



A study on Traditional Dress of Indigenous people of Tripura

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Abstract: Tripura, one of the northeastern states of India, is home to several indigenous communities with rich cultural traditions that have been preserved over generations. Among these traditions, traditional dress plays a vital role in expressing cultural identity, social values and historical continuity. The indigenous people of Tripura, including communities such as the Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Chakma, Halam and Mog, possess distinctive forms of attire that vary according to gender, occasion and community affiliation. These garments are primarily handwoven using traditional looms and natural materials, reflecting the close relationship between indigenous culture and the natural environment. This study aims to examine the traditional dress of the indigenous people of Tripura, focusing on its types, materials, designs and cultural significance. The paper adopts a descriptive and analytical approach based on secondary sources such as books, research articles and government reports. It also explores the role of traditional weaving practices, particularly the contribution of women, in preserving cultural heritage. Further, the study highlights the impact of modernization, changing lifestyles and market influences on traditional dressing practices. The findings emphasize that while traditional attire continues to be worn during festivals and rituals, its everyday use is gradually declining. The study concludes by stressing the need for preservation and promotion of indigenous dress through policy support, cultural awareness and sustainable livelihood initiatives.

Keywords: Traditional dress, Indigenous people, Tripura, Handloom weaving, Cultural identity, Tribal communities, Indigenous heritage, Northeastern India

1. Introduction

Tripura is in the northeastern part of India and shares an international border with Bangladesh. Its geography, past and large number of different ethnic groups have shaped its culture in a way that is unique. The state is mostly made up of native people whose ways of life have changed over time as they've interacted with forests,

hills and river systems. A lot of different cultural practices have been kept alive in these communities. These include language, traditions, festivals, food habits and artistic expressions. Traditional clothing is one of the most important because it serves both practical purposes and is a powerful way to show cultural identity. In indigenous societies, clothing represents social norms, group identity and historical awareness. This is why it is an important part of understanding indigenous culture in Tripura. The traditional clothes of the people who live in Tripura are an important part of their social system and daily life. Conditions like weather, work and social structure can change how people dress, which makes clothes that are both useful and culturally significant. Indigenous clothes are usually light, comfortable and made for the humid temperature of the area. They also have beautiful patterns and colors that show how the people feel about fashion. Each indigenous group has its own unique way of dressing, which can change depending on the person's gender, age, marriage status, or the purpose of the ceremony. For instance, some clothes and patterns are only worn at holidays, religious ceremonies and important events in people's lives, like weddings. In everyday life, people wear simpler clothes. Traditional clothing communicates social identity and cultural belonging within and between groups through these changes. One of the most important ways that the native people of Tripura make their traditional clothes is by weaving. It is mostly done in the home and has a lot to do with women's jobs and responsibilities in the family and community. Girls are taught weaving techniques, patterns and symbolic meanings from a very young age. This keeps traditional knowledge alive from one generation to the next.



Fig. 1 Traditional Dress of Tripura

There are, however, big changes happening in traditional ways of dressing right now because of development, globalization and socio-economic change. New fashion tastes and lifestyle goals have come about because of living in cities, having more mobility, going to school and being exposed to mass media, especially among younger groups. Clothes that are easy to find, cheap and made in large quantities have slowly replaced handmade clothes in everyday life. So, people are wearing traditional clothes only at festivals, cultural shows and community celebrations more and more. Even though these events continue to strengthen cultural identity, the fact that traditional clothing isn't worn as often in everyday life makes people worry about the slow fall of weaving practices and the loss of cultural knowledge that goes along with them. Because of this, studying the traditional clothes of the native people of Tripura is important for both culture and education. Looking at traditional clothes from other cultures can teach us a lot about identity, gender roles, sustainability and cultural resilience in general. The goal of this study is to look into the traditional dress of different tribal groups in Tripura, figure out what cultural and social meanings it has and look at the problems that come up when trying to keep it alive in a society that is changing so quickly. The study's goal is to help people understand indigenous heritage by collecting and analyzing traditional clothing. It also wants to show how important it is to keep traditional clothing alive as an important part of cultural variety and intangible cultural heritage.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the major indigenous communities of Tripura and their traditional attire
2. To examine the materials, designs and weaving techniques used in indigenous clothing
3. To understand the cultural and social significance of traditional dress
4. To analyze the impact of modernization on indigenous dressing practices
5. To highlight the need for preservation and promotion of traditional attire

3. Methodology

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods to look at the traditional clothes of the people who live in Tripura. There are a lot of secondary sources used in this research because the study's main goal is not to collect original statistical data but to look at cultural patterns, historical continuity and social significance. Many written works have been looked at, such as books on ethnography and tribal culture, study papers that have been reviewed by experts in the field, government documents, census reports

and reports from cultural and anthropological organizations. These sites tell you a lot about the social and cultural background of indigenous groups and the clothes they wear traditionally. To learn about the design elements, motifs and material composition of traditional clothing, people have used both written sources and culture documentation like museum archives, exhibition catalogs and visual records. Photographs and other well-documented artifacts are good ways to see how people dressed differently in different groups and for different ceremonies. Researchers have also looked at ethnographic studies done by others to learn more about native weaving customs, the roles of men and women in textile production and the symbolic meanings of different clothes and patterns. With these studies, we can learn more about how traditional dress is linked to people's real cultural experiences. To figure out what the combined data means, the study uses both descriptive and analytical methods. The descriptive method is used to list the different kinds of traditional clothes, the materials that are used and the ways that they are worn in different communities. The analysis method, on the other hand, helps to look into the cultural, social and symbolic meanings of traditional clothes. The study looks at how modernization and changing lives have affected the ways that indigenous people dress by comparing them. This method allows for a complete and culturally sensitive study of traditional dress among the native people of Tripura by combining data from many secondary sources.

4. Indigenous Communities of Tripura

Many different kinds of indigenous groups live in Tripura. Each has its own language, customs and way of running society. These neighborhoods are an important part of the state's culture and demographics and they have made important contributions to its cultural history. In order to study traditional dress, it is important to understand the indigenous communities of Tripura. This is because clothing practices are closely linked to ethnic identity, historical background and community-specific customs. Communities' traditional clothes often differ because of their different cultural beliefs, where they live and how they've interacted with neighboring areas in the past. Tripura's native people are mostly from the Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan racial groups. Different groups, like the Tripuri, Reang (Bru), Jamatia, Noatia, Halam, Chakma and Mog, have kept their own cultural identities while also sharing some things, like how they traditionally weave and dress for ceremonies. Language is a big part of cultural identity. For example, many native groups speak Kokborok. Other groups, like the Chakma and Mog communities, get their language and culture from Buddhism and other nearby areas. The following table gives a quick outline of Tripura's main indigenous groups, showing their ancestry, language and most important cultural traits. This grouping helps us understand the state's cultural variety and gives us a way to look at how traditional dress varies from one

community to the next. The study's goal is to give a full and community-specific picture of Tripura's traditional clothing heritage by placing traditional clothing within the larger context of indigenous societies.

Table 1: Major Indigenous Communities of Tripura

Indigenous Community	Ethnic Affiliation	Language Spoken	Cultural Identity
Tripuri	Tibeto-Burman	Kokborok	Weaving, festivals, clan-based society
Reang (Bru)	Tibeto-Burman	Bru	Distinct weaving patterns, rituals
Jamatia	Tibeto-Burman	Kokborok	Community-based customs
Noatia	Tibeto-Burman	Kokborok	Traditional festivals and dress
Halam	Tibeto-Burman	Halam	Handwoven attire
Chakma	Indo-Aryan	Chakma	Buddhist influence on dress
Mog	Tibeto-Burman	Mog	Burmese cultural influence

5. Traditional Dress of Indigenous People of Tripura

Native people of Tripura wear traditional clothes that are an important part of their cultural history and social identity. It shows how the communities have changed to fit their natural surroundings, their economic activities and their deeply held cultural customs. Not only does indigenous clothing serve a purpose, it also has a lot of meaning. It shows values, beliefs and memories that have been passed down from generation to generation.

5.1 General Characteristics of Traditional Dress

The traditional clothes of Tripura's indigenous groups are simple, comfortable and useful, which makes them perfect for the humid environment and farming way of life in the area. Most of the time, these clothes are made by hand from light fabrics that are comfortable to wear and allow for easy movement. Although traditional clothes are useful, they look different because they use bright colors and well-thought-out designs. Instead of following the latest fashion trends, the designs often show how the native people like things to look and what they mean to them culturally. The fact that traditional clothing is still worn during rituals and holidays shows that it is still important to the culture, even though everyday clothing styles are changing.

5.2 Women's Traditional Dress

In the native society of Tripura, women's traditional clothing is very important and holds a lot of meaning. Women most often wear the Rignai and the Risa, especially in the Tripuri community, but women from other

indigenous groups also wear clothes that look similar. The Rignai is a bottom piece that is handwoven and goes from the waist to the legs. Often, it has intricate geometric, floral, or symbolic designs on it that show clan membership, marital status, or the ceremonial value of an event. As a breast cover, scarf, or headgear, the Risa is an upper cloth that can be used in different ways. It's especially important at religious events, festivals and community get-togethers, where it stands for honor, respect and national pride. The Rignai and the Risa together show how talented indigenous women are as artists and how they use weaving to keep cultural customs alive.

5.3 Men's Traditional Dress

In the native communities of Tripura, men's traditional clothing is usually simpler, but it is just as important for function and societal meaning. People often wear the Rikutu Gamcha or the Kamchwlwi Borok, which are worn around the waist and are usually worn with a simple top or a short jacket. These clothes are made to be comfortable and allow for easy movement, which is very important for men who work in farms, forests, or other hard labor jobs. Even though men's clothes aren't as fancy as women's, they still show national identity through the colors and weaving styles that are typical of certain communities. Men may wear specially woven clothes that are different from everyday clothes during holidays and rituals.

5.4 Materials and Weaving Techniques

Indigenous ways of sewing and using natural materials are at the heart of how traditional clothes are made in Tripura. Cotton is the most common fiber and people like it because it breathes well, lasts a long time and works well in different climates. A lot of people use traditional handlooms and most weaving is done in people's own homes. This reinforces the idea that textile production is based in the home and in the community. In the past, rich, long-lasting colors were made with natural dyes taken from plants, roots and minerals. These ways of weaving show that indigenous people know how to make things in a way that doesn't harm the environment and they show that traditional traditions and the natural environment can coexist in harmony.

5.5 Symbolism and Cultural Meaning

The clothes that the native people of Tripura wear have a lot of traditional and symbolic meaning. The designs, colors and patterns used to make clothes are often based on spiritual views, nature, or family traditions. Some designs are linked to certain communities or clans, while others show social rank, age, or

involvement in rituals and festivals. By using these symbolic elements, traditional clothing is a way for cultures to talk to each other, showing who they are and where they belong without words. As a result, indigenous clothing is not only a way to protect oneself, but also a way to keep traditional traditions alive and keep society going.

Table 2: Traditional Dress Items of Indigenous People of Tripura

Community	Women's Traditional Dress	Men's Traditional Dress	Special Features
Tripuri	Rignai, Risa	Rikutu Gamcha	Symbolic patterns
Reang	Rignai, Risa	Waist cloth, shawl	Bold colors
Jamatia	Handwoven wrap	Cotton cloth	Ritual significance
Chakma	Pinon, Hadi	Dhoti, kurta	Buddhist influence
Mog	Longyi-style cloth	Shirt, lungi	Burmese style

6. Cultural and Social Significance of Traditional Attire

The clothes that the native people of Tripura wear have a lot of traditional and social meaning. They show who they are, what they believe and how they remember the past. Indigenous clothing is more than just useful; it's also a live cultural practice that links people to their community, ancestors and social environment.

6.1 Traditional Attire as a Marker of Cultural Identity

For the indigenous people of Tripura, traditional clothing is a strong sign of cultural identity and social connection. People show that they are proud of their cultural heritage and belong to a certain group by dressing in traditional clothes. In a society that is changing quickly and where mainstream cultural impacts are becoming more important, indigenous clothing helps people stay true to their ethnic identity. Traditional clothing helps people feel more connected to each other and strengthens group identity through everyday use and special events. An important way for traditional values and social norms to be passed down from one generation to the next is through storytelling.

6.2 Role of Traditional Dress in Festivals and Rituals

When it comes to festivals, traditions and important life events like weddings and community celebrations, traditional clothing is very important. Indigenous communities actively celebrate their cultural traditions at festivals like Garia Puja. Wearing traditional clothing is seen as an important part of these celebrations. Clothes worn to these kinds of events are often more fancy and carefully chosen to show that the event is

holy or celebratory. When people wear traditional clothes to rituals, it shows respect for their ancestors, their spiritual views and the values of their community. In this way, clothes become an important part of both rituals and cultural heritage.

6.3 Symbolism of Designs and Motifs

The designs and patterns that the native people of Tripura use to weave their traditional clothes have deep spiritual meanings. The close connection between the communities and nature can be seen in the many designs that are based on plants, animals and natural landscapes. Other designs come from mythology, folklore and ideas passed down through generations. They represent things like safety, wealth, fertility, or getting along with others. These meaningful details turn traditional clothing into a visual language that keeps cultural stories and shared memories alive. So, each piece of clothing is both an artistic expression and a way of telling a cultural story that has been passed down from generation to generation.

Table 3: Materials, Motifs, and Cultural Meanings in Indigenous Dress of Tripura

Aspect	Description	Cultural Significance
Fabric Used	Cotton (locally grown and hand-spun)	Suitable for humid climate; eco-friendly and sustainable
Weaving Method	Traditional handloom weaving	Preservation of indigenous skills and craftsmanship
Natural Dyes	Plant-based and mineral dyes	Reflect harmony with nature and indigenous ecological knowledge
Common Motifs	Geometric patterns, floral designs, natural symbols	Representation of nature, ancestry, and community identity
Color Usage	Red, black, white, and earthy tones	Symbolism of vitality, purity, tradition, and ritual importance

6.4 Role of Women in Preserving Traditional Attire

In the indigenous villages of Tripura, women are very important when it comes to keeping traditional dress alive. Weaving skills are usually passed down from mothers to daughters, which makes sure that traditional textile knowledge and methods stay alive. Women make a big difference in keeping cultural traditions alive and strengthening group identity through weaving. This job also raises women's status in the home and community because they are seen as guardians of cultural heritage. So, weaving is both a cultural activity and a way for people of different generations to stay close.

6.5 Economic and Social Importance

Traditional clothing is important for more than just its cultural worth. It is also very important for the economy and society. Handwoven clothes are often made for everyday use, but they are also sold at local markets, culture fairs and art shows to help indigenous families make extra money. This part of the economy is especially important for women because it gives them chances to make money and gain power. At the neighborhood level, making and trading traditional clothes helps local economies and encourages long-term ways of making a living. So, traditional clothing is not only a way to show your cultural identity, but it can also help your community and economy grow.

7. Changing Trends and Contemporary Influences

The native people of Tripura's traditional ways of dressing have changed a lot as social, economic and cultural situations have changed. Modernization has made people less likely to wear traditional clothes every day, but recent moves to bring them back show that people are once again interested in preserving indigenous clothing.

7.1 Impact of Modern Education and Urban Lifestyles

Modern schooling and more exposure to city life have had a big impact on changing traditional ways of dressing. As indigenous youth move to cities to go to school and get jobs, they are more and more affected by modern fashion styles and social norms. People often think that modern clothes are better for places like schools, businesses and public places, so people don't wear traditional clothes as much every day. This change is a reflection of larger changes in living and goals that come with becoming more modern.

7.2 Influence of Market-Driven Fashion

These changes have been made even more significant by the rise of market-driven fashion and the wide supply of cheap, ready-made clothes. Clothes made by machines are easier to get, cheaper and need less upkeep, which makes them more appealing than clothes made by hand. Traditional weaving takes a lot of time, skill and care and more and more people think it can't be done for money. Because of this, there is less demand for native clothing, which has an effect on both how it is used and how it is woven in indigenous communities.

7.3 Decline in Everyday Use of Traditional Dress

People now mostly only wear traditional clothes on special events and not every day. Of course, festivals, rituals, weddings and cultural shows are still big events where people wear traditional clothing with pride.

But the fact that traditional clothing isn't worn as much in everyday life makes people worry about the loss of cultural information that comes with it. Younger generations don't have as many chances to learn about traditional clothes and their cultural meaning because they aren't worn as often.

7.4 Revival and Cultural Reassertion

In spite of these problems, there is a growing push to bring back traditional indigenous dress. More and more, indigenous clothing is being shown off at cultural festivals, heritage programs and tourist events as a sign of cultural pride and identity. For indigenous groups, wearing native clothes to public events is a way to show their cultural identity and fight against cultural homogenization. People are trying to get back in touch with their ancestors' traditions and cultural ideals through this revival.

7.5 Role of Government and Institutional Support

The return of traditional dress has been helped a lot by government programs and backing from institutions. Native textiles are made and used more often when handloom promotion programs, culture exhibitions and tourism-related programs are in place. Cultural institutions and non-governmental groups also help by putting together workshops, training programs and campaigns to raise awareness about traditional weaving. These efforts not only help protect traditional clothing, but they also give local artists, especially women, ways to make a living.

8. Challenges in Preservation of Traditional Dress

The indigenous people of Tripura are facing a number of problems that are linked to changes in their economy, society and culture that make it harder for them to keep wearing traditional clothes. These problems have had a big impact on both making and wearing traditional clothing and they pose a threat to the survival of traditional weave knowledge and cultural practices.

8.1 Decline in Traditional Weaving Practices

One of the biggest problems with keeping traditional clothes alive is that traditional weaving methods are slowly dying out. Handloom weaving used to be an important part of everyday life, but fewer families do it now because people's lives and work schedules have changed. Weaving has lost some of its charm because it takes a lot of time and there aren't many good support systems for it. As skilled weavers get older and fewer young people start weaving, important skills and methods could be lost, which would weaken traditional textiles from different parts of the world.

8.2 Influence of Cheap, Machine-Made Textiles

Traditional handmade clothes aren't as popular as they used to be because cheap textiles made by machines are so easy to find. Factory-made clothes are often cheaper, more uniform and easier to find, which makes them a good choice for everyday wear. Handwoven clothes, on the other hand, take a lot more time and work to make and usually cost more. People are less likely to buy traditional clothing because of this price difference, which hurts its production and market importance.

Table 4: Role of Traditional Dress in Social and Cultural Life

Social Context	Use of Traditional Attire	Cultural Importance
Festivals (e.g., Garia Puja)	Specially woven Rignai and Risa	Expression of cultural pride and spiritual devotion
Weddings	Elaborate traditional garments	Symbol of tradition, social status, and community identity
Community Ceremonies	Formal indigenous attire	Reinforces unity and collective belonging
Daily Life (Earlier)	Simple handwoven garments	Practical clothing aligned with indigenous lifestyle
Cultural Performances & Tourism	Traditional attire showcased	Promotion of heritage and cultural awareness

8.3 Lack of Economic Incentives for Weavers

Another major problem is that traditional weavers don't have enough cash incentives. Unfortunately, many tribal weavers do not get paid fairly for their work, which makes weaving an unprofitable job. Low income levels are also caused by not having easy access to markets, not having organized marketing outlets and not getting enough help from the government. Because of this, a lot of skilled weavers have to give up traditional weaving in order to find other ways to make a living, which speeds up the fall of making indigenous clothes.

8.4 Limited Interest Among Younger Generations

Keeping traditional dress alive is also hard because younger people aren't very interested in it. Modern schooling, city life and fashion trends are having a bigger impact on young people. These trends often value comfort and global styles over traditional clothing. People don't always want to learn and practice traditional sewing skills because they think it's out-of-date or less important. This gap between generations is a big

problem for passing on indigenous knowledge and it shows how important it is to keep working to make traditional dress interesting and relevant to younger people.

9. Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Attire

The indigenous people of Tripura need coordinated efforts from the government, non-governmental groups, school systems and local communities to keep and promote their traditional clothing. Because indigenous clothing is important for culture, society and the economy, it needs focused strategies to stay relevant and last in a society that is changing quickly.

9.1 Government and NGO Support for Handloom Products

Supporting traditional handloom goods and indigenous weavers is very important for government agencies and non-governmental groups. Many handloom development plans, financial aid programs and skill development efforts help keep traditional weaving alive by giving people the tools, training and market access they need. NGOs often work closely with indigenous communities to record traditional designs, make products better and spread the word about how important handwoven fabrics are to culture. This kind of support not only helps keep traditional clothes alive, but it also helps makers, especially women, make a living.

9.2 Inclusion of Indigenous Textiles in School Curricula

Indigenous linens and traditional weaving skills can be taught in schools, which is a big step toward preserving culture. Schools can help young people become more culturally aware and proud of their heritage by teaching them about the history, meanings and skills behind traditional clothing. Students can gain a deeper understanding of indigenous culture by taking part in classes, art shows and talking to local craftspeople. This method makes sure that traditional knowledge is passed down in a structured and organized way, instead of just through informal learning in the family.

9.3 Role of Cultural Festivals and Exhibitions

Cultural events like fairs, festivals and displays are great places to show off traditional native clothing. Events that honor indigenous culture get people involved in their communities and with the public, which helps to spark interest in traditional dress. These events give artists a chance to show off their work, talk to more people and get noticed for their skills. Festivals also make traditional clothing more culturally important by linking it to group celebration, pride and identification.

9.4 Promotion through Eco-Tourism and Digital Platforms

Ecotourism and internet platforms are new ways to get people outside of local communities to wear traditional clothes. When tourism projects highlight native cultures, people want to buy traditional clothes as gifts and cultural items. Digital venues, such as social media, online markets and cultural websites, help artists reach more people and interact directly with buyers. These platforms not only help artists get more exposure and market access, but they also help record and keep traditional designs alive in digital form, which is good for the culture's long-term survival.

10. Conclusion

The traditional clothes that the native people of Tripura wear are an important part of their cultural identity, social ideals and historical continuity. These clothes show how closely culture, the environment and community life are connected. They are based on indigenous knowledge systems, local materials and traditional techniques. Traditional clothing is more than just a style of clothing; it's a live cultural symbol that represents shared memories, artistic expression and a sense of community. Native American clothing has meanings that have been passed down from generation to generation through patterns, motifs and weaving methods. Traditional clothing still has cultural, symbolic and emotional meanings, even though modernization, urbanization and global fashion styles are having a bigger impact. Indigenous clothing isn't worn as much these days, but it's still worn at festivals, rituals and other traditional events, which shows that it's still important. When people wear traditional clothes to these events, it helps them feel more connected to their community and proud of their heritage. But the fact that people don't wear traditional clothes as often shows how vulnerable indigenous textile customs are in a world that is changing quickly. It is important to keep up traditional dress not only to protect indigenous identity but also to promote cultural diversity and growth that includes everyone. Traditional weaving gives people a way to make a living, especially women and supports eco-friendly, long-lasting practices that come from local knowledge. So, efforts to protect and support indigenous clothing help both the economy and the continuation of culture. To effectively preserve something, indigenous communities, government agencies, educational institutions and traditional groups must work together. Policies that support handloom weaving, encourage cultural education and make it easier for people to get to markets can help keep these practices alive. Finally, the traditional clothing of the native people of Tripura is an important part of their culture that should be respected, kept safe and spread. To make sure it stays alive, people must work hard to bring traditional practices into modern situations while still

honoring their cultural roots. People can help make sure that this rich cultural heritage lives on and is passed on to future generations in a useful way by valuing and supporting indigenous clothing.

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