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Religious Belief and Practices of the Toto Tribe of West Bengal

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Abstract

The Toto tribe is one of the primitive tribal groups in West Bengal. The child of nature, the forest-dweller Totos are animist. Nature is their deity. They believe that there is life in rivers, mountains, forests, sky, paths and rocks. But Toto does not have idols of gods and goddesses. Toto once believed that various natural disasters or catastrophes are caused by the wrath of nature. They were completely ignorant of any correct idea about this. So the Totos worshiped various deities under the influence of blind believe. Toto believes that if the gods are satisfied, the crop production will be good, there will be sufficient rain and it will protect them from evil forces and the overall welfare of the Toto community. This conventional notion is still present in Toto society today. Religious festivals bring joy and happiness to Toto's busy life. Not only that, they communicate with each other and forget all differences and build strong social bonds among them. But with the passage of time, Toto's religious life has been touched by modernity. As a result, their religious life has undergone many simplifications and changes. This article attempts to highlight various aspects of Toto's religious life.

KEYWORDS- primitive, animist, religious, festival, modernity

The Totos, a primitive tribe, live on the border of Bhutan in the Madarihat block of Alipurduar district in West Bengal. The Totos are one of the three primitive tribes of West Bengal and a very small primitive people of North Bengal. Anthropologically, the Toto tribe is a branch of the Tibetan-Mongoloid ethnic group¹. Their physique is good, their hair is strong, their beards and mustaches are rare. It is also noticeable in the structure of nose and eyelids. They are naturally innocent and love to be different from any other human group around them. The area inhabited by the Toto people has been named Totopara in official documents. They were completely dependent on the forest for their livelihood and were isolated from the light of civilized society.

The Torsha River flows east of Totopara, the Pidua Hills to the west, the Hipsa Hills to the north and the Hauri River to the south, these are the geographical boundaries of Totopara. At present Totopara has been formed with six villages like Pujagaon, Dhumsigaon, Mitrangaon, Subbagaon, Mandal gaon and Panchayatgaon. The descendants of the thirteen Totos who first settled in Totopara are divided into thirteen tribes and live in Totopara.

Objectives of the study

1. Provides an informative idea of Toto's religious beliefs, practices, and festivals.
2. To highlight on the characteristic features of the religious festivals of the indigenous Totos.
3. Highlighting the differences between the religious beliefs and festivals of the indigenous Totos and the religious festivals of other communities.