

# **FROM JHUMING TO TAPPING**



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# **FROM JHUMING TO TAPPING**

RUBBER PLANTATION AUGURS WELL FOR THE  
TRIBALS OF TRIPURA

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## **FOREWORD**

In the course of this monograph on "From Jhuming to Tapping; Rubber Plantation augurs well for the Tribals of Tripura," Dr. Bhattacharya dealt with some important aspects of the social and economic life of the Jhumias. After describing the physical features of the area and the traditional socio-economic life pattern of the Jhumias including their food production, handicrafts, weaving and their social organisation, he has narrated in detail about the transformation of Jhumia economy to money economy and the growth of market alongwith the development of transport, exploitation of forests and also economic poverty prevailing on the hills of Tripura. Dr. Bhattacharya has devoted one full chapter on the rubber plantation as a promising alternative to Jhuming. The possibility of removing the distress of the Jhumias and ensuring a higher level of living to them is intimately connected with the successful changeover from Jhuming to tapping makes an interesting reading.

I do hope that Dr. Bhattacharya's monograph would be carefully studied by the interested persons, research workers, anthropologists and also the administrators working in various fields development of the society.

Agartala  
10.3.92

Director of Research  
Govt. of Tripura

## **PREFACE**

As in every other sphere, the behavioural approach of the Jhumias of Tripura also has been undergoing a radical change. It is, therefore, considered as appropriate for a student of Social Science to study the modus operandi of the Jhumias not only as persons but in institutionalized i.e., Socially sanctioned forms.

I am fully conscious of the fact that the subject is sensitive yet I have ventured upon this Project only in response to an urge from a teacher in me, which I could not resist but to act upon, for which I offer my due apology to the Scholars of this subject.

The present monograph has been undertaken at the instance of the Directorate of Research, Government of Tripura. The monograph is not all-embracing but however, all important features such as introduction to the Jhumias, their traditional economic pattern, Social organisation, transformation of the Jhumia economy, New Deal for the 'Jhumias' Rehabilitation and above all, the socio- economic life-pattern of the Jhumias and their Potential level of changes have been covered within possible and permissible limit.

It is a great pleasure to acknowledge the constant inspiration, guidance and blessings that I received from my revered and beloved Guru Dr.S.R. Das, Senior Fellow, ICHR, New Delhi, formerly University Professor and Head of the Department of Archaeology, Calcutta University.

I would like to mention here that I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my revered teacher Dr. J. B. Ganguly, now Vice Chancellor, Tripura University, formerly University Professor and Head of the Department of Analytical and Applied Economics, Calcutta University, Post Graduate Centre, Agartala, who actually inspired me while teaching us in the college

to turn to detailed studies in tribal life and culture, I hope my venture in this direction will be found useful and informative even by him, who is very particular about correctly portraying tribal life by the academics.

Needless to say that in preparation of this Monograph, I have necessarily drawn upon copiously on the existing reports especially those of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' Commissioner for India and the various Census Reports as well as individual surveys undertaken by the experts in the field for which I sincerely express my heart-felt thanks. I shall also frankly confess that the writings of such eminent Scholars as, Dr. S.K. Chatterjee, Dr. V. Elwin, Dr. B. S. Guha, Dr. G.S. Ghurye, Dr. J.H. Hutton, Dr. D.N. Mujumder, Prof. N.K. Bose, Dr. S.R. Das, Dr. J. B. Ganguly and a host of others have benefited me much. The debt to all these authorities can better be realised than described in words.

I am thankful to Shri D.P. Deb Barman, Shri R.G. Singh, Shri R.K. Acharya and A. DEb Barma of Tribal Research Directorate for the valuable assistance rendered by them in the presentation of this monograph. I am highly obliged to Shri D. Nag, I.F.S., Managing Director, TRDPS LTD. Who in spite of heavy engagements rendered considerable help by making useful comments.

I also wish to record my gratitude to Shri H.N. Mathur, I.F.S., Shri Mathew John, Dy. Dev. Officer, Shri S.K. Bhowmik, F.O., Shri Gautam Debbarmann, Shri I.M. Debnath, Shri N.G. Chatterjee, Shri Subir Choudhury

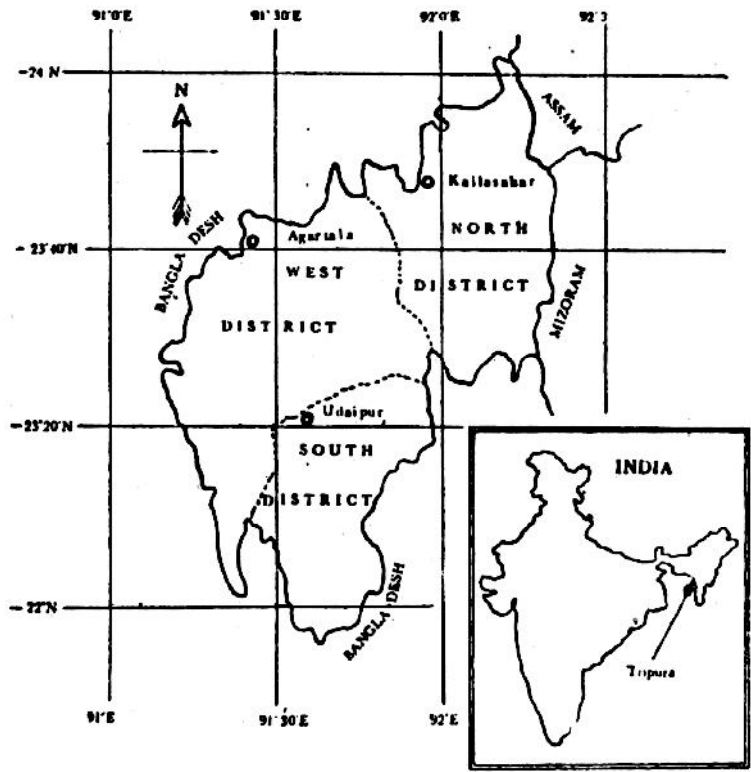
Mrs. Jayanti Bhattacharya, Miss Jayatri Bhattacharya and Miss Aditi Bhattacharya and many other friends and students who have helped me in various ways in writing of this monograph.

Lastly, I gratefully acknowledge all active help and co-operation extended by the Directorate of Research, Department of Welfare for Scheduled Tribes, Government of Tripura, Agartala.

March, 1992  
M.B.B. College  
Agartala

Suchintya Bhattacharya

**TRIPURA**  
(A National map)



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## ONE

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### **THE TERRITORY AND ITS PEOPLE**

Tripura is a small state of the Indian Union situated in the North-eastern region of the subcontinent of India. The tiny state lying between the latitude of 22 56'N and 24.32'N and longitude of 91 10' and 92 21'E is bounded on North, west and South by Bangladesh and on East by Assam and Mizoram. The maximum length from North to South is 183.5 Kms., and the maximum breadth from East to West is 112.7 Kms (Map No. I). An international boundary line of 839 Kms separates the State from Bangladesh on North- West, West and South-east. The land surface linking Assam and Mizoram on North and North-East covers an area of 162 Kms. The present territorial area of the State of Tripura is 10,477 Sq. Kms. <sup>1</sup>

#### **I PHYSIOGRAPHY**

##### **Geological perspectives**

Geologically, Tripura is a part of the North-eastern India. Its northern part is characterised by sedimentary rocks which are grouped into three : The Surma - Group (further subdivided into the Bhuban and Bokabil formation). Tioam - Group and Dupi - Tila -Group. The above rocks range in age from Middle Miocene to Recent, i.e., from 18 million years to less than 1 million years old. The Surma - Group consists of indurated sandstone with 50% grey and olive clay rocks. The Tipam sandstone is associated with lumps of silicified fossil wood. It comprises medium yellow to light buff and brownish yellow rock. The Dupi-Tilla Group consists of brown to buff sandy clay with greenish and reddish brown sandy loam followed down by mottled sandy clay. <sup>2</sup>

The rock formation of the Southern District range in age from Mid Tertiary (15 million years) to Recent. The Southern District as a whole comprises argillaceous and arenaceous sedimentary rock like sandstone, shale and clay belonging to the Surma - Group, Tipam Group and Dupitila - Group. A major portion of the District is occupied by the recent alluvial deposits. The sedimentary rocks are deformed and folded<sup>3</sup>.

Tripura's western District is represented by sedimentary rocks which range in age from (15 million years old) Miocene to loosely consolidated sediments of recent (1 Million years) age. The rocks are sandstone and siltstone shale grading into clay. These rock types are repeated as layers one above the other. It appears from the nature of grains and texture imprinted on these rocks that originally sediments were deposited in the sea and later converted into rocks which were subsequently acted upon by strong forces and resulted in the folding of the rock-layers into wave-like structures known as anticliner and syncliner.<sup>4</sup>

It may be noted that before the merger into the Indian Union, the State was called Parbatya-Tripura. As implied by its name, the country is hilly. (Map No. 2). About 70 percent of the area consists of hills and small hillocks, and the rest of the area is plain land situated in the river valleys and the narrow strips of land between the hills is known as lungu-land. There is no mountain proper as such. Some peaks in the eastward ranges rise upto a height of more than two thousand feet only. There are again series of hill ranges running parallel to one another from North to South dividing the state into broad valleys. The ranges increase in height towards the South from the plains of Sylhet and towards the North from Chittagong District in Bangladesh. The hills are narrow ridges and sometimes so narrow at the top that it is very difficult to walk over.

The principal hill ranges from east are : Jampui, Sakhai - Tlang, Longtarai and Atharomura running through Hill Tripura in a northerly direction and almost parallel to one another. The northern portions of the valleys between the above ranges are mostly flat, swampy and covered with rank vegetation, and in the South these are of a wild and broken character intersected by an infinity of deep-cut ravines and narrow - topped ridges. The highest peak is Betling - Shiv about 3, 200 feet above the sea-level. It gradually

decreases in height both ways. To the North it is joined by small tilas or hillocks with a low ridge which runs into Sylhet and to the South with the range of Chittagong in Bangladesh.

There are also a number of water-sheds in Tripura formed by the hills or hillocks, and almost each valley contains a river to which numerous chheras or hill streams join carrying water from the hill sides. It is said that these hills are the veritable homes of wild elephants in Tripura and these are covered with dense bamboo jungle and vast forests with timber are frequented by animals and men.

About 70 per cent area of Tripura consists of hills and small hillocks, the latter being called as tila, and the rest of the area is plain. On the basis of cropping pattern, the land of this area may be classified into three main categories : (1) Tila land or small hillocks; (2) Plain land and (3) River Valleys. The Tila land again can be further divided into two types : (1) The Jhum - areas on hills and steep hillocks and (ii) - tila i.e. , table land, The Jhum - cultivation is resorted to by the tribals who sow paddy seeds, sesamam, cotton, maize, chillies and other Kharif Vegetables whereas in the flat tilas, the Kharif is the main crop. Plain lands are divided into three classes : (1) high plain land, (2) medium low land and (3) low lunga (Plain land situated in the river Valleys and narrow strips of land between the tilas is locally known as lunga).

The soil is mainly laterite in the hills and hillocks and alluvial in the flat land. In the Valleys, soil is medium to fine in texture and light grey in colour and contains more organic matter than the tila-soil. The soil of the plains locally known as nal (arable) can be described as loamy with less sand-content than the tila-soil. The soil of the Lunga-land is generally acidic, and its texture is coarse to medium. It is important to note that about 98% of the soil contents tested were found to be high (about 0.75 to medium (0.5% to 0.75%) in respect of organic carbon and medium 224.5 to 561.37 kg. in respect of available nitrogen. More than 50% of the soil are low (below 22.5 Kg P 205) in available Phosphorous and 80% low (below 112.3 Kg) in available Potash.<sup>4</sup>

Tripura, was once abounded in luxuriant forests. These were mostly naturally grown forests and yielded a very important addi-

tion to the State resources. But, due to repeated and indiscriminate Jhum-cultivation by the tribals and high demand for land for settling the refugees from Bangladesh, the forest produces as such decreased to a considerable extent. Now only a small quantity of soft wood is obtainable and exported to Assam, and the remaining forest produce is utilised locally. The Forest Department, however, has undertaken plantation of rubber, cashew nuts, coffee, etc. which hold out prospect of a lucrative cash crop.

As regards types of vegetation, the forests of the entire state may be classified into five major types : (1) East Himalayan Lower Bhabar - Sal; (2) Cachar tropical ever green forest; (3) Moist mixed deciduous forest; (4) Low alluvial Savannah wood land and (5) Moist mixed deciduous forests - dry bamboo brakes.<sup>5</sup>

East Himalayan lower Bhabar - Sal type is recognised as a high quality of Sal wherever the soil is deep, loamy and well drained. The Garjan (*Dipterocarpas*) forests belong to this type. It is found in three forms (a) in pure and gregarious form in patches (b) in mixed form with Sal (c) in mixed form with other evergreen and deciduous species. The Garjan is, also found both in pure gregarious form as well as in mixed form. In pure form it occurs either in small patches or in the form of a long narrow belt along the toe of the tilas (hillocks) fringing the Sal - forests and low lying paddy land. In a mixed form, it occurs either mixed with the Sal or with miscellaneous plant species. The Savannah woodland found on the low hillocks and on undulating rolling up of ground of the State does not probably correspond strictly to this type of forest, but is definitely akin to this type and has a close resemblance to it. This type of forest is found in the form of belt in between the Sal areas in Baramura - Deota-mura hill range. In the moist mixed deciduous forests the dry type of poor quality bamboo is found in the heavily Jhumed areas of the eastern parts of Baramura, Deotamura and Atharomura. It may be noted that due to continuous heavy Jhuming followed by heavy erosion, the soil has become much impoverished characterised by scrub jungles of no use.

As regards rivers it may be stated that the State of Tripura is bereft of any river of worth mentioning. There are only several

**Rivers** rivulets, some of which may be called rivers by courtesy. These rivers are not again navigable by any boat of four tons capacity throughout the year. During the rains, the hilly rivers become fully to the brim with tremendous current and tend to get flooded. In other seasons, most of them remain practically dry except in some sections. The principal rivers in the State are : (i) the Gumati; (ii) the Haora; (iii) the Khowai; (iv) the Manu; (v) the Deo; (vi) the Longai; (vii) the Juri; (viii) the Muhuri and (ix) the Feni. It is important to note that none of these rivers of the State has undergone any great or sudden changes in its course and none of them forms any island and there is no regular inland water-traffic in the state nor any water-side town fed by any river.

**Climate and Rainfall** Tripura falls within the tropical climatic Zone. The climate is moderate with high humidity. During the winter season temperature varies between 22.5 C (77.09 F) and 10.4 C (50.7 F). From the month of March, temperature rises rapidly and reaches the highest point in the month of May. The period from March to May is the summer season in Tripura. At the end of the summer the south-west monsoon sets in and lasts upto September. The post-monsoon season covers the months of October and November. During the months of April and May, humidity varies between 50% and 75%, but during monsoon it is over 85%. The rainy season usually commences from the beginning of April and continues till the middle of October. Practically speaking, the rainy seasons covers half of the year. The average annual rainfall in the state is 2100.7 mm (82.07"). But during the summer, the rainfall is generally accompanied by thunder storms. The highest temperature so far recorded at Agartala is 41.1 C on the 25th May, 1962, and the lowest is 5.2 C which was on the 4th and 5th February, 1968.

**Flora and Fona** The state of Tripura with its characteristic physical features including its geological formation and dense jungle areas is traditionally known as a great depository of various kinds of flora, mostly grown in the forest areas. Of the various flora species, two plant species are extremely

important for two reasons : firstly, these are widely grown throughout the State, and secondly, these are widely used for different purposes by all categories of people living in the State. These two species are bamboo and cane. bamboo is widely grown in all parts of the State. Most of the hills produce different kinds of bamboos. It is interesting to note that the demand for bamboo is greater than any other botanical species available in the State. All kinds of people belonging to different social and economic positions are very much dependent on bamboo products. In the first place bamboos are extensively used for building houses or huts or any kind of shelter by both the advanced and tribal peoples. Not only that, a peculiarity with the advanced people is that the boundary fencing is invariably done with the bamboo-strips. Secondly, the traditional craft and industries of the Jhumias also centre round bamboo products.

In this context, it is also important to note that the condition of germination, growth and development of rubber plantation are quite favourable in the State and recently Tripura has earned a name in rubber plantation and already opened up a new horizon of economy. The tapping of rubber is very encouraging and the yield of latex is even higher than the yield in Kerala, the home of rubber in India and not only that the dry rubber content of Tripura latex is the highest in India.

The fauna of Tripura bears a close resemblance to those in Assam and Bangladesh due to close continuity of the forest and hill ranges of the North-eastern border of the State with the Chittagong hill tracts and the hills of Southern Assam and plains of Western border of its territory with Bangladesh. There is hardly peculiarity in respect of animal species of Tripura.

The total population of Tripura is 2,053,058 according to 1981 Census. Out of this total population the number of tribal people has been enumerated as 5,83,920, (1981 census) i.e. 28.44% of the total population. A comparative study of the Population figures as enumerated in the Census Reports from 1901 to 1981 shows a progressive decline in the ratio of tribal population and rapid increase of the non-tribals and the ratio of the tribal population to the total popula-

tion has never been static. This would be evident from the following Table.

**Table I** Population trend (1901-1981)

Year	Total Population	Non-tribal Population	Tribal Population	% of the Tribal Population	% of non-tribal Population
1901	1,73,325	81,646	91,679	52.89%	47.11%
1911	2,29,613	1,19,484	1,10,129	47.96%	52.04%
1921	3,04,437	1,37,937	1,66,500	54.69%	45.31%
1931	3,82,450	1,79,123	2,03,327	53.16%	46.84%
1941	5,13,010	2,56,019	2,56,991	50.09%	49.91%
1951	6,39,029	4,01,071	2,37,958	37.23%	62.77%
1961	11,42,005	7,81,935	3,60,070	31.53%	68.47%
1971	15,56,342	11,05,798	4,50,544	28.95%	71.05%
1981	20,53,058	14,69,138	5,83,920	28.44%	71.56%

It is interesting to note here that the non-tribal population of Tripura increased by 71.05% during 1961-71, whereas India records a growth rate of only 24.54% during 1961-71. On the other hand, the ratio of tribal to total population gradually decreased from 52.89% in 1901 to 28.44% in 1981 in spite of upward growth of population. This decrease in the population ratio in respect of tribal and non-tribal people of this state has been primarily caused by influx of peoples from the neighbouring regions of Bengal and after the partition of the country in 1947 when a large scale influx took place. It may be, however noted that even before 1947, whenever there were communal riots in East Bengal, the Hindus, generally took refuge in the State of Tripura. Such an influx had taken place after the Dacca communal riots in 1941. As a result the Bengali Hindu population increased tremendously all over the State. After the Partition in 1947, many Muslims also left Tripura for the newly creasted East Pakistan, resulting in the decrease of the number of Muslim population in the State. In this context, it may be stated that the Tripura Kings from the very early times

encouraged the immigration and settlement of the Bengali Hindus in Tripura. In fact, the Tripura State Administration was for all practical purposes run and managed by these Bengali Hindus. Even the Tripura King did not object to any large scale migration and settlement of the Bengali Hindus after the Partition of the country. The ruler might have been motivated by two primary reasons viz., that such a migration of the Bengali Hindus would certainly augment the financial resources of the State by giving land holding right to them. Besides, the Tripura King was in favour of such migration and settlement of Bengali Hindus because he thought a contact with these people would produce cultural enlightenment amongst the tribal peoples of the country. In reality, the Tripura State Government encouraged large scale immigration of the Bengali Hindus into Tripura from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after 1947. This immigration and settlement of the Bengali Hindus is primarily responsible for the population ratio of the tribals and the non-tribals in this State.

There are as many as 19 tribal communities in Tripura. These are: Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Halam, Noatia, Mog, Oraon, Santal, Khasia, Bhil, Bhutia, Lepcha, Chaimal, Lushai, Uchai, Kuki, Garo and Munda. According to 1981 Census Report of India, the population figure of the Scheduled tribes was 5,83,920 i.e. 28.44% of the total population. It is significant to note that the percentage of the tribal population was 50.09% in 1941 and 31.53% in 1961 and 28.44% in 1981 respectively. It has already been stated that this gradual decrease of tribal population ratio is not due to lower growth rate, but for unprecedented large scale influx of non-tribals coming from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). They mostly include caste Hindus and the so-called Scheduled Castes.

The following table shows the major Scheduled Tribal Communities and their frequencies in total Scheduled Tribal population of Tripura as recorded in 1971 Census Report :

**Table II (Census Reports)**

Sl.No.	Scheduled Tribes	Population	% of total Sch. tribal population of the tribe.
1.	Tripuris	250382	55.57%
2.	Reang	64722	14.36%
3.	Jamatia	34192	7.59%
4.	Chakma	28662	6.36%
5.	Halam	19076	4.23%
6.	Noatia	10297	2.28%
7.	Mog	13273	2.94%
8.	Lushai	3672	.81%
9.	Uchai	1061	.21%
10.	Kuki	7775	1.72%
11.	Garo	5559	1.23%
12.	Munda	5347	1.18%

From the above figures it appears that the Tripuris constitute 55.57% of the total tribal population; Reang 14.36%; Jamatia 7.59%; Chakma 6.36%; Halam 4.23% and the rest constitute 11.89%. Among the Scheduled tribes, the Tripuris are in the majority and form a dominant group. They are spread over all the Sub-divisions and their highest concentration is found in the Khowai region and lowest in Udaipur, while the Chakmas and Halams have maximum concentration in Amarpur Sub-Division. The Oraons, Santals, Mundas and Khasias are primarily found in the northern parts of the State and they are mainly engaged in tea plantation. The percentage of the Kukis is highest in Amarpur Sub-Division and the Lushais are mostly found in Jampui hills of Dharmanagar Sub-division.

The above analysis of the land, its physiography and people demonstrates that the State of Tripura is indeed the most fascinating region from both Physiographical and ethnological points of

view. The Physiographical conditons relating more particularly to hills and forests and also the fluctuating tropical climate with considerable rainfall provide a redoubtable resort to a host of primitive hill peoples like the Tipras, Jamatias, Reangs, Halams etc. , with diverse physical features and cultural attainments. All these peoples though of foreign extractions had from indeterminate time made Tripura their primary habitat, and from bygone days they have most wonderfully succeeded in retaining their respective individuality pertaining to their cultural traditions and physiogromy. There has been no doubt considerable admixture and cultural intermingling but the individuality of each tribe is well demonstrated if one happens to make a scientific analysis of the culture of any one of these people. However, in the perspectives of the Physiographical conditions prevailing in the State as outlined above, it would be now possible to concentrate on the scientific study of the Jhumias of Tripura.

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## TWO

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### **INTRODUCING THE JHUMIAS**

The term 'Jhumia' comes from the aboriginal word, 'Jhum' or 'Jhoom' which means to cultivate and thus one who lives on jhuming is called 'Jhumia' or 'Jhoomia'. Jhum cultivation or shifting cultivation, as it is popularly known is not a speciality of Indian primitive tribes rather it is a stage in the evolution of agricultural technique and precedes plough cultivation. It is known by various names in different countries. The primitive cultivators of West Africa call it 'Farming' and it is known as 'Sartage' in the French and Belgian Ardennes, whereas the natives of South-East Soloman Islands call it 'Koholo'. The Vedda of Ceylon call it 'Chena' and the Burmese hill tribes as 'Taungya'. Again, in India, the process of shifting cultivation is differently known in different tribal belts. As for instance, among the Bhuiya of Orissa it is known as, 'dabi' and 'Komon', among the Marias of Bastar as 'Penda' whereas this is called by the primitive peoples of North-eastern India and also of Tripura by the name 'Jhum' or 'Jhoom'. Although shifting cultivation is known by different names, except with slight variations, it is similar in its fundamentals throughout the areas where it is practised. As a matter of fact, wherever topographic, climatic and socio-economic forces have not favoured technological progress in agriculture, shifting cultivation or patch agriculture persists and as such it is not at all surprising that this practice is found in one or the other form throughout the world.

It is interesting to note that although the origin of shifting cultivation can be traced back to the Neolithic period, i.e. 13,000 to 3000 B.C. on the basis of Archaeological data when the use of ground and polished stone im-

Ecological reasons

plements replaced the chipped stone ones of the old stoneage. This is however, a revolutionary change in the history of human societies from food-gathering to food-production. Sharma (1976) observes, "It may be accident that he took to hoe from bow, i.e. from hunters he became food producer."<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, it has been found that the effects of the productive economy as against food-gathering economy of the old stoneage were so impressive that ultimately people of neolithic period were able to exercise control over their food supply. But the interesting point is that although human civilization has made much progress since that age, yet, a culture-pattern of remote past still continues to exist even to-day! Of course, experts are of opinion that ecological conditions are largely responsible for such a continuous process. Ecologically, it may be stated that shifting cultivation is the outcome of two main factors: (i) In the tropical regions fertility of the soil exhausts very rapidly and (ii) Soil's capacity to retain plant nutrients is very low. These difficulties according to F.A.O. "can be split into several factors - low absorptive capacity for exchangeable bases of the soil's clay fractions, the tendency of these clays to immobilize phosphates, the heavy percolation rate of tropical rains through generally very porous soils and the resulting leaching of plant nutrients, the rapid destruction of organic matter by bacterial action under conditions of high temperatures, and so on."<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, the poor fertility of the soil is mainly responsible for making cultivation shifting in nature. Dr. Ganguly (1968), rightly observes; "To obtain a continuous yield of crops from lands we require to conserve soil fertility by using manures and fertilizers. Under the pressure of an ever-increasing population the demand for agricultural products rises more and more. This inevitability leads to the use of manures and protection of soil from erosion to get continuous yields from a particular plot of land. But in a primitive society there is no such pressure. Nor are they conversant with the modern soil conservation methods. So in their efforts to produce their food when the fertility of a particular plot of land is exhausted they are to shift to another fertile one."<sup>3</sup>

It is however important to note that besides ecological and economic factors, cultural factors are also considerably responsible for the continuity of this pre-historic system because of the fact that in spite of introducing new methods of cultivation in

recent years in the tribal societies, it has been found that they are yet to generate the process of cultural acceptability.

It is significant to note that in the North-East India, the intensity of shifting cultivation is so much so that approximately 4,57,000 hectares of land is under this type of agriculture. In Tripura alone, the total area of land under shifting cultivation is 23,000 hectares i.e. about 20.71% of the total area of the State.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for a proper understanding of the intensity of such cultivation the area under shifting cultivation, total population dependant on it and, also the percentage of total population dependant on shifting cultivation to total population in different States of North-East India are given below.<sup>5</sup>

States	Area under Shifting cultivation (in hectares)	Total Population dependant on Shifting cultivation (in 000's)	Percentage of total population dependant on shifting cultivation (1971) to total population of respective States.
Arunanchal Pradesh.	70,300	270	57.69
Mizoram	60,000	260	80.74
Meghalaya	76,000	350	34.58
Manipur	50,000	300	27.95
Nagaland	83,000	Not available	Not available
Tripura	17,000	100	6.42
Only North Cachar & Mikir Hills Districts of Assam	70,000	403	0.48

From the above discussion and also from the above table it is clear that shifting cultivation plays a vital role not only in the economy of Tripura but also in other States of the Indian Union

and as such it is an all-India problem. The details of which shall be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

The next relevant question arises before us, who are the Jhumias of Tripura? In fact, in Tripura, all the tribes are commonly called 'Jhumias', because they mainly depend on jhum cultivation for their livelihood. Not only that, the socio-cultural life-pattern of the tribal communities is woven in such a way that it corresponds to this practice of cultivation. It is interesting to note that their social as well as religious pursuits and calculation of times centre round the operations of shifting cultivation. As for instance, birth-day ceremony, marriage-settlement or even construction of houses coincide with the timing of 'jhum' cultivation. Not only that, all the states of jhuming operations are celebrated with songs and dances along with socio-religious rites to ensure good harvest. Thus if we say jhum-cultivation is a way of their life. perhaps, it will not be an exaggeration to the least.

Now, as to the question of ethnic affiliation of the jhumias of Tripura, if we take into account the physical characters and the cephalic and nasal indices together, it would appear that the jhumias of Tripura are affiliated to the Mongoloid racial stock of Tribe to-Burman family. Generally, the Mongoloid race is characterised by scanty hair growth on face and body, flat face with prominent cheekbones, arrested development of nasal bones and epicanthic fold. Keane (1920) observes that all the tribes of North-eastern India belong to the Mongoloid stock with such characters as black hair, absence of facial hair, and normally brachy cephalic head.<sup>6</sup> It has also been observed by Guha that the Mongoloids of the Brahmaputra Valley are primarily dolicho-cephalic and there might have been waves of the Mongoloid immigration from Burma into Assam and all these waves belong to dolicho and brachy groups. The Mongoloid race movements continued South-westwards from Burma and from there they might have penetrated into Tripura and got mixed up with other peoples.<sup>7</sup>

Scholars are also of the opinion that the Original homeland of the Tibeto-Burmese family to which jhumias of Tripura belong is

the south-west of China, near the headwaters of the Yangtze Kiang and the Hoangho. It is believed that from this place, the Tibeto- Burman speakers moved downwards in different waves and in subsequent times spread over Burma, Assam and North-eastern Bengal. This contention supports the observations of Grierson (1927) who holds the opinion that the Tibeto-Burmans migrated from their original seat on the upper courses of the Yangtze and Hoangho towards the head-waters of the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin, and then some followed the upper course of the Brahmaputra, the Sanpo, north of the Himalayas and Tibet.<sup>8</sup> A few of these crossed the watershed and occupied the hills on the southern side of the Himalayan range right along in the east to the Punjab in the West. At the Assam end they met and mingled with others of the same family who had wandered along the Lower Brahmaputra through the Assam Valley. Towards the great bend of the river, near the present town of Dhubri, the last wave moved to the South and occupied first the Garo Hills and then moved to the Hills of Tripura.<sup>9</sup>

It is assumed that the movement started long before 1000 B.C.  
<sup>10</sup> The route taken by the first wave into India is not known; whether it was from Tibet and thence southwards by crossing the Himalayas or whether it was from East Assam along the Dihang, the Sadi, the Dibang and the Luhil rivers and down the Brahmaputra in Assam. The Himalayan Group of the Indo-Mongoloids were probably the first to be established in India and settled in Nepal and then moved as far west as Garhwal and Kumaon, and further to the West, but they have remained largely in a very primitive Stage. <sup>11</sup> After the Himalayan Group of the Indo-Mongoloids, the Tibetan people whose national name Bod has been Indianised as Bhota penetrated into Sikkim and Bhutan. In the next phase, the Bodos, the Nagas and the Kuki-Chins crossed the Himalayas and wandered along the lower Brahmaputra through the Assam Valley. Judging from wide range of extension of their language, the Bodos appear to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra Valley and extended West into the North Bengal and South of Garo Hills. From Noagong District of Assam, they spread over Cachar and Sylhet and further to the south to Tripura, and from Tripura they spread over Comilla and

possibly also Noakhali district of Bangladesh.<sup>12</sup> Two other groups, viz., the Nagas and the Kuki-Chins are important branches of the Assam Indo-Mongoloids. The Nagas are in occupation of the Naga Hills area to the East of Assam and are also found in the State of Manipur. But the Kuki-Chins appear to have settled in fairly ancient times in Manipur and the Lushai Hills as well as in Chittagong Hill tracts. From Lushai Hills and Manipur they came in large numbers to Tripura State where they formed an important section of its people. It is important to note that these Indo-Mongoloids are known to the Assamese and Bengalees as Kukis, and to the Burmese as Chins (Written Khyin), and the appellation Kuki-Chin has been adopted as a composite name for them.<sup>13</sup>

Barkataki (1969) however, observes that the movement of the Mongoloid population from the North to India had taken place by about 2000 B.C. through Assam, and these people along with others who migrated from northern Burma formed the bulk of the population of Assam. There were apparently waves after waves of this migration and the invaders belonged to the Indo-Chinese linguistic family, of which the two most important sub-families are the ' Mon-Khmer' and the Tibeto-Burman. The third, Siamese-Chinese, includes Shan which was spoken by the Ahoms, the last of these invaders. The Mon-Khmer speakers appear to have come earlier than the others. They are apparently driven by subsequent Tibeto-Burman hordes into the Khasi hills. This is only part of Meghalaya in which this sub-family now exists. The Tibeto-Burman sub-family includes three groups, viz., Naga, Kuki-Chin and Bodo. The Naga and Kuki speakers were driven out to the hills and thus Bodo became dominant in the region.<sup>14</sup>

On the basis of above analysis it may perhaps be inferred that the Jhumias of Tripura are affiliated to the Tibeto-Burman family of the Mongoloid ethnic stock and that they are closely linked up with many other tribes of North-eastern India from where they moved to their present habitats.

The next significant point that naturally arises before us, as to the causes of migration of the different tribes otherwise known as Jhumias to Tripura. It seems more probable that due to inter tribal conflicts between the tribal communities of Assam, some were forced to move into Tripura.

Causes of  
migration

Besides this, it may also be noted that the land of the State of Tripura was also a source of allurements for the food-gathering activities as settlements. Naturally, several groups of the tibeto-Burman family like the Tipras, Jamatias, Chakmas, Reangs, Kukis or Halams etc. migrated to this land in search of jhum fields and also for settlement. This is evident from the observation of Webster, "That the Tipras first settled in the plains of Sylhet and in the northern portion of the hills of Tripura about 1500 years ago and subsequently they were followed by other tribes of Tibeto-Burman group of north-eastern India."<sup>15</sup> Again, the general custom prevalent amongst the tribal population is that the descendants of the chiefs move from place to place for exploring the possibilities of potential jhum-land. This factor is also largely responsible for the migration of the tribal population in Tripura.

From the above discussions, it is abundantly clear that the jhumias of Tripura do not form an isolated group, on the other hand, they are closely akin to many other Tribes of north-eastern India like the Bodos, Lushais, Kukis etc. and that they migrated into Tripura in several waves from their original homeland in South-east China. They first settled in Assam and thence migrated towards Tripura.

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## THREE

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### **THE TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC PATTERN**

The Jhumias are, by traditio , forest dwellers. The surroundings in which they live have conditioned their life-patterns in such a way that they have not yet been able to come out of the fetters of primitive economy which primarily consists of food gathering, food producing, animal domestication, cottage industry etc. As a natural process, the food-gathering activities of the jhumias is supplement by the primitive method of agriculture known as shifting cultivation or jhum cultivation. A perusal of their economic pattern also reveals that they are economically self-contained and self-sufficient. The jhumias make their own articles of daily use without any help from available extraneopus sources. This, naturally implies that they make or produce their own requirements and this engages them largely to cottage inustries. To-day, however, it is very difficult to live in economic isolation and jhumias also are not exception to that. Money economy has considerably changed the nature and character of the economic life-patterns of the jhumias who also have become prone to outside cultural influences. This would be evident from the survey of the economic activities of the jhumias under such headings as: food-gathering, food production, handicrafts, textile-weaving, exchange and tradings.

#### **1. Food-gathering activities**

Food-gathering activities of the jhumias mainly consists of collection of fruits, roots, tubers, leaves, etc. from the nearby hillocks or jungles, hunting animals and birds in the hills and forests and fishing in

Food collection

the neighbouring revulets. It may be noted that the collection of fruits, roots, tubers or leaves etc is mainly done by womenfolk of the society, but in case, roots lie too deep into the soil, they may take the help of malefolk. Of course, it is not uncommon that sometimes the adult males and boys extend their help and co-operation in food gathering activities of the women.

Strenuous activities like plucking fruits from trees or collecting honey from hives are done by men and boys only. It is significant to note that the food-gathering patterns of the jhumias of Tripura are mostly common to all other tribes of North-east India like the Sema-Nagas, Angami Nagas, Kuki, Lushai, Lakhers, Purums and analogous food gathering activities are also to be found amongst Lamets of South-East Asia.<sup>1</sup>

The collection of honey by the jhumias is also very interesting. This is done in the months of June and July. When a bee-hive is detected on a tree, several men mostly young-boys go to remove it. One who is expert in climbing, climbs up the tree and drives away the bees with the help of a burning torch made of dry bamboo and leaves. Others on the ground also help in driving out the bees by burning torches and when the hive is completely free from the bees, the climber removes the hive by a bamboo sliver or a takal (iron chopper) and places the pieces in a container which is mostly a loin cloth. The hive is then distributed equally among the members of the honey gathering party.

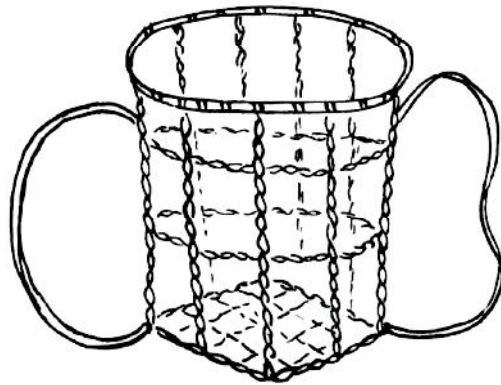
Other wild products which are collected by the jhumias are: raichuk (soft top of cane), Samasta (*Ceatella asiatica*), thalik balang (wild banana, *Musa rosea*), ganga (wild root), maitu (arum), muia (bamboo sapling), banskurul (bamboo shoots) etc. It is important to note that the roots and tubers are collected during the winter season, when there is a scarcity of food grains. Besides these roots and tubers, the jhumias collect some medicinal plants which are mostly known as folk-medicine. Amongst them worth mentioning are: *Abroma angusta*, *Aegle plants marmeloes*, *Bacopa monneleria*, *Terminalia arjuna*, *Mucuna prurita*, *T.Chebula*, *Zingiber officinales*, *Piper niagrunm*, *Ipomia aquatica*, *Ozalis cor-*

hiculata etc. It is interesting to note that even to-day, the Jhumias do not bother for the treatment of any disease. They have a great belief and reliance on their folk medicine.

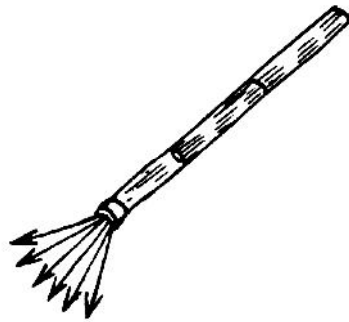
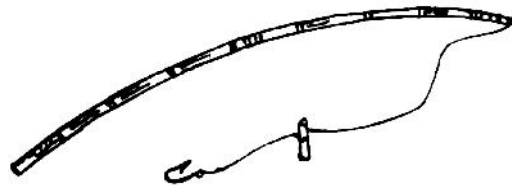
The next important food-gathering activity of the Jhumias is hunting of birds and animals. Almost all animals except certain species like tiger, monkey, crow etc. are hunted for food. Of course, the Jhumias do not always hunt birds or animals for food-gathering purpose but for protecting the jhum crops against them. It is important to note in this context that a certain section of the Jhumias, viz., the Kaipengs do not usually kill a tiger. They consider that they themselves are the descendants of tiger.<sup>2</sup> Even if, they hear that a tiger is killed, they observe mourning for a period of three days and do not partake anything other than nera-mishi-chanai (vegetarian food) during this period. They also cry aloud for the killed tiger. It is thus evident that doubtlessly the Kaipengs had tiger as their totem, and as such, they consider themselves as its descendants. That is why a distinct taboo on killing or eating the tiger persists among them even to-day.

AS a matter of fact, hunting activity is closely associated with the life-pattern of the Jhumias. The Jhumias start practising it from child-hood. The elders teach and impart training to the youngsters regarding the use of weapons and traps during the hunting operation. The youngsters never miss an opportunity of joining any hunting expedition. The Jhumias hunt both individually and collectively. Women and girls are not, however, permitted to participate in any hunting operation. Only the adults and the grown up boys engage themselves in hunting expedition. Generally, small games like deer, boars, hare, etc. are hunted by an individual Jhumia. In the case of hunting any big animals, the Jhumias organise themselves into a hunting party. To ensure success, the Jhumias, before undertaking the operation perform also some magical rites with the purpose of pleasing the Lagri deity (Goddess of fortune). The Jhumias strongly believe that if Lagri is pleased, they will have nothing to fear and they would be able to entrap or kill wild animals very easily.

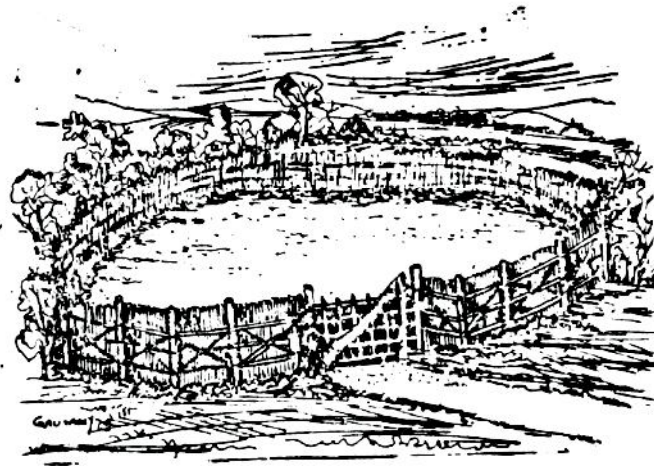
Another important activity of the Jhumias is fishing which prevails so widely among all sections of the people that it may well



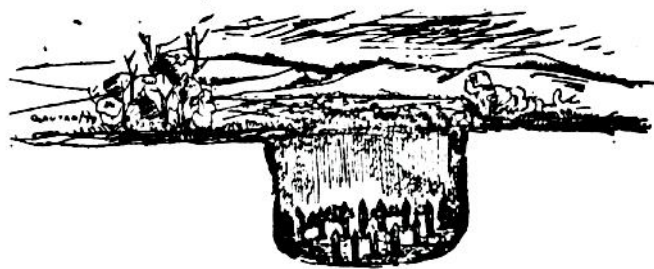
Traditional basket and implements



Traditional basket and implements



(a) Mang khang



(b) Oarai

Traps for animals

Fishing be taken for all practical purposes as a primitive method of gathering food. This is not restricted only among the males as in hunting, and unlike hunting, fishing operation is open to both sexes. Both males and females go out in groups for fishing throughout the year, especially during the rainy season when the rivers overflow and marshy areas become filled with water. The presence of lungas (marshy places) and Chheras (streams) in and around the village encourages the Jhumias to pursue fishing activities and very often they postpone Jhuming -in favour of fishing. Sometimes, almost all the villagers engage themselves in fishing. This is a sort of communal fishing, i.e., fishing operation being conducted by the whole community. In such a communal fishing operation, the gains are equally divided amongst the participants.

## II. Food Production

Although the Jhumias are mainly concerned with the food-gathering activities and their economy centres round it, yet they are not averse to the primitive type of producing food articles by jhum- cultivation, yields of which are not again sufficient enough for their subsistence. Naturally so, the Jhumias are mostly dependent on food-gathering which is supplemented by jhum-yielding crops. It is important to note that the Jhumias produce food crops by an incipient type of agriculture on the slopes of hills and jungles, which is a very common primitive practice of food-production in North-eastern India, South-East Asia and also in some other parts of India and outside (Map No.3). This kind of food-production is called by the primitive peoples of North-eastern India and also of Tripura by the name Jhum which means shifting cultivation, i.e., the area under cultivation is shifted from one selected field to another, the primary reason being the loss of fertility after at least two seasons' productions.

For a proper understanding of the jhum cultivation, it is necessary to give a brief account of the different stages of jhum-production as pursued by the Jhumias of Tripura. This may be noted as follows : (i) Selection of the jhum-field and its associated rituals; (ii) Tools used in jhuming operations; (iii) Preparation of the field; (iv) Digging of holes and sowing of seeds; (v) Sprouting

and weeding; (vi) Provision for protection of jhum-field; (vii) Crop-harvesting and (viii) Threshing and storing.

It is important to note that while making the selection of a jhum-field, the Jhumias always take into account such factors like a vergin site bearing bamboos and bushes on the hill slopes and

secondly the selected jhum-field must be in the vicinity of the dwelling place for the purpose of keeping constant watch over the field and making all sorts of provision

for the protection of the crops. Of course, the liberty of selecting jhum-field has been presently very much restricted by the Forest Department which actually allots plots of lands to the individual Jhumia families for Jhum-cultivation.

The selection of the jhum-land is completed by the Jhumias during the months of November and December. But the final selection of the land for jhum-operation is, however, closely associated with some magico-religious beliefs and practices. The Jhumias believe in the existence of the Goddess of the jhum deity, also known as Bura-Devta is worshipped at the very site which has been preliminarily selected for jhum-cultivation. It is a very simple kind of worship. First of all, a small area of the selected field is cleared and made clear. Then, three short bamboo pieces are planted in the ground. Generally, the bamboo pieces are planted in a horizontal row at a distance of 12" inches from one another. These bamboo pieces are supposed to represent the Goddess of the jhum-field. In the next stage, the owner of the jhum-field, keep in his hand splitted two halves of a bamboo piece. He then drops down two halves of the bamboo pieces with the chanting of the following spells :

" Hima louming hai pui ah  
 Shi par ar jir rang nung  
 Rikhu thang Khu akong rang nung  
 Tanga mao jit te rel jun woa  
 Ar dai nabul, sing lai a-detai  
 Chong Khel rilmok takhel rilmok  
 Ni Sug Khaowar ah Omong  
 Chandi Sakhi ah Omong  
 Satya, Satya, tin Satya Khatka  
 Khupate Khatka thalate deo"

(Translation : I shall cultivate this plot of land. It is really a wonderful place. Let there be a plenty of crops. Oh bamboo ! Let your head be seen by the birds, the Moon and the Sun and the root penetrate deep into the soil. Please make correct forecast in the presence of the Moon, the Sun and the Chandi).

Now, if one half of the bamboo split falls on the ground obversely and the other half reversely, the site is considered to be a suitable one for jhuming operation. But if both halves of the bamboo pieces fall on the ground obversely or reversely, the site would be considered unsuitable. This practice of throwing bamboo pieces is to be continued thrice, and if the auspicious signs as indicated above are not obtained, the site is abandoned and a new selection of another field is made. It may be noted that this type of ritual practice is also common to many other tribes of North-eastern India.

As regards tools and implements it may be mentioned here that previously the only tools used for jhum-cultivation were : the digging stick and a chopper.

By the digging stick holes are dug out in the jhum-field for sowing seeds, and the chopper is used primarily for cutting plants bushes etc. But now-a-days, the Jhumias rarely use any digging stick, and even the chopper used by them is made of iron which is locally called takal. Other iron tools used in jhum-cultivation consists of Cekhras (Sikles). Besides these cutting and digging tools baskets made of bamboos and canes are also used for carrying and holding seeds to be sown.

For the preparation of jhum-field the Jhumias, first of all, clear the field by cutting down all plants and bushes which are left in the field to be sundried for several days, not less than twenty-five days to thirty days. This practice, however requires to be followed only in the case of a new jhum-field to be cultivated. For sowing seeds second time in the same field, there is hardly any need for any clearance on such a wide scale. Whatever may be the case, when it is found plants and shrubs are fully dried, fire is set for burning for four to five days, and two to three days are required for cooling down. Burnt ashes are con-

sidered to be good manure for the fertilization of the soil which would promote bumper production. After cooling down, the burnt ashes are then evenly distributed over the entire field of operation and levelled up. This operation is to be completed by the month of Falguna i.e., February-March.

The next stage is meant for digging and sowing. It is only after the first rains that preparations are to be made for sowing seeds,

Digging and sowing and the day for sowing is to be fixed in accordance with the Omens or dreams of the head of the family. If he dreams clear water, fish, paddy or cooked rice then it is

considered auspicious for sowing operation, and the jhum field thus prepared is also considered to be a potential one. On the other hand, if the head of the family dreams an animal killed by a tiger or a broken takal or a dying domestic animal, pigs or fowls being stolen, etc., these are considered inauspicious indications for the same, and accordingly, another day is fixed for sowing operation. The Jhumias pursue two methods of sowing seeds, viz., (i) broadcasting and (ii) sowing in dug out. As regards the first method, it may be stated that seeds are held in a bamboo-basket called japa by the left hand, and seeds are taken out of it, by the left hand, and seeds are taken out of it, by the right hand and broadcasted by walking up and down the entire jhum-field. After this broadcasting of seeds, the Jhumias would expect a few showers which would help in covering seeds thus sown with soil and also in sprouting. If there be no rainfall tendershoots would wither away and thus sprouting and growth of plants by broadcasting seeds is solely dependent on rainfalls.

The second method relates to the digging of holes in horizontal rows up and down the field and placing seeds these holes and finally covering holes by the dugout loose earth. Previously, these holes used to be dug out by the latha or digging stick but now-a-days, takal or the iron chopper is commonly used for digging holes in the jhum-field. These holes are dug in rows at an approximate depth of 3" at a distance of 18" inches from one another in horizontal rows beginning from the top of the field and ending at its bottom. A still more common practice with the Jhumias of to-day, is to dig holes with the dao or a kind of iron chopper which is an all purpose cutting tools used so commonly by the plains



The Dandi (Watch cabin) in a jhum field

people. The usual practice is that holes are dug and seeds are placed inside the dugouts which are thence covered with the dugout loose earth. While sowing seeds, the basket commonly known as japa, containing the same is held on the left waist, and the digging and sowing are done by the right hand. It is to be borne in mind that for the participation in this sowing operation, there is no taboo on women, and as such both men and women are to be found merrily engaged in sowing operation in the jhum-field.

It has been found from common experience that germination or sprouting requires at least fifteen days or so from the date of sowing. Thick sprouting and weeds growing are not at all congenial or rather harmful to the healthy growth of plants.

Accordingly, weeding is a must for the healthy growth of plants which can alone yield bumper crops. Weeding is primarily done

with hand, i.e., weeds and undesirable sprouts are simply uprooted and the base of each plant is cleared from its full growth.

**Sprouting and weeding** Very often the iron chopper or takkal is used for the purpose of weeding. Among the jhumias, weeding is a primary concern of the women and children who are engaged in this operation often for the whole day at a stretch. This weeding operation is continued thrice at an interval of one month or so, normally in the months of June, July and August. But the number of operations to be undertaken depends largely on the growth of weeds or wild or unwanted growth of any other plants. After completion of the weeding operation, plants are allowed to grow and bear fruits.

When plants start bearing fruits, there is the necessity of affording all sorts of protection to the jhum-fields against the onrush of animals and birds. When fruits

**Jhum-protection** become mature, the jhum-field falls a prey to all animals and birds. Accordingly, the Jhumias adopt all sorts of protective or

defensive measures in respect of their jhum-fields. The most important protective measures undertaken by the Jhumias is to keep a constant watch over the jhum-fields and to drive out all animals and birds approaching the fields. For this, they build a watch-house either in the centre or at one side or at the corner of the jhum-field. Such a watch-house is also called Dandi, measur-

ing about 9' x 6'. It has a do-chala type of thatched roof and a platform without any fencing walls. Four bamboo poles are planted vertically at a height of 10' feet and four such poles are tied horizontally to these vertical posts and then again bamboo poles are placed crosswise upon this horizontally tied up bamboo poles to form a platform. Upon this platform is raised and thatched roof. For climbing up the high watch-house, the Jhumias use bamboo poles placed in a slanting position from one side of the house to the ground. The watch-man stay in watch-house and keeps watch over the jhum-field. It is interesting to note that the watchman drives our birds and animals from the jhum-field by making all sorts of sound like lour cries, hand clapping etc.

Sometimes, watch-dogs are set out for the same, and fire is also set to drive them out. Besides, another method is adopted for making a peculiar sound for driving out birds and animals. For this, bamboo poles with the upper portion of each splitted into four parts are vertically planted in the field, and a long rope is tied to all these splitted parts. When the watch-man pulls the rope, a peculiar sound is produced by the clapping of the bamboo poles. Frightening sounds thus produced drive away birds and animals from the jhum-fields.

Not only that, traps are also commonly used for catching animals approaching the jhum-field. One popular trap for this purpose in Man Khang which is set near a fence. A long and heavy log is placed in a slanting position, one end of which rests on the ground, and the other end is placed horizontally on another bar acting as a balancing rod. A board of bamboo poles and splits are placed below the long and heavy log and the balance rod serves as the connecting media between the log and the tread-board. If a wild animal steps into the tread-board, the board presses the horizontal bar which releases the log causing its fall, and as a result, the animal becomes entrapped.

All these are a few means and methods by which the Jhumias protect their jhum-field against animals and birds. It goes without saying that the methods of protecting jhum-fields described above are not peculiar to the Jhumias of Tripura, but the other Jhumias like Lushais, Kukis, Lakhers, Purumss of North-eastern India also pursue analogous techniques for protecting their jhum-fields.

The Jhumias produce varieties of vegetables and paddy including sesamum, jute and cotton etc. Sowing of seeds, growth of aforesaid plants and their yielding of fruits are all primarily seasonal.

Accordingly, jhuming activities continue for a long period, and the harvesting operation also extends over different months of the year, more particularly from June to October. Traditionally, a Jhumia harvester used to carry a long conical shaped basket called Langa on his back kept hanging by fastening it with a string of fibre around the head. The usual practice was simply to break ears and put them in the langa. Now-a-days, of course, the Jhumias have acquired the use of iron sickle called cekhra from the plains people and with the aid of the sickle, the Jhumias now cut each plant at its base. Fruits from the yields are subsequently separated from ears by threshing.

Jhum-harvesting is a communal affair, and generally all members of the family aided by the other villagers of the community participate in harvesting operations. It has been already stated that jhum-harvesting covers a period from June to October, and various yields are harvested in different months. As for instance, thaichumu (cucumis), Mamphal (melon), Sasha (cucumber), magdam (maize) etc. are harvested during the month of June only but maisinga (Sugarcane), Khakloo (white gourd), chalkumra (pumpkin) etc. are harvested in the month of July. Again, mai (paddy), chiping (Sesamum) despia (hibiscus), mesta (jute) khool (cotton) etc. are harvested during the period from August to October.

Harvested yields are brought home and kept in heaps for threshing. The threshing operation is restricted primarily to the members of the family concerned. The jhumias pursue different methods of threshing. The simplest method is called 'treading', i.e., treading over ears for separating or detaching crops from the plants. Ears are spread over the open courtyard, and both men and women continue treading over them till corns are separated from ears. Another method is known as 'beating', i.e., corns are separated from ears by beating with a wooden or bamboo rod. Both these methods are

very primitive practices which are followed even to-day by the jhumias of different parts of the North-east India.

When separation of corns from ears is over, the Jhumias keep themselves busy in winnowing operation. The traditional method

of winnowing grains is by sprinkling them in the air in the direction of wind blowing.

Winnowing

This would result in falling down of solid grains on the ground separately because

chaffs and other unwanted light contents are blown away by wind.

Besides this natural method of winnowing, an artificial practice has been also taken recourse to. This relates to the use of a winnowing fan which is even now a common practice amongst all rural people. These two methods of cleaning grains from chaffs may thus be described as winnowing and fanning. After clearing away all unwanted contents, grains are spread over the courtyard either on the ground itself or on a mat for drying in the sun. This is essential for the purpose of storing grains in a granary, called mai-nok. Generally, it is built at a corner of the courtyard and at a little distance from the place of cooking, so that it may not catch fire.

### III. Handicrafts

It is evident from the discussion of the food-gathering and food producing activities of the Jhumias that their economy is self-

sufficient and self-contained and this is again revealed in other spheres of

Food-

gathering tools

economic pursuits like general handicrafts and making of tools and weapons which

are essential requisites for their very existence. In the field of

handicrafts as well, the Jhumias do not make anything in excess

of their needs. They generally make an article only to replace the

old or unsuitable one. Further, because of the self-contained

economic pattern prevailing amongst the Jhumias, each and

every member of a family is also acquainted and well-skilled in all

sorts of craft-making which are essentially required by the

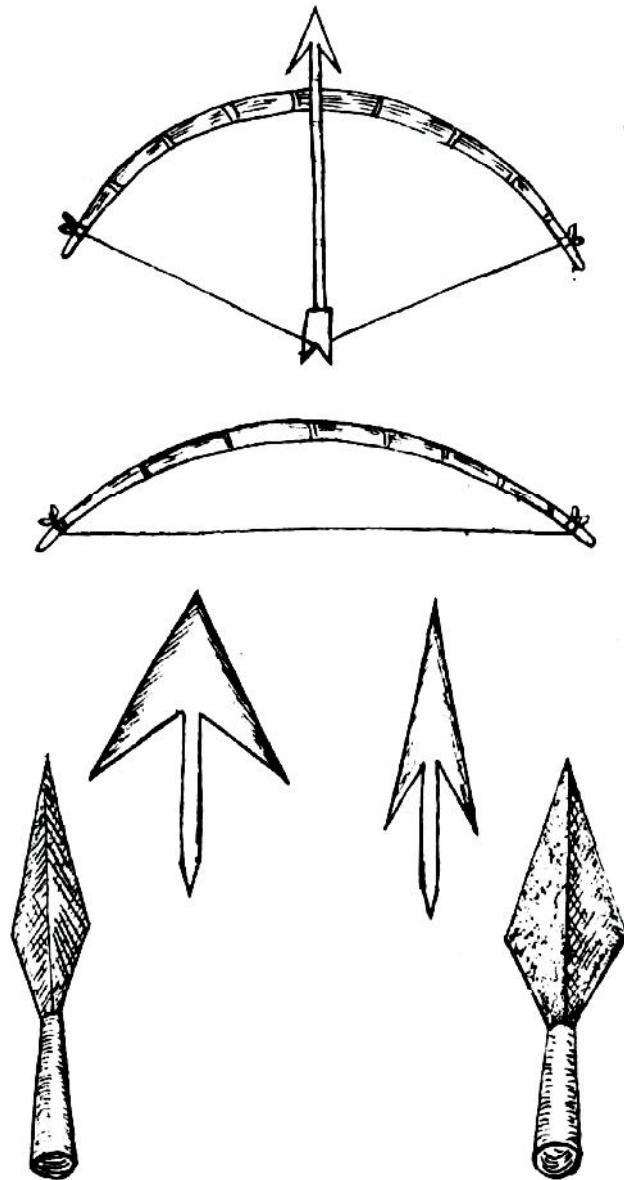
Jhumias. In other words, the Jhumias do not purchase any tools

or any other essential articles from any extraneous agencies.

As regards traditional tools, first of all, we may mention the

tools and other accessories made and used by the Jhumias for

their food-gathering pursuits. The most important tool used by



Hunting tools

the Jhumias for gathering roots and herbs from the jungles is of course, the digging stick (Khura Latha). A digging stick is made out of a particular species of solid bamboo bearing uniform girth. This bamboo species is called barak (*bambusa balcooa* Roxb). For making a digging stock, a straight and matured bamboo is to be selected. Generally, the length of a digging stick ranges from 50 cm. to 60 cm. with a diameter of about 7 cm., the lower end of which is made sharply pointed in order to make the digging operation more effective. With the help of this digging stick the Jhumias dig all kinds of roots, herbs, etc., from the jungles for their consumption. Again, to carry home all gatherings made in the forest, the Jhumias use a type of a carrier or a sort of basket, with the aid of which the Jhumias carry all sorts of articles. This kind of basket is roughly oval at its opening or mouth and it gradually narrows down to the base which is flat and circular. This kind of basket is made of thin bamboo splits and the technique employed is a simple twilling. The basket is carried in a hanging position from the shoulder under the arm-pit and held by a strap. It is no doubt an all purpose carrier basket.

Tools or weapons used by the Jhumias are indeed very few and simple. Only two kinds of tools are made and used by the Jhumias for hunting purpose : (i) Bow and arrow and (ii) Spear. The bow is made from a single piece of a bamboo sliver. Its stave is about one and half meter in length and the middle portion is oval in cross section. The arrow shaft is made of the same kind of a bamboo as the bow-stave. The shaft itself is rounded and polished. Sometimes, the arrow head is poisoned by a compound made from a fluid derived from putrefacted heads of the snake, centipode, bee or wasp or any other dead animal kept in an earthen pot. The arrow head is smeared with this poisonous fluid, and it is believed that such a poisoned arrow is most effective even in killing a large animal. The Jhumias are very expert in shooting arrows with the help of their bows, and this is their only effective weapon for killing birds and animals. Besides the bow and arrow, the Jhumias are also accustomed to using spear which is consisted of three parts : head, shaft and butt. The head of a spear has again three constituent parts like socket for the insertion of the shaft, shank and blade. The total lengths of

each of these parts are : head - 45 cm, blade 25 cm. and shank - 8 cm. The socket itself is about 12 cm in length, and the maximum breadth of the head is 9 cm., i.e. at the meeting of the shank with the blade. The shaft is again one and a quarter metre in length being rounded in cross section with a diameter of 7 cm. This implement is made from a particular species of bamboo called muli (*melocanna bamboosoides trin*) which is solid and maintains uniformity in girth.

As regards tools for food-producing activities, it may be stated that the traditional tools required for food-production are also simple and very few in number. The primary tools required for food-production activity consists of the cutting tool, digging stick, basket or khara and a kind of winnowing fan. These simple tools are sufficient enough for successful jhuming operation for which there is hardly any need for any other complicated contrivances. When the crops in the field ripen harvesting operation starts. Generally the Jhumias tear the ears containing grains. Sometimes, Chapraga is used for separating grains from ears of the plants. This particular tools is made of a branch of a tree with three smaller branches diverging from one place. These smaller branches are brought to the same line, and their upper parts are slightly curved by pressure. The user catches hold of the tool at the lower end and strikes paddy ears spread out on a mat or on courtyard itself. Besides, harvesting and threshing contrivances, the Jhumias are also accustomed to the use of husking-lever or dhenki which is very commonly used in the plains for husking grains. They are also in the habit of using mortar and pestle for husking, but now they prefer dhenki. It is important to note that the Jhumias are also expert craftsmen and as such, they make their own tools and articles to be used for food-gathering, food-producing and household purposes.

#### IV. Weaving

The art of weaving amongst the Jhumias is absolutely a family concern and naturally so, the textile requirements of the members of each family are to be woven by the members of the family only. It is important to note that the art of weaving amongst the Jhumias is a primary concern of the womenfolk. In fact, there is a taboo on man's participations. But in regard to the cultivation of cotton,

carding of cotton flowers, spinning, yarning, dyeing, etc., men always help the women. Again, the making of the loom out of bamboo and wooden pieces is however, the avocation of men only. It is only the weaving operation which is confined to women-folk. Some Jhumias believe that if men are engaged in weaving, the entire village may be visited by natural calamities or that the members of the family may suffer from all kinds of adversaries including failures in hunting operation or men may be killed by animals. of course, a pragmatic explanation may be that men are always engaged in out-door activities, and as such, they have little time to devote themselves completely to weaving which is a long-drawn and time-consuming process. On the otherhand, the womenfolk are primarily concerned with the domestic works and accordingly, they can afford to have sufficient time at their disposal to engage themselves in all sorts of operation relating to weaving. That is why each and every family has a loom of its own for textile weaving.

The raw material used for textile weaving is, of course, cotton. Every family procures cotton flowers from its own plantation in the jhum-field. Cotton seeds are generally sown in the month of Vaishakha (April-May), and its flowers are plucked in the month of Paush (December-January). Cotton flowers and cleaning  
Then follows the collection of cotton flowers which are then spread over the ground in the courtyard for drying in the sun and these flowers are kept for three or four days in the courtyard for the same. When flowers are fully dried in the sun, operation begins for separating seeds from flowers.

The next stage is to clean cotton-flowers in a wooden gin with two rollers geared to revolve in opposite directions. Cotton flowers pass through the roller and seeds being unable to pass through it are left behind. Spinning wheel  
After the separation of seeds, cotton flowers are tested with a bamboo bow to make them soft and fluffy. After cleaning, a quantity of cotton is rolled down in a cylindrical stick of about 12 cm. long and 1.5 to 2 cm. in diameter. These rolls of cotton flowers are then spun on a spinning wheel which consists of three parts, viz., base, wheel itself and spindle. The base of the wheel is generally made of two

wooden pieces being rectangular in cross-section and dove-tailed at right angles near about the end of two other wooden pieces, heavier but shorter in length. At one end of the base two vertical wooden posts are inserted at one of the heavier pieces which are connected towards the top by a loose-fitted horizontal wooden bar being circular in cross section. Both ends of this horizontal bar protrudes beyond the vertical posts, one of them being larger than the other. To this end the crank for moving the wheel is attached and the wheel rotates on the horizontal bar. The wheel and the spindle which is made of an iron bar being circular in cross-section and pointed with one of its end are linked up by a cord passed around it. The wheel is moved with the help of the crank which is held by the right hand. Thread is tied to the pointed end of the spindle and along with its movement the operation touches lightly the free end of the thread with one end of the sausage of cotton held by the left hand. At once the thread catches the loose fibres of the sausage and the left hand moves upwards and as a result, the yarning is done, which is then wound round the spindle and the process is continued till the spindle is fully loaded with yarn. Afterwards yarn is removed to a very simple tools made of bamboo or wood. This is followed by the next stage to dyeing. Colours generally used are : red, chocolate-brown, black, dark-blue and green etc. All these colours are produced from locally available floral and soft stone specimens. It is only after dyeing work, the jhumia women engage themselves in weaving clothes by a kind of loom locally called ri-thanthi. This is a tension loom having the

Loom operation                      following parts : (i) two bamboo poles of 5' in height; (ii) two horizontal bamboo beams about 3' or 4' long; (iii) breast-rod which rests across the weaver's knees; (iv) a backstrap or a belt made of hide which is tied at each end of the breast-rod and passed behind the back of the weaver; (v) a rounded bamboo-split to which yarns are rolled; (vi) a shuttle which is a short bamboo-pipe into which the spool of yarn is placed; (vii) heddle of bamboo; (viii) a flat wooden plunk with pointed ends measuring 30" x 3" and (ix) lease-rod. The weaver sitting behind the breast-rod fastens each end of the two horizontal bamboo beams to a plaited cane-band. Then the loom operation starts. It may be noted that the breadth of a piece of cloth made

from such a loom varies from 18" to 30" and its length is about 5' or 6'. Various colours are however introduced into the wrap by laying out threads of different colours, but the woof is mostly of a single colour, either white or black. It has been already stated that the Jhumias weave their clothings for their own consumption and not for any commercial purposes. Accordingly, each family meets the demands of its members in respect of clothings from the productions made by its own womenfolk.

#### **V. Exchange and Trading**

It has been already stated that the Jhumia economy is self-sufficient and self-contained and each Jhumia family is an economic unit with its own jhum-productions, arts and crafts. It is interesting to note that previously the Jhumia was characterised by more communal in nature and character. When they were absolutely dependent on food-gathering and incipient food-producing economy, communal activities and endeavours in all matters relating to their means of subsistence were the usual norm. But it is only in the subsequent period that the individual Jhumia family unit emerged resulting in the transformation of the communal economy to family economy. Such an individual Jhumia family-economy was also self-contained and self sufficient. It is again important to note that this individual family economic unit was not or even to-day is not completely divorced from the larger communal economy. In respect of both, communal and individual family economy, there has been little scope for any regular trading or exchange. In the case of primary needs, a Jhumia family would necessarily seek help or assistance in all matters either from other individual Jhumia-families or from the community and such a help or assistance used to be always given and is being extended even to-day. In fact, the communal character of the Jhumia economy is manifested in all aspects of their life and activities.

In course of time, again, economic developments have taken place to an extent of exchanging articles to meet the family needs. In otherwords, a sort of barter system developed amongst the Jhumias. If a jhumia-family was in need of a particular item, he could exchange another item at his disposal for the same. This barter system has been in practice amongst the Jhumias for a long time past. This is of course, a very incipient kind of trading or

exchange of articles by barter and this practice is being continued even to-day. It has been noticed the wandering hawkers from the plains move about from door to door in the Jhumia villages, more particularly during the harvesting seasons. The Jhumias are also in the practice of purchasing articles from those hawkers by barter, i.e., giving them in return their own jhum-produce. It may be stated that this kind of barter was a common practice amongst all the jhumia-families of Tripura and also the neighbouring regions of North-east India.

#### VI. Social Organisation

As regards the Social organisation of the Jhumias it may be noted that family is primary socio-economic unit amongst them. A jhumia family normally consists of the husband, wife and minor children. Sometimes, sons and daughters are also adopted and they are also legally and sociologically recognised as full-fledged members of the Jhumia family. Generally there are two types of jhumia family viz., (a) Nokhong-Kosu, i.e., nuclear family and (b) Nokhong-Katar, i.e., extended family. The former comprises husband, wife and unmarried children who live together under the same shelter. But the Nokhong-Katar is a larger family unit consisting of husband, wife, married and unmarried sons and daughters, grandchildren, brothers their wives and children, father or even grandfather etc. In reality, the extended family includes members of three or more generations all living together under the same shelter and living on common gathering of food articles and earnings. Numerical strength of the members of an extended family varies from 8 to 20. To the jhumias, the Nokhong-Katar is ever to-day recognised as the ideal family.

In an extended family, all its members commonly share the house, food articles etc. All socio-economic activities are pursued in close co-operation and hardly any dispute or quarrel occurs. The oldest male member is the supreme patriarchal head of such an extended family. He manages all the family affairs and performs all socio-religious rites and practices on behalf of the family. All members of the family offer unquestioned obedience and loyalty to the head of the family and his authority is maintained in all spheres of the family activities. Absolute authority rests with



A jhumia family

him. But when the head of the family becomes too old to manage the family affairs, the charges of the family is taken over by the next oldest member. On the death of the grand-old father, sometimes his sons separate themselves and establish their respective individual units. But the brothers would generally prefer to live together as long as it is possible for serving their mutual interests.

The jhumia family members are all close kins, i.e. father, brother, wife, sons and daughters, brother's wife, their sons and daughters and so on. As the marriage amongst the jhumias is patrilocal, hardly any sisters or their issues, married daughters and their offsprings are to be found living in such a family. The practice of adoption is not, however, unknown amongst the jhumias. But a son or a daughter is adopted only by the founder of a nuclear family without having any issue.

The jhumia family is patrilocal and monogamous. A jhumia rarely marries a second wife. It is only in the case of the death of the first wife or divorce that a person marries for the second time. Though monogamy is the normal practice, it can hardly be stated with any certainty that polygyny is absolutely unknown to the jhumias. An affluent jhumia may take recourse to Polygyny which is not condemned in the jhumia society.

The jhumias, no doubt, prefer Nokhong-Kataar or extended family as the most favourite one, and in fact, most of the families surveyed have been found to be joint families run on a co-operative basis. It is quite well-known that a joint family is more advantageous for the jhumia people in respect of taking recourse to all sorts of undertaking for which the co-operation of several persons male and female, are required and that such a family can thrive and last only on earnings from the joint ventures in all activities. But in the case of scarcity of agricultural lands and their yields, forest produces, etc. it becomes hardly possible for so many peoples living together. Not only that, even if the problem into account, it seems impossible for so many members to live together under the same shelter.

Besides, disputes or quarrels are quite likely to surface, if so many peoples live together. Accordingly there is a recent growing tendency amongst the jhumias to separate themselves and break into nuclear family units. Further in recent years, the younger



A jhumia housewife

generation prefer to live in individual family units with the purpose of making themselves free from the tutelage of the head or mistress of a joint family. Such tendencies and ideas relating to forming individual family units have been primarily the results of contact with the peoples of the plains. Amongst the jhumias, however, this separatist tendency in family groupings has been disastrous. In such cases of separation, the agricultural fields are also to be partitioned, and fragmentations of agricultural land are not in the least favourable for better agricultural yields. Not only that, separatist tendencies in family matters have deprived the jhumias of their co-operative spirits and ventures. Naturally so, this modern tendency towards the establishment of individual family does not appear to be meaningful in the context of the progress of the jhumia community as a whole. The older generation, however, even, to-day look down and condemn such a tendency. Yet the jhumias living in or near the plains are mostly found grouped in nuclear family units. But in isolated hilly regions, even to-day the Nokhong-Katar is the only prevailing type of family.

The marriage institution of the Jhumias is primarily socio-economic in nature. With the attainment of marriageable age of a boy, the parents make all out efforts to save money from their earnings for hum-juk-dam or bride-price because a bride is always to be purchased. Not only the parents, even a marriageable boy works diligently with all seriousness to prove his worth in respect of his capabilities to support or maintain his wife. The Jhumias have also made provision for the marriage by service. In this type of marriage, the young boy shall have to live in his would be father-in-law's house for a few years varying from 3 to 5 years and pay the bride price by rendering all sorts of service to the family. Secondly, marriage is considered as the only medium for adding new member to a family, and the addition of fresh working hand in a family is no doubt a socioeconomic asset. After marriage, the boy returns to his family with his wife who becomes an additional member of the family rendering help to the mistress and other women members of the family in all socioeconomic activities. Thirdly, marriage amongst the Jhumias offers a new status or recognition to the

wedded boy or girl. It is by marriage that the former is recognised by the elders as an able person capable of doing all family works. The wife similarly acquires a position of honour and dignity amongst the village women. The Jhumias consider most undesirable and beneath dignity for a father to have maidens even after the attainment of marriageable age. Fourthly, the marriage binds together two distinct families by a close relationship. Accordingly, in times of needs, families socially tied together by a marital union always extend active help and co-operation to one another.

The marriage amongst the Jhumias is obligatory and the unmarried young boys and girls are always looked down upon. Naturally so, every marriageable boy and girl taken the earliest opportunity to enter into a marital union to earn social recognition and to become a full-fledged member of the jhumia community.

To enter into a marital union is not an easy task with the Jhumias because their community is strictly endogamous and as such, marriage is restricted within the community itself. No Jhumia is permitted to marry outside the community. Secondly, marriage within the same Gosthi was not formerly permitted. Accordingly, a Jhumia had to find out his mate from another Gosthi other than his own, but within the community. But to-day exogamous character of the Gosthi is hardly maintained by the Jhumias, and a true exogamous group prevalent amongst the Jhumias is now of course, Sandai which is purely a lineage consisting of close kins. Naturally, a Sandai is exogamous and a Jhumia is to find out his mate from another Sandai. Thus, the Jhumias observe so many limitations in respect of marital union. The general practice is that a Jhumia must marry within his community but outside the lineage group.

It is however, important to note that in course of time, the Jhumias have undergone considerable changes in respect of their social behaviour patterns including the organisational aspect of the Jhumia society as well. The Jhumias originally formed as endogamous community comprising a number of exogamous units. Rules of endogamy and exogamy were once strictly followed but with the progressive trends in their cultural contact with other communities and more particularly with the advanced Bengali Peoples of the plains. The Jhumia Social Organisation has broken down to such an extent that even the endogamous and



A jhumia "belle"

exogamous rules so long strictly observed by them, were first set aside under certain circumstances and later on very little regard or adherence to them was shown. This would be evident from the citations of numerous examples relating to inter-tribal marriages and also marriages between the Jhumias and the Hindus of the plains.

Inter-tribal marriages are not, however, confined to any particular tribal communities, e.g., inter-marriages between the Kuki-Jhumia and Halam-Jhumia are not at all uncommon. According to the recent trend the Halam-Jhumias have started inter-marrying with the Tipras, Reangs and other tribal jhumias of Tripura. It has been possible to collect a few instances of such marriages with the purpose of indicating their nature and character. Here mention may be made about the cases of inter-tribal marriages amongst the Jhumias :-

1. Sib Chandra Kaipeng, a Jhumia of Jampui Hills married a Kalai girl of Ampu, Amarpur Sub-division in 1962.

2. Rabindra Deb Barma, a Jhumia of Taidu Bari married a Halam girl Daising Rong, daughter of Rangdong Kaipeng of Taidu Bari, in 1971.

3. Jhumia Lepoi Kuki of Howaibari married a Kaipeng girl, daughter of Wanpuisick Kaipeng of Baramura in 1972.

4. Rajlakshmi, daughter of Roldon Som Kaipeng, a Jhumia of Baramura was given marriage to a Reang Jhumia in 1977.

5. Samarendra Deb, a Bengalee teacher of Dhanlekha married a Halam girl Hang jou siem, daughter of Tirtha Som Kaipeng, a Jhumia of Dhanlekha about a couple of years back.

6. Lal-te-Lushai, a Christian Missionary staff of Mizoram married a Kaipeng girl named Palong-don-Kaipeng, daughter of Hang-yu-thang Kaipeng, another Jhumia of Dhanlekha in 1972.

The above cases of inter-tribal marriages indicate that the marriage circle of the Jhumias has been now made more wide as to include all other peoples as well, even the Bengalees from the plains. It may be noted in this context that after the partition of the country a large number of Bengali refugees got settled both in the plains and hills as close neighbours of the Jhumias of Tripura. The result has been a close contact not only in respect of exchanges of ideas and behaviour patterns, but also in matters relating to marital unions.

As regards the selection of mates, the Jhumia parents of a boy, attaining marriageable age seeks after a bride of their own choice, and when attention is focussed on a particular girl, the matter is discussed with the close friends and relatives. But the consent of the boy shall have to be taken by the parents before making the final selection. If the boy gives his consent, the parents then approach the parents of the girl and the marriage negotiation starts. If the boy does not, however, give his consent, no attempt is made to carry on negotiation with the parents of the girl. Again, the parents of the girl attaining marriageable age shall similarly seek after a groom. While making a preliminary selection of a groom, particular attention is given to his nature and character. A groom must be a youngman of ideal character, and his economic bearings shall have to be good enough to support his wife. Specialisation in jhuming and basket-making is considered as the necessary qualification of a groom. It is said that a youngman who is expert in making dingara or Khara (basket) is the most suitable groom. A youngman incapable of making dingara is unworthy of being an ideal groom. In fact, such a youngman is ridiculed and is called Panka, i.e., good for nothing. It appears that the Jhumias lay great emphasis on the manufacture of basketry which is undoubtedly essential requisite for their subsistence economy. Naturally so, it is expected that every Jhumia boy should be well acquainted with basket making and an expert one in the field is necessarily considered as an ideal groom.

In the same way, while making selection of a bride, attention is to be laid on her certain qualities. The Jhumias expect that an ideal bride must be polite and shy. Just an ideal groom is one who excels in basket making, an ideal bride would be one who is an expert in the art of weaving. A bride without any knowledge of weaving is, in fact, called Punki i.e., good for nothing. It is, however, very difficult to find out or select such ideal grooms and brides in accordance with the norms of selection as observed by the Jhumias. But this question of selection and making formal contact for marriage arises only in case of a formal marriage by negotiation, i.e. when a marriage contact is made by making a proper selection of the groom and bride. But the question of

selection of brides and grooms for marital unions does not arise in the cases of other forms of marriage. In fact, in the Jhumia Society several forms of marriage are extant. Even there is hardly any occasion to-day regarding the selection of the brides and grooms by their respective parents. In most cases, the marriage in the Jhumia Society are now related to the selections made by one of the mates or by both and sometimes marriages are also performed under compulsion. This would be evident from a discussion on different kinds of marriage or various methods of acquiring a mate as prevalent in the Jhumia Society. These are :

Methods of acquiring mates (i) marriage by capture or elopement; (ii) marriage by probation; (iii) marriage by tribal (iv) marriage by purchase (v) marriage by exchange. Of all these forms of

marriage the most primitive one is of course the marriage by capture or elopement. Such a marriage form is most common amongst all the primitive tribes.<sup>1</sup> This kind of marriage is called Hamjook-tisao. In this marriage, the girl is captured and forcibly taken away by her suitor despite all resistances offered by her. Sometimes such a capture of the bride is made at the behest of her parents, if the latter failed to come to terms with the parents of the boy or if the girl has more than one suitor. In such cases, the bride's parents would ask the suitor of their choice to capture and elope with the girl. Sometimes, the parents of the girl offer a mimic resistance at the time of capturing the girl and a feigned fighting takes place when the girl is expected to weep. Besides, in another form of capture, the girl is forcibly caught hold of and vermillion is applied on her forehead which tantamounts to marital union. The most common form of marriage is however the marriage by service or Jamaikhata. In such a kind of marriage, a prospective groom is to serve in the house of the girl's father for three or more years doing all sorts of work including the ones connected with jhuming for the family in lieu of which he is provided with board and lodging. It is by rendering such service to the father of the girl that the boy actually pays the bride price. Naturally so, if a young boy becomes unable to pay bride-price, he would go to the girl's father's house for rendering services and after a lapse of three years, he becomes fully qualified to marry the girl. There is also another significant implication of this type

of marriage. As a matter of fact, the system of Jamai Khata trains up the youngmen and women in the art of jhuming which involves very arduous labour and the different activities such as weaving, basket-making, building tong-ghars, processing of crops, preservation of seeds, laying of traps for wild animals and birds etc. are associated with it and all these require special training which can be learnt only by absolute devotion and ceaseless practice. A youngman of fifteen or sixteen years of age is just suitable for becoming a probationer for jhum activities. This is the most trying time in the life of jhumia. This is also the time when there is every possibility for the adolescents for becoming delinquents. To overcome such a danger and at the same time for training up the youngsters, the institution of Jamai Khata might have been created. Such system also serves as an incentive for the youngmen because they know unless they are trained up with jhuming activities they will not be entitled to have their mates. The custom also prevails in the jhumia society that during such probationary period, if the bride and the groom fail to accommodate each other they can be separated from one another but if the groom divorces his bride he is severely punished even to the extent of excommunication from the jhumia society.

In this context, mention may be made of jhumia-village organisation which also makes important contribution towards Social Organisation. It is because, the Jhumias are very strongly united through the village organisation. Truly speaking, co-operation and fellow-feeling among the co-villagers, collective worships of Gods and Goddesses and observation of certain rules by the whole village and the joint ownership for jhuming have made the village the most important socio-economic unit. The unity has been strengthened by the fact that each jhumia village is a homogenous unit, i.e., belonging to one or two Kin-groups only. Families belonging to other tribes are not allowed to settle and that there is no caste system in the jhumia society.

The jhumia villages generally lie at the hill tops and the settled areas are concentrated on the hill crests, and one is to make a hazardous climbing up the slopes of the hills before arriving at the dwelling. The habitation site is, as a rule, conditioned by the

primary consideration of accessibility to water and therefore, a village shall invariably lie near a chhera (stream) supplying sufficient water, more particularly during the dry season as well.

A village is known by the name of the Chief or head of the village. Thus, Luxmidhan-Para denotes the village (Para) named after the headman. Again, each village-name bears meanings of its own and points to its identify with the Chief. A village, however, small it may be is an independent entity with its own headman, communal performance of socio-religious rites and festivals along with many other socio-political cum economic rights and responsibilities.

It is again important to note that a typical jhumia village differs fundamentally from a non-tribal village in composition and character. Differences are due to different ecological and cultural settings.

A review of these differences is likely to render positive guidance to make an assessment of the village solidarity and inter-Village relationship. The general layout or physical setting of the Jhumia village is distinct from a non-tribal village. As for instance, the jhumia village lying on an undulating plateau or on a hill slope generally surrounded by a clump of trees indicating its boundaries. On the otherhand, a non-tribal village is comparatively more easily accessible and communicable. By standing on a jhumia village, it may be possible to caste a glance around for miles together in all directions, because of the high altitude of its locale. In size of dimension, the jhumia village is smaller than a non-tribal one. The average number of houses in a jhumia village varies from fifteen to twentyfive.

Each jhumia village has a number of officials to look after all its temporal affairs. The Chodhri, meaning a chief is the head of the village people or the village head-man. All peoples of the village shall have to follow and obey him. He is also to look after the welfare of the village people as a whole. The Chief is the elected by the village peoples. He represents the village in all internal and external affaaars. The post of the Chief is strictly honorary and he receives no payment for the work rendered by him. Of course, the position is held in high esteem and regard by the village people. All village disputes, quarrels or infightings, etc.

are decided by him. During Maharajas' time, the Chiefs had significant role. As for instance, they were empowered by the Kings of Tripura to collect House Tax through the Chiefs who were finally exempted from paying any tax. In political and administrative matters the Chiefs used to act as bridge between the Kings and the tribals. For all representations to the Government, ordinary jhumias fully depend on them.

The foregoing study relating to jhumia Social organisation and socio-political bearings of the jhumia villages reveals that because of the active role played by the village Chiefs, jhumia villages are generally free from any serious crimes or social complexities. But now-a-days, and more particularly since independence, Social organisation and the Socio-Political patterns prevailing in the jhumia villages have undergone considerable changes. Even an ordinary jhumia now prefers to file suits before the law courts instituted by the Government. The Village Chief have lost the confidence of the people in general because of the abuse of powers exercised by them. NOT only that, at present, many of the chiefs entered into money-lending business like professional money-lenders and are no less rigorous in realising the advances made to the Jhumias. Very often, the people complained that the village headman and his assistants hardly act impartially. This is a serious grievance against the authority of the head of the village. It implies that heads of the villages have lost their traditional authority and values, for which they once enjoyed absolute confidence of the people who had, previously, however, no other alternative but to refer all matters to them for final decisions. This is how, the Jhumias have lost or gradually losing their traditional institutions which from indeterminable times has been looking after all affairs of the village in such a way as to foster and promote the integrity and welfare of the Jhumias towards their happy and fruitful livings.

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## FOUR

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### **TRANSFORMATION OF JHUMIA ECONOMY**

It is interesting to note that even a few years before, the Jhumias living in isolation had little knowledge about coin as the medium of exchange. It is only in recent times that the Jhumias have become conversant with the money economy and as such, regular trading is now quite well known to the Jhumias. Such a great transition from a simple barter economy to money economy of trading has been brought about by several factors; the most important of which appears to be the impact of contact with the peoples of the plains who are well conversant with money economy from a pretty long time. Secondly, the wide-circulation of coins and their market value in relation to all economic pursuits have made the Jhumias gradually acquainted with the money economy and realised its utility as a medium of exchange. Thirdly, the transition from jhum-cultivation to settled agricultural life has also brought about significant changes in both economic and social behaviour patterns of the jhumias. The settled agricultural life created the utmost need of money economy because of the very fact that all equipments relating to agricultural operations are to be purchased mostly by money. Naturally so, a great demand was created for earning more and more money to cope with the new situation. Fourthly, the settled agricultural life and contact with the more advanced peoples of the plains brought about also great changes in the socio-economic life patterns of the Jhumias.

The above factors have prompted the Jhumias to earn money for purchasing their needs. So, a tendency developed amongst them to produce more and more cash crops. They are now not

Money economy and the growth of market satisfied simply by producing food-grains for their own consumption only. They now have engaged themselves in producing cash crops e.g. jute, rice, cotton both in jhum and ploughed fields. These crops are sold in the market and money thus earned is spent for purchasing tools, implements, ornaments, oil and all other requisites. In this connection Hunter (1876) observes: " Jute was now not atleast a cash crop produced by the jhumias. It is quite likely that jute cultivation might have been a later introduction, perhaps by the peoples of the plains. When the jhumias found that jute thus produced can earn more cash crops than any other crops they also began to cultivate jute." <sup>1</sup> All these crops and jungle products are generally marketed in the local markets. Sometimes even brokers or traders purchase their produces from the homes of the Jhumias and these middlemen sell these purchase goods to the traders for export. Generally, the Jhumias carry their cash products to the markets for selling and purchasing their necessities. Of course, during the harvesting season, traders from the plains are in the habit of gathering at some fixed places where the Jhumias would come along with their Kharas or baskets ladden with articles to be bartered. Such a small gathering of purchasers gradually multiplied and become concentrated at one fixed place which is called by the Jhumias as ' hati ' or market. It may be noted in this context, that the Jhumias live in isolated and inaccessible hill areas causing a great amount of risk and inconvenience in respect of moving ups and downs with heavy loads, and as such, the question of attending any daily market from distant places does not arise. Landscape is largely responsible for the growth of periodic markets. mostly weekly in nature in the Jhumia areas. It may also be noted that the markets are usually organised on a rotation basis i.e., holdings of markets at different places, one after another. This is done to facilitate the visit of the traders at different places on the scheduled days. Previously, markets used to meet only in the morning and break away by noon in order to facilitate the return of the jhumias to their respective homes before dusk but now-a-days, the number of markets has increased and again markets are located in the hilly areas. As a result, the jhumias can easily frequent markets more conveniently. Accordingly, the scheduled

time for holding a market has been also altered. A market is now held even in the afternoon and breaks at dusk. A characteristic feature of the Jhumia market is the absence of any permanent shop for stocking and selling goods. Only temporary thatched structures are raised for displaying articles to be sold.

In the absence of any cash-crop at their disposal, the jhumias collect forest produce for selling them in the market. Very often, the jhumias are also found carrying domestic animals and birds like tak (cock). Oak-bacha (Pig) etc. to the nearby market for selling them.

Another factor which has contributed much towards the break up of the isolation of the jhumia-economy is the opening-up of the aboriginal forest lands by means of transport and communications.

Departmental working of forests and the needs of administration had hastened the development of transport since independence. Such development of transport has not only increased import and export trade of the region but also helped the growth of village and weekly markets.

Forest roads and foot tracks have rendered many areas accessible for trade purposes. As a result, the monopoly of the trade-money-lender and contact with the markets have changed the primitive character of agriculture as well as forest work. Now, under the new circumstances, the jhumias cultivate or collect not what they need for themselves but what satisfies the demand of the market or the itinerant trader. Mention may be made here that they presently have started to grow various cash crops like jute, rice, and cotton and not only that besides these, a little quantity of maize, sesamum mustard, pluses and peas, beans, raddish, pumpkin, cucumber are also grown by them. This has led to commercialisation of jhumia agriculture. Again, the social effects of modern transport on jhumias' life are also no less significant. Road construction and repair necessitate the movement of labour from one place to another. Since the work is of a seasonal character, the aboriginal workers cannot take their families to the spot of the work. This results in the temporary break-up of the jhumia family. Tribal labourers being away from their homes and mixing freely with other tribals and non-tribals begin to neglect the

conventional tribal code of social life. On the otherhand, enforcement of Government laws and the detection of violation has become possible due to the development of transport. As a result, the jhumias' faith on their traditional customs and institutions, or in otherwords the collective tribal life is giving way to official fiats.

Again, the extension of forest operations to the remotest corner of the hill forests has brought the jhumias within its orbit.

The departmental working of forests and contractor's operations are making jhumias familiar with the modern technique of forest exploitation. Now, a good

number of jhumias have learnt the use of saw machines. They also have come to know the Commercial Values of certain forest products. Here mention may be made of the Benchmark Survey conducted by the Tribal Welfare Department in 1978. According to the Benchmark Survey Report, the collection of forest products by the jhumias for sale is one of the important economic activities of about 74 per cent of the 2013 sample jhumia families.<sup>2</sup> It is also reported that one hundred per cent of the jhumia families collect bamboo, firewood, and sungrass from forests for their own use; and their average annual income being Rs. 185.00, Rs. 200.00 and Rs. 154.05 respectively<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that in contrast, non-traditional activities connected with forest resources seem to yield a higher level of income to the sample jhumia families. According to the recent survey report, about 96 per cent of the jhumia house holds earn incomes from wage employment, the average annual income of the sample jhumia families from this source being Rs. 1790.50. The main source of wage employment of the jhumias being the Forest Department which provides employment to a large number of jhumias in development works Beside Forest Department, wage employment is also provided to the jhumias by forest traders for the extraction of timber, firewood, bamboo etc. Horticulture and Plantations also provide employment to 3.9 per cent and 2.9 per cent of the sample jhumia households yield an average annual income of Rs. 452.00 and Rs. 400.05 respectively.<sup>4</sup> It is now clear from the above report that non-traditional activities connected with the forests have assumed importance in the economic life of the jhumias of Tripura. But at the same time it is important to note that as a result of

breakdown of self-sufficiency, the traditional jhumia economy has become less stable. It is because wage employment provided to the jhumias by the Forest Department and Forest traders is of irregular nature. Its volume and continuity largely depend on the decisions of the Government and their implementation by the Forest Department. Again, in case of forest traders much depends on the nature of the contract and the contractor's resourcefulness. Sometimes adverse weather conditions also interrupt the work. For instance, forest and road work remain completely suspended for nearly four months in the year. Consequently, under the changed circumstances, the jhumias do not get regular employment for more than 5 months in a year. Thus, irregular employment has reduced the element of stability in jhumia economy and the wage system has further aggravated the instability. Moreover, being nomadic in character, the jhumias have no experience of adjusting their family budgets to the wage system. They had no practice of spreading monthly wages over the whole month like the wage earner nor had they any habit of saving for the contingencies, for in the past they depended upon nature's supply of food. This led them to borrowing for maintaining their family expenditures till the next payment of wages.

The steep poverty is therefore, largely responsible for the sudden change from traditional economic life. The change in the technique of cultivation has shattered their livelihood. Being not well versed in plough cultivation, they failed to produce sufficient crops. Besides, the improvidence and extravagance of the jhumias, their uneconomic holdings and particularly dishonesty of money-lender and charging of high rate of interest are the major factors which have reduced the jhumias to the present level of abject poverty.

It would be evident from the above analysis of the economic life-patterns of the jhumias that jhumia economy has been throughout basically a primitive one. It is a simple economy based on procuring the primary needs of life, viz., food and shelter. For pursuing the aforesaid economic activities, the requisites were also very simple and small consisting of digging-sticks, bows and arrows, cutting tools, baskets etc. All these food gathering and food producing tools were made by the jhumias themselves. Whatever, the jhumias gathered and produced were consumed

by them and as such, in all respects the jhumia economy were self-sufficient and self-contained.

### **Observation**

But the persistence or continuation of such an economy depends largely on the bountiful gift of nature. Presently, the landscape has been fast changing and the angry nature has been taking revenge on the very people whom it so long sustained and nursed. It is because of the changing pattern of the landscape that the forest products are now becoming more and more scarce, hardly sufficient to meet the requirements of these peoples for their very subsistence. But not only nature is responsible for it, even the human agency largely contributed towards the scarcity of jungle productions to be available to the jhumias. Constant felling of trees and clearance of jungles have driven out animals, and the availability of fruits, herbs and roots is becoming scarce. Again, as a matter of fact, the incipient jhum-cultivation has also now become less fruitful. It is known that a jhum-field cannot be subjected to continuous cultivation for years together, and as such, the jhuming operation is to be shifted from one field to the another. Previously, there was no dearth of land for transformation into jhum-fields, but at present, lands or forest areas are hardly available for the same and as a result jhuming operation has become as impossibility. This problem has become more acute by the growth of population. Non-availability of sufficient forest or jhum-field for producing their livelihood has been largely responsible for deteriorating their condition day by day.

Fortunately, the jhumias found out alternative means of procuring their livelihood by taking recourse to more substantial and potential means of production, which they have borrowed and most successfully adopted to suit their own life patterns and means of subsistence. The fruitful results of plough cultivation have become known to the jhumias and the adoption of such cultivation has brought about revolutionary changes in the socio-economic life-patterns of the jhumias. First, instead of nomadic or wandering tribal life subsisting on food-gathering and jhum-cultivation, the jhumias have now largely become settled agricultural people. This nomadic incipient farming community has now become transferred into a firmly agricultural people. Secondly, the jhumias used to produce only crops of their livelihood in the

jhum-field. But with the introduction of currency system and money economy, the whole life-pattern changed. They are now producing cash crops in the jhum-field and also in the fields under plough cultivation. Thirdly, the settled agricultural life and plough cultivation have also brought about many other consequential changes in the general life patterns of the jhumias. Their needs for worldly maintenance and the craving for better and prosperous life after the plains people have encouraged the jhumias more and more to produce cash crops to earn money and to meet their created demands. Fourthly, the settled agricultural life has also brought about beneficial effects eating into the vitality and the very existence of the jhumias. It may be noted that previously in times of any need, the jhumias could borrow food grains from another family and the same could be returned in kind, but now, the situation has changed considerably. For each and everything the jhumias are to take recourse to money transactions. In times of need, they are to borrow money to purchase food grains and other necessities. The result has been disastrous. The jhumia villages are now frequented by money-lenders who lend money on exorbitant interest and the amount is to be repaid in cash, not in kind. In the case of the failure of cash crops, such loans can hardly be repaid, and accordingly, the jhumias have now become victims of these money-lenders. In fact, the jhumias are living in perpetual debt and poverty. For repaying loans, the jhumias are to adopt the last resort of selling their agricultural lands to the money-lenders or to others. As a result, the jhumias are being deprived of their agricultural land and other holdings as well. According to Tribal Bench Mark Survey Report (1978) it appears that out of 71,882 tribal households 1992 households have transferred land to non-tribals during last 10 years and 1014 households have transferred land to non-tribals between last 10 to 30 years. Thus, 3006 tribal households in all have transferred land to non-tribals within 40 years prior to the year of survey that is 1978. The percentage of land transferer households among the tribals thus comes to 4.18 only. Besides, the partition of the country and the consequent refugee settlement all over the state made the agricultural land problems more and more acute. The refugees coming over to Tripura have purchased lands from the jhumias of different tribal communities. Because of the abject poverty, the jhumias also had

no alternative but to sell them. Again, the exploitation of forests on modern lines has caused a fundamental change in the life-patterns of the jhumias. Forest laws have curtailed jhumia's freedom of forest and compelled them to give up traditional way of life. This is how, the jhumias have become deprived of their forests, jhum-fields and agricultural lands. Being divorced from their traditional life-patterns, and deprived of their acquisitions, many of the jhumias have now turned to become daily wage-earners working as casual labours in Government Forest Department or in any contractor's firms. It is however, heartening to note that the State Government is determined to ameliorate the condition of the jhumias. To tackle the problem of settlement of the shifting cultivation the present Government has initiated the grassroot approach by which survey work has been undertaken through revenue officers to identify the jhumia landless tribals. Jhumia Settlement Committees have been started in each Gaon Sabha to select the needy jhumias eligible for getting settlement and to supervise the implementation of settlement programme. Not only that certain acts have been passed in regard to land-holdings. According to the laws enacted by the State Government, no land belonging to any tribal community can be purchased by any non-tribal person. Again, lands already sold out to such persons shall revert to the original owners who sold them. Thus, the Government is making all out efforts to make the Jhumias economically self-sufficient but unfortunately the overall economic position of the jhumias has not been improved to the desired level. However, while making any attempt to improve the condition of the jhumias, it is to be borne in mind that such an attempt must not negate the tribal traditional economy at the behest of modern economy. Instead, at the very outset an adjustment is to be made and any changes to be introduced must not be an inverse of their own traditional possession. Here Dr. Ganguly's (1969) opinion may be taken as a representative statement. According to him, "Primitive people living in isolation develop their own customs and socio-economic institutions which are the results of hundreds of years of gradual adaptation to their environment. So any abrupt or unplanned change in their environment disturbs that equilibrium and causes maladjustments to the discomfort of tribal folk. This may even lead to their degeneration." Hence, it is only by a gradual process of

infiltration and adjustment that the economic amelioration of the jhumias and other tribal peoples would be possible and fruitful. Otherwise, the evils of modern economy would prove disastrous even in respect of the very question of the survival of the jhumias not only in Tripura but throughout the entire area of North-east India.

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## FIVE

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### **NEW DEAL FOR THE JHUMIAS**

There is no doubt that jhuming as a system of agriculture is the transitional stage from hunting and gathering to settled cultivation. Such system cannot survive in the long run because of the fact that the increase of population in the absence of abundant supply of land is bound to shorten the cycle of jhuming, bringing about continuous deterioration in soil fertility and ecological changes. The fact also goes that the population sustaining capacity of land under shifting cultivation is incredibly low. The studies conducted in the Philippines, Gambia, Malawi and Zambia including a few in India (Bose 1967; Ganguly 1969; and Saha 1970) reveal that land carrying capacity under jhuming is very low. It has been estimated that in Tripura, the population sustaining capacity of land under shifting is six persons per sq. Km. supposing 50% of the areas amenable to the shifting cultivation.<sup>1</sup> According to Dr. Ganguly (1968), here in Tripura, a particular plot of land is jhumed only once and then left fallow for about ten years for regeneration of forests. Hence, cultivation factor under jhuming is eleven. Dr. Ganguly further observes that in Tripura every year approximately 20,235 hectares of land is jhumed which means that this form of cultivation can support about 2,200 souls only.<sup>2</sup> This shows the utter inadequacy of the system to-day.

Now, with the background of above information it is quite logical to replace this wasteful system of agriculture. It is interesting to note that Late Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur (1923-47) in order to induce his tribal subject viz., Puran Tipras, Noatias, Jamatias, Reangs and Halams to plough cultivation instead of jhum cultivation, reserved

The first Jhumia-settlement attempt.

a large fertile ploughable area by an order dated 20th Bhadra, 1341 T.E. (1931) and by a subsequent order dated 1st Aswin, 1353 T.E. (1943), the area was extended later. It has been estimated that in the first jhumia settlement attempt (1930-31) an area of 11,000 drons i.e., 28,490 hectares in Khowai Sub-division, called Kalyanpur Reserve was set apart as reserved for the settlement of the jhumias. In the next order, the total area reserved for this purpose was raised to 5,05,053 hectares and as a result, there was sharp rise in the area under cultivation.<sup>3</sup> Again, in order to develop the vast tracts of wild land and populate them, His Highness opened a new Department called the Immigration and Reclamation Department. Soon after the opening of this department vigorous attempts were made for the study of material conditions of various tracts of land awaiting development. Reclamation work was commenced in kulai Haor, Dhalai valley of Kailashahar Sub-Division and various other places and nearly 400 sq. miles of land were distributed amongst the immigrants. The Agricultural Department which was reorganised at the instance of his Highness took up the work of introducing superior quality of cotton, paddy, jute, tobacco, sugarcane and Potato in the high lands and in the plains. Circuit lectures against nomadic jhuming and in favour of plough cultivation was arranged by the said department. As a further step, the department opened an enquiry office in a specially constructed shed right in the heart of Agartala Bazar to furnish people with all information regarding agricultural operation, seeds, appliance, plants and cattle diseases. But unfortunately, in spite of sincere efforts, the progress of the settlement was not satisfactory. This will be evident from the Administrative Report for 1939 - 40. : "Many families have since permanently settled in the Reserve area and taken to ploughing, though the area actually brought under cultivation during the period was not encouraging."<sup>4</sup> As regards the progress of the scheme, the Report says : " Survey operations were carried on in 1347 T.E. (1937) within the Reserve in respect of 125 drons and 8 Kanis i.e., 803.2 acres of land. The total expenditure incurred in the year 1347 T.E. in furtherance of the scheme amounted to Rs. 1,239-10-9 pies only, there being no expenditure in the following yezs."<sup>5</sup>

It is thus clear from the above Administrative Report that the progress of the settlement till 1940 was not impressive. It is important to note that besides the creation of jhumia settlement, the King also followed a general Policy of urging the jhumias to take to settled plough cultivation. The Tenancy Act of the State gave a special incentive to plough cultivation. According to the section 57 of the Law of Landlord and Tenant, a tenant who accepts a lease for reclamation of the hilly lands by cutting jungles shall get remission of rent for three years from the date of lease.<sup>6</sup> Again, in order to check the evil consequences of jhuming an Act relating to Reserve Forests was passed in 1297 T.E. (1887 A.D.) for the first time by the State. Amongst other things, the Act also prohibited jhuming within half a mile of the boundary line of reserved forests (clause VI) and none could set fire in the hills which might affect reserved forests in any way (Clause IX).<sup>7</sup> The Act laid down heavy punishment for any infringement of the provisions of the law. Any person setting fire and by whom caused any damage to the trees in the reserved forests was liable to rigorous imprisonment up to six months or a fine not exceeding one thousand rupees or both.<sup>8</sup> Such measure, however, affected the liberty of the Jhuming to do jhum anywhere they liked before.

#### **Immigration of cultivators and middle class persons**

The rulers of Tripura also encouraged large-scale immigration of cultivators and middle class cultured persons from the adjoining districts of Bengal to open out the way for general development and prosperity of the State. The actual intention and purpose of such settlement of land will be clear from the excerpt from the proceedings of the Shashan Sarmilani of 1323 T.E (1913 A.D.) : "the system of permanent settlement should be continued. In stead of distributing small pieces of land large areas of 500 drones i.e., 3200 acres or more in one block should be given out in permanent settlement. This measure will lead to an increase in the number of rich and cultured persons as also of ordinary tenants. And if rich, wealthy and resourceful persons take such taluks (estates), then by their endeavour roads and other means of communication will be built up which will open out the way for general development and prosperity of the State."<sup>9</sup> As a result of the above measure, the purpose of the rulers of Tripura, However, was fulfilled temporarily but that vitally affected the life- pattern of

the Jhumias. The immigrants began to grab land paying nominal *najrana* (tribute) to the King and in the process met the folk in the interiors who were almost taken by surprise. This is not all. This influx greatly increased after the partition of India. It may be noted that from the time of partition till the end of 1950 about 1,75,000 displaced persons crossed the border and came over to Tripura from the adjoining districts now Bangladesh.

### **Inflow of refugees**

This inflow of refugees however was checked to a considerable extent since 1958 when the Government announced its decision not to register immigrants as displaced persons<sup>10</sup> During the period from 1947 to 1957 about 83,000 families consisting of 3,74,000 persons officially registered themselves as displaced persons from Bangladesh." Of course, another wave of migration started from the middle of 1963 due to communal riots in Khulna, Jessore and other districts of Bangladesh. Again, during Bangladesh liberation war thousands of refugees migrated to this land for shelter. This rehabilitation of refugees in the rural areas of Tripura completely shattered the remnants of isolation enjoyed by the Jhumias. Not only that, the marshy lands reclaimed for setting the refugees thus causing a further fall in the area available to the Jhumias to shift about for nothing.

It is, however, heartening to note that the policy of the independent India was to assume a special responsibility for the welfare and upliftment of tribal people of the country. Art. 338 of the Constitution makes provision for the appointment of a special body to investigate the safeguards provided for tribal population. This body started functioning with effect from 18th November, 1950 under a Commissioner assisted by six Regional Commissioners with jurisdiction over 17 States. The commission subsequently stated in its report (1955 - 56): The system of shifting cultivation has come in for serious criticism as in many cases, is directly responsible for large-scale soil erosion on the hill, leads to deforestation rapid denudation of flexibility in the soil and in slopes. On account of the great national importance of forests, conservation of soil and economic development of the tribal people, it is necessary to rehabilitate the hill peoples. Accordingly, the Tripura Administration formulated the Jhumia Settlement

Scheme and colonisation Scheme, both being the part of the overall strategy of "Shifting Cultivation Control Scheme" initiated in the first plan period in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Tripura. Under the Settlement Scheme, each Jhumia family in Tripura was given settlement of cultivable land suitable for settled agriculture and a grant of Rs. 500.00.<sup>12</sup> The Colony scheme made provisions for allotting a dwelling house in a colony established by the Government. Again, such colony was designed to provide facilities of drinking water, primary education, medical and Veterinary help and a co-operative society for credit and marketing.<sup>13</sup>

In 1961, the Agro-Economic Research Centre for North-east India undertook a survey in the Kathalichherra Model Tribal Colony. The survey pin pointed the importance of the colonisation scheme in the rehabilitation and welfare of the Jhumias of Tripura. The experts are of opinion that " the colonisation scheme has achieved a partial success with settled farming having a mixed reception." <sup>14</sup>

It is thus evident that though efforts were made to bring the jhumias to permanent settlement through various schemes, it is seen that even to-day there is a large number of shifting cultivators in the State. Out of 1,04,362 households in sub-plan area\* 54,463 households do not practise shifting cultivation. The rest 49,899 households are either practising shifting cultivation, partly or fully. However the number of jhumias engaged fully in shifting cultivation is 23,292. The Districtwise distribution of Jhumias of different tribal communities according to Agricultural Finance Corporation, 1981 is as follows :

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\* Sub-Plan area area is composed of 462 revenue villages out of 871 revenue villages in Tripura. The total population under Sub- Plan according to Bench Mark Survey Report is 5,66,046 and the tribals constitute 70.24% of the total Sub-Plan area population.

Sl.No.	Name of District	No. of households practising shifting cultivation (for five important tribes only)				
		Tripuri	Reang	Chakma	Halam	Jamatia
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	North District	2355	4346	821	330	01
2	West District	4330	417	—	274	74
3	South District	4008	1997	1000	579	1044
4	Total	10693	6760	1821	1183	1119
5						

It appears from the above table that the number of households practising shifting cultivation is the largest among the Tripuri communities and they are mainly concentrated in the West and South Districts of Tripura whereas the number of households practising shifting cultivation is the minimum amongst the Jamatias mobilising in the Sout Tripura along.

It is estimated that at the beginning of the Seventh Plan, the number of jhumia families awaiting for rehabilitation are 16,150. So it is proposed to rehabilitate all those families during the 7th Plan period under settlement programmes of various Departments. The targets for rehabilitation of jhumia families during the year 1986-87 under Tribal Welfare Department are as follows.

Sl.No	Name of the Scheme	Financial Target	Sub-Plan	Physical Target
1	2	3	4	5
1	Settlement on Agriculture Scheme	25.76 lakhs	16.50 lakhs	33 new families 640 Spill-over families.
2	Horticulture based Settlement Scheme	8.40	3.41	34 new families 85 spill-over-families

3	Animal Husbandary	9.06	3.85	57 new families 65 soukk-over families
4	Pisciculture	4.00	1.80	15 new families 48 spill-over families
5	Restoration assistance	4.00	2.50	180 families
6	Self-Employment	2.00	1.50	150 beneficiaries

It has been observed that till the year 1984-85 the settlement on Agriculture based Scheme was not successful to the desired level mainly due to non-availability of lunga lands to the required extent, Horticulture, Animal Husbandary, Pisciculture are commonly termed as Diversified Settlement Scheme which was started from the year 1985-86 was expected to be implemented side by side with Settlement Scheme based on cultivation as availability of lunga land is extremely limited. As regards Restoration Assistance Scheme, financial assistance is given to tribal families to whom the possession of alienated land is restored under the provisions of Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act. Besides, a number of Industrial training centres under Self-Employment Schememare run by the Tribal Welfare Department. It is also to be noted in this context that under a new Scheme viz., Purchase of land for rehabilitation of jhumias and landless tribals, lands are purchased through the Schedule Tribe Development Corporation. According to this Scheme 50% of the cost up to maximum limit of Rs. 5,000/- will be given as grant and the rest 50% will be given as loan by the Sch. Tribe development Corporation and collaborating Banks. The Scheme also provides that land thus purchase will be mortgaged to the above corporation till loans are fully repaid by the beneficiaries.

It is also, encouraging to note that since the inception of the Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council a new look has been given to the administrative set-up by the present Government to ensure speedy implementation of various Tribal Welfare Schemes including the Schemes of the Settlement of the Jhumias. Here, mention may be made of an interdisciplinary team which has been constituted with Tribal Welfare, Engineering Agricultural and

Medical Officers to take up intensive survey of the remote hilly areas. Secondly, Survey-work also has been undertaken through Revenue Officers to identify the Jhumia landless tribals. It may be noted that previously there was no authentic data on the total area affected by the jhuming and total population practising it but now, on the basis of the above survey-work, it has been possible to arrive an estimation of total number of jhumia families. Thirdly, each Gaon-Sabha is provided with Jhumia Settlement Committee which again selects the needy Jhumias eligible for getting settlement and to supervise also the implementation of settlement programme. Fourthly, new scheme for revitalisation of the Model Tribal Colonies has been taken up to provide benefits of renovation of houses, milch cattle, bullocks etc. to families of settlers who are still residing at their places of settlement. Fifthly, in addition to agriculture based settlement for the Jhumias, provision has been made for subsidiary occupation and as such weaving training Centre, Tailoring training centre, Cane and Bamboo Craft training centres have been started.

It would be therefore, quite clear from the above approach that the new deal initiated by the Government is a bold experiment. If, however, administrative lacunae are removed, behavioural pattern of educational facilities expanded and more particularly occupational scopes widened, the Jhumia settlers will take more and more interest in the improvement of their economic conditions.

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### **TAPPING - A PROMISING ALTERNATIVE TO JHUMING**

In the preceding Chapters, we have reviewed the Socio-economic life-pattern of the Jhumias. We have seen their life-pattern has been undergoing a transformation of fundamental nature. Previously, the old economy was based on self-sufficiency. The Jhumias collected or produced their food themselves. Being nomadic by nature, the Jhumias did not construct permanent homes. Temporary Tang-ghar made of Shan-grass and wood would meet their needs fully. For domestic utensils bamboo-bottles or gourd/bottles and leaf-plates were sufficient for them. Cooking earthen-pots were bought from weekly market, where the local potter came for selling his wares. Barter was the rule and money an exception in the Jhumia economy. The rare rupees that reached the Jhumias were pierced and worn as ornaments by the women!

But now the socio-economic order has undergone radical changes due to acculturation and impact of modernity. The nomadic Jhumias have become settled cultivators. They have adopted new technique of production. The Jhumias have realised the value of lunga-land for wet paddy cultivation which is more efficient than their traditional method. Such case is, however, not typical to the Jhumias of Tripura only. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Apa-Tanis developed an extensive system of irrigated fields and though ignorant of the plough succeeded with their hoes in raising two annual crops for themselves and their neighbours.<sup>1</sup> The Apa Tanis, of course, were forced to practise intensive and continuous cultivation because

they were prevented by the Daflas to secure more lands for freely shifting their farms.<sup>2</sup> But the Garos of North-east India willingly accepted the plough cultivation and then gradually made necessary adjustments in their traditional culture. Hence, it should not be believed that the Jhumias cannot be induced to alternative to jhuming for earning extra income and to patch up their present shattering economy.

The present study already indicates that in Tripura, there is a serious problem relating to land suitable for permanent cultivation. Even by Tripura Government's own admission that the scope for permanent cultivation by terracing or contour bunding is very limited.<sup>3</sup> It has been also reported that under Settlement Scheme of the Jhumias tilla (up land) land allotted to Jhumia settlers remained unreclaimed and even tilla-lands terraced at the cost of the administration remained unused due to their unsuitability for field crops.

For this, the three-dimensional forestry i.e., combining sericulture and horticulture with animal husbandry may be fruitfully introduced. Experts are of opinion that the whole of North-east Hilly region wherever jhuming is practised, is considered to be ideally suited for different horticultural crops. In this context, the valuable suggestion offered by the I.C.A.R. Research complex for North East Hilly region may be offered. According to the Research Complex two types of farming may be practised in this region viz., (a) Short term till the permanent settlement of Jhumias and (b) Long term permanent settlement. In the former type, long growing starchy crops like tapioca (cassava), colocasia, dioscorea; fruit crops like Papaya, banana (cavendish group) and vegetable crops like chillies, sweet-gourd, beans etc. may be planted during the late growth phase of the first cereal crops. As a result of the mixed planting, at the time when the first crop is ready, the vegetative growth of the second crops will form a protective soil cover. Some of the second crops will be ready by the second year, while the remainders may be allowed to grow further for three to four years to be harvested as required. It is believed that this system will help in reducing the losses due to sheet erosion and again will help in developing litter layer on the surface.<sup>3</sup> The short duration horticultural

tural crops also will help in transferring sub-soil nutrients in the top soil.<sup>4</sup>

As regards long-term permanent settlement, it may be pointed out that the upper portion of the hills (above 30% slope) may be covered permanently with perennial horticultural crops species with suitable inter or companion crops. The fruit plants may be planted by making half moon terraces and bench terracing may thus be avoided.<sup>5</sup> It has been suggested by the Research complex that in the low hills (up to 900 m) crops like citrus, pineapple, banana, guava, litchi, in medium hills (900 - 1500 m) stone- fruits like peach, plum, apricot etc. may be tried.<sup>6</sup>

Among the plantation crops coffee, arecanut, black pepper, rubber etc. have been found to be promising in the North East Hill Region. In Tripura, warrangbari, Kalkalia and Patichari have already earned names in rubber plantation and opened up a new horizon of economy in the State. It may be noted that as one of the important exotics rubber plantation was first raised at Patichari in the year 1963 and till now it has been found that the plants are absolutely disease-free which is not even the case where rubber is indigenous. Another plus point here in Tripura is that the yield of latex is higher than the yield in Kerala which is supposed to be the home of rubber in India and the dry rubber content of Tripura latex is the highest in India.<sup>7</sup>

It is a fact that the North-Eastern Region lies well outside the traditional rubber belt but the existing agro-climatic conditions coupled with low elevation and other moderating influences has made areas within this region most suitable for rubber plantation but unfortunately very little has been done till now in respect of its development in this region. The Statewise position of rubber plantation in the North Eastern Region is given below.<sup>8</sup>

States/Union territories	Area up to 1982/83 (in ha) under Govt./Dept. Undertaking	Private Holdings	Total area (in ha.)
Tripura	4646.82	742.81	5389.63
Assam	932.00	50.00	982.00

Arunachal Pradesh	42.00	—	42.00
Meghalaya	1109.00	—	1109.00
Mizoram	406.00	—	406.00
Manipur	395.00	—	395.00
Nagaland	70.00	2.00	72.00
Total	7600.00	794.81	8395.63

From the above table it seems that out of the total 8395.63 ha. of rubber plantation in the North-east region, Tripura's share alone is 5389.63 which means 64% of the total rubber plantation has come up in Tripura.

Scope of  
resettlement for  
the Jhumias

It is also to be appreciated that on the encouraging results of experimental rubber plantation raised by the Forest Deptt. in Tripura, the Govt. has formed Tripura Forest Development and Plantation Corporation in 1976. Similar Public Sector Organisations also came up in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh almost during the same time for resettlement purpose. Another encouraging note is that in Tripura a separate corporation has recently come up for resettlement of landless tribal jhumias through rubber plantation. It has been reported that under Rubber Board's New-Planting Scheme, 1979 about 10,000 ha. of rubber plantation will be raised and maintained up to tapping stage for allotment at the rate of 1.5 ha. per jhumia family. The above Scheme also provides capital subsidy @ Rs. 7500.00 per hectare for growers up to 2 ha. and Rs.5,000.00 per ha. for growers up to 20.23 ha. are admissible at seven annual instalments in addition to input subsidies for small growers up to 6 ha. Further, it has been provided that Bank credit to the extent of Rs. 15,000.00 per ha. inclusive of Government subsidies and 3% interest subsidy can also be availed by the rubber growers.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequent implementation of Rubber Plantation Development Scheme - Phase I (1980-84) and Phase II (1985-89) under the Rubber Board is also very encouraging. The Scheme is intended to increase production of natural rubber in India by accelerating new planting and replanting of rubber on modern



A view of the rubber plantation in Tripura



Growth of rubber plantation after three years

scientific lines. Accelerated new planting and replanting would be achieved by giving technical, material and financial assistance to all categories of growers. The total areas to be covered during the five year period that is from 1985-86 to 1989-90 by way of new planting and replanting will be 40,000 hectares. As regards extent of assistance it may be noted that the maximum amount of assistance in the form of cash subsidy shall be Rs. 5,000/- per hectare in the case of growers owning up to 5 hectares of rubber including any area proposed under the scheme for newplanting in the traditional areas and for all categories of growers in non-traditional areas.<sup>12</sup> The beneficiaries under the Scheme may avail of long term financial credit from banks under the refinance scheme of NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) in order to supplement the financial and other assistance granted by the Board as well as to acquire financial liquidity for undertaking the planting operations. The board in such instances provide the required technical support to the banks concerned. The interest payable by the permit holder on such loans availed by all growers other than large growers in traditional areas will be subsidised by the Board at the rate of 3% per annum in respect of the loan outstanding at the close of each year until the end of the ninth year of planting. Mention may be made that the maximum extent of credit that can be availed of on a hectare basis by a permit holder will normally be the total per hectare cost of development cost determined by the Board reduced by the total amount of financial assistance offered to be granted by the Board under the scheme. The per hectare cost is accordingly laid down as follows :<sup>13</sup>

Year of Planting/maintenance	For traditional rubber growing areas	For non-traditional rubber growing areas
1st year of planting (maintenance)	10400	7600
2nd year (..)	4200	3200
3rd year (..)	3400	2500
4th year (..)	2800	1900
5th year (..)	2500	1300

6th year ( , )	2300	1200
7th year ( , )	2100	1100
	27700	18800

However, drawal of loan amounts required for each of the above seven years shall be completed ordinarily before the close of the month of October and payment of the loanee's share of interest accrued on the loan advanced from the bank shall commence from the eighth year of planting and completed by the end of the 14th year of planting. The loan shall be repaid from the tenth year of planting and completed by the fourteenth year in five equal annual instalments. Another important condition is that if after availing of any credit from the bank, the loanee fails to carry out satisfactory planting as stipulated under the scheme, the Board shall have no liability whatsoever to make any remittance to the bank in his credit and/or to subsidise the interest payable by him to the bank.<sup>14</sup>

Experts are of opinion that average production of rubber in Tripura and in other areas of N.E. Region will be 1200 Kg. per ha. 107 and if that is so, it may be added with responsibility that a small grower having 1.5 ha. rubber plantation area under tapping will get 1800 kg. of dry rubber worth Rs.36,000.00 at the current rate of market providing net income of Rs. 18,000.00 per annum after meeting the cost of maintenance and tapping and repayment of the Bank loan. Besides, rubber plantation would also provide fuelwood, vegetable-oil, oil cakes and honey as bi-products. Thus, according to rough calculation, the net income of a small rubber cultivator having 1.5 ha. rubber plantation area will get not less than Rs. 22,000.00 per annum, i.e., monthly income from rubber plantation comes to Rs. 1,834.00 whereas the average income of a jhumia house-hold ranges between Rs. 1,000.00 to Rs. 2,000.00 per annum (A.F.C. report) or on an average it is Rs. 1500.00 i.e. the monthly income being Rs. 250.00 only.

So in order to ameliorate the sad plight of the Jhumias it was decided by the government to resettle the Jhumias by raising viable rubber holdings on land. For this, a corporation was established on 1st March, 1983. It has been suggested by the said corporation that the size of a viable Rubber Plantations will be 75

ha. in a compact block and each family is to be allotted 2.5 ha. area (1.5 ha. for rubber plantation and the remaining 1 ha. for homestead) and thus total requirement comes to 75 to 87 ha. in one Centre. It is important to note that for raising 1 ha. of rubber plantation, the Rubber Board will give Rs. 5,000.00 as cash and input subsidy and Bank will sanction Rs. 13,800.00 per ha. as loan @ Rs. 12.5% interest per annum of which 3% will be subsidised by the Rubber Board and net rate of interest on loan money will be 9.5% per annum. Thus, for one individual family total subsidy and loan amount will be Rs. 5,000.00 + Rs. 13,800.00 i.e., Rs. 18,800.00 will be released in a phased manner from the 1st to the 7th year. The loan amount is repayable from 8th year onwards when production is expected to commence. As regards progress of the financial assistance, the National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development has sanctioned the financial assistance of Rs. 96.25 lakhs with refinance assistance of Rs. 86.25 lakhs to consortium of 3 Banks viz., U.B.I., S.B.I. and Tripura Gramin Bank for raising 1200 ha. for 800 families.<sup>16</sup> Another important feature is that from the 1st to the 7th year different items of work will be done, by the individual beneficiary in his own land against daily wages so that he need not go other places for earning his livelihood. It is also to be noted that under the rehabilitation programme, the first year work will be concentrated for raising rubber plantation and from second year onward up to 7th year when production starts, different activities like development of homestead area and utilising the same for Agri-crop, horticulture, social forestry, poultry, piggery etc. will be started and the fund for the above purpose will be made available from various Governmental Departments of the State and financial institutions.

As regards norms for taking up a new project the particulars which are considered essential by the Corporation are given below.<sup>17</sup>

In the first place, the concerned Gram-Panchayat has to ensure that a minimum of 50 ha. of Government Khash-land is available under the Gaon-Sabha in a Compact Block. Secondly, if land is available, Gaon Panchayat is to initiate proposal indicating clearly the quantum of land available, Tehsil, Mouza, Sheet No., and Plot No. of the

Norms for a  
new Project

proposed area to the Corporation. Thirdly, on receipt of the proposal, the Corporation will check up the technical feasibility of the proposed site for the purpose. If the area is considered fit for taking up Project, the proposal will be placed before the Board of Directors of Tripura Rubber Plantation Corporation for approval. Fourthly, if the proposal is approved by the Board in a meeting, the respective Gaon Sabha will be requested to select the beneficiaries. The number of beneficiaries is to be decided on the basis of available Government Khash land @ 2.5 ha. per family. Lastly, the beneficiaries must be landless jhumia who can work on his own land against wages.

It is thus evident from the above that the Rehabilitation Programme of the Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation has brought about a new hope to the Jhumias of Tripura. Since its inception, the Corporation took initiative for rubber plantations with a view to rehabilitate jhumia families at different centres. It is to be noted again that in addition to the Plantation Scheme, the beneficiaries were given a housing aid of Rs. 750.00 per unit from Rural Development Department. Besides, other amenities like drinking water, schooling, medical health, marketing of produce will be arranged with the assistance of other agencies. It may be noted that during the period from 1984-87 works were initiated by the said Corporation for rubber Plantation with a view to rehabilitate 719 jhumia families in Tripura. The districtwise position of rubber plantation in Tripura is given below : <sup>18</sup>

Name of the District	No. of Jhumia families covered under the scheme	Area up to 1984-87 (in ha.)
West Tripura	212	318
North Tripura	294	441
South Tripura	213	319.5
Total	719	1078.5

From the above table it is clear that the Rubber Plantation Scheme for the resettlement of the jhumias has covered at least some areas of all the three districts of Tripura viz., North Tripura, West Tripura and South Tripura. The Corporation has taken

initiative for the creation of 1200 ha. for rehabilitating 800 families in Tripura during the period from 1984-87 but in fact, the physical achievement is 719 jhumia families and 1078.5 ha. area being covered under the Scheme.

Besides, mention may be made that the Tripura Forest Development and plantation Corporation with 44 rubber plantation centres in Tripura is engaged in raising large scale rubber plantation in the State. It has been estimated that the corporation so far raised 6,692.81 ha. up to 1986-87. The physical achievement during the year 1986-87 is given below : <sup>19</sup>

Rubber plantation raised : 903.99 ha.

Maintenance of older rubber plantation : 5788.82

Rubber seedling nursery raised : 17,500 Nos.

Budwood mother plants raised : 10,000 Nos.

Polybag rubber nursery raised : 3,61,000

Tapping of rubber trees : 422 block (ha)

It is significant to note that the corporation with a big project in hand has already generated 7.00 lakhs mandays during the year 1986-87 of which 60% are tribal jhumias. Not only that the corporation has already raised 592.25 ha. area up to 1986-87 with a view to settling the landless jhumias at Karringchhera, Padmonagar, Warrangbari, Kalkalia and Banbazar.

There is no doubt that the above schemes for the settlement of materially backward jhumias will be very effective from socio-economic point of view. But it is important to note that in spite of sincere efforts by the Government a good number of landless jhumias are not spontaneously accepting the Project in their tribal areas, rather they are reacting against such schemes. This will be evident from the fact that as per report of the Rubber Plantation Development Scheme, Phase II of the Rubber Board, about 527 permits were issued to the growers during the current year of 1989 and out of which total number of 75 permits were issued to Scheduled Tribes and 116 permits to Scheduled Castes and the rest of the permits were issued to the general growers. That means, the percentage of the Scheduled tribes and Scheduled Castes in relation to general category are 14% and 22% respectively. Hence, it would not be improper to comment that the acceptance of the aforesaid

Reaction among the Jhumias

schemes on the part of the jhumias is not very encouraging. The reasons are : In the first place, the primary need for taking up a new project, it is essential that a minimum of 50 ha. of Government Khash land is available under the Gaon Sabha in a compact block. So, in the absence of Khash land, the implementation of the above scheme is very difficult. Secondly, the Gaon Panchayat is to initiate proposal indicating clearly the quantum of land available, Tehsil, Mouza etc. of the proposed area to the Corporation. This procedure is lengthy and complicated for the ordinary jhumias. Thirdly, barring growers in traditional rubber growing areas owning more than 5 ha. of rubber including new planting proposed to be carried out all other categories of growers will be granted assistance and the demand that the applicant should have clear title to the land in respect of which assistance is sought for cannot be applicable because a good number of tribals still do not possess ownership document of land. Fourthly, it has been laid down in the norms that on receipt of the proposal the technical feasibility of the proposed site will be checked up by the authority concerned. It has been experienced that sometimes the proposal is subject to official formality and delay. Fifthly, the beneficiaries are generally selected by the Gaon-Pradhans who might have vested interest in such deals. The fact also remains that for all kinds of approaches to the authority, the ordinary jhumias still depend upon their Gaon-Pradhans who fully exploit the situation. It has been reported that in a number of cases middlemen illegally collected good amount of money, as application fee from the ordinary jhumias, and also giving them false assurance that they will help in issuing necessary permits to them. Sixthly, the beneficiaries under the scheme may avail of long term financial credits from banks under the Agricultural Refinance and Development Corporation's Scheme in order to supplement the financial and other assistance granted by the Board as well as to acquire financial liquidity for undertaking the planting operations but unfortunately, the role of the banks is not encouraging in the sense that unnecessarily banking authorities consume too much time in issuing loans to small growers. Finally, a belief is very strong among the jhumias that ultimately Government will encroach the allotted land which is earmarked for rubber plantations. The notion is however wrong, queer and fictitious.

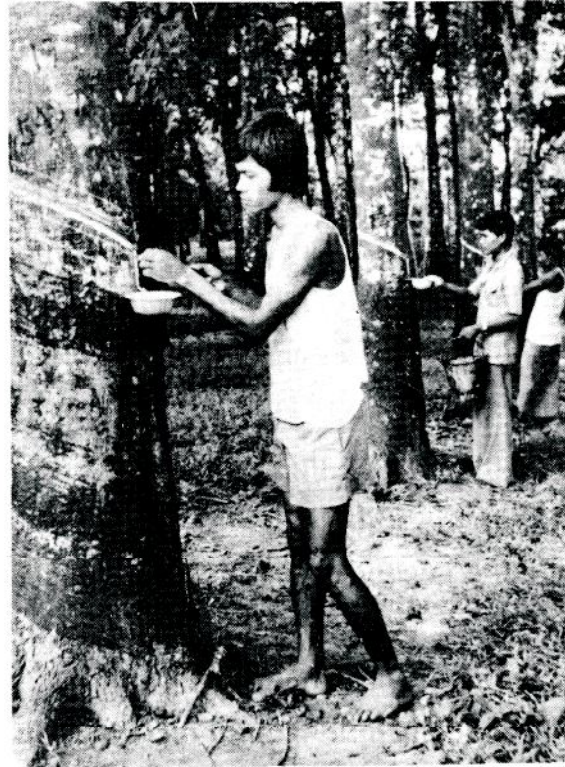


Rubber Plantation has opened up a new horizon of economy

It is thus quite evident that the transition from the shifting to tapping is beset with various problems which need careful considerations. From our previous experience

Observation

we have seen that the two schemes viz., Settlement Scheme and Colony Scheme for weaning the Jhumias away from shifting cultivation failed to play a great role in rehabilitation. The most important defect in the above schemes was their sole reliance only on agriculture. Though there were provisions for settled farming, horticulture and animal husbandry but all these had very negligible impact on the household economy. A good number of families deserted the colonies due to inadequate supply of cultivable land. Moreover, the colonies had serious disadvantages in respect of irrigation, lack of education, and medical facilities and a good system of communication. Not only that the payment of the Jhumia grant was not always properly timed. Most surprisingly, many of Jhumia settlers were deprived of the specified area of land. As for instance, though officially the Jhumias were, allotted with 1.62 ha. of land yet the actual area allotted was much less.<sup>20</sup> So, it should



The tribals have become accustomed to latex collection

be borne in mind that emphasis should not be upon plantations alone, on the other hand it should be three- dimensional forestry based. It may rightly be beleived that if administrative lacunae are removed, educational facilities expanded, occupational patterns widened, the jhumia will take more interest to accept the new Scheme for improving their economic conditions. We must also see that implementation of such a scheme also entails far reaching socio-cultural changes and if no attention is given in paving the way for necessary social changes, the future result may not be good. History gives us evidence that in the scheme of large scale peasant resettlement in Congo, the social aspect was not given due emphasis and as a result of which the settlement Scheme met with only limited success. Here, Mr. P.D. Schlippe's

opinion may be taken as a representative statement " One cannot help feeling that the danger of developing agriculture for the sake of production without a parallel social adjustment has yet been overcome." <sup>21</sup> In support of this opinion Dr. B. S. Guha's observation may be referred. According to him the Adis of N.E.F.A largely dropped meat and different vegetables from their diet after taking to wet cultivation. <sup>22</sup> It is because of the fact that Adis used to hunt gamas and produce various vegetables on the jhum which are not possible in the new conditions. It has been further told that the position of women also suffered a fundamental change. Instead of women being economically independent, they have now become fully dependent, with the result that normal Adi domestic situation has broken down and great disparity of ages in marriage has occurred, such as youngmen marrying old women and vice versa. <sup>23</sup> Similar changes are not uncommon amongst the Jhumias of Tripura. Again, it has been found that after taking to plough cultivation the Jhumia village has ceased to be a living community. It is now an aggregate of some isolated units. Many of the traditional customs which provided recreation to the whole community are being abandoned at the cost of important village politics, rivalry and social disputes.

As regards education of the Jhumia Children, it may be noted that the type of education they receive in the traditional School, alienate them from their home and culture. The Jhumia children gradually feel encouraged to give up Village life and seek their fortune in some nearby town. He prefers to be a peon in an office rather than remain an agriculturist on his own field. The so-called educated jhumias begin to imitate the foreigners in dress and talk and draws inspiration not from their traditional culture but from foreign culture. Coming back to village he begins to look down upon his own ignorant folk. As a result, the new gap between a small so-called elite group of the Jhumias and a very large section of the general population began to become wider and wider undermining much of the equanimous composition of their earlier society. It is encouraging to note that to avoid this trend, the Government of Orissa first started a special type of residential schools having a vocational and agricultural bias. These schools which have now come to be known as Ashram Schools have since been extended to other tribal areas also. <sup>24</sup> Following the above

example one Ashram type of institution was founded by the Tripura Administration at Champaknagar near Agartala for the tribal children only. The attempt was not successful due to the fact that the type of education was not in conformity with the tribal ways of life and thought. What is needed most for such special type of residential schools is that the impartation of education must be through the medium of Kak-barak of tribal languages. The curricula of these schools should include training in suitable crafts and agriculture, horticulture besides learning the three R'S. Again, in order to make the atmosphere more homely, music and dances which are the characteristics of tribal life are to be introduced.

It should also be noted that Jhumia Welfare Programmes are to be based on respect and an appreciation of the Social, Psychological and economic problems with which they are involved. It is to be kept in mind that the welfare and development programmes in tribal areas generally involve a measure of disturbance in relation to traditional beliefs and practices. So, in their implementation, the confidence of the Jhumias and the understanding and goodwill of the elders of the Jhumia communities are of the highest importance. It would be appropriate if the anthropologists, the economists, the administrators, the Specialists and above all the elders of the Jhumia communities work as a team in approaching the problems of the Jhumias. For this, the process of conversion from a jhumia to a tapper will be gradual one but it is believed with the known technology and sound research base, we can change the grim economic picture of the jhumia to usher in an era of peace, prosperity and happiness.

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# MAP OF TRIPURA

Scale 18 Miles to an inch

