Chapter – VI

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, ORAL LITERATURE
AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The Tiwas believe on some gods and goddesses. Their religion can be considered as one branch of the Hindu religion.¹ The hill Tiwas worship stone images of deities while their plains counterpart don’t install any image in the alter. The major source of living of the Tiwas is agriculture and as such excepting the beliefs of supernatural origin, the religious rites-rituals and deities are performed mainly for bettering agriculture. In fact, all the deities are performed for the well being of the society and their agricultural improvement. Although their main God is Fa-Mahadev (Siva), they also equally offered puja to other deities like Kalikap, Mai, Thal, Lakhi, Badalmajhi, Jangkhang, Kechaikhati, Charibhai etc.

In the Kumoi and Tetelia villages Kechaikhati puja and Charibhai pujas are observed in a ritualistic way. Jongkhong, Badalmajhi etc. are popular in Silchang, Mokoria, Dabarghat,

Markhangkuchi areas of the district. Each Tiwa villages have their *thans* and so they collectively arranged these *pujas* in their respective villages. The officials like *Loro, Deuri* and *Changmaji* etc. are entrusted to perform religious ceremonies. The *pujas* held mainly in *thans* and some of in the *Barghars*. *Gharbura* presides over these *pujas*.

### 6.1 God and Goddesses

Fa-Mahadeu (Lord Siva) is their supreme God. He is a benevolent god who showers blessings upon those who worship him with devotion. The prayers prevalent among the Tiwas are mostly in Assamese but there are a few words, the meaning of which are difficult to trace either in Assamese or in Tiwa. *Kailash* is considered as the holy place for the Tiwas as it is the abode of their *Lord Mahadeo*. As mentioned earlier, the main priest is known as *Ghar bura* or *Zela*. The seniormost member of the village is selected as *Zela* and after the death of *Zela*, son of the *Zela* is selected for this post. There is another person selected as *Saru bura* who assist *Barbura* or *Ghar bura*. In every *borghar* one ladey is selected as *Harikunawari*.

Tiwas worship many deities in *Borghar, Than* and in *Namghar*. Every *Khuta* has a *Borghar*. The *Borghar* has two altars, one for the main deity and the other for ancestors. *Rongdoswarind, Maidoswori*
are placed near the altars, *Rongdo* means rice and *Maido* means paddy. On the day of puja the *Harikanwri* cleans the house, while the *Giharbura* wraps *batas* full of betal leaves and nuts with banana leaves and kept in different places. The *Borghar* is considered as a very sacred place by the Tiwas. Unlike *Namghar*, the *Borghar* can not be used for holding any village disputes and other matters.\(^2\)

The different deities worshiping by the Tiwas collected in my survey areas are shown in the following table.

### Table 6.1

**Worshiping deities and numbers of Namghars and Thans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name of the Village</th>
<th>Worshiping deities</th>
<th>Namghar</th>
<th>Than</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gurigaon</td>
<td><em>Sani puja, Lakhi Puja, Badalmajhi</em></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Akaragaon</td>
<td><em>Sari Bhai, Lakhi puja Kalika puja</em></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kalbarigaon</td>
<td><em>Kachaikhati, Bishnu puja, Mahadev, Kuber</em></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Traditional Festivals/Deities</th>
<th>Marked</th>
<th>Verified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Banpara</td>
<td>Lakhi puja, Sani puja, Badalmajhi puja</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dorapani</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kholapathar</td>
<td>Mal puja, Sani puja, Badalmajhi etc.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nizkhola</td>
<td>Lakhi puja, Swaraswati, Siva puja</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Karaiguri</td>
<td>Badalmajhi, Kalika puja, Sari Bhai</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pachim Nagaon</td>
<td>Lakhi puja, Swaraswati, Bhagavati</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Charangkuchi</td>
<td>Badalmajhi, Ai Gosani, Lakhi puja</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bhumuraguri</td>
<td>Badalmajhi, Lakhi puja, Siva puja, Swaraswati</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bangthaigaon</td>
<td>Sani puja, Lakshpuja, Swaraswati puja, Badalmajhi</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Markangkuchi</td>
<td>Badalmajhi, Bhagavati, Sanipuja</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dabarghat</td>
<td>Min-Dai-Prun, Swaraswati, Badalmajhi, Sani puja</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Deities</td>
<td>Male Deities</td>
<td>Beneficent Goddesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Garangkuchi</td>
<td>Min-Dai Prun, Kalika, Badalmajhi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Natun Gaonlia</td>
<td>Kalika, Badalmajhi, mindaiprun, Sanipuja</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Borgaon</td>
<td>Burhadangaria, Sanipuja, Lakshi puja</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Kamarkuchi</td>
<td>Sanipuja, Mahadev, Baghpuja, Kalika</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Natun Daborghat</td>
<td>Min-Dai-Purn, Badalmajhi, Sanipuja</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sonaikuchi</td>
<td>Kuber, Baghdeu, Lakhi puja</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tetelia</td>
<td>Malpuja, Sari Bhai, Sanipuja</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Tiwas deities should be regularly propitiated by offerings and sacrifices. Besides Mahadev, Ganesh, Paremeswar, Kuber, Baghdev, Badalmajhi etc. are their male deities while Ai gosani, Lakhi, Kalika, Saru ai, Bor ai, Kani Adheli are the important beneficent goddesses.

*Barghar* or *Noper* is the main worshiping place of the Tiwas. Besides *Borghar*, *thans*, public worshiping places are established in
each village or a group of villages. In my survey area, most of the villages have their *Namghars*. Again the villagers of a particular area may affiliate themselves with *thans* and *Namghars* of different area. *Aolia Than* of Markangkuchi, *Burhi Air Than* of Nakhola, *Burhadangaria Than* of Borgaon, *Siva Than* of Deusal, *Kechaikhati Than* and *Bishnu Than* of Kalbari, *Sari bhai Than*, *Kechaikhati Than*, *Kalika Than* of Kumoi etc. are the prominent *thans* in these areas.

A *than* is a big hall erected generally in an out of the way place near the forest. Public worshiping are performed in these *thans* where the Tiwa *deuri* presides over. Different god and goddesses are related with different *thans*. Today, considerable changes have been taken place in the mood of *than* worshiping. Although, there is no reference to a *namghar* in the Tiwa traditional belief system, the institution of *namghar* occupies an important place in the religious system among the present day Tiwas. The converted Tiwas do not maintain a *borghar* nor they take ricebeer or pork. Many of *pujas* have been abandoned. The educated sections of the Tiwas also do not play active role in the traditional worships. Thus today, there are two broad religious divisions among the Tiwas — the traditionalists and the Vaisnavites.
6.2 Deo-Sewa

Deo-Sewa is performed in the month of Bhada (i.e. August and early September) every year. In some villages of Silchang and Gova area it is observed in Kati-Aghon (i.e. late October and early November) when new arecanuts are ready for offering to the deities. In this function the heap of things offered to satisfy the deity every year on that day with battlenuts, 7 packets of ashes, 7 packets of rice, 7 bundles of reeds, 7 heaps of demoru treeleaves, a bamboo pipe of water and 7 bundles of thatches are taken off and again for the coming year same sort of things are kept in the barghar. After this offering to deity the Tiwas believe to take betelnut for the year. The ashes signify the salt and other materials offered there represent the things which are used in their day-to-day life. Mainly, the deu-sewa puja is observed in order to make the villagers and relatives self sufficient with the bare necessities for the year.

6.3 Bhakat-Sewa

On the day of the bhakat sewa in the early morning the gharbura worships the original ancestral man of the gutra and the other tribal

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god and goddesses with betel-nuts at the borghar. For each deity, separate rituals are performed. The invited guests are welcome with betel-nuts and ricebeer. The puja is mainly performed for the peace of the people of the kula or gutra.

6.4 Kalika Puja

The Tiwa community of the Morigaon district performed another important puja for the good health of the villagers and better growth of agricultural products, which is known as Kalika puja. This puja is observed in the month of Kati (October/November) to propitiate goddess Kamakhaya. Two tortoises and a white fowl is required for this puja. But now-a-days due to the non availability of tortoises only fowls are sacrificed on this occasion.

6.5 Bhitar Sewa or Rati Sewa

The bhitar sewa or rati sewa is a function performed inside a sasang ghar very secretly. There is no idol but a light is illuminated as a token of worship. This puja is not only performed by the Tiwas. As myself belongs to Ahom community and preparing saj (ricebeer) for every religious festivals by our family members, rati sewa functions are also observed by most of the Ahoms in Upper Assam those who
belongs to *kalsanghati* or *bhetorpokia*. In this function ricebeer have to take from the same pot without keeping any differences. The function is mainly performed at night. Childrens are prohibited in this function.

According to the nature of offerings *ratisewa* may be divided into two parts, *viz. bor sewa* and *aaroïya sewa*. If pig and fowls are sacrificed then it is called *bor sewa*. If, on the other hand, only the fowl is offered then it is known as *aaroïya sewa*. Boiled rice, dried rice powder, *sandah*, *kaldil*, pig, fowl are offered with *zu* (ricebeer) in this *puja*.

### 6.6 *Ai-Bhagawati Puja*

For the peace and progress of the village and community, *ai-bhagawati* worship is performed by the Tiwas of Jagiroad, Nakhola, Mokoria, Dahali, Borgaon etc. of the district. The *puja* is observed mainly by the Tiwa womenfolk in the month of *Jeth* (May/June). Gram and banana are offered with betel-nut. In some villages, a pair of pigeon also offering in this *puja*. Today considerable changes have taken place in the mode of *puja* or worshiping. *Mah prasad* (Mug, gram, banana) is offered before the gods and goddesses. This is happening due to the influence of *vaisnav* religion. Some Tiwas of the district who are closely tie-up with the non-tribal Assamese people, they observe the cast Hindu religious ceremonies in their *namgharas*.
6.7 Sani Puja

In the month of Jeth (May/June) sani puja is observed by Tiwa community. It is a family puja where eggs are essential for sacrificing before the deity. This puja is done mainly to scare away the evil spirits from the family.

6.8 Villagewise common Puja or Than Worship

For the common well being and peace of the villagers common pujas are performed in a holy place called thans. In Table No. 6.1, shows the different villages and deities performed in their home and thans. Mainly Kechaikhati, Mahadeu, Kalika, Bhagawati, Malthakur, Jongkhong puja etc. are performed in these thans. Earlier in these functions goats and buffaloes were sacrificed.⁴ In different tribal society, they sacrificed different birds and animals generally depending upon its availability. Like Nagas, some other tribes even sacrificed human being for the satisfaction of the deities. Among Tiwas, the Gova king also supplied human being for the satisfaction of tribal deities.⁵ He also sacrificed an ox for kapla god.

6.9 *Mal Puja*

In the Kumoi area of Morigaon district a special *puja* was arranged in ancient time, known as *mal puja*. It was mainly organized by the direction of Kumoi king. The Tiwas of this area believed that for the physical strength and development *mal puja* is very important. In the month of *Jeth* (May/June) *mal puja* is observed by the Tiwas.

*Mal pujas* are of two types. One is known as *garakhia mal* and another is known as *bormal puja*. In *garakhia mal puja* only the cowboys may take part in the *puja*. They came to the *puja mandap* by singing and dancing folk songs of different kinds. At the time of dancing if they found any pig or fowel of the neighbours, they generally tried to kill them and feasted with rice-beer. After *garakhia mal puja*, in the evening of the same day, they organized *barmal puja*. In this puja the age old folks of three clans may take part. For this *puja*—125 nos. of banana leaves, fowel from each family, *zu* (rice-beer), rice, vegetables etc. are required. The *deuri* (priest) of the three clans offered *puja* to *kalika than*, *kechaikhati than* and *parboti than* with *zu*, pig, flower and betel-nuts. The priests of the *mal puja* are *loro* and *gaonburaha*. After completion of the *puja* all the members have to

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attend the loro's and gaonburaha's house to have community feast with rice beer, pig, fowl, rice etc. But now-a-days *mal puja* is not observed by the community due to the decreasing trend of belief and faith or may be of increasing modernism among the Tiwas.

6.10 Oral Literature

Oral literature or verbal art form or expressive literature is “spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterances”. It includes myth, fairy tale, religious tale, folktale, legends, animal tale, ballads, folksongs, lullabies, worksongs, marriage songs etc.

The rich heritage of oral literature, legends, ballads, lullabies are very common among this community.

(a) Prayer Songs (*Mantras*): In Tiwa society prayer songs (mantras) are different form clan to clan. These *mantras* are unwritten and the *gharbura* learns those from his predecessors. The Tiwas called the *mantras* as *bedang*. In Gova area the *mantras* are chanted in Tiwa dialect. But in Kumoi, Tetelia, Borgaon etc. villages, the mantras are chanted in Assamese language. Though the mantras are chanted in Assamese language, the Tiwa tune provide a tribal character to the mantras.

In Jagiroad area, where sukai kul, mikthikul etc. are common, they are using mantras or bedang in Assamese language. Below some specimens of bedang are collected from the different kulas.

Prayer songs of Sukai Kul:

_Aa ram iswar prabhu, ghar jyoti ghar gosani zeal gorha marali gorha aru tutiridang bhaktiridang, apunar ashirbade kintu agosti pariyale aru epine kintu jyari para bowari para, pame thaka pathare thaka hate abaran kari rakhisha, kone rakshise bogh raja rakshise buli apunar nam roba jash roba._

When somebody is doing antisocial or delinquent activity in the society, the priest uses the mantra to release the person in the following ways – _purab lo, pachime sargan, riga rina sarjan riga. Singaro leghinga ram sana he sog bathau lee anglo roi foi, kurune kheda, kuruna mata, asung leena atha phu phu._ It means God Rama created all human beings from east to west. We the people are belonged to demon dynasty. We can not think properly, even solve the problems intelligently. We only know the god Rama _gosai_. So come forward and utter his (God) name loudly.
Another prayer song of Mithi clan is as follows—

*Aa Ram iswar prabhu*

*Saga namakara idang*

*Baolakongar badalmaji*

*Manus mahadeu guru*

*Na bene tutiridang prathanaridang*

*Nama thakima jen jah thakima*

*Muruhan manakara ridang*

*Ityaba go gai nail puli parbate*

*Thakima pahere thakima*

*Haje phure, maidhale phure*

*Be sakalg aaguri samari*

*Tirai jirai rakshans garaki*

*Rakshane nang prabhu ei iswar ityaba*

*Khetiru, krishnu*

*Eguna nang sahasra guna hangame*

*Ei eswar gila prabhu*

The summery of the prayer song addressed to their God Mahadeo, says—Oh! Lord you may stay your abode on the hills but bless us so that all of us be happy, give us all goodness so that all of us be good.
Similarly a prayer song of Madur clan says –

\[
\begin{align*}
Aa \text{ Ram iswar prabhu} \\
\text{Saga tutidang ghar jyoti} \\
\text{Ghar gosain, zeal gorha} \\
\text{Marali gorha, son bala} \\
\text{Hajon ala, pao bala} \\
\text{Pochim bala tungra bala} \\
\text{Tukra bala, mao keshakhati} \\
\text{Lokho konwar, pakhi konwar} \\
\text{Than bali mahe bali devi matri kalika} \\
\text{Bali nilogar, dhou bajar nilage} \\
\text{Atar kari sakaloke thi yai jiyai rakhiba lage.}
\end{align*}
\]

The above song addressed to their ancestor king Bali as well as to goddess Kalika but meaning is almost same as the previous prayer. The influence of Sankardeva school of Vaisnavism is also clearly visible in some of their songs like – sankar hol salika, mahadev hol kanika etc.

They have also certain traditional devotional prayers chanted during ceremonial occasions. One example of such a song known as Jiwa Uruwa is given below –
Janehe hoise jiure egoti

Jivak mari jatona bhunjai.

Bhagar jiwa bhage jai

Sihanar jiwa sihane jai

Muthir jiwa muthite lukai

Meaning – there is no certainty about the lives of living being.

The soul leaves for its destined place.

The Tiwas of Morigaon district as well as others believe that Fa Mahadev was the first cultivator on this earth. Under his direction the Tiwas forefathers chari bhai, chari kora started agricultural activities in the field. In Jongkhong puja festival they have chanted a prayer in the following way –

Ahe Tiwa panthairaw, ahe Tiwa kharala raw

Share name hebe dai

Chari bhai chari korane name habe dai

Mathi chasun oi charibhai charikora.

Meaning – “O’ God! We have no agricultural equipments nor seeds and land. You please provide us land, seeds, equipments and stream as well as ponds for water.” After this puja the Tiwas collectively
clean the agricultural land and started their activity. In Tiwa language it is called *Aar kura.*

6.11 *Kahini Keet or Ballads*

The Tiwas have their traditional *kahini keet* or ballads. Most of the songs are found in Tiwa language as well as in Assamese. One such ballad I have collected from Rupsing Deuri in the following ways –

*Nonga para lum huka*

*Mothal lengaji tan manka*

*Mothal aro inda ri ka?*

*Thai morom kuthi jungkhera lika*

*Thai morom kuthi jungkhera lika*

*Thai morom aro inda ricka?*

*Ba tan tankhala kuthri o koga*

*Ba tanthal inda pika?*

*Fempor pas kacha holga*

*Fempor aro inda pika?*

*Patuli sungau nai lika*

---

Meaning – One day the king’s servant Nonga, when busy with cleaning the road, incidentally he cut the nail of a squirrel. What did the squirrel do? It shaked the Morom tree. What did the seed do? The seed fell on the face of a herd of pigs. What did the herd of pigs do? They stepped on an ant’s burrow, while running in fear. What did the ant do? They entered in a bat’s nest. What did the bat do? It entered in a deers ear. What did the deer do? It ran over a wild hen’s nest. What did the hen do? It bit on the head of an elephant. What did the elephant do? It destroyed the king’s residence. What did the king do? The king punished the servant.

6.12 Legend about Snail and Deer

Once upon a time, there was a snail in a grassy field. One day, the snail loitering in the field; incidentally, he met a deer. After seeing the deer the Snail says – “My friend, it is my area, please do not
disturb me by eating grass. Then the Deer says “Sorry, I do not know, whether it is your area or not”. Myself live on grass just like you. The creator of this world is God. That is why, I donot believe that it is your field. The Snail became angry with the Deer for such type of statement. The Deer also became very angry and ready to kill the Snail by his legs. But, at last he decided not to kill his small enemy. He thought that he will prove his superiority in front of the Snail. The Deer thought and thought and at last he made a good plan. He asked the Snail and explained – “there will be a competition between us.” He explained the whole plan in the following ways –

“There is Tarai Hill, far away from here. For reaching the hill, one will have to climb twenty four hills and three streams. In the middle of the hill, there is a big tree, and my bathing tank is under the tree.” The condition of the competition is to reach the mentioned tree quickly and be announced him as superior.

The Snail then thinking with fear for reaching the tree firstly. At last he solved the problem. He decided that the nail of the Deer will be the best way for reaching the tree.

One morning, in presence of all the members of the jungle, they started their competition. The Snail took his position (under the Deer’s
nail) without knowing by the Deer. The Deer started running. The Deer asked the Snail to run fast. The Snail also in the same way replied to the Deer. The Deer became wonder that how a Snail run with him? He started run very fast. The Deer at last fell down under a big stone near the tree. The Snail slowly came down from the nail and started his actual journey to the tree and reached his destination.

The Deer felt very tired and thanked the Snail for his better performance. He also told that all the Snails of the world will be of two horn just like Deer from that very day and also promised not to meet one another in grassy field. From that day – till today, no one could found both of them in a common grassy field.

The above legend is very popular among the Tiwas and a valuable contribution to the folk literature of Assam as a whole.

6.13 Nursery Rhymes

The Tiwa community have also their various type of nursery rhymes which may be called as lullaby. In Tiwa language these songs are called as nunai khar lowa kgit.9 The main characteristics of the Tiwa lallabies are that, the songs for male child and female child are

not same. They donot use the same song for all the child as a whole.

For example, the following one is applying for male child--

\[
\text{Kungkai kungkai khai hajua} \\
\text{Na na karwna sela hajua,} \\
\text{Indana krawba no khoi phewala,} \\
\text{Takra dai pla roma lajewa} \\
\text{Sela roma hajua} \\
\text{Na tora duri pla-nakeri, sela nakeri hnga nung} \\
\text{Khaina tongkhrw mamaine tongkhraw khejonge;} \\
\text{Solok sada kuchina nung.} \\
\text{Sangal tore foi paba hajewa} \\
\text{Kungkai kungkai takra dai fa hajewa.}
\]

The following one is for female child--

\[
\text{Kungkai-kungkai takra dai dai ma hajewa} \\
\text{Sangal hongbo no khosoi solom-fewa;} \\
\text{Parai tala dai ma ma hajewa.} \\
\text{Sangal tore foi mai mido khosoi fewa.} \\
\text{Sangal tore foi sakar mido khosoi fewa} \\
\text{Takra dai dai ma hajewa.} \\
\text{Sam aro lomlore mina nithawara khanana thura}
\]
Andhuna nung belena nung, thananung sananung
Kungkai kungkai takra dai ma hajewa.

Another one nunai khorolowa kgit is –

Jhoka sonai sonai oi, baji kisa oso,
Bejino muna nung? Sala siala.
Chalanu muna nung? Thaka puraina.
Thakanu muna nung? Hathi perena.
Hathinu muna nung? Toi kodora.
Tui kodo rame muna nung? Kumun libinghong.
Wathene mura pugurena kora
Bathaifur figana khusana bura.

These are some of the songs commonly used by the Tiwa people.

6.14 Proverbs

Riddles and proverbs are also a part of oral literature in folklore. Like other communities or tribes of north eastern region the Tiwas also have their riddles and proverbs using in daily life. But due to the lack of preservation, these valuable oral literatures become invisible in the Tiwa society. A proverb is a short sentence founded on long experience.10

The following are some examples of proverbs popular among Tiwa community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tiwa</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Uja pungai pesa thangoia</em></td>
<td>Too many cooks spoil the broth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nokha khalana saldeng hora</em></td>
<td>Everybody is wise after the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fethong the parisa naithong tho lai Rakhe le asa chaili mai</em></td>
<td>It becomes too late in preparation for doing something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fung tora kuthi sokha</em></td>
<td>Small pitchers have large ears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Libing the samo chelira ware to the samo kholia</em></td>
<td>The birds are entangled by their feet and men by their tongues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.15 Material Culture

Material culture consists of man made objects such as tools, houses, implements, furniture, automobiles, buildings, roads, bridges and in fact, the physical substance which has been changed and used
by men. It is concerned with the external, mechanical and utilitarian objects. By means of the technology, men wrest from habitant the foodstuffs, the shelter, the clothing and the implements they must have if they are to survive. The objects they make and use for these purposes are generally classified under the heading of material culture.\textsuperscript{11}

In this part the material culture of the Tiwas as found today will be described. While dealing with their material culture our attention will be concentrated on those implements connected with food and agriculture as well as houses, dresses, ornaments, art and crafts too.

\textbf{6.16 Food Habit}

Rice is the main food of the Tiwas. Their two major meals consists of rice and boiled vegetables. Meat, dry fish, eggs, eri silk worm, crabs are included in their menu. Fowl and pork are their delicious dish. Pigs and fowls are reared by almost all the Tiwas as they are essential items in their socio-religious ceremonies. Milk is not considered as an item of food. They have taken milk and tea rarely.\textsuperscript{12}

Matikaduri, Manimuni, Narasingha, Dhekia, Kalmou, Kaldil, Bhakuri, Kerela etc. are their usual vegetables.

In some of my survey villages like Daborghat, Komarkuchi, Natungaonlia etc. they take their breakfast at 5 a.m. with rice, then lunch at 12 noon and dinner at 6 p.m. at 7 p.m. all are preparing to go to bed.

There is no provision of using mastered oil in their meal. Instead of this, they generally use *khar* or alkalic prepared from banana tree. Tea is also not popular among the Tiwas. The Tiwas of this area prepare a special kind of dry fish called *Hukoti* with *Til* leaf, dry fish and alkalic. It is prepared by pounding dry fish and stuffing it in bamboo tubes kept airtight for a month or so. One age old Tiwa folk told me at Daborghat village that his family consumed only one to two litre of mustard oil in a year. But alkalic is common among all Tiwa households.

*Zu* (rice beer) is their main liquor. They made it locally and it is also an essential item in all socio-religious functions of Tiwas. But now the educated sections of the Tiwas discourage the rice beer consumption. Now-a-days the guests are not entertained with *zu*. *Zu* is made by fermenting broken rice grains. Some grains get broken in husking into minute bits that donot go well with the whole grains in cooking. The amount of broken rice produced in the process of husking depends on the skill of the woman doing it and on the quality of the paddy harvested.
Every kind of rice is not good for preparing rice beer. Generally *bora* rice is used for this purpose. A kind of yeast is used for fermentation. The yeast is a combination of certain kinds of leaves found in the locality. The Tiwa people of Gova area prepare the yeast with *dighlati* leaves, *huklati* leaves, *bhekuri* leaves, *amara*, *amlokhi chal*, *hilikha* and papaya flower. They keep these one week on fire in the kitchen. The rice beer preparation earthen pot also coloured with banana flower guice so that earthen smell could not mix up with the fermented rice. In the Kariguri village of Silchang area they prepare the yeast with *porola*, *leaves*, *bahaka* leaves, *nangal danga* leaves, *dalchani*, jack fruit leaves and with sugarcane leaves. The Tiwa people call the yeast cakes as *Bakhar*. The quality of the yeast depends largely on one’s experience.

After boiling, rice is spread on a bamboo mat and when it become cool, yeast has been mixed with it. After two or three days the fermented rice are be preserved in the earthenpots. *Daron*, a wooden pot is usually used for distributing zu in every Tiwa family. Generally bell-matel utensils are used for taking meal and zu.
6.17 Agriculture varieties and Equipments

Agriculture is the principal means of livelihood of the Tiwas. Paddy is the main crop of Tiwas’ agriculture. It keeps them engaged for about nine months, with the onset of pre-monsoon showers in the end of March or in early April. In Morigaon district, the Tiwas share a common pattern of agricultural economy with other communities.

Cultivation of paddy is done during the wet months between April to September. On the first part of April, a summer variety of paddy called ahu is sown. They also practis the sali paddy cultivation. In Tiwa language sa means land and li means wide. Thus paddy grown in wide land is known as sali. There is another variety of summer paddy called bao; which is grown on lands where water accumulates during rains or floods. Along these paddy, the Tiwas grow some quantities of matikalai, turmeric, ginger, bringal and chillies etc.

The areca nut is also an important crop of Tiwa. It is also used in all socio-religious functions. It is a seasonal crop that ripes in summer.

Bamboo is another useful economic commodity. No householder builds his domicile without growing a bamboo grove in the backyard. It is an all purpose material equally useful in house building, baskettey, fencing etc. Bamboo also used by the Tibeto-Burmese as their delicacy. Therefore, Tibeto-Burmese culture sometimes regarded as bamboo culture.\textsuperscript{15}

Although the hill Tiwas are not accustomed with ploughing, the plain Tiwas on the other hand use this as common equipment for farming. The \textit{nangal} is the main agricultural implement for the plain Tiwa community. The wooden plough is fixed with an iron share. A \textit{Juwali} is attached with a \textit{nangal}. Other agricultural equipments are \textit{kor, fal, moi, jabaka, jut-jori, dolimari, kachi, beria, ukhani, kuthar, daa, bindha} etc.

For dehusking paddy they use the \textit{dheki} and \textit{ural}, which is commonly used by all the rural Assamese people.

In the foothill of Morigaon district, the villagers of Daborghat, Kamarkuchi etc. uses some traditional agricultural implements like \textit{khangra}, which is the versatile bush-knife of the Tiwas used for various

\textsuperscript{15} Gogoi, Lokeswar : \textit{Asomor Loka Sanskriti}, 2007, p-345.
purposes from making fine bamboo strips for basket making to chopping firewood. It is used for clearing the bush, felling small trees and for lopping of branches of big trees in shifting cultivation plots. Paku is another equipment used for digging small holes and loosening the soil around the plants. It is used in wet paddy cultivation also. They use two types of hoes: first the khasi type and the common hoe used by Assamese peasants.16

6.18 Hunting and Fishing

The old Tiwa people say that there was a time when they used to go in groups to the jungle for hunting deer, bear, pig, tiger with spears and bows. But now the community hunting is fast disappearing. Bow and arrow, dao and firearms are used for individual hunting.

Fish catching is much more popular and very frequently expedited in the winter season. The people go out for fishing individually or in groups. In winter season the beels and streams have scanty water. Groups of people go to a beel or stream and construct artificial barrier with mud. After that the entire group of people suddenly jump over the barricaded water and catch the fish with the help of

fishing implements like *palo, juluki, jakoi, chalani* etc. During flood season the daring Tiwa youths cut fish with *dao* at night. Fishing traps like *chepa, dingora, cek, dalanga, pacha* etc. are the other common fishing equipments of the Tiwas.

6.19 House

The pattern of house of the traditional Tiwas was almost similar to that of *Samadi*. But now-a-days the pattern has been changing. They construct their houses on plinths. Thatch is used for roofing. Walls are made of reeds and bamboos. Wooden and bamboo posts are used in their houses. There is no provision for windows in a traditional Tiwa house. Doors are also made of bamboo in each apartment.

Now-a-days in most of the Tiwa villages the *choraghar* is replaced by an additional house near the main house. In between *choraghar* and *borghar* there is a *majghar* which is used for sleeping purposes. The *borghar* has two parts - one for household deity and the other for cooking purposes. The main post of the *borghar* is known as *thunakhuta* which is mainly made of *gamari* wood. *Thnakhuta* is the holy place where only *gharbura, zela* and *hari kunwari* can sit in different religious ceremonies. The Tiwas prefer to
keep the floor of the houses dry and clean. They keep the floor clean. They take care in beautifying and decorating the walls which they take as a mark of aristocracy. Once there had been little difference in between the houses of the Tiwas and the villages of other community. The well to do people start constructing pacca houses of RCC and CI sheet structure. In the houses of a rich man a pair of buffalo horns is found kept as a mark of aristocracy which is being the chief sacrifice to the tribal deity.

6.20 Dress Habit

In Tiwa language dresses are known as *kanajyonanemal*. The Tiwas have their special traditional tribal dresses. They feel proud in knitting and weaving their own dresses. These dresses are decorated and colourful and made of cotton. The traditional young boy wear a shirt called *tagla*. They use *thana* a long cotton cloth instead of pant. The king and the royal officers like *senapati, pator, zela* etc. use royal dress of milky white shirt with *tagla, dhoti* and a white turban. They get themselves decorated with the garlands on the day of festival while they sit in the *Rajchara* or *Patchara*.

The female Tiwa uses a small but decorated cloth wrapped on waist called *faskai*. They do not wear the *mekhela* or *kasong* on the waist, rather the same is worn at the breast extending a few inches below the knees.

In the daily walk of life the office bearers of the Tiwas do not wear any special dress, rather their dresses are common to that of other community.

### 6.21 Ornaments

The Tiwa women and the king as well as officers wear different ornaments in different occasions. Most of the women wear silver, bead necklaces and ear-rings. Formerly, the womenfolk wore *gamkharu* (bracelet), *sipatmoni* (necklace), *gotakharu* (bracelet). But now-a-days in Morigaon area, the Tiwa womenfolk do not use these. The other traditional ornaments of Tiwas are –

- *Magandar khoria* (Silver made)
- *Sonane khoria* (Gold)
- *Rufane khoria* (Bronze)
- *Sonane khaidong* (Gold)
- *Rufane khaidong* (Bronze)
6.22 Musical Instruments

All the Tiwas of the district are music lover. They observe innumerable religious ceremonies throughout the year and musical instruments are very essential in these festivals. Generally, in *Samadi*, all the musical instruments are kept.

They have a number of musical instruments, which they manufacture by themselves. The major musical instruments are –

1. *Khrams* (drums)
   a. *Khrambar* (big drum)
   b. *Pisakhram* (small drum)
   c. *Khram* (general size)

2. *Kali* (pipe)

3. *Tandrang* (violin)

4. *Thogari* (string instrument)

5. *Phansi* (bamboo flute)
6.23 War Weapons

In ancient time, most of the Tiwas of the district are accustomed with warfare. For that purpose, they had to use different kinds of weapons made by themselves. The Tribal Research Institute of Assam have collected some important weapons of Tiwas from Gova, Neli, Khola, Topakuchi and Komarkuchi area of the Morigaon district.

Tiwas' main war weapon is lunkhui (sword). Different types of lunkhui were made by the experts for different ranks of the soldiers. They also used poisoned arrow, pistols, exclusives etc. at the time of war.

The above discussion shows that the Tiwa community was independent in each and every sphere of livelihood. However, they started neglecting their traditional lifestyle with the advent of grater Assamese culture, which influences them. Modern education and industrialization have also changed their mind and way of life. Gradually they merged with the Assamese society and become a part and parcel of the grater Assamese culture. Due to
their economic conditions and neglecting attitude to preserve their culture is also a factor of getting wiped out their own culture. There is also fairly large influence of Christinity and converted Tiwas are destroying their own culture. It is now necessary for everyone of us to preserve this rich culture and stop the slaughter on it immediately. This step will certainly be an attempt to glorify our own heritage.