

Gods and Goddesses of Tripura Society

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Abstract

India is a country of diverse Gods and Goddesses. Every religion, every state and every community has a unique tradition and customs for worshipping their deities. This is also the case in Tripura State, which is home to 19 tribal communities. Here is a brief discuss about the gods and goddesses of the Tripura community. Out of the many Gods and Goddesses here, Rondokmwtai(Mailuma/Khuluma) and Noksumwtai are two of the most important. The people of Tripura are basically naturists and nature worshippers. The God and Goddesses worshiped in Tripura society are composed of various nature elements including forest, water, soil, sky, moon, sun, planets, stars, earth, cosmos, etc. Tripuras worship their own deities according to their own rules. Deities are also named according to their own mother tongue. Although the name of the God and Goddesses worshiped by the Hindus, the method of performing the worship etc. are almost similar to these God and Goddesses of Tripura, they are not the same. Idol worship is not practiced in Tripura society even in tribal society. In the puja ceremony of Tripura, only the symbols of the deity are used as symbols of the deity in the seat of worship Wathop (making by bamboo), Dip, Marai, Khong, Nagri, Thalongma, etc. are used as aggregates of worship. As a result, the people did not need Brahmins to conduct the puja ceremonies. According to their own Culture, Religion, Customs, the Tripura people perform the puja with priest Chantai, Deorai or Ochai. All puja-parvan work is done hand in hand by Achai.

Keyword: Ochai/ Priest in Tripura Society, Benevolent deities, malevolent deities.

Introduction: Worship of Tripura Tribe is nature worshipers called Animism. Most of their worship is done in forests, rivers or streams. Tripura's own deities or deities that are intrinsically associated with Tripura society in daily life include – Matai Garja, Lampra Matai, Mailuma Matai, Khuluma Matai, Ker Mwtai, Garia/Garoiya Matai, Kaleaya Matai, Katharok Matai, Tuima Matai, Hachukma Matai, Longtharai matai or Chalaba Matai etc. At every step from birth to death Tripura Tribe spend their lives through worship several God and Goddesses.

Brif About the Priest(Ochai) in Tripura Society:

Ochai refers to performing all the puja parvan for the good and bad of the Tripura society. He is omnipotent in the performance of parvani, the worship of the gods and goddesses of Tripura. Even today this kind of Ochai practice is prevalent in Tripura society. Tripura caste society is generally Ochai divided into two classes. Namely they are Ochai kasong and Ochaiyung. Ochai kasong is usually village, Performs minor puja parvan and perform all types of puja parvans in Ochaiyung society but can be Ochai kasong and Ochaiyung if he has received mantra tantra through 'Bantak Lamani' ceremony.

Ochai's will be obliged to worship all types of society. According to custom the Ochai's after performing the pooja get a share of the total of the pooja as 'Mui Ochai' and as a reward for performing the pooja the Ochai's get something called 'Ochai Gurbana'. But they cannot claim it. In the past, the people of the house in which the puja was performed had to go and work in Ochai jhum instead of Ochai. This is called "Ochaino Yak Sumani". Today this practice is almost extinct. Since the coming into force of the Tripura Society Customary Law, Ochai's are entitled to a minimum of 10 rupees to a maximum of 60 rupees as Ochai Gurbana by the householder as Ochai Gurbana in proportion to the time spent performing the puja as per the rules of every Ochai puja. At present when an ochai goes to perform a puja parvan the payment is made based on one day's attendance.

Tantric physician swargiya Alindrala Tripura explains the term 'Ochai' in his book "Tribal Culture and Tantric Medicine of Tripura" on page 57 as follows:

"The word 'Ochai' is probably derived from the word "Achai". Achai means birth. Ochai helps the pregnant women in delivery. A special person was denoted by this word Ochai as a helper, director of action. Ochai is the representative of the deity. The intention of the deity is expressed through the Ochai. Ochai rules regulation it is to be observed. It is to be observed in eating and drinking. Ochai is worshipful individuals, king also have to respected and worshiped Ochai"

He also wrote a 20 page Ochai or priestly aid book called "Ochai Yakhwrai" in 1993 AD on the initiative of TTAADC on the identity, importance, functions, and practices of Ochais. "Ochai Yakhwrai" is the main objective of writing Ochai sahaj pustak to maintain the Ochai tradition in Tripura society and to perform all the rituals in the society from birth to death properly by Ochai except Brahmins. The opinion of the author of the book "Ochai Yakhwrai" is as follow:

"Ochai Yakhwrai bijap Ochairokni bagwi swijakya. Ochairok achaimani, kailaimani, yakheba thwimani samung tangthun. Chini samaj sayong sampurna other sak sak yakung bai bachathung haikhai kagwi Tripura sajamni yago ochai yakhwrai usirijakkha"

'Barua' and Tangsarai will be the assistants of these two Ochai to assist Ochai in the work of worship. 'Barua' helps Ochai in all the puja work and Tangsarai performs the animal sacrifice after completion of the triya of all the puja offerings by Ocha. In Tripura society, if someone falls ill, faces danger then someone is consumed by the auspicious and inauspicious gods and goddesses. Therefore, Ochais propitiates them by offering sacrifices of domesticated animals such as ducks, roosters, goats, pigs etc. Even in that case even the tail of the black dog is seen to be used as an accessory of worship. Some of the malefic deities who use black dog's tail as an object of worship include Burasa, Talbetal etc. Also various auspicious deities are involved in our daily life. Such auspicious and malefic deities include Banirok-khanirok, Burasa, Toini Burasa, ikhitra-bikhitra, khwrangma- khwrangsa, ayuk kithar Lairing, Sareni baja, Khilamithing, Toiwakha etc.

Benevolent deities:-

Benevolent deities mean such a deities who show the right way and protect its practitioners. Heavenly

gods and benevolent deities Also, protective gods, tutelary gods, guardian deities, etc. Gods who function to protect the people and their land and bring good fortune to both.

- 1. Matai Garja/Matai Ganjama:** Matai Garja is the supreme deity and Matai katarma is his consort. These deities are worshipped for the enhancement of prosperity and security. They are worshipped house hold wise or community wise. For these deities a goose is required to be offered. Sometime he goat is also offered in case of a promise. Along with this offering banana, sundried rice, vermilion, banal leaf and nut etc. are required; this worship takes place the house. Matai Garja is parallel to Lord Siva of Hindus.
- 2. Hachukma Matai:** Goddess of hills and mountains, parallel to Parvati Mata, consort of lord Siva, resident of the Kailash Mountain of the Himalayas. Hachukma Matai is worshipped for the welfare of the people. She is worshipped on the hills by achai on behalf of the community or village.
- 3. Tuima/ Tuibukma:** Goddess of water and parallel to the Ganges of Hindu pantheon. This deity is worshipped as a household goddess as well as village goddess as a precautionary measure against the attack of pox, cholera etc. they worship the Tuima deity on the river. As the water helps to speed the disease so they worship the goddess of the river not to contain the disease. To worship the deity one he goat or one buffalo is needed as offering.
- 4. Sangrama:** Sangrama (Husband of Tuima) is the god of wealth and prosperity. If any member of a family suffers very frequently from diseases and illness the worship of the Sangrama deity take place to overcome the suffering. It is a household deity. At the court yard of the house the Sangrama deity is worshipped. For this deity two fowls are required as offerings. In want of fowls, this puja or worship can be performed with two eggs also.
- 5. Mailuma:** Goddess of paddy and other crops and is parallel to goddess Laxmi of Hindus. Mailoma is the Goddess of fortune, wealth and prosperity.
- 6. Khuluma:** Kholoma are also goddesses of cotton and prosperity. These two deities are household deities. Two fowls are sacrificed for these two deities as offering during this worship. Inside the house the deities are worshipped.
- 7. Nakchhu Matai:** The guardian of homestead a female deity. Noksu Matai is worshipped at homestead to this deity a fowl or a pig of any size is needed. After the worship the cooked meat is offered to the deity. There after the meat is eaten by the achai and his helper 'Barua' along with the family member of the household.
- 8. Kalea-Garia/ Garoiya:** Gods of success. Every year in the first week of Vaishaka (April) these two deities are worship individually or collectively. They are the god of agriculture and crops. Kalea and Garoiya deity is more prominent and worshipped as the god of crops and good harvest in the Huk cultivation. Garoiya is also called 'Wakalok Matai'. Maybe it says so because Garia/Garoiya is made of bamboo. Garoiya dance is performed while Garoiya worship. When the gods are worshipped jointly it called 'Bonike'. Garia is worshiped by ochai by cutting the rooster with wathap.
- 9. Kusumrok:** This deity is regarded as the son of Garia in Tripura society. Illness if there is especially headache, eye disease etc. this deity is worshiped with two black roosters by making wathap bamboo craft (Chanduta Misiri) at the base of any tree not far from the house.
- 10. Akhata and bikhitra/ lampra:** They are the sons of the Matai Garja and Matai katarma. The two deities are jointly named as 'Lampra'. These two deities are worshipped in Tripura community in the

beginning of all social and religious ceremonies. They are the gods of sky and sea. They are worshipped for the well-being of the society.

11. **Sakal Matai:** This is considered as god of health. In the last part of magh or in phalgun (January, February) this deity is worshipped deity and it is worshipped Sakal/ Sakal Matai is a household deity and it is worshipped in the courtyard with different types of cakes prepared with oil and without oil along with other offerings. In the evening a he-goat is sacrificed inside the house to the deity. It protects the family members from the evil eye of the evil spirits.
12. **Kharchi Matai:** The worship of fourteen Gods and Goddess all being Brahman call ones is called Kharchi puja or 'Chaturdesh Devta puja' (worship of fourteen Gods and Goddess). They are Lord Siva (Hara), Goddess Durga (Uma), Lord Vishu (Hari), Laxmi(Ma), Kumar, Ganesa, Bani, Sikhi, Abdhi, Kshama, Himadri, Bidhi, Ganga Kama. The king of Tripura was the founder of this worship.
13. **Ker puja:** It is a presiding deity of both individual and community life of mass people royal family. It is performed either on Tuesday or Saturday after days of the end of week- long Kharchi Matai. It is performed within fortified area. Nobody is allowed to go out or enter during the worship for the period of one day and two nights. Absolute serenity and solitude are a must to be maintained for the worship. It brings well- being and prosperity for the whole community.
14. **Katharok:** When the principal deities namely Sukundrai and Mukundrai are combined worshipped are called Katharok.

Malevolent deities:

The following deities are named as malevolent in the Tripura society. All these deities are worshipped as household deities related with the persons concerned.

1. **Burasa:** A male deity stands for diseases. When a household member, especially the children cry incessantly from severe pain or fever it is believed that the 'Burasa Matai' has caused this disease. In order to cure the patient they worship this Matai with two black fowls along with two eggs. The worship of this deity takes place outside the village.
2. **Chhakaljook:** The guardian deity of witches. To be cured the illness caused by the witches the Chhakaljook deity is worshipped. Cooked meat of the tortoise and pork are offered to this deity as offering. The Chhakaljook is worshipped outside the village. She is a female.
3. **Haichukma or hachukma:** A female deity. She is the wife of 'Burasa'. She rules over animals and forests. The Tripura's believe that when any domesticated animal is lost, they pray to this deity to get back the animal. If this deity is promised, she gives back the domestic animal lost. The deity is worshipped in the jungle with two black fowls or a pig of any size.
4. **Thomnairok and bonirok:** As these two deities are called the messengers of death news, they are worshipped to keep them in good humour. He or she goes along with two chickens or two eggs are required as offerings in the courtyard. For Bonirok two fowls or two geese are needed to offer. The Bonirok deity is worshipped in the jungle.

Conclusion

Any ethnic group in the world has its own social culture and folk culture. Similarly, the society of Tripura nation has spread folk culture since ancient times. Gods and Goddesses in Religious Eyes in Tripura Society very ancient. Ochai and uathap are mandatory in any puja- parvan in Tripura society. Two uathaps are required in the normal puja- parvana. But in the case of the dead or in the case of

supernatural actions, three uathaps are necessary. Belief in rebirth also exists among the Tripuras. They believe that a man after his death takes birth again. But re- birth takes place in different manner. If a person during his life time performs good deeds and leads a pious life then his next birth would be human. On the other hand if a man does bad deeds during his life time then after death he would take birth as abest or animals. Tripuras perform several rituals and pujas till birth to death. To be in harmony with nature, the tribals of Tripura worship the above mentioned deities with respect.

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