



# MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY OF TRIPURA: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE, FESTIVALS, AND TRADITIONS

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**Abstract:** Tripura, a state rich in cultural heritage in Northeast India, showcases a distinctive mix of ethnic, linguistic, and traditional diversity. It is home to a significant tribal population alongside Bengali, Manipuri, and other communities, with its multicultural identity shaped by historical migrations, native traditions, and evolving socio-political landscapes. This research paper explores the role of language, festivals, and traditional customs as fundamental elements in forming and maintaining Tripura's multicultural essence. Utilizing a theoretical framework, it examines constitutional provisions, legal interpretations, policy documents, and academic discussions to comprehend how cultural identity is acknowledged, safeguarded, and negotiated in the area. Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful symbol of identity and community affiliation. Likewise, festivals celebrated by both tribal and non-tribal groups act as venues for cultural expression, promoting unity within and interaction among communities. Traditional customs, from indigenous rituals to craft forms, help preserve collective memory and social continuity. However, modernization, demographic changes, and policy shortcomings present challenges to cultural preservation. The study underscores the necessity for balanced governance that protects cultural rights and encourages coexistence. It reaffirms India's constitutional dedication to linguistic and cultural diversity and advocates for inclusive policies to enhance social harmony. Ultimately, Tripura's multicultural identity remains both robust and adaptable, shaped by the ongoing interplay between tradition, modernity, and legal structures.

**Keywords:** Tripura, multicultural identity, language, festivals, traditions, cultural rights.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The state of Tripura is one of the most diverse cultural landscapes in India since it is situated in the northeastern part of the country. The state is a rich mixture of ethnic, linguistic and traditional communities as its population is represented by a number of different tribal communities, the Bengali settlers and other smaller communities like Manipuri and Chakma ones. The fact that Tripura accommodates numerous identities is what makes it a significant case in comprehending multiculturalism in the Indian constitutional and social-cultural context. Traditionally shaped by the native kingdoms, migration patterns, and socio-political changes, the cultural identity of Tripura has been developed as a dynamic and stratified system in which the tradition and modernity tend to overlap.

Multicultural identity is not only symbolic in Tripura, but it has many cultural expressions in terms of language, festivals and traditional practices that still influence how the people relate with each other. Language is important in the declaration of cultural belonging and the indigenous languages coexist with Bengali, which is extensively used in administration and education. Tribal and non-tribal festivals are communal spaces, which display cultural narrative performance and sharing, enhancing inter-group harmony. Even more, the collective memory and heritage are preserved by traditional practices, including rituals and handicrafts, which all lead to social cohesion and cultural resilience.

This richness of culture however comes with its own problems. The language conservation problem, demographic shifts, cultural assimilation, and the disproportionate policies are some of the issues that define the modern identity discussion in Tripura. In this regard, the necessity to study the way such cultural manifestations are acknowledged and safeguarded in legal and policy frameworks emerges.

It is on this against this background that the current article will explore the role of language, festivals and traditions in the relationship to the multi-cultural identity of Tripura. It also brings to focus the constitutional and policy aspects that affirm cultural diversity and areas where it needs to be further fortified in order to maintain inclusive multicultural development.

By relying on a number of interconnected theoretical and conceptual frameworks, such as the multiculturalism theory, pluralism theory, constitutional identity, cultural rights, and social integration theory, the present paper on the topic of Tripura multicultural identity can be given rigor.

### Objectives of the Study

- To examine how language functions as a marker of cultural identity in Tripura and contributes to the state's multicultural character.
- To analyse the role of festivals—tribal and non-tribal—in shaping social cohesion and expressing collective identity.
- To explore the significance of traditional practices in preserving indigenous heritage and sustaining cultural plurality in Tripura.
- To assess the constitutional and policy frameworks that recognize, protect, and promote cultural diversity in the state.
- To find out what modern issues are influencing the maintenance of multicultural identity, and provide the possible actions to enhance the cultural harmony.

## 2. THEORETICAL / CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Multiculturalism Theory

The theory of multiculturalism considers the society as a mosaic of diverse cultures, which are valuable and unique on their own. This paradigm emphasizes the support and acceptance of cultural variety in the governmental establishments and the general policies, guarding the minority rights against assimilationist tensions. In Tripura, the phenomenon of multiculturalism theory could be used to understand why tribal, Bengali, and other people live on the same territory and have their languages, traditions, and festivals accepted, not just tolerated, but officially recognized by education, cultural preservation programs, and even the government. The theory plays a vital role in minorities and their role within policy initiatives and constitutional defences against cultural homogenization<sup>23456</sup>.

### 2.3 Pluralism Theory

The pluralism theory assumes that there are numerous, competing groups in society and power is distributed among the different organizations, institutions, and clusters of interests. It also stresses on the way social integration is achieved through interaction, negotiation, and compromise between these groups. Local self-government facilities (such as the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council) in Tripura represent the principles of pluralism by providing voice and agency to the tribal people, and sharing power and safeguarding group identities. This framework highlights the manifestation of cultural and linguistic diversity in local government, local ceremonies, local movements, and interethnic communication<sup>78910</sup>.

### 2.4 Constitutional Identity and Cultural Rights.

The constitutional identity of India is deep-rooted in the respect of the cultural rights and protection of minorities as it is evident in the Sixth Schedule of tribal areas and the other provisions of the law. These frameworks protect native practices, languages and communal independence and pluralistic government. In Tripura, mechanisms of constitutional autonomy and security of tribal interests explicitly tie multicultural and pluralistic principles in legal and policy, and therefore ethnic coexistence despite societal tensions or migration pressures<sup>1112</sup>.

### 2.5 Social Integration Theory

Social integration theory is a theory that studies how various groups are able to preserve their uniqueness as they live together in a social life. This has been captured in Tripura by the fact that the various communities participate in common festivals, take collective decisions in their local councils and by the institutions trying

<sup>2</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00380229241306089> (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

<sup>3</sup> <https://tripurauniv.ac.in/site/images/pdf/StudyMaterialsDetail/POLS-801C-Political%20Theory.pdf> (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

<sup>4</sup> Saikat Bhowmik, *The Impact of Multiculturalism in the Life of North East India*, 4 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH 524-530, 2024

<sup>5</sup> Rinashree Khound, *Minority Rights In Indian Democracy: A Multicultural Perspective*, 8 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC & TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH 1438-1441, 2019

<sup>6</sup> [https://irgu.unigoa.ac.in/drs/bitstream/handle/unigoa/3628/J\\_Media\\_Social\\_Develop\\_2%284%29\\_2014\\_19-33.pdf?sequence=1](https://irgu.unigoa.ac.in/drs/bitstream/handle/unigoa/3628/J_Media_Social_Develop_2%284%29_2014_19-33.pdf?sequence=1) (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

<sup>7</sup> LOTUSARISE, <https://lotusarise.com/pluralist-theory-of-state/> (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

<sup>8</sup> SCERTTRIPURA, [https://scerttripura.org/pdf/class11/ClassXIPolital\\_Science\\_English.pdf](https://scerttripura.org/pdf/class11/ClassXIPolital_Science_English.pdf) (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

<sup>9</sup> STUDY.COM, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/pluralist-view-of-interest-groups-on-american-politics.html> (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

<sup>10</sup> [https://synopsisias.com/blog/pluralist-theory-psir-optional-for-upsc?category\\_slug=psir-2-theories-of-the-state](https://synopsisias.com/blog/pluralist-theory-psir-optional-for-upsc?category_slug=psir-2-theories-of-the-state) (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.satp.org/satporctp/countries/india/states/tripura/documents/papers/attf\\_const.htm](https://www.satp.org/satporctp/countries/india/states/tripura/documents/papers/attf_const.htm) (last visited on Nov. 17, 2025)

to maintain the language and culture heritage. The theory assists in visualizing it by providing theoretical insights into the ways of getting integrated via cultural exchange, educational programs, and harmonization of rituals and criticizes cases, in which forced assimilation results in marginalization or even ethnocide<sup>13</sup>.

Together, these frameworks are powerful vehicles to examine how Tripura negotiates its multicultural identity, how it defends it, and how it shapes it through language, festival, tradition, government and constitutional structure<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. ANALYSIS / DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Constitutional Basis of Cultural Identity in India

In India cultural identity has constitutional protection and is guaranteed through different provisions mostly Articles 25 to 30 of the Indian Constitution that provide religious freedom, cultural rights, and minority educational rights. The Sixth Schedule gives tribal areas such as Tripura detailed power to maintain customs, languages and the traditional governance. It is a constitutional structure which protects the cultural integrity of tribes and promotes pluralism. Such landmark cases as *M.P. Sharma v. P. Venkataramaiah v. Satish Chandra. State of Mysore* highlights the role of states in safeguarding particular cultural groups, stating that it is non-assimilationist and highlights affirmative protection of minorities<sup>1516</sup>.

#### 3.2 Multicultural Landscape of Tripura: An Overview

Tripura has a complicated multicultural terrain that includes native tribes that include Tripuris, Reangs, Jamatias and non-tribal Bengalis. This heterogeneity is defined by migration, ethnic mixing, and political concession in the past. The existence of linguistic plurality and various religious faiths expresses a grid wherein cultural coexistence is not only glorified but also argued. Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) is a good example of a structural acknowledgment of this diversity, which is created by law and socio-political movements<sup>1718</sup>.

#### 3.3 Language as a Core Element of Identity

Language is a basic factor of cultural identity, and it plays a role in oral traditions, rituals, and the creation of collective memory. In Tripura, the native tongues such as Kokborok and Chakma have been accepted both by the law and society as the signs of tribal identity. The Official Language Act requires the use of two languages, thus enhancing the diversity of languages. Policies in education that embrace the teaching of the mother tongue show the dilemma of how to balance the preservation of cultural heritage against the requirements of the state language. Still, one of the difficulties is to stop the slow disappearance of the less spoken languages in an area where Bengali is the dominant language politically and socially<sup>192021</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Debraj Deb, Charvak, *Media and Stereotypes on Ethnicity: A Study of Framing Chakma Migration In Tripura*, 6 GLOBAL MEDIA JOURNAL, 2025

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/tripura/documents/papers/attf\\_const.htm](https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/tripura/documents/papers/attf_const.htm) (last visited on Nov. 20, 2025)

<sup>17</sup> BANOTES, <https://banotes.org/democracy-development-northeast/tripura-ethnic-composition-tribal-bengali-cultures/> (last visited on Nov. 21, 2025)

<sup>18</sup> <https://tripura.gov.in/cultural-heritage> (last visited on Nov. 21, 2025)

<sup>19</sup> <https://healthinformaticsjournal.com/index.php/IJMI/article/view/1703> (last visited on Nov. 22, 2025)

<sup>20</sup> Mr. Nimai Sarkar, *Language as a Tool for Social Cohesion and Cultural Identity in Indian Society*, 7 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH 1-6, 2025

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Pritilata Debbarma, *Kokborok Language and Its Role in Identity, Unity, and Modern Challenges*, 2 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH, 462-472, 2024

### 3.4 Festivals as Collective Cultural Expressions

Festivals in Tripura are communal manifestations of cultural pluralism, which enhances social fabric and ethnic pride. Tribal festivals like Garia Puja, Kharchi Puja and Biju are communally based festivals which entail ritual performances, and native spirituality, which are endorsed and embraced by the state cultural policies. The inclusion of Bengali festivals, such as Durga Puja is also a significant feature of Bengali festivals and is a symbol of syncretism and inter-ethnic peace. Not only as a part of cultural rights these celebrations are under the protection of the living heritage of the tribes of Tripura that includes not only dance and oral literature but also customary laws. These are practices that are legally recognized in the Sixth Schedule and under the customary law, which are in parallel with the formal law of a state. This two-layered approach protection system ensures the autonomy of indigenous people and supports the preservation of culture. But there arises tension when the traditional land rights or customary governance are subverted by a modern law or economic development project necessitating the reconciliatory mechanisms on policy systems<sup>2223</sup>.

### 3.5 Custom vs. Modern State Law: Points of Conflict

Conflicts often happen when tribal customary laws and modern state laws differ, especially in areas like land rights, resource management, and social norms. The Sixth Schedule gives some autonomy, but overlapping rules and unclear boundaries can cause disputes over who has authority. Cases like *Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v. Union of India* show how courts try to balance tribal customs with the constitution. In Tripura, finding ways to resolve these issues is important to prevent alienation and violence. This calls for flexible legal systems and involving communities in decision-making<sup>242526</sup>.

### 3.6 Role of Policies, Governance, and Institutions

Tripura has state policies and institutions such as TTAADC, Tribal Welfare Departments, and cultural ministries which are crucial in upholding the multiculturalism in Tripura. Education policies, language conservation, cultural festivals and economic development policies are a product of constitutional requirements and international conventions such as ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous Rights. Governing systems focus on participation in decision-making and affirmative action in order to defend minorities but translating it into practice and political disputes are obstacles<sup>2728</sup>.

### 3.7 Challenges to Multicultural Harmony

These are demographic changes through migration, language dominance, resource competition, identity politics and at times ethnic conflict. Authenticity is threatened by the loss of tribal languages, a lack of representation in urban areas, and cultural commodification. Furthermore, inequality exacerbates tensions in

<sup>22</sup> <https://ttaadc.gov.in/CULTURAL-DANCE> (last visited on Nov. 22, 2025)

<sup>23</sup> Mr Shyamal Debbarma, Dr Rajeev Kumar Jain, *Indigenous Culture and Heritage of Tripura*, 30 EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE 5989-5994, 2024

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.isec.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/WP-429-Rajiv-Tiwari\\_2-final.pdf](https://www.isec.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/WP-429-Rajiv-Tiwari_2-final.pdf) (last visited on Nov. 22, 2025)

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> <https://banotes.org/democracy-development-northeast/tripura-ethnic-composition-tribal-bengali-cultures/> (last visited on Nov. 22, 2025)

both developed and developing countries, and there are no alternative policy solutions that would not rely on the values of cultural sensitivity, legal safeguards, and inclusive development<sup>293031</sup>.

### 3.8 Opportunities for Cultural Integration and Sustainability

The opportunities are in the advancement of intercultural communication, multi-lingual education, heritage tourism, and empowerment of independent institutions. The current information technology has the capability of supporting documentation and digital preservation of languages and traditions. Anywhere there is a cultural sensitivity in the development of strategies of sustainable development, this will enhance community resilience. The joint governance structures with tribal representation and equal distribution of resources have the potential of achieving sustainable multicultural coexistence<sup>3233</sup>.

## 4. FINDINGS

The doctrinal analysis shows that Tripura is a multicultural identity that is formed majorly due to the linguistic plurality, variety of festivals and traditional practices that have a rich heritage. Among the major points, it is important to note that in spite of the quick pace of modernization and demographic shift, the indigenous cultural manifestations remain at the core of social unity. Such languages as Kokborok, as well as Bengali and tribal dialects, serve as the means of identity, helping not only to preserve culture but also to communicate with each other. Festivals (Kharchi Puja, Garia Puja, Buisu and Durga Puja) serve as socialising places where communities meet, which strengthens the respect amongst each other and their culture.

The other important discovery is that although the constitutional clauses, in particular, Article 29, 30, and tribal safeguarding Articles in the Sixth Schedule can provide a solid framework of protecting the cultural rights, some practical loopholes in protecting them still exist. The native languages and practices are usually inadequately institutionally developed, especially in institutional learning systems, written sources and governmentally supported cultural marketing. The legal framework ensures cultural autonomy however fails to completely control issues like linguistic decline, loss of traditional knowledge and commercialization of festivals.

The paper also highlights that there are also strengths of the current system and one of the strengths is that the tribal identity is recognized by the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous

District Council (TTAADC) and this is central in maintaining community-based traditions. Nevertheless, the weaknesses still exist in the form of limited policy interventions to combine cultural preservation with the developmental planning. There is also the lack of laws that are specifically designed to protect intangible cultural heritage on the state level.

On the whole, the results show that the multicultural identity of Tripura is still active but needs more effective legal protection, institutional support, and community engagement so that languages, festivals, and traditions

<sup>29</sup> Ms. Guriya Paul, *Cross-Border Interactions: Migration, Identity, and Multiculturalism in Tripura and Its Neighbours*, 24 REDVET -Revista electrónica de Veterinaria 162- 168, 2023

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.veterinaria.org/index.php/REDVET/article/view/1752> (last visited on Nov. 22, 2025)

<sup>31</sup> <https://tripurainfo.com/TripuraArticle/TRIPURAINFO-English-Article-By-Pranab-Dey-117-12-07-2025-117.html> (last visited on Nov. 22, 2025)

<sup>32</sup> Debraj Deb , Charvak , *Media and stereotypes on ethnicity: A study of framing Chakma Migration in Tripura*, 6 GLOBAL MEDIA JOURNAL – INDIAN EDITION, 2015

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

could flourish under the influence of social and demographic changes. The practical implication is that the cultural preservation should become more than recognition, but more of an organized promotion to be sustained in the long run.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Enhancing Institutional Provisions of Aboriginal Language.

The state ought to increase Kokborok and other tribal languages in school curricula, tertiary education and administration. The language resource centres and translation units can contribute to the maintenance of the oral traditions, folk literature and the dialects in danger of extinction.

### 2. Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection under the Law.

Tripura can attempt to write a State Cultural Heritage Protection Act which emphasizes on the protection of the culture of the traditional activities, folk rituals, indigenous crafts and the community-based festivals against dilution, misuse or commercial exploitation.

### 3. Enhancing TTAADC's Cultural Mandate

The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council must be granted greater power and resources to cultural documentation, museum development and community based cultural revival programme.

### 4. Cultural Documentation Programs held by Government.

To ensure that the oral histories, ceremonies, songs, dances, and traditional knowledge systems do not show up in non-written form, the government needs to work with universities, tribal research institutes, and culture organizations to record them.

### 5. Combination of Preservation of Culture and Development Policies.

Planning must be culturally sensitive although economic growth is a requirement. Tourism, industrialisation and infrastructure policies should contain a clause to avoid the erosion or erosion of the indigenous identity.

### 6. Encouragement of Intercultural Communication and Joint Celebrations.

Social cohesiveness can be enhanced through community-level programmes that promote attendance of tribal and non-tribal people, including cultural exchange festivals, intercultural youth events, and multilingual workshops.

### 7. Traditional Artists and Performers.

Indigenous artisans, weavers and performers should be offered financial incentives, market linkages and training programmes in a manner that will enable economic sustainability of traditional crafts and art forms.

### 8. Application of Digital Platforms in the Preservation of Culture.

It is possible to create digital archives, online museums, and social media campaigns that would allow young generations to associate with their cultural heritage and encourage more people to learn about the variety of Tripura culture.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Multicultural identity of Tripura is the result of centuries-long interaction of the tribal and non-tribal population groups that are manifested in wide variety of languages, rich colorful festivals, and strong traditional customs. It is evident in the analysis that linguistic diversity, particularly the Kokborok and other tribal dialects is majorly used to determine the community identity, in addition to such festivals like the Garia Puja, Kharchi Puja, and the Buisu that unite the various groups. Old traditions and practices also maintain group memory and add to cultural continuity.

Despite the fact that the constitutional framework, in particular, Articles 29 and 30 and the Sixth Schedule, offers a high level of protection to cultural and linguistic rights, there are still practical difficulties. The native languages should be better institutionalized and the traditional ways should be documented and given protection at a policy level.

Overall, the multicultural nature of Tripura is still living and strong, yet it needs the further efforts by the State, local institutions and communities in order to be maintained. Tripura can achieve this by enhancing its cultural conservation efforts and fostering intercultural awareness and understanding to make sure that its rich and diverse heritage does not die.

