women wear hanging earrings and necklaces usually of silver or gold. Mikir women wear a large silver tube as earrings known as nothangpi and other ornaments are lek.

1074. Langsun D. Mate, The Mate tribe of Manipur, p. 39.
1075. Letthuama Darlong, The Darlongs of Tripura, p. 179.
(necklaces) made of coral beads, *urnam* (rings) and *roi* (bracelets) of gold and silver\textsuperscript{1078}.

Garo women wear heavy brass rings in their ears of very much larger size known as *shishas* and the number of *shishas* they wear in each ear are as many as 40 to 50. The *Nadirong* (small brass ring) is worn in the upper part of the ear. The *Natapsi* is worn in the lower part of the ear. Necklaces of Garo women are known as *Ripoks*. These are made of long, barrel-shaped beads of cornelian or red glass. The waistband, known as *senki*, consists of several rows of beads. The bracelets used by the Garo women are generally made of brass and bronze and are called *Jaksan*. They wear brow bands and curious head ornaments known as *pilnis* or *salchak-maldongs* during dancing. These consist of bamboo combs each of about 8 inches in length, to the top of which is attached strips of indigo-dyed cloths about 6 inches long, ornamented with rows of the white beads. When the comb is stuck into the knot of hair at the back of the head, the cloth hangs down behind like a curtain\textsuperscript{1079}.

The Khasi female dancers wear on their head a circular coronet of silver or gold with a flat top. The round earrings are called *wahdong* and looping earrings are called *siar kynthei* or *ksah shkor* and for the top of the ear they use *langkyrdeng* made of gold. The bracelet is called *ki tad ki mahu* that is made of gold and the armlet is called *ki khadu synkha* or *iiu kdoh kti*. Beautiful necklace is worn round the neck and the collar is decorated with a variety of hanging silver chains called

\textsuperscript{1078} S.T. Das, *Tribal life of Northeastern India*, pp. 229-230.  
\textsuperscript{1079} P.C. Kar, *The Garos*, p. 31.
ki kynjri tabah mixed with coral beads (shan ryndang) and water pearls (kanupad) in yellow and red. The hair is plaited at the back with a decorated string of gold and silver colours. Coral beads and all these jewelleries are considered as an important part of the crown treasure.

Women of different Naga tribes use various ornaments such as brass bangles, earrings, armlets and necklace etc. Necklaces are generally many stringed and are made of cornelian beads; and some tribes particularly Lotha, have a piece of length-wise cut conch shell fitted in it. Of all the necklaces, the most beautiful ones are found among the Aos. Ao Naga women use necklaces of red and blue coloured cornelian beads, crystal ear trinket, brass rings, brass made bracelets and hornbill feathers.

Among the Mizo women, the most valuable ornaments are saingho bengbeh (earring made of ivory disc) and thinhna (necklace made from valuable stones called amber imported from Burma). Besides amber, various sorts of beads necklaces like agate, cornelian are worn. To wear the ivory disc earrings, women pierced their ear lobes as wide as three to four inches. The hairpins and the hair sticks they used were known as thimkual and dawhkilh respectively.

Among the women of Arunachal Pradesh, the bead necklaces and the ornaments of silver and coins are very common. The common silver ornaments of women of Aka tribe are melu (chest ornament), rombin
(big ear-bulbs), *gichli* (earrings) and *gejjui* (wristlets). The woman of well-to-do families also wears a fillet of silver chain-work called *lenchhi*. The most valuable ornament among the Aka woman is *aescheri*, an ancestral necklace.\textsuperscript{1083} Nocte women wear metal earrings called *Lik Natho, Jan Nate, Waki Melap* and earrings made of coins called *Ngun Ru Nate*, bead necklaces called *Lik, Tamphiyang, Kathung Ru*, finger rings of silver, metal bangles called *Sanka*, head bands of beads called *Lik Khaphok* and coins called *Nyamkhaphok*.\textsuperscript{1084} The Ramo, one of the sub-tribes of Adis, wears some different types of ornaments.\textsuperscript{1085} A bride wears a brass cap called *talu dum lup*. The metal is covered with a thin layer of leaves along with bamboo netting. Other ornaments are: *ralung tadin* (earrings made of gold and precious stones), *pobje* (necklaces made of light blue beads) *ini* (necklace of white beads beautified by silver rings and metal pieces), *Yarge* (metallic chain for neck), *Kembung* (metal fingerings), *Telu* (wrist ornament made of leather), *Ook* (waist ornament made of cane), *Bulu* (Brass belt), etc. Singpho women wear a long silvery chain called *chairu* attached with some small hairpins called *chotang* made of silver in their hair knots.\textsuperscript{1086} They mostly use silver ornaments and bead necklaces.

The favourite ear ornament of the Manipuri woman is a large disc of silver called *bilba* and she also wears *Tau* (copper disc), *Khiba* necklace of beads, etc.\textsuperscript{1087}

\textsuperscript{1083} Raghuvir Singh, The Akas, pp. 28-29.
1087. Langsun D, Mate, The Mate tribe of Manipur, p. 39.
Women of Tripura were very fond of ornaments. Darlong women wear necklaces called rithei, Thi tak made of red beads, tangka thi or thival made of silver coin and a bead as well as Khualhnur, a costly necklace made of valuable stones\textsuperscript{1088}. In the earlier days, women of Riang tribes used the ornaments made of locally available materials like wood, bamboos, tooth, horn or bone of wild animals and seeds of wild bananas\textsuperscript{1089}. The Riang woman used three different pairs of earring, oarik at the upper portion of the ear, oakhamburai at the middle and nabak at the bottom of the lobe. They also used three types or ornaments at their necks, lokaik made of black seeds of wild plantain or of beads, rangbakbatang made of coins and ganthi, a wide, circular ring, made of brass. Even they used three types of ornaments in their hands, tara (armlet), yak ca (bangles), tarah (bracelet). Their foot ornaments were called benki that were made of brass. The woman used a hairpin called sangai, which was formerly a porcupine’s thorn or spine.

7.13.5 Tattooing:

Tattoo has been practiced by most of the tribal women in different parts of their bodies. After attaining puberty, the Mikir girl used to practice tattoo or duk by drawing a perpendicular line of indigo colour most generally along the middle of the forehead, down the nose to the upper lip and chin\textsuperscript{1090}. Among the Konyak, Chang and Phom Nagas, both men and women are tattooed. Among the Aos and Sangtams, only women

\textsuperscript{1088} Lethuasa Darlong, The Darlongs of Tripura, p. 180.
\textsuperscript{1089} Dr. Jagdish Gan Chaudhuri, The Riangs of Tripura, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{1090} S.T. Das, Tribal life of Northeastern India, p. 230.
are tattooed. The Konyaks usually tattoo their faces. The Phom women
tattoo their legs only but Naga women of the Ao tribes are tattooed on
their chin, breast, arms and legs\textsuperscript{1091}.

Tattooing is very common among women of Arunachal Pradesh. The Aka woman tattoos her face in a pattern of a straight line running from below the forehead to the chin where it bifurcates into two
directions. Tattooing is done before puberty\textsuperscript{1092}. The Nocte woman is
tattooed on the arms and backs. The designs are generally in the form
of big stars with cross lines joining the ends\textsuperscript{1093}. The Sherdukpen woman
do not tattoo her body but uses a vaseline called \textit{bachichlong}, a black
sticky substance prepared out of pine-resin mixed with charcoal dust, for
painting her lips and making geometrical designs on her cheeks\textsuperscript{1094}. Apatani
women tattoo themselves with broad blue lines from the top of the forehead
to the forehead of the chin, leaving only the lips\textsuperscript{1095}.

\textsuperscript{1091} Prakash Singh, Nagaland, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{1092} Raghuvir Sinha, The Akas, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{1093} Parul Dutta, The Noctes, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{1095} P.T. Nair, Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, p. 42.