

ENCYCLOPAEDIA

OF

Tripura



SUBROTO ROY

Encyclopaedia
of
TRIPURA

Volume 1

सदभं
REFERENCE



Subroto Roy

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CONTENTS

Preface

vii

(Vol. 1)

1. Introduction	1
2. History of Tripura	29
3. Facts about Tripura	45
4. Tripura Government and Politics	59
5. Basic Information about Tripura	99
6. Education in Tripura	127
7. Tripuri Culture	147
8. Tripuris : Weaving a Magic of Legend and Lore	191
9. Tripura—A Bird's Eye View	209
10. Militancy in Tripura	227
11. Integration of the North East : The State Formation Process	237
12. Insurgency and Human Security in Tripura : Past and Present	255

(Vol. 2)

13. Economy	281
14. Food Security Vis-a-vis Natural Resources	337
15. Diversity of Horticultural Crops in North Eastern Region	355
16. Management for Resource and Environment	369
17. Information Relating to Tripura	381
18. Population and Migration	423

19. Tripura Destinations	505
20. Tribals of Tripura	513
21. Government Schemes	537
<i>Bibliography</i>	551
<i>Index</i>	557

PREFACE

Tripura is the second smallest state in India. It was formally declared as Union Territory on November 1st, 1957 and was elevated to the status of a full-fledged state on January 21, 1972. The state is covered by picturesque hills and dales, deep and green valleys which have added beauty to its landscape. The state is connected with the rest of India by only one road which runs through the hills to the border of Cachar district in Assam. The state has three districts with ten sub-divisions. The three districts are Tripura west with Agartala as its headquarter (which is also the state capital), Tripura north and Tripura south with Kailasahar and Udaipur respectively as district headquarters. From the east the principal hill ranges are the Jampoi, Sakham Tlang, Langtarai, Athara Mura and Bara Mura. The highest peak of the state is Be-talang-Shiv (3,200 ft.) in the Jampoi hill range. A number of broad and elongated valleys - Agartala - Udaipur - Sabrum, Khowai - Teliamura - Amarapur - Silachari etc are located between the north-south trending, parallel to sub-parallel high ranges (topographic highs) such as the Baramura - Deotamura ranges, Atharamura ranges, Langtari ranges, Sakham ranges and the Jampui hill ranges. The soil in the valley is fertile with rich alluvial deposits and therefore suitable for the cultivation of paddy, jute, oilseeds, pulses, fruits and vegetables. About 54.5% of the land is under forest. Only about 24.3% area is available for agricultural use.

With a history shrouded in legends and traditions, Tripura represents a land ruled by the Rajas. It is also said to have played a role in the battle of Kurukshetra. A line of 74 rajas had ruled over Tripura after which the Rajas were called by the little of 'Manikya'. In about 1280 Ad Tripura experienced the onslaught of the Muslims-This was followed by the inhabitation of settlers from Bengal and Burma. The Bengal sultanate dominated till 1515. During the rule of Jasodhara Manikya in 1586 the Tripura Rajas confronted the Mughals ceding a portion of Tripura to them after his defeat. It was during Krishna Manikya's rule from 1760-1783 that Tripura ceded to the British who wrested power on the pretext of resolving issues between the rulers.

On 15th October 1949 it joined the India Union as a state.

A diverse ethnic element among the people of Tripura is that - there are two major racial elements, namely, the Indo-Aryans represented by the Bengalese and the Indo-

Mongloids represented by a few communities like the Tripuris, the Reangs, the Jamatis, the Noatias, the Kukis, the Halams, the Chakma, the Mogh and the Lushai. Besides these nine major tribes, there are ten more tribes. All the nineteen tribes are classified as 'Scheduled Tribes'. The Tripuris also called Tripuras or Tipras are the original inhabitants of the state. They constitute about a little over 16 percent of the total and 57% of the tribal population of the state. The formal rulers of the land is believed to be the descendants of the Kshatriyas. In course of time, a section of this community came into close contact with the Bengali settlers, and was much influenced by their language, culture and custom. Then a new community, now known as Natun Tripuris, a sort of breakaway group of the original (Puram) Tripuris. A few among the Tripuris who were close to the royal family (known as Thakur) settled in and around Agartala. They are quite advanced in education and general enlightenment. High public officials, writers, musicians, engineers and doctors are found among them. The other group who live on the hill-slopes are not much improved regarding economic status or nature of occupation. They practice jhooming (or shifting cultivation), fetch wood from the forests, sell vegetables and bamboos. The women help men in jhooming, weave cloth on their traditional loin looms and take care of pigs, fowl etc. Their houses made of bamboo, are built five to six feet above the ground to avoid hazards from wild animals.

The Reangs the tribal group constitute about 14% of the tribal and 4% of the total population of the state. They are broadly divided into two groups. Meksha or Mechka and Marchai or Malchai. The former is again sub-divided into Masha, Raichak and some other sub-groups, while the principal sub-groups among the latter are Apet and Champung. The community is governed by a well-defined hierarchical institution; the chief enjoys the title Rai. The Reangs are considered as one of the strongest pillars of the states military forces. The Reangs are Hindus and generally believers in the Sakti cult. Like other tribals they also believe in animism. Another section of the Tripura community is known as Jamatia - the term seems to have originated from jamayet, which means a gathering or mobilization. Like the Reangs, the Jamatias also constituted the fighting force during the time of Tripura King. Their system of worship comprises both Hindu practices and animistic rites. Having many social institutions in common with the Bengalese, the Jamatias are taking to plough cultivation in preference to jhoom and are now settling down in the plain areas of the state.

The book is an asset for all scholars, researchers, teachers, students and ofcourse, the general readers.

INTRODUCTION

Tripura is a state in North-East India. Tripura is surrounded by Bangladesh on the north, south, and west. The Indian states of Assam and Mizoram lie to the east. The capital is Agartala and the main languages spoken are Bengali and Kokborok (also known as Tripuri). It was formerly an independent Tripuri kingdom and was merged with independent India on 15 October 1949 by the Tripura Merger Agreement. It was also known as Hill Tippera (anglicized version of Tipra) during the British Raj period and has a history of over 2500 years and 186 Kings. With an area of 4,036 sq. mi. or 10,453 km².

Origin of Name

Several theories exist pertaining to the origin of Tripura's name:

- The origin of the word *Tripura* is attributed to the legendary tyrant king of Tripura, *Tripur*. According to legend, Tripur was the 39th descendant of Druhya, who was a descendant of Yayati, one of the lunar race kings. He was so powerful that he ordered his subjects to worship him as the sole God. People fled to escape his tyranny to the nearby state of Hiramba (Cachar).
- The word *Tripura* may have originated from *Tripura Sundari*: the presiding deity of the land which is famous as one of the 51 Shakti Peethas, pilgrimage centres of Shakti worshippers of Hinduism.
- According to another school of thought the name Tripura was probably given to the state in honour of the temple at Udaipur, Tripureshwari, the wife of lord Shiva.
- According to historian Kailash Chandra Singha, the word Tripura is a derivative from two different Kokborok words *twi* and *pra*. *Tw* means *water*, *pra* means *near*. It is likely that the state bears the name Tripura from this fact that in ancient time the boundaries of Tripura extended up to the Bay of Bengal when its ruler held sway from the Garo Hills to the Arakan.

- According to another belief, Tripura is a corruption of *Twī-bupra*. The meaning of *twi* is *water* and that of *bupra* is *confluence*. Several villages in Tripura are named after the confluence of various rivers, e.g. Twikormo, Twirisa, Twisarangchak, and Twimudul.

History

Tripura finds mention in the Mahabharata, the Puranas and pillar inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka. Tripura has a long historic past, its unique tribal culture and a fascinating folklore. In the distant past Tripura was known as Kirat Desh. There are references of Tripura in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Tripura, the descendent of King Druya and Bhabru, contemporary of Yudhishtara, was the ruler on whose name Tripura is named. One more explanation says that the territory is named after the temple of Tripuri Sundari, located at Radhakrishnapur.

Tripura was a princely state before its merger with the Indian Union. The Tripuri Kings (*Habugra*) held the title of Manikya and ruled Tripura for 3000 years until its merger. Udaipur, in South Tripura district, was the capital of the Kingdom. The capital was shifted to Old Agartala by King Krishna Manikya in the eighteenth century, and then to the present Agartala in the 19th Century. The 19th century marked the beginning of Tripura's modern era, when King Bir Chandra Manikya Bahadur Debbarma modelled his administration on the pattern of British India and enacted various reforms.

The *Ganamukti Parishad* movement led to the integration of the kingdom with India in 1949. Tripura was heavily affected by the partition of India and the majority of the population now comprises Hindu Bengalis, many of whom came as refugees from East Pakistan after independence in 1947. Tripura became a centrally administered Union Territory on July 1, 1963 and attained the status of a full-fledged state on January 21, 1972.

Armed conflict in Tripura has been a problem since the end of the 1970s as an aftermath of 1971 Indo-Pak war. Mass migration of Bengalis from Bangladesh during this time has resulted in widespread insurgency and militancy in the state with groups such as the Tripura National Volunteers, the National Liberation Front of Tripura and the All Tripura Tiger Force aiming to drive away the Bengali people.

Geography and Climate

Tripura is a landlocked hilly state in northeastern India with altitudes varying from 50 to 3080 ft above sea level, though the majority of the population lives in the plains. Tripura has a tropical climate and receives rainfall during the monsoons. It is surrounded on the north, west, and south by Bangladesh and is accessible to the rest of India through the Karimganj district of Assam and Aizawl district of Mizoram

in the east. The state extends between 22°56'N and 24°32'N and 90°09'E and 92°10'E. Its maximum stretch measures about 184 km from north to south and 113 km from east to west with an area of 10,492 km². Tripura is the third smallest state of the country.

Although landlocked, Tripura has many rivers including the Manu River which originates here.

Economy

Tripura's gross state domestic product for 2004 is estimated at \$2.1 billion in current prices. Agriculture and allied activities is the mainstay of the people of Tripura and provides employment to about 64% of the population. There is a preponderance of food crop cultivation over cash crop cultivation in Tripura. At present about 62% of the net sown area is under food crop cultivation. Paddy is the principal crop, followed by oilseed, pulses, potato, and sugarcane. Tea and rubber are the important cash crops of the State. Tripura has been declared the *Second Rubber Capital of India* after Kerala by the Indian Rubber Board. Handicraft, particularly hand-woven cotton fabric, wood carvings, and bamboo products, are also important. The per capita income at current prices of the state stands at INRs 10,931 and at constant prices Rs 6,813 in the financial year 2000-2001.

Some quality timber like Sal, Garjan, Teak, and Gamar are found abundantly in the forests of Tripura. Tripura has poor mineral resources, with meagre deposits of kaolin, iron ore, limestone, coal and natural gas. The industrial sector of the state continues to be highly underdeveloped.

Government and Politics

Tripura is governed through a parliamentary system of representative democracy, a feature the state shares with other Indian states. Universal suffrage is granted to residents. There are three branches of government. The legislature, the Tripura Legislative Assembly, consists of elected members and special office bearers such as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, that are elected by the members. Assembly meetings are presided over by the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker in the Speaker's absence. The judiciary is composed of the Guwahati High Court (Agartala Bench) and a system of lower courts. Executive authority is vested in the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister, although the titular head of government is the Governor. The Governor is the head of state appointed by the President of India. The leader of the party or coalition with a majority in the Legislative Assembly is appointed as the Chief Minister by the Governor, and the Council of Ministers are appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister. The Council of Ministers reports to the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly is unicameral with 60 Members of the Legislative Assembly,

or MLAs. Terms of office run for 5 years, unless the Assembly is dissolved prior to the completion of the term. Tripura sends 2 representatives to the Lok Sabha and 1 representative to the Rajya Sabha. Auxiliary authorities known as *panchayats*, for which local body elections are regularly held, govern local affairs. Tripura also has an autonomous tribal council, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council which has its head-quarters in Khumulwng.

The main political parties are the Left Front and the National Socialist Party of Tripura. Tripura is currently governed by Left Front, with Manik Sarkar as Chief Minister. Until 1977 the state was governed by the Indian National Congress. The left front governed from 1978 to 1988, and then returned in power in 1993. During 1988–1993 the state was governed by a coalition of the Congress and Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti. On the last elections (23 February 2008) the Left Front gained 49 out of 60 seats in the Parliament, 46 of which went to the CPI(M).

Divisions

For administrative purposes, the state has been divided into 4 districts, 17 subdivisions, 40 development blocks.

Districts	Head-quarters	Population	Area (in km ²)
Dhalai	Ambassa	307,417	2312
North Tripura	Kailashahar	590,655	2470
South Tripura	Udaipur	762,565	2624
West Tripura	Agartala	1,530,531	3544

Major towns of the state are Agartala, Badharghat, Jogendranagar, Dharmanagar, Pratapgarh, Udaipur, Kailashahar, Teliamura, Indranagar, Khowai, and Belonia. Badharghat, Jogendranagar, and Indranagar are now parts of the Agartala municipality.

Transport and Communication

Tripura is connected with the rest of the country through Assam by meter gauge railway line extending to Luming and Silchar. The main railway stations are in the northern towns of Dharmanagar and Kumarghat. National Highway 44 connects it to Assam and the rest of India.

Agartala Airport, which has flights to Kolkata, Guwahati, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, and Silchar, is the main airport of the state.

Most of the major Telecommunications companies of India are present in the state, with the state capital and regions of the state being served by Airtel, Aircel, Reliance and BSNL landline, mobile, and broadband networks.

Demographics

Tripura is the second most populous state in North-East India, after Assam. According to the census of 2001, Tripura has a total population of 3,191,168, with a density of 304 persons per square kilometre, and ranks 22nd among Indian states. It constitutes 0.31% population of India and 8.18% of the Northeast. In the 2001 census of India, Bengalis represent almost 70% of Tripura's population and the native tribal populations represent 30% of Tripura's population. The tribal population comprises several different tribes and ethnic groups with diverse languages and cultures with the largest tribal group being the Kokborok-speaking tribes of the Tripuri (16% of the state's population), the Jamatia, the Reang, and the Noatia tribal communities. There is some tension between these native tribal populations and Bengali settlers in tribal areas.

Tripura ranks 22nd in the human resource development index and 24th in the poverty index in India according to 1991 sources. The literacy rate of Tripura is 73.66%, higher than the national rate of 65.20%.

Hinduism is the majority religion in the state, with 85.6% of the population following the religion. Muslims make up 8.0% of the population, Christians 3.2%, and Buddhists 3.1%.

This represents a major change in the religious composition of the state over time. In 1941 the population was 70% Hindu, 23% Muslim and 6% followers of tribal religions. It should be noted that in 1951 Tripura had 649,930 inhabitants, and the number was even less in 1941 because the Hindu exodus had not begun from East Bengal, although that would not really become a factor in the state's population until the 1970s.

Today most of the Hindus in Tripura, both those who are Bengali and the Tripuri and numerous tribes, are adherents of an animist-Shaktism hybrid of Hinduism, which was the state religion under the Tripuri kings. Brahmin priests (called *chantais*) are regarded as custodians of *dharma* and occupy an exalted position in Tripura society. Important gods are Shiva and Tripureshwari (patron goddess of Tripura and an aspect of Shakti). Several fertility gods are also worshipped, such as Lam-Pra (the twin deities of sky and sea), Mailu-ma (goddess of corn, identified with Lakshmi), Khulu-ma (goddess of the cotton plant), and Burha-cha (god of healing). Durga Puja, Navaratri, Vijayadashami, and the worship of the *Chaturdasha* deities are important festivals.

Culture

Tripura has several diverse ethno-linguistic groups, which has given rise to a composite culture. The dominant culture is Bengali, while minority cultures are those

of the Tripuris, Jamatia, Reang, Noatia, Koloi, Murasing, Chakma, Halam, Garo, Kuki, Lushai, Mogh, Munda, Oraon, Santhal, and Uchoi.

Tripura has a rich cultural heritage of music, fine arts, handicrafts and dance. Music is an integral part of the tribal people of Tripura. Some of their indigenous instruments are the *sarinda*, *chongpreng*, and *sumui* (a kind of flute). Songs are sung during religious occasions, marriages, and other festivals. Agricultural festivals are integral to the culture of the state.

Dance is important to the tribal way of life. Dances are performed during Gorja Puja. Hojagiri dance is performed by standing on a pitcher and is performed by the Reang clans. The Bihu dance is performed by the Chakmas during Chaitra Sankranti (the last day of the month of *Chaitra*).

Flora and Fauna

The state is located in the bio-geographic zone of 9B-North-East Hills and possesses an extremely rich biodiversity. The local flora and faunal components of Indo-Malayan and Indo-Chinese sub-regions. There are 379 species of trees, 320 shrubs, 581 herbs, 165 climbers, 16-climbing shrubs, 35 ferns, and 45 epiphytes.

Wildlife sanctuaries of the state include Sipahijola Wildlife Sanctuary, Gumti Wildlife sanctuary, Roa Wildlife Sanctuary, and Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary. National parks of the state include Clouded Leopard National Park, Sepahijola, and Rajbari National Park, Trishna.

Education

Tripura schools are run by the state government or by private organisations, including religious institutions. Instruction is mainly in English or Bengali, though Kokborok and other tribal languages are also used. Secondary schools are affiliated with the CISCE, the CBSE, or the Tripura Board of Secondary Education. Under the 10+2+3 plan, after completing secondary school, students typically enrol for 2 years in a junior college, also known as pre-university, or in schools with a higher secondary facility.

Notable higher education institutions of Tripura are MBB College, National Institute of Technology, Tripura Institute of Technology, Tripura University, and ICFAI University all located in Agartala.

Sports

Football and cricket are the most popular sports in the state. The state capital Agartala has its own club football championships every year where many local clubs compete in a league and knockout format.

Tripura participates as an Eastern state team in the Ranji Trophy, the Indian domestic Cricket competition. The state also is a regular participant of the Indian National Games and the North Eastern Games.

District of Tripura

Dhalai District

Dhalai is an administrative district in the state of Tripura in India. The district headquarters are located at Ambassa. The district occupies an area of 2523 km² and has a population of 307,417 (as of 2001).

Statistical Report of the District

Group	Population
Total	3,07,868
Male	1,59,095
Female	1,48,773
Urban	18,867
Rural	2,89,001
Scheduled Tribe	1,66,326
Scheduled Caste	49,817

The total literacy rate is 60.9% and the sex ratio (females per 1000 males) is 945.

North Tripura District

North Tripura is an administrative district in the state of Tripura in India. The district headquarters are located at Kailasahar. The district occupies an area of 2821 km² and has a population of 590,655 (as of 2001).

South Tripura District

South Tripura is an administrative district in the state of Tripura in India. The district headquarters are located at Udaipur. The district occupies an area of 2152 km² and has a population of 762,565 (as of 2001). It is around 60 km from the state capital, Agartala. Udaipur is famous for the historic Matabari Temple. Also known as the city of lakes, it is an avid tourist destination. South Tripura District has six sub divisions. Tirthmukh another pilgrimage centre is also located in this district in Amarapur Sub Division.

West Tripura District

West Tripura is an administrative district in the state of Tripura in India. The district headquarters are located at Agartala. The district occupies an area of 2997 km² and has a population of 1,530,531 (as of 2001).

Administration

West Tripura District has four sub-divisions:

- Sadar Subdivision
- Bishalgarh Subdivision
- Sonamura Subdivision
- Khowai Subdivision

West Tripura District has 16 Blocks:

- Mohanpur
- Hezamara
- Jirania
- Mandwi
- Bishalgarh
- Dukli
- Jampuijala
- Melaghar
- Boxanagar
- Kathalia
- Khowai
- Padmabhil
- Tulashikar
- Kalyanpur
- Teliamura
- Mungiakami

Tripura Tourism

Within its small geographical area, Tripura offers plenty of attractions for the tourists in the form of magnificent palaces (Ujjayanta Palace and Kunjaban Palace at Agartala and Neermahal-Lake Palace at Melaghar), splendid rock-cut carvings and stone images (Unakoti near Kailashahar, Debtamura near Amarpur and Pilak in Belonia Sub-divisions), important temples of Hindus and Buddhists including the famous Mata Tripureswari temple (one of the 51 Pithasthans as per Hindu mythology) at Udaipur, vast natural as well as artificial lakes namely Dumboor lake in Gandacherra subdivision, Rudrasagar at Melaghar, Amarsagar, Jagannath Dighi, Kalyan Sagar, etc. at Udaipur, the beautiful hill station of Jampui hill bordering Mizoram, wild life sanctuaries at Sepahijala, Gumti, Rowa and Trishna and rich cultural heritage of Tribals, Bengalis and Manipuri communities residing in the state.

Places of Interest

Agartala

The main attractions in Agartala are Ujjayanta Palace, State Museum, Tribal Museum, Sukanta Academy, M.B.B. College, Laxminarayan Temple, Uma Maheswar Temple, Jagannath Temple, Benuban Bihar, Gedu Mian Mosque, Malanch Niwas, Rabindra Kanan, Purbasha, Handicrafts Designing Centre, Fourteen Goddess Temple, Portuguese Church etc.

This royal house, which stands in the Capital city Agartala covering one sq.Km. area was built by Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya during 1899-1901. It is a two storied mansion, having a mixed type of architecture with three high domes, the central one being 86' high. The magnificent tile floor, curved wooden ceiling and beautifully crafted doors are particularly notable. The palace is set with huge Mughal style gardens, beautified by pools and gardens and tiled floors. Flood lighting and fountains have also added to its beauty.

Location: Agartala.

Accommodation: Rajarshee Yatri Niwas, Yatrika, Bhagat Singh Youth Hostel and Private Hotels..

How to Reach Agartala?

- By air from Calcutta/ Guwahati.
- By Train upto Dharmanagar/ Kumarghat and then by road.
- Distance from Dharmanagar is 192 km, bus fare from Dharmanagar Rs.65/-
- Distance from Kumarghat – 170 km, bus fare from Kumarghat Rs.50/-.

A green hillock known as Kunjaban (a bower) for its scenic beauty stands to the north of Ujjayanta palace at a distance of about 1 Km. Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya (1909-1923) selected this beautiful place for building a suburban palace for retreat and constructed a palace in 1917 which was named as 'Pushbanta Palace'. The Maharaja himself being gifted artist is said to have drawn the plan of the palace and its adjoining garden.

Poet Rabindranath Tagore stayed in the eastern apartment of this palace during his 7th and last visit to the state in 1926. This palace was the mute witness to many of the great poet's creations including a number of popular songs. There are well laid gardens and lawns inside the palace which is the official residence of the Governor of Tripura now. The southern side of the garden has been made open for the public and has been named as 'Rabindra Kanan'.

Location: Agartala.

Accommodation: Rajarshee Yatri Niwas, Yatrika, Bhagat Singh Youth Hostel and Private Hotels..

Malancha Niwas

The Bungalow adjacent to Kunjaban palace situated on a hillock was originally a kaccha house where Tagore stayed during his visit in 1919. The pucca construction was subsequently built and given the name of Malancha Niwas.

Location: Agartala.

Accommodation: Rajarshee Yatri Niwas, Yatrika, Bhagat Singh Youth Hostel and Private Hotels.

Unakoti

It is Shaiba pilgrimage and dates back to 7 – 9 centuries if not earlier. The marvellous rock carvings, murals with their primitive beauty, waterfalls are not to be missed. Unakoti means one less than a crore and it is said that these many rock cut carvings are available here. As per Hindu mythology, when Lord Shiva was going to Kashi along with one crore gods and goddesses he made a night halt at this location. He asked all the gods and goddesses to wake up before sun rise and proceed for Kashi. It is said that in the morning, except Shiva himself, no one else could get up so set out for Kashi himself cursing the others to become stone images as a result we have one less than a crore stone images and carvings at Unakoti. These carvings are located at a beautifully landscaped forest area with green vegetation all around which add to the beauty of the carvings.

The images found at Unakoti are of two types namely rock-carved figures and stone images. Among the rock cut carvings, the central Shiva head and gigantic Ganesha figures deserve special mention. The central Shiva head known as 'Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava' is about 30 feet high including an embroidered head-dress which itself is 10 feet high. On each side of the head-dress of the central Shiva, there are two full size female figures-one of Durga standing on a lion and another female figure on the other side. In addition three enormous images of Nandi Bull are found half buried in the ground. There are various other stone as well as rock cut images at Unakoti.

Every year a big fair popularly known as 'Ashokastami Mela' is held in the month of April which is visited by thousands of pilgrims.

Location: 178 k.m. from Agartala, 8 k.m. from Kailashahar, district head quarter of North Tripura District.

Accommodation: Uttarmegh Tourist Lodge.

Tariff: Double Bed Rs. 120/-+ 10% Tax.

How to Go to Unakoti?

- From Agartala to Kailashahar by bus (fare Rs.60/-) and then by Jeep upto Unakoti (Rs.10/-).
- From Dharmanagar to Unakoti by bus (Fare Rs.15/-) only.

Pilak

Treasure house of Hindu and Buddhist Sculpture. It dates back to 8 and 9 centuries. Beautiful images scattered in an area of about 10 Sq.Km. have been found. The images, terracotta plaques and sealing found here reflect survival of heterodox creeds and sects representing both Hinduism and Buddhism. Colossal stone images of Avolokiteshwar and Narasimha have been found here.

Location: 100 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: Pilak Pantha Niwas, Bagafa and Dakbanglow, Shantir Bazar.

Tariff: Dormitory Rs.50/- per head.

How to Fo to Pilak?

By bus from Agartala to Julaibari in Belonia Sub-Division (fare Rs.27/-) only. Then by auto rickshaw or rickshaw (5 km.), fare negotiable.

Tripura Sundari Temple

This temple is one of the 51 pithasthans in India as per Hindu mythology. As per mythology, Lord Vishnu had cut off the body of Mata Sati into 51 pieces by Sudarshana Chakra and all these pieces fell at different places throughout the country and these places are known as pithasthans. It is said that 'right foot' of Mata Sati fell at Matabari.

This pithasthan is also known as Kurma Pith because the shape of the temple premises resembles to that of "Kurma" namely tortoise. Inside the temple, the idol of Maa Kali is kept which is made of 'reddish black Kastic pathar.' Maa Kali is worshipped in her 'Soroshi' form in this temple. There is an idol of smaller size of Maa Kali called 'Chotto Maa' and this image used to be carried by Maharajas of Tripura during "Mrigaya" namely hunting and also during war.

The temple consists of square type sanctum of the typical Bengali hut type structure with a conical dome. The temple was constructed in 1501 A.D. by the then Maharaja Dhanya Manikya.

In the eastern side of the temple there is a famous Kalyan Sagar where fishes and tortoises of huge size are found and devotees feed them with "muri" and biscuits. No fishing is permitted in the Kalyan Sagar.

Every year on Dewali, a famous Mela takes place near the temple which is visited by more than two lakhs pilgrims.

Location: 55 k.m. from Agartala. 3 k.m. away from Udaipur, district headquarter of South Tripura District.

Accommodation: Matabari Pantha Niwas.

Tariff: Rs.50/- per bed.

How to Go to Tripureswari Temple?

By bus from Agartala to Tripura Sundari Temple at Udaipur (Rs.14/-) only.

Fourteen Goddess Temple

It is located about 14 Km. away from Agartala at a place called Old Agartala. In the face of continued fight with Shamsar Gazi, Maharaja Krishna Manikya had shifted the capital from Udaipur to Old Agartala. It continued to be the capital till it was shifted to Agartala. Near the sacred 14 goddess temple during the month of July every year a Kharchi festival is organised and thousands of pilgrims and devotees visit this festival.

Location: 14 k.m. from Agartala.

Neermahal

This magnificent lake palace was constructed as a summer resort in 1930 by late Maharaja Birbikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur in the middle of a natural lake called Rudrasagar having an area of 5.35 Sq.Km. The construction was undertaken by Martin & Burn Co. and it is the only lake palace in the entire eastern India.

A good combination of Hindu and Mughal architecture is noticed on the domes of the palace.

There are mainly two parts of the palace-one on the western side known as Andar Mahal which was used by the royal family and another on the eastern side which was used for the security personnel and servants. There are 15 rooms in the main Andar Mahal. There is a beautiful garden laid in the western side of the palace. In the garden there is an open stage where drama, theatre, etc. use to be organised.

Maharajas used to go by motor boat to the palace from Rajghat. There is a motor boat ghat inside the palace upto which the motor boat could go and there are two, stairs at the motor boat ghat-one for Maharaja and one for Maharani.

Flood lighting of the palace has been arranged in the evening. In addition, water sports facilities are being extended. The palace is going to be renovated and a museum depicting the royal life style will be set up inside the palace. In addition Light & Sound

show on the historical past and cultural heritage of Tripura will be organised in the palace. In water number of migratory birds are found in the lake surrounding Neermahal.

Location: 53 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: Sagarmahal Tourist Lodge.

How to Reach Neermahal?

Agartala to Melaghar in Sonamura Sub-Division by bus (Rs.15/-) only and then by rickshaw (Rs.5/-) only.

Udaipur

The main attractions in Udaipur are Tripura Sundari Temple, popularly known as MATABARI, one of the 51 pithas of Hindu Puran, Bhuvaneshwari Temple, Gunabati group of Temples, Vast Lakes with scenic beauty.

Location: 55 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: Wayside amenities at Bagafa & Dak Bungalow at Santirbazar

Jampui Hill

The permanent seat of eternal spring is situated at an altitude of 3000' above sea level. Jampui is famous for its charming landscape and bracing climate. The excellent climatic condition, green forests, beautiful orange garden, view of raising and setting sun are wonderful sight for tourists.

The hill range has 11 villages inhabited by Mizo (Lushai tribes) and also by Reang tribes. Population of the hill range is about 8,000 and the main occupation of the villagers is orange cultivation.

The temperature variation in the hill range is very nominal in all seasons and is ideal for the purpose of tourism. Different seasons offer different pleasures to the tourists at Jampui hill. During October to December the orange trees are laden with fruits and the entire hill range looks orange coloured. During March to May various species of orchids and other wild trees bear flowers. During rainy season the hill range is full of clouds and one can have the feeling of walking in the clouds.

The Lushai tribes mainly inhabited in the hill range have a very strikingly distinct cultural identity. They are quite well-off people having neat and clean houses well equipped with modern amenities. Most of them speak English fluently and follow Christianity.

The sun rise and sun set in the hill range is a delight worth seeing. The natural beauty, the pleasant weather, various species of trees, orchids and orange gardens,

hospitable people and rich cultural heritage makes it an ideal destination for the tourists.

There is an 'Eden' Tourist Lodge in Vangmun village where tourists can go and stay comfortably. In addition, local people offer paying guest accommodation to the visiting tourists which enable them to closely understand the life and culture of the Lushai tribes.

After withdrawal of Restricted Area Permit for the foreign nationals, the hill range is attracting a large number of foreign tourists. The highest peak of Tripura 'Betalongchhip' falls in this hill range which is 3600 feet high and from where tourist can see the panoramic view of Mizoram, Chittagong hill tracts and various other hill ranges of Tripura. There are good trekking routes in the hill range for tourists. State Government is planning to develop village tourism in Jampui hill and sports complex and cultural complex will be constructed shortly.

Location: 250 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: Eden Tourist Lodge at Vangmun. Paying Guest accommodation is also available. Cottage at Phuldongsie.

Tariff: Double bed Rs.200/-+10% tax, Single bed Rs.120/-.

Bhuaneswari Temple

On the right bank of river Gomati at Udaipur is found the ruins of a big palace built by Maharaja Govinda Manikya (1660-75 A.D.). The Bhuaneswari temple is situated adjacent to this palace. It finds close literary reference in Great poet Rabindranath Tagore's novels and drama namely 'Bisharjan' and 'Rajarshi'

Location: 55 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: Matabari Pantha Niwas.

Tariff: Dormitory Rs.50/- per bed.

Sepahijala

Sepahijala is covering an area of 18.532 km. More than 150 species of residential birds, migratory birds, orchid garden, boating facilities, wild life, botanical garden, zoo, elephant joy-rides, rubber and coffee plantation attracts the visitors. The famous spectacted monkey is found here.

Location: 25 k.m. from Agartala on Agartala-Udaipur main road.

Accommodation: Abasarika (Forest Bungalow) and Cottages run by Forest Department.

Tariff: Rs.50/- per bed, Rs. 100/- per cottage.

Trishna Wild Life Sanctuary

Trishna Wild Life Sanctuary is located at about 100 Km. away from Agartala in Belonia Subdivision of South Tripura District. Bison is the main attraction in this sanctuary, in addition to the resident and migratory birds.

Kamalasagar

Vast lake at the border of Bangladesh was excavated by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya in 15th century. On the bank of Kamalasagar, there is a famous temple of Goddess Kali dating back to 16th century. It is one of the excellent picnic spots in the state with scenic beauty.

Location: 30 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: At Agartala.

Deotamura

Deotamura is famous for its panels of rock carvings on the steep mountain wall on the bank of Gomati. There are huge images carved of Shiva, Vishnu, Kartika, Mahisasur Mardini Durga and other gods and goddesses. This is also called Chabimura. These images date back to 15th-16th centuries.

Location: 75 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: Raima Tourist Lodge at Jatanbari.

Tariff: Double bed Rs.200/-(AC)+10% tax, Rs.120/-(Non-AC)+10% tax.

Dumboor Lake

A water area of 41 sq.km. with an un-ending spell of luxuriant green vegetation all around stands majestic for her exceedingly charming beauty and 48 islands in the midst of the lake. Migratory birds, Water sports facilities are additional attractions. There is a Hydel Project near the lake from where River Gomati originates and this is called Tirthamukh where on 14th January every year famous 'Pous Sankranti Mela' takes place. The lake is the confluence of rivers Raima and Sarma. Various species of migratory birds are noticed in the winter and it has rich reservoir of natural and cultured fishes.

Location: 120 k.m. from Agartala.

Accommodation: Raima Tourist Lodge at Jatanbari.

Tariff: Double bed Rs.200/-(AC)+10% tax, Rs.120/-(Non-AC)+10% tax.

Rudrasagar Lake

Rudrasagar lake, about 55 Km. away from Agartala near Melaghar having 5.3 Sq.Km. water area is another big attraction. In the centre of the lake the famous lake

palace of Tripura namely Neermahal is built. The lake witnesses a large number of migratory birds in every winter. Every year a boat race is organised in July/August. The visiting tourists can enjoy boating facility in the lake.

Ujjayanta Palace

This royal house, which stands in the Capital city Agartala covering one sq.Km. area was built by Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya during 1899-1901. It is a two storied mansion, having a mixed type of architecture with three high domes, the central one being 86' high. The magnificent tile floor, curved wooden ceiling and beautifully crafted doors are particularly notable. The palace is set with huge Mughal style gardens, beautified by pools and gardens and tiled floors. Flood lighting and fountains have also added to its beauty.

Location: Agartala

Kunjaban Palace: A green hillock known as Kunjaban (a bower) for its scenic beauty stands to the north of Ujjayanta palace at a distance of about 1 Km. Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya (1909-1923) selected this beautiful place for building a suburban palace for retreat and constructed a palace in 1917 which was named as 'Pushbanta Palace'.

The Maharaja himself being gifted artist is said to have drawn the plan of the palace and its adjoining garden. Poet Rabindranath Tagore stayed in the eastern apartment of this palace during his 7th and last visit to the state in 1926. This palace was the mute witness to many of the great poet's creations including a number of popular songs. There are well laid gardens and lawns inside the palace which is the official residence of the Governor of Tripura now. The southern side of the garden has been made open for the public and has been named as 'Rabindra Kanan'.

Location: Agartala

Malancha Niwas: The Bungalow adjacent to Kunjaban palace situated on a hillock was originally a kaccha house where Tagore stayed during his visit in 1919. The pucca construction was subsequently built and given the name of Malancha Niwas.

Location: Agartala

Buddhist Pilgrimage and Interest Centres in Tripura

Tripura is a tiny state in the North-East of the country. It has extensive international border with Bangladesh and, in fact, 85% of its perimeter is international border with rest being common boundary with Assam and Mizoram to the east. There is a common belief that the name of the state has originated from the presiding deity "TRIPURA

SUNDARI'. Another theory is that the name of the state was originally 'TUIPRA' – meaning a land adjoining water. Once upon a time Tripura extended upto the Bay of Bengal when its ruler held from Garo Hill to Arakan.

History of Tripura as an administrative unit back to the days of Maharajas, when the territory was a native state. It was an independent administrative unit under the Maharajas even during British Rule. The agreement of merger was signed by the Regent Maharani on September 9, 1947 while Government of India took over the administration on October 15, 1949. Tripura attained full statehood on January 21, 1972.

Out of the total area of 10,491 sq.km. the state has 6,291 sq.km. under forest cover. The location of the state stands in the way of industrial growth in the state. The state is connected with Assam through a railway track from Kumarghat, which is at a distance of 140 km from the capital town Agartala, while National Highway-44 connects Agartala with Sillong in Meghalaya and Guwahati in Assam.

Agartala is connected by air with Calcutta and Guwahati. The state has three more small Airports at Khowai, Kamalpur and Kailasahar, where small-chartered planes can land after prior information.

Tripura has a large number of attractive tourist sites including religious sites of Hindu's and Buddhists. The places of Buddhists interest are described below.

Buddha Temple, Venuban Vihar in Agartala

The shrine though small in size, preserves some beautiful metal idols of Lord Buddha and Bodhisatva. The idols are Burmese in origin. Here Buddha Jayanti is celebrated on the Buddha Purnima day followed by a big fair every year.

Buddhist Temple at Pecharthal, North Tripura

This temple is one of the oldest Buddha temples in the state. It was set up in 1931. The Idol was brought from Rangoon in 1931. This Idol does not look enormous in consideration of its incredible weight of 700 kg.

Buddha temple at Kanchanpur, North Tripura

The temple is situated at sub-divisional headquarter. It is about 80 years old. Buddhists from different parts of the country are coming to visit and stay there.

Buddha Temple at Manu Bakul, South Tripura

The Idol of this temple was brought from Arakan long back. The biggest week long fair is held every year in the month of April. The Pilgrims from Myanmar (formerly Burma), Bangladesh, Japan, Thailand and other places congregate during the fair.

Pilak-in Jolaibari, South Tripura

The site of civilization which flourished during 8-12 centuries of the Christian era has been a cradle of culture of heterodox creeds and sects representing both Hinduism *i.e.* Shiva, Surya, Baishnabi and Buddhism *i.e.* Hinayana, Mahayana, Bajrayana which were found to exist side by side. The important places are Shyam Sundar Tilla, Deb Bari, Thakurani Tilla, Balir Pathar, Basudev Bari and Sagar Deba. The art form and site followed in the making of the images and in the sculptures have distance influence of Palas and Guptas of Bengal. Influence of Arakan, Myanmar (formerly Burma) and local style is discernable in the form and style of Pilak images and sculpture. The number of rock-cut images and terracotta plaques are lying scattered in various places of the area.

The site has been under the care of Archaeological Survey of India. The rock-cut images and terracotta plaques still speak of a unique glorious cultural past of Tripura. Some of the important images found there are Avolokiteswar, Mahisasur Mardini, bronze images of Buddha and Vishnu in addition to terracotta plaques, sealing Coins etc. The moulded terracotta plaques bear resemblance with moulded plaques recovered from Paharpur and Mainamati. The Buddhist Complex here may be assigned a date between 9 and 10 century A.D. During excavation in the late sixties, Archaeological Survey of India team found out brick built stupas. Archaeological Survey of India has plans to do some more excavation to unearth the hidden cultural heritage of the area. It may be presumed that these extensive plains of Tripura were under the control of several dynasties who ruled in Eastern Bengal and Samanthal in ancient period. Some of them were Buddhists and the others were Hindus. Most of these rulers had their capitals near this region. The ancient kingdom of Pattikera had its capital in Comilla region and Pilak is not very far from Comilla.

Boxnagar: In Sonamura, West Tripura

Very recently after denudation of a natural forest area, a brick-built building emerged. This is near Boxnagar market. The local people initially attributed to the temple of Manasa – the goddess of Snake. It was in a dilapidated condition. When attention of Archaeological Survey of India was arrested to it, they took over the site but infact nothing was done. In July' 97 Dr. Jitendra Das, Superintending Archaeologist came to Tripura and visited this site. He focused there the idol of a Buddha and had been confirmed that it was a Buddha Temple. He was assured of immediate excavation of the site to find out the hidden story.

Adjoining Places of Buddhist Interest

Mainamati (In Bangladesh): About 8 km to the west of Comilla town, which is situated 114 km south east of Dhaka, lies a range of low hills known as Mainamati-

Lalmai ridge, an extensive centre of Buddhist civilization (7-12 century A.D.). At Salban in the middle of the ridge, excavations laid bare a large Buddhist Vihar (Monastery) and imposing central shrine. It has revealed valuable information about the rule of the Chandra and Dev dynasties, which flourished here from the 7-12 century.

Paharpur (in Bangladesh): Paharpur is a small village in the Rajshai district (northern part of the Bangladesh) 315 km from Dhaka, where the remains of the monastery have been excavated. This 7-th century archaeological find covers approximately an area of 10.8 hectors of land. The hugeness of central cruciform temple of the monastery is an awe-inspiring sight. It had taken its name from a high mound, which looked like Pahar or Hillock.

How to Reach Tripura?: The State capital, Agartala is well connected by air with Calcutta and Guwahati. Flight from Guwahati or Calcutta takes less than 45 minutes to reach Agartala. The present schedule of flights along with fare is given below:

Airlines

Carrier Name	Flight No.	Route	Day	Time *	
				Departure	Arrival
INDIAN	IC244	AGARTALA(IXA) - KOLKATA(CCU)	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	1115	1205
INDIAN	IC7728	AGARTALA(IXA) - KOLKATA(CCU)	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	1855	2005
INDIAN	IC7901	AGARTALA(IXA) - KOLKATA(CCU)	2,3,4,5,6,7	1250	1340
JET AIRWAYS	9W 620	AGARTALA (IXA) TO KOLKATA (CCU)	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	1845	1940
KINGFISHER AIRLINES	IT 2542	AGARTALA (IXA) TO KOLKATA (CCU)	1,3,5	1655	1805

The state has three more small airports at Khowai, Kamalpur and Kailashahar where small chartered planes can land after prior information.

Tripura is also connected by rail via Guwahati and the nearest rail head is at Kumarghat which is 140 Km. away from Agartala. This rail line is getting to be extended upto Agartala in the next four years.

Agartala is connected by road with Guwahati via Shillong by National Highway No.44. It takes about 24 hours by road from Guwahati to reach Agartala. Good luxury coaches, both of private travel agencies and public sector transport corporations ply on this road.

Considering the proximity of Tripura to Bangladesh, it is more convenient for foreign nationals to enter Tripura via Bangladesh with an appropriate visa. Those

foreign nationals coming to Dhaka or other cities of Bangladesh may come to Agartala via Akhaura border check post. Similarly, foreign nationals coming to Tripura by other routes could enter to Bangladesh via this route. If tourists coming via this route intimate the state Information, Cultural Affairs & Tourism (ICAT) Department in advance, either in writing or over phone, necessary arrangements in this regard can be made. The journey time by road between Dhaka and Agartala is approximately 3 (three) hours.

Tagore's Immortal Ties with Tripura

Though lulled to a sequestered life in the backyard of an ancient tribal kingdom, Tripura goes down in the pages of history as a little place almost religiously devoted to fine experiments in arts, crafts and literature. The rulers of this ancient State were not merely patrons of art and culture but a number of them were great exponents in different creative fields. Even the reputed journals of the West mention eloquently their work of art, photography, literature and music. Tripura's modern era began with Maharaja Birchandra (1862-96) who was a superb painter, an excellent photographer, a great composer of music, a profound scholar of Vaishnav literature and obviously a great connoisseur of all creative activities.

This sagacious ruler created a stir in the literary world by conferring upon young Rabindranath Tagore the honour of the 'best poet' in 1882. The poet was hardly 21 years old then and he had to his credit only one book of verses-*Bhagna Hriday*-(The Broken Heart). Birchandra, having read 'Bhagna Hriday', was so moved that he immediately sent his minister all the way from Agartala to Jorasanko, home of the Tagores at Calcutta just to convey the message that he discerned in the young poet the promise of a great future. Tagore was taken by surprise.

Tagore very respectfully mentioned the great event in his autobiography *Jiban Smriti* and paid great tributes to Birchandra on a number of occasions during his sojourns to Tripura.

This was the beginning of an unforgettable tie between the ruling house of an obscure land and a great poet who dominated the literary world. This historic bond lasted for over sixty years till the last days of Tagore. He became the friend, philosopher and guide to the four generations of Tripura rulers.

The elderly Birchandra was quick enough to befriend the young poet. Tagore went to Kurseong twice during 1894 and 1896. On both the occasions he invited Tagore to be his guest of honour and the poet gladly obliged. Those were meetings between two great minds that provided a rare opportunity to both of them to know each other more intimately. Tagore was then hardly thirty-three years old and Birchandra almost double his age. Naturally, the young poet felt shy to open up himself. But in

all literary discussions he was treated as an equal. Tagore often recalled the sweet memories of those golden days that he spent together with Birchandra at Kurseong.

Birchandra was quite pained at the ruthless criticism that Tagore's literary works drew from the critics of that time. He wanted to buy a printing press and invest one lakh rupees, a princely sum in those days, so that decorated editions of Tagore's works could be published without any hitch from any quarters. But as ill luck would have it, while returning from Kurseong, Birchandra died in Calcutta in 1896. Tagore was naturally very upset. He thought his ties with the Tripura royal family would abruptly come to an end. But it was not be.

There waited more surprises for Rabindranath from this land of eternal love. Birchandra's worthy son, Radhakishore, lost no time in extending even warmer invitation to Tagore to take his seat of affection in Tripura left void by the death of his illustrious father. Radhakishore ascended the throne in 1897 and died in 1909. During these twelve years, Tagore visited Tripura as many as five times. On innumerable occasions, Radhakishore sought Tagore's help in rescuing himself from very complicated problems of statecraft which he faced.

Tagore's advice was sought in all matters right from the appointment of ministers, drafting of state budget, framing of code of conduct for the officers of the royal court and general approach towards dealing with erring officials. Leaving aside literature, Tagore lavishly showered his hitherto unknown skills in all these prosaic areas of statecraft. The erst while Tripura royal family still preserves the rare historic documents written in Tagore's own handwriting where he has shown his remarkable ingenuity in matters of public finance, state policy, principle of education and other such matters. Radhakishore virtually became dependent on Tagore in all the areas of day-to-day administration. This naturally irked the officials of the royal court. But Tagore, even at the cost of burning his fingers, did not leave his trusted friend at large.

This short-association of Tagore with Radhakishore had lasting impact on Tripura's ties with greater Bengal. The benevolent Maharaja contributed liberally in various literary, cultural and scientific endeavours of Bengal. Tagore once approached Radhakishore for financial grant for the scientific research work of Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose who was in dire financial state at that time in England. Radhakishore himself was in a very tight financial condition as the palace at Agartala had been struck by a severe earthquake and was to be re-built besides, the marriage of prince Birendrakishore was on hand.

But the ever-generous Radhakishore did not fail to rise to the occasion. He wrote to Tagore that he was prepared to deprive his would-be daughter-in-law from a piece or two of jewellery for he was sure that in return of that Jagadish Babu would

decorate mother India in a much befitting manner. He kept his promise and granted a huge sum of rupees fifty thousand in those days with the only stipulation that his name should not be made public.

Radhakishore also sanctioned an annual grant of Rs. one thousand for Tagore's Viswa Bharati which was continued for nearly fifty years till the death of the last ruler, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore.

Radhakishore's son, Birendra Kishore, also inherited the rare artistic acumen of his grandfather, Birchandra. He was a great painter and a musician, too. Like his forefathers, he extended liberal financial grants to Viswa Bharati. It was during his time that Tripura's relationship with Tagore acquired a cultural dimension.

In 1939, Birchandra's great-grandson-Maharaj Bir Bikram Kishore, visited Shantiniketan. He deputed Rajkumar Buddhimanta Singh from Tripura as a Manipuri dance teacher at Shantiniketan. Buddhimanta was followed by a number of other talented experts in Manipuri dance from Tripura. They made remarkable contributions in providing the floral foundation of effusive softness, style and grace to Rabindra Nritya.

Following the footsteps of his ancestors, Tripura's last ruler, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore, always paid the highest respect to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. It was his privilege to confer on Tagore the honorific title "Bharat Bhaskar" just three months before the death of the great poet. Tagore's 80th birth anniversary was celebrated at the royal Durbar of Tripura with all solemnity.

An emissary was sent to Shantiniketan to formally confer on Tagore this last tribute of Tripura. The ailing poet was so moved by this generous royal gesture that he made no secret of his feelings," Such a free and disinterested bond of friendship between an immature poet whose fame was yet uncertain and one enjoying royal distinction is unprecedented in the history of any literature. The distinction that this royal family has conferred on me has illumined today the last limits of my life's span".

During his last visit to Agartala in 1926, while addressing a public meeting Tagore had another occasion to pay his tributes to Tripura. In response to the genuine love showered on him by the Kishore Sahitya Samaj of Agartala, Tagore in his inimitable words said, "Gone too are those days, I had the good fortune to receive great honour; it has been my privilege to receive honour even at the hand of kings in the West. But the tribute I received from a prince of my own country is to me, personally speaking, of much greater value.

That is why my relation with this State of Tripura is not just that of a guest for a day. That relation is indeed wedded to the memories of the father and the grandfather of the present king".

Temples

Tripura Sundari Temple

This temple is one of the 51 pithasthans in India as per Hindu mythology. As per mythology, Lord Vishnu had cut off the body of Mata Sati into 51 pieces by Sudarshana Chakra and all these pieces fell at different places throughout the country and these places are known as pithasthans. It is said that 'right foot' of Mata Sati fell at Matabari.

This pithasthan is also known as Kurma Pith because the shape of the temple premises resembles to that of "Kurma" namely tortoise. Inside the temple, the idol of Maa Kali is kept which is made of 'reddish black Kastic pathar.' Maa Kali is worshipped in her 'Soroshi' form in this temple. There is an idol of smaller size of Maa Kali called 'Chotto Maa' and this image used to be carried by Maharajas of Tripura during "Mrigaya" namely hunting and also during war.

The temple consists of square type sanctum of the typical Bengali hut type structure with a conical dome. The temple was constructed in 1501 A.D. by the then Maharaja Dhanya Manikya. In the eastern side of the temple there is a famous Kalyan Sagar where fishes and tortoises of huge size are found and devotees feed them with "muri" and biscuits. No fishing is permitted in the Kalyan Sagar.

Every year on Dewali, a famous Mela takes place near the temple which is visited by more than two lakhs pilgrims.

Location: 55 km from Agartala. 3 km away from Udaipur, district headquarter of South Tripura District.

How to reach Tripureswari Temple?: By bus from Agartala to Tripura Sundari Temple at Udaipur.

Fourteen Goddess Temple: It is located about 14 Km. away from Agartala at a place called Old Agartala. In the face of continued fight with Shamsar Gazi, Maharaja Krishna Manikya had shifted the capital from Udaipur to Old Agartala. It continued to be the capital till it was shifted to Agartala. Near the sacred 14 goddess temple during the month of July every year a Kharchi festival is organised and thousands of pilgrims and devotees visit this festival.

Location: 14 km from Agartala.

Bhuvanewari Temple: On the right bank of river Gomati at Udaipur is found the ruins of a big palace built by Maharaja Govinda Manikya (1660-75 A.D.). The Bhuvanewari temple is situated adjacent to this palace. It finds close literary reference in Great poet Rabindranath Tagore's novels and drama namely 'Bisharjan' and 'Rajarshi'

Location: 55 km from Agartala

Buddhist Temples

Buddha Temple, Venuban Vihar in Agartala: The shrine though small in size, preserves some beautiful metal idols of Lord Buddha and Bodhisatva. The idols are Burmese in origin. Here Buddha Jayanti is celebrated on the Buddha Purnima day followed by a big fair every year.

Nearest Airport

Agartala, 12 km from the city.

Nearest Railway Station

Kumarghat, 140 km from Agartala.

Buddhist Temple at Pecharthal, North Tripura

This temple is one of the oldest Buddha temples in the state. It was set up in 1931. The Idol was brought from Rangoon in 1931. This Idol does not look enormous in consideration of its incredible weight of 700 kg.

Nearest Airport

Agartala, 165 km.

Nearest Railway Station

Pecharthal, 2 km.

Nearest Town

Kumarghat, 10 km.

Buddha Temple at Kanchanpur, North Tripura

The temple is situated at sub-divisional headquarter. It is about 80 years old. Buddhists from different parts of the country are coming to visit and stay there.

Nearest Airport

Agartala, 195 km

Nearest Railway Station

Pecharthal, 30 km.

Nearest Town

Kanchanpur.

Buddha Temple at Manu Bakul, South Tripura

The Idol of this temple was brought from Arakan long back. The biggest week long fair is held every year in the month of April. The Pilgrims from Myanmar (formerly Burma), Bangladesh, Japan, Thailand and other places congregate during the fair.

Nearest Airport

Agartala, 125 km.

Nearest Railway Station

Kumarghat, 265 km.

Nearest Town

Sabroom, 265 km

Pilak (in Jolaibari, South Tripura)

The site of civilization which flourished during 8-12 centuries of the Christian era has been a cradle of culture of heterodox creeds and sects representing both Hinduism *i.e.* Shiva, Surya, Baishnabi and Buddhism *i.e.* Hinayana, Mahayana, Bajrayana which were found to exist side by side. The important places are Shyam Sundar Tilla, Deb Bari, Thakurani Tilla, Balir Pathar, Basudev Bari and Sagar Deba. The art form and site followed in the making of the images and in the sculptures have distance influence of Palas and Guptas of Bengal. Influence of Arakan, Myanmar (formerly Burma) and local style is discernable in the form and style of Pilak images and sculpture. The number of rock-cut images and terracotta plaques are lying scattered in various places of the area.

The site has been under the care of Archaeological Survey of India. The rock-cut images and terracotta plaques still speak of a unique glorious cultural past of Tripura. Some of the important images found there are Avolokiteswar, Mahisasur Mardini, bronze images of Buddha and Vishnu in addition to terracotta plaques, sealing Coins etc. The moulded terracotta plaques bear resemblance with moulded plaques recovered from Paharpur and Mainamati. The Buddhist Complex here may be assigned a date between 9 and 10 century A.D. During excavation in the late sixties, Archaeological Survey of India team found out brick built stupas. Archaeological Survey of India has plans to do some more excavation to unearth the hidden cultural heritage of the area. If may be presumed that these extensive plains of Tripura were under the control of several dynasties who ruled in Eastern Bengal and Samantha in ancient period. Some of them were Buddhists and the others were Hindues. Most of these rulers had their capitals near this region. The ancient kingdom of Pattikera had its capital in Comilla region and Pilak is not very far from Comilla.

Nearest Airport

Agartala, 110 km.

Nearest Railway Station

Kumarghat, 240 km.

Nearest Town

Santibazar, 19 km, Jolaibari market, 2 km.

Boxnagar (In Sonamura, West Tripura)

Very recently after denudation of a natural forest area, a brick-built building emerged. This is near Boxnagar market. The local people initially attributed to the temple of Manasaa-the goddess of Snake. It was in a dilapidated condition. When attention of Archaeological Survey of India was arrested to it, they took over the site but infact nothing was done. In July' 97 Dr. Jitendra Das, Superintending Archaeologist came to Tripura and visited this site. He focused there the idol of a Buddha and had been confirmed that it was a Buddha Temple. He was assured of immediate excavation of the site to find out the hidden story.

Nearest Airport

Agartala, 98 km

Nearest Railway Station

Kumarghat, 220 km.

Nearest Town

Sonamura, 8 km.

Wild Life Sanctuaries

Sepahijala

Sepahijala is covering an area of 18.532 km. More than 150 species of residential birds, migratory birds, orchid garden, boating facilities, wild life, botanical garden, zoo, elephant joy-rides, rubber and coffee plantation attracts the visitors. The famous spectacled monkey is found here.

Location: 25 km from Agartala on Agartala-Udaipur main road.

Trishna Wild Life Sanctuary

Trishna Wild Life Sanctuary is located at about 100 Km. away from Agartala in Belonia Subdivision of South Tripura District. Bison is the main attraction in this sanctuary, in addition to the resident and migratory birds.

Lakes***Dumboor Lake***

A water area of 41 sq.km. with an un-ending spell of luxuriant green vegetation all around stands majestic for her exceedingly charming beauty and 48 islands in the midst of the lake. Migratory birds, Water sports facilities are additional attractions.

There is a Hydel Project near the lake from where River Gomati originates and this is called Tirthamukh where on 14th January every year famous 'Pous Sankranti Mela' takes place. The lake is the confluence of rivers Raima and Sarma. Various species of migratory birds are noticed in the winter and it has rich reservoir of natural and cultured fishes.

Location: 120 km from Agartala.

Rudrasagar Lake

Rudrasagar lake, about 55 Km. away from Agartala near Melaghar having 5.3 Sq.Km. water area is another big attraction. In the centre of the lake the famous lake palace of Tripura namely Neermahal is built. The lake witnesses a large number of migratory birds in every winter. Every year a boat race is organised in July/August. The visiting tourists can enjoy boating facility in the lake.

Kamalasagar

Vast lake at the border of Bangladesh was excavated by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya in 15th century. On the bank of Kamalasagar, there is a famous temple of Goddess Kali dating back to 16th century. It is one of the excellent picnic spots in the state with scenic beauty.

Location: 30 km from Agartala

Jampui Hill

The permanent seat of eternal spring is situated at an altitude of 3000' above sea level. Jampui is famous for its charming landscape and bracing climate. The excellent climatic condition, green forests, beautiful orange garden, view of raising and setting sun are wonderful sight for tourists.

The hill range has 11 villages inhabited by Mizo (Lushai tribes) and also by Reang tribes. Population of the hill range is about 8,000 and the main occupation of the villagers is orange cultivation.

The temperature variation in the hill range is very nominal in all seasons and is ideal for the purpose of tourism. Different seasons offer different pleasures to the tourists at Jampui hill. During October to December the orange trees are laden with fruits and the entire hill range looks orange coloured. During March to May various species of orchids and other wild trees bear flowers. During rainy season the hill range is full of clouds and one can have the feeling of walking in the clouds.

The Lushai tribes mainly inhabited in the hill range have a very strikingly distinct cultural identity. They are quite well-off people having neat and clean houses well equipped with modern amenities. Most of them speak English fluently and follow Christianity.

The sun rise and sun set in the hill range is a delight worth seeing. The natural beauty, the pleasant weather, various species of trees, orchids and orange gardens, hospitable people and rich cultural heritage makes it an ideal destination for the tourists.

There is an 'Eden' Tourist Lodge in Vangmun village where tourists can go and stay comfortably. In addition, local people offer paying guest accommodation to the visiting tourists which enable them to closely understand the life and culture of the Lushai tribes.

After withdrawal of Restricted Area Permit for the foreign nationals, the hill range is attracting a large number of foreign tourists. The highest peak of Tripura 'Betalongchip' falls in this hill range which is 3600 feet high and from where tourist can see the panoramic view of Mizoram, Chittagong hill tracts and various other hill ranges of Tripura. There are good trekking routes in the hill range for tourists. State Government is planning to develop village tourism in Jampui hill and sports complex and cultural complex will be constructed shortly.