

# Tribes In The *Prakāmakāmarūpam*: A Cultural Panorama

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## ABSTRACT:

The great Sanskrit Paṇḍita Ācārya Manoranjan Shastri was born in village Bheruā in Darrang district in Assam on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1911 in a poor Brāhmin family. His father was late Shyamadeva Sarma and mother was late Bhogesvari Devi. Ācārya Manoranjan Shastri has various contributions to Sanskrit literature as well as other branches of learning. He composed a good number of scholarly works in the world of Sanskrit as well as Assamese learning. He composed three Sanskrit works, viz. the *Patākāmnāya*, the *Utaṅkabhaikṣam* and the *Prakāmakāmarūpam*. Assam, a northeastern state of India known for its rich cultural diversity, is home to several indigenous tribes, each with its unique traditions, languages, and customs. A tribe is a group of distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient and not integrated into the national society. In the *Prakāmakāmarūpam*, it has found the description about several tribes who lived in different places of Assam. There are mainly two tribes found in Assam- Hill tribes and Plain tribes. Manoranjan Shastri has given the names of hill tribes who lived in the North-East frontier part of Assam from Paraśurāmakuṇḍa to Manipur which he indicates as *Bhārgavakṣetra*. He gives the list of hill tribes as follows- Abara, Micimi, Daphala, Aka, Nakte, Galan, Phombari, Khova, Banco, Moklum, Miji etc. Again, he indicates the name of Cimpho, Khamti, Monpa, Bhota, Miri, Devari etc. Another some hill tribes also lived in the different parts of Assam, such as- Khasi, Naga, Garo, Kuki, Miju, Mikir, Jayanta etc. are given in the book with special reference to their life, nature and culture.

**KEY WORDS:** Tribe, Assam, Hill, Khasi, Jayanta.

## INTRODUCTION:

The great Sanskrit Paṇḍita Ācārya Manoranjan Shastri was born in village Bheruā in Darrang district in Assam on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1911 in a poor Brāhmin family. His father was late Shyamadeva Sarma and mother was late Bhogesvari Devi. Ācārya Manoranjan Shastri has various contributions to Sanskrit literature as well as other branches of learning. He composed a good number of scholarly works in the world of Sanskrit as well as Assamese learning. He composed three Sanskrit works, viz. the *Patākāmnāya*, the *Utaṅkabhaikṣam* and the *Prakāmakāmarūpam*. Assam, a northeastern state of India known for its rich cultural diversity, is home to several indigenous tribes, each with its unique traditions, languages, and customs.

A society is a number of interdependent organisms of the same species. The socio-cultural study refers to an interdisciplinary field of research that examines the ways in which society and culture interact and influence each other. This type of study focuses on understanding how social factors and cultural factors shape human behaviour, attitudes, identities and relationships. Due to variations in social and geographical conditions, there is different culture in every society. But sociability develops by the culture and the culture of the society is developed by literature. Society and culture of a land can be known through the literature. A tribe is a group of distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient and not integrated into the national society. In the *Prakāmakāmarūpam*, it has found the description about several tribes who lived in different places of Assam. There are mainly two tribes found in Assam- Hill tribes and Plain tribes. Manoranjan Shastri has given the names of hill tribes who lived in the North-East frontier part of Assam from Paraśurāmakuṇḍa to Manipur which he indicates as *Bhārgavakṣetra*. He gives the list of hill tribes as follows- Abara, Micimi, Daphala, Aka, Nakte, Galan, Phombari, Khova, Banco, Moklum, Miji etc. Again, he indicates the name of Cimpho, Khamti, Monpa, Bhota, Miri, Devari etc. Another some hill tribes also lived in the different parts of Assam, such as- Khasi, Naga, Garo, Kuki, Miju, Mikir, Jayanta etc. are given in the book with special reference to their life, nature and culture.

### **Description of various Tribes in the *Prakāmakāmarūpam*:**

Here, a brief descriptions of the tribes found in the *Prakāmakāmarūpam* is given below-

#### **Daphala Tribe:**

The Daphala tribe also known as the Daphla or Nyishi tribe, is an indigenous community primarily found in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>1</sup> Daphala hills are a tract of hilly country on the border of western Arunachal and Assam occupied by an independent tribe called Daphala. The Nyishi tribe is one of the largest ethnic groups in Arunachal Pradesh and is known for its rich cultural heritage and traditional practices.

#### **Apatani Tribe:**

The Apatani tribe is an indigenous community primarily residing in the Ziro valley of Arunachal Pradesh, India. They are one of the prominent tribal groups of the state known for their unique cultural practices, sustainable agricultural methods, and distinctive appearance. The Apatani tribe is the neighbouring tribe of Adi tribe. The tradition, though non-existent now, dates back to pre-modern times, when the Apatani women were considered to be the most beautiful in all of Arunachal Pradesh. Men of other tribes would often steal the Apatani women. It is also referred by Manoranjan Shastri in his *Prakāmakāmarūpam*.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Aka Tribe:**

The Aka tribe, also known as Hruso or Hrusso Aka, is an indigenous community residing in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in the west Kameng district. The Aka people are part of the Tibeto-Burman ethnic group and have a distinct cultural identity shaped by their traditions, language and lifestyle. The Aka share strong cultural affinities with the Miji, and intermarriage with the Miji is prevalent. Handicrafts, basket weaving and wood carving are the principal arts among the Aka tribe.

#### **Miji Tribe:**

The Mijis or Miji tribe is found in the west Kameng and East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Miji tribe, also known as Sajolang or Damai, is an indigenous community primarily residing in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The Miji people belong to the Tibeto-Burman ethnic group and have a unique cultural heritage with distinct traditions, language, and lifestyle.

#### **Kuki Tribe:**

The Kuki tribe is a major ethnic group spread across northeastern India and neighboring regions in Myanmar and Bangladesh. The language of the tribe is Kukish languages and also known as Kuki-Chin language. Most speakers of these languages are known as Kuki in Assamese and Chin in Burmese. Some also identify it as Lushei.

#### **Monpa Tribe:**

The Monpa people are an ethnic group primarily residing in the eastern Himalayas of India, particularly in the regions of Arunachal Pradesh. The languages spoken by the Monpa people are often refers to as the Monpa languages. This is not a genealogical term, and several quite different languages are subsumed under it. The Monpa are sub-divided into six groups because of their variations in their language, such as – Tawang Monpa, Dirang Monpa, Lish Monpa, Bhut Monpa etc. Therefore the list of the hill tribes given in the *Prakāmakāmarūpam* which the poet has described as Bhuta type is none other than the sub tribes of Monpa. Together with the Khamti, Bhota, Monpa and Cimpho peoples Shastri has listed them as *Kirāta* class of people.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Khasi Tribe:**

The Khasi tribe is an indigenous community primarily found in the northeastern Indian state of Meghalaya, particularly in the Khasi Hills region. The word Khasi is derived from the Sankardeva's *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* an Indo-Aryan literature. Khasi tribes resides in different parts of India, like the state of Assam, the Khasi Jaintiya hills in Meghalaya. Khasi is the language spoken by Khasis, which is an Austro-Asiatic language. It is the part of the Mon-khmer group of language. The major festival celebrated by Khasis is Nongkrem. Ācārya Manoranjan Shastri has described that there are temples of Jayanti in the Khasi hill where still worshipped according to Kaula system with flesh and blood.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Jayantiya Tribe:**

The Jayantiya tribe, also known as the Jayantia community, is an indigenous group residing in the state of Meghalaya in northeastern India. The Jayantias can be located on Jaintiya hills. The Jayantiya tribals have no recorded history of their own. However they are mentioned in the Burañji of Assam and the British records. They speak the Jayantia language.

Jayantiya people are rich in their cultural heritage. The tribe is famous for artistic weaving, wood-carving and cane and bamboo work.

#### **Naga Tribe:**

The Naga tribe refers to an indigenous group from the northeastern region of India, particularly in the state of Nagaland. The tribes have similar cultures and traditions and form the majority ethnic group in the Indian state of Nagaland, with significant population in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and in Assam. Nagas have more language diversity than any other ethnic group of states in India.

#### **Garo Tribe:**

The Garo tribe, also known as the Garo tribe is an indigenous community primarily found in the northeastern part of India, particularly in the Garo Hills region of Meghalaya. The Garos are a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group in Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and neighbouring areas of Bangladesh. They are the second largest tribe in Meghalaya after the Khasi tribe. A large part of the Garo community follows Christianity. It is also described by *Ācārya* Manoranjan Shastri in the third *ucchvāsa* of his book.<sup>5</sup> The Garo tribal religion is popularly known as Songsarek. They have their own language. They have a rich cultural heritage and celebrate with dance and songs. Wangala is their main festival.

#### **Mizo Tribe:**

The Mizo tribe are an ethnic group to north-eastern India, western Burma and eastern Bangladesh. They are also present in parts of Manipur, Assam and Tripura. The Mizo people have a rich culture, with a distinctive language, traditional attire and unique festivals. The Mizo are of Mongolian origin and their original home was somewhere in Tibet and China where from they migrated to Burma and then to Mizoram through many centuries.

Thus, the existence of various tribes is still there in the Assam and the entire North-East. Some of them as mentioned in the *Prakāmakāmarūpam* are not found in the present day such as- Tagin, Cherdukopa, Bancho, Nakte, Galan etc. The description of the tribes given by Manoranjan Shastri indicates his vast knowledge on it. He also described their religious views, food habits, festivals etc.<sup>6</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION:**

From the above discussion, it has been found that the tribes of Northeast India contribute significantly to the region's rich cultural diversity and heritage. These indigenous communities have unique languages, traditions and lifestyles shaped by their environment and history. While facing modern challenges and changes, they continue to preserve their cultural identity through festivals, music, crafts and social customs. The tribes of Northeast India are an integral part of the region's social fabric and contribute to its cultural vibrancy and uniqueness.

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