

# International Research Journal of Management Science & Technology



**ISSN 2250 – 1959(Online)**  
**2348 – 9367 (Print)**

*An Internationally Indexed Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal*

[www.IRJMST.com](http://www.IRJMST.com)  
[www.isarasolutions.com](http://www.isarasolutions.com)

Published by iSaRa Solutions

---

## TRANSCULTURATION AMONG THE TIWAS OF NORTH EAST INDIA

**Dr. Lakhinanda Bordoloi**

Associate Professor,

Department of Political Science, Dhing College, Nagaon, Assam

Email- bordoloin@gmail.com, WhatsApp: 918638156391

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2460-4997>

### **Abstract**

Tiwas are one of the major ethnic groups in Northeast India. They mainly live in Central Assam. They have lost their pristine culture over time. They have been undergoing a transculturation. This process has led to identity formation in some living areas. The new group lost its old cultural identity, did not speak its own language, and did not practice its traditions. As a result of this transculturation, there have been problems with their ethnic languages and identities. With the growing consciousness of revivalism, reverse processes such as tribalization, Sanskritisation, and ethnic identity assertion have occurred in some areas. This is an ethnographic study of the problems and prospects of transculturation among the Tiwas of Northeast India. We have also attempted to find solutions to this problem.

Key words: Ethnicity, Identity, Tiwa, Transculturation

### **Introduction:**

Transculturation is a social change process. To understand this process, it is crucial to understand both the cultural heritage and cultural patterns. Cultural heritage can be defined as the legacy of physical artifacts (cultural property) and intangible attributes of a group or society inherited from the past. Cultural patterns are similar behaviors within similar situations that we witness because of shared beliefs, values, norms, and social practices that are steady over time. Culture is a way of life for a group of people- the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. Across all times, culture exists, differently among ethnic groups, castes, tribes, societies, and religions, whatever one says. Culture is an identity, and as such, it is deeply linked to one's sense of self and feeling of belonging (Bordoloi, 2024: 77). Therefore, an attack on the culture of an ethnic group is often considered as an attack on its identity. Conflict theorists, anthropologists, and sociologists frequently cite the preservation of the culture of ethnic groups because of their strong connection with identity and emotion (Taylor, 1991: 99-104). They believe that identity is important for an ethnic group, and that the loss of ethnic identity has a detrimental impact on them. Like other ethnic groups of North East India, the loss of culture of the Tiwas through the process of transculturation has a detrimental impact on their ethnic identity. It has been chronic to them in the Pachorajya (five principalities) and Satorajya (seven principalities) areas, where the Tiwa people lost tradition, language, and culture. In those areas, due to transculturation, Tiwas assimilated into a heterogeneous culture and indoctrinated in religion and the lifestyle of others.

Defining ethnic groups relies heavily on their cultural identity, lifestyle, and language. Erasing traditional culture erases the world's multicultural diversity. The loss of ethnic culture, often leaves lasting scars on affected people, erosion of the sense of brotherhood, adherence to the new

culture, and disconnection from their historical roots and, traditions. Knowledge and life style are due to the process of transculturation in many cases among ethnic groups, as reflected by the Tiwas of Northeast India (Markam, 2021: 215-216). Among the Tiwas, transculturation started with Sanskritisation fuelled by a caste-ridden social order: status, structural, and positional differences. Nation building in India, which has a diverse population and religious and ideological differences, is also responsible for the process. Tribes and marginalized ethnic groups are victimized in the so-called national mainstream process. For generations, there has been a systematic erasure of ethnic cultural identities in the name of nation- building, national unity, and integrity, affecting the rich cultural diversity of the country.

Thus, the transculturation process has a negative impact on ethnic groups, particularly regarding the loss of ethnic cultural identity. To overcome this problem, efforts have been made worldwide to preserve ethnic culture, language, diversity, and multicultural identity (Kalita, Dewri, & Ali, 2023: 483-487). To understand the problem, draw attention, and determine the measures necessary for ethno-cultural preservation, it is important to conduct a micro-level study on the issue.

### **Methodology:**

The data collection methods used in this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are field visits to the Tiwa village areas in the districts of Nagaon, Morigaon, Hojai, Kamrup, Karbi Anglong, and Dhemaji in Assam and the Ri-bhoi district in Meghalaya. An Interview Schedule was used to collect data from the selected respondents. Purposive sampling of the interviews was conducted. Participatory observations were made in this ethnographic study. Secondary sources have been historical studies of the transculturation processes in the Tiwas. The published books, journals, articles, web searches, and other written documents were secondary sources for the study. Descriptive analytical and qualitative methods were used to analyze historical data, field visits, and other studies.

### **Objectives:**

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- (a) To understand the transculturation process: causes and concerns among the Tiwas in Northeast India.
- (b) Determine the ethnic identity question and
- (c) Find possible solutions to this problem.

### **Results:**

The Tiwas lived in both the hills and plains of Northeast India. The hill Tiwas living in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam and the Ri-bhoi district of Meghalaya are comparatively more conservative in terms of their language and culture. However, among the Tiwas, living in the central plains of Assam was largely affected by cultural change. There are various transculturation processes that differ from village to village in the Tiwas. The frequency of the impact of transculturation also differs. The process led to the division of the Tiwas into two distinct groups, categorized as hill and plain Tiwas, which differ in terms of culture and language (Ramirez, 2014: 20). The hill Tiwas are more traditional; they speak their own language and have their own culture. On the other hand, the Tiwas in Pachorajya and Satorajya, in particular, lost their tradition, language, and culture. The processes that led to the cultural shift in terms of transculturation are as follows.

**Sanskritization:**

The Tiwas accepted the Sanskritisation process at different points in time, coming into contact with dominant castes and religious groups. However, there is a lack of proper information on sources in the first group of Tiwas who accepted the Sanskritisation process. However, in all probability, many considered it to be a 16th century phenomenon (Kalita, Patar & Ali, 2023: 514-515). The Tiwas living in Pachorajya and Satorajya had an age-long association with the groups of prevalent Aryan culture than the Tiwas living in the hills and isolated village areas (Patar, 2021: 192-197). Sanskritisation is an easy process. In this process, ethnic groups or low- caste people convert to another caste-fold, frequently considered a high- or twice-born caste in the caste-ridden Indian social system with whom they had been associated for a long period of time (Baruah, 2015: 172). This process is chronic to social disparities and strata, mostly because of the prevalent system. A section of Ti was attracted to the process on the expectation that they would get a higher status and position. Transculturation continued in the form of Sanskritisation. This happened to the extent, due to the denial of rights of the people of lower strata or a tribal group in social participation, prevalent discrimination, and untouchability in society. To overcome this problem by achieving a higher status and position in society, they took the path of transculturation through the process of Sanskritisation (Baruah, 2015: 172).

The history of Sanskritisation among the Tiwas goes through the propagation of Neo-Vaishnavism by Assamese Saint Srimanta Sankardeva during the 15th century in Assam. His followers sped up propagation after him. In Satorajya and Pachorajya, cultural mobility propagated among various ethnic groups and tribes. In Neo-Vaishnavism it kept on admitting proselytes through ‘soron’ (acceptance of religious instructions) and ‘bhojon’ (mode of worship) imparted by a ‘Gohain’ (preacher), to a low caste people or tribes (Patar, 2021:100). A section of the Tiwas accepted it, gave up former habits, practice and customs and underwent ‘prayachit’ (atonement), receiving the status ‘horu-koch’ (low Koch) through the process. The process attracted a section of the Tiwas to grant ‘Lakheraj’ (granting land) to Batadrava-than established by Srimanta Sankardeva (Kalita, et al. 2023: 516). Thus, Tiwas changed their culture and lost their linguistic identity at the acceptance of the Assamese language as their mother tongue in the process (Patar, 2017: 229-234). Their intention to assimilate into a greater Assamese society was also a factor behind this process (Kalita, et al. 2023: 518). They thought that the new lifestyle would give them a social status and position similar to other high-caste people.

With the transculturation process, the Tiwas began to develop an aversion towards their traditional ethnic institutions, such as Shamadi (village dormitory), Thaanghor (place of worship), Nobaro or Borghar (prayer house), heritage and material culture, faiths, and values, considering them as devil’s altar. The new thought taught them to think so (Bordoloi, 2024: 181). In places, their traditional institutions gradually fall into disrepair until they disappear to believe things of the older days are gone by. These phenomena were common in plain Tiwa villages, although more among the Tiwa villages fell under Pachorajya and Satorajya (Dewri, 2009: 308-309). In those areas the Tiwas those who accepted the process used to go to ‘Namghars’ instead of ‘Shamadi’ go to Temples, instead of ‘Nobaro’ or ‘Borghar’ go to ‘Satra’ instead of ‘Thaanghor.’ They used to go for congregational prayers, which in turn were at par with the new religions or devotees based on the new faith (Ramirez, 2014: 14-21).

### Christianity among the Tiwas:

The entrance of Christian culture, which began with British occupation in 1826, was a significant event in the ethnic cultural life of the region. The history of Christianity among the Tiwas is a 19th century phenomenon. A section of the Tiwa accepted religion in the hope that they will get better life opportunities, including education and health, convinced by the way, that the traditional Tiwa religion is nothing, but a ‘satans’ (evil beings) religion (Bordoloi, (2024: 77-78). The first effort to convert them to Christianity was made by the Khasi Presbyterian Missionary, who preached them using the Khasi language. Using the Khasi language - Khasi hymns, the Khasi prayer book, etc.– the missionary met little success in preaching the Gospel to the willing Tiwas. Thereafter, Protestant Evangelists began preaching in Karbi. The person who became Christian had to learn Karbi during the time to preach Christianity. In 1911 Langtuk Hanse’s family came from North Cachar Hills to Umswai village and started converting in 1914 both the Tiwas and Karbis of the area to Christianity through Reverend Christofer Bekar (the Roman Catholic Salvadorian Missionary Institution). Saint Mary’s Church was first established in the Umswai area in 1916. Araw Malang, Kathsala Amsong (Lukas), Talaw Amsong etc. were the first group of the Tiwas converted to Christianity (Patar, 2021: 198). In 1932, the Saint Joseph Church was established in an area in which the villagers of Pundurimakha, Shikdamakha, and Amsobra accepted Christianity. In the later period, the Catholic Celestial Missionary converted villagers to Sinani, Umbarmon, Maupenjeng, Tipali, Mogoidhorom, Morteng, Ulukhunji-roman, Orlongluri, Khumkhunji, Chandraphali, Thaulaw, and Sapali. Likewise, the Presbyterian Missionary converted the villagers of Romphom, Maulen, Amsetri, Pantalu, Roman Mayong, and Amkhashi village (Bordoloi, 2024: 77).

In 1951, some Umswai families embraced the Baptist Christianity. The Tiwa Catholic Community was organized in the same year. In 1953, another Tiwa village, called Umphew, became Catholic. Thus, the foundations of the Catholic Church in the Tiwas of the hills were established. The Tiwa Catholic Community of Umswai was examined by the Parish Priest of Nongpoh of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. Michael Balwan’s father arrived at Nongpoh in 1958. He began to take keen interest in converting Tiwas into Christianity. He learned the Tiwa language and frequently visited Catholic Tiwa and Karbi villages in the Umswai area. The Karbi missionaries, Jacob Hanse of Sojong and Sylvester Teron, helped him in this juncture. Tiwa catechists Babu Mourus Amsong and Simon Mukti, and his former pupil, Peter Phinal Maslai, began to intensify their conversion efforts. As the community at Umswai grew, it became a separate unit of the Nongpoh Mission. Father Balwan was given a mission charge. With a building mission center at Umswai, he came out in 1966, and a Mission Hall was built in 1968 (Baruah, 2015: 129). However, until 1977, there were no resident missionaries. Father Balwan used to come and stay a few days in each month at the Mission Centre and return to Nongpoh (Patar, 2021: 197-201). He converted many Tiwas into Christians. This effort was continued by missionaries in later stages. Roman Marjong, Putsari Christian, Model Umswai, Amkashi, Birsingki, etc. became Christian villages in West Karbi Anglong. In the Ri-bhoi district of Meghalaya, the Tiwa villagers of Umsiang, Mayong, Mauker, and Lomlong accepted Christianity (Baruah, 2015: 129). Apart from Karbi Anglong of Assam and Ri-bhoi district in Meghalaya, in Pachim Nagaon and Mokoria village of Morigaon district of Assam, a section of Tiwas converted into Christianity.

Unlike Neo-Vaishnavism, Christian Tiwas do not automatically lose their mother tongue, attire, or foot habits. But they don’t follow Tiwa traditional institutions like ‘Shamadi,’ ‘Nobaro,’ ‘Thaanghor,’ etc and don’t worship Pha-Mahadeo (Lord Shiva) and neither other deities nor they

celebrate Tiwa traditional festivals (Pumah, 2016). They go to churches to accept Christianity for prayers, instead of performing traditional rituals and prayers for their deities. Thus, conversion to Christianity causes the loss of Tiwa ethnic culture, identity, and lifestyle. Thus, the transculturation process and the acceptance of Christianity led to ethnic identity problems for the Tiwas.

#### **Conversion to another Tribe:**

Christian Tiwas in the state of Meghalaya converted to Khasi, and they wrote the Khasi surname mainly because of their non-recognition as the Schedule Tribe in the state. Christianity is the main religion of the state, and the government praises it. The Khasis designate the non-Khasis as 'utkhar' (outsider) there and 'sons of the soil' (Khasis and Garos) generally want to keep away 'utkhar' from the enjoyment of resources in the state. The Khasis called Tiwas living in the Ri-bhoi area as 'karew'- a sub tribe of the Khasis (Lumphui, 2021: 16). In such a situation, Ti was converted to Khasi to obtain government benefits and social recognition in the area. However, they did not obtain Scheduled Tribe status in the state (Baruah, 2015: 129). Some Tiwas of Meghalaya wrote the Tiwa clan name as a surname, but it was not similar to the original Tiwa surname. This change is chiefly due to the influence of the surrounding dominant Khasi tribe (Patar, 2021: 92). Tiwas took the Khasi names: Amsong became Memsong, Puma became Umbah or Membha, Maslai became Mathlai, and Mithi became Mukti, but they were truly Tiwa (Ramirez, 2014: 63). Thus, Tiwa ethnocide in the Khasi and Jayantia hills is also ongoing.

There were also conversions of Tiwas to the Karbi tribe. In Umswai of west Karbi Anglong some Tiwa villagers were converted to Karbi, for getting advantages in getting benefits from the local self-government of the Karbis, which gives priority for welfare of the Karbis. The acceptance of Christianity also led them to convert to Karbi, because Karbi was used to preach Christianity (Ramirez, 2014: 60). Some villagers of Hongkram, Umru, Chu-cha, Maisam, Khandajan, Purana Ghilani, Angchok, and Sat-mail (near Diphu) were Tiwas, but they took the Karbi clan after conversion (Bordoloi, 2024: 77-78).

#### **Hinduism among the Tiwas:**

Hinduization is going on side by side with other processes of social change among the Tiwas. In this process, the desired person to Hinduism avoids some tribal food and dress habits, such as taking strong liquor and swine flesh while preceding his/her taking of Hinduism and then he/she has all religious intents and purposes to call a Hindu (Patar, 2021: 99-103). In the 4th and 5th decade of the 20th century, there was a great deal of conversion of many Tiwas to Hinduism because of their massive trend of inferior complexity, social mobility, and softness. They felt pride to call them 'no-koch' after they converted to Neo-Vaishnavism (Senapati, 2010: 178-182).

Because of the conversion process, there was a phenomenal reduction in the Tiwa population in census reports conducted at different points in time. The Census report of India in 1901 described Tiwas as professing animism. The same report also stated that Tiwas practiced through human sacrifice (Gohain, 1993: 05). A census report from 1921 recorded 3,354 Hindu Tiwas as against 496 Hindus in 1911. In 1921, there were 38,723 animists, and 37,679 animists in 1911. By 1931, most of the plain Tiwas in Nagaon and Morigaon reported themselves as Hindu, and only 3,500 Tiwas living in the Khasi hills claimed themselves to be speakers of the Tiwa language and followed traditional institutions. This exemplifies Tiwa transculturation in these areas (Das, 2024: 92).

The Tiwas practice 'Shakti Dharma' influenced by Hinduism. The Tiwa concept of departed soul called 'phidri' to heaven after death appears to have been inspired by Hinduism. Hindu concepts of 'vaikuntha' 'swarga' and 'naraka' are prevalent amongst the Tiwas; especially among certain

plain Tiwas, who give inspiration to Hinduism (Patar, 2021: 92). They believe in the presence of the almighty called 'Kosai' the Hindu temples Mandir 'Upasana-griha' are present among some family households of the Tiwas, which is due to the reflection of the Hindu faith and way of life (Patar, 2024:126). The Tiwas worship 'Pha-Mahadeo' (Lord Shiva). The purification ceremonies with water called 'ti-khumur' in the worship show how Tiwas followed Hindu tradition. The ceremony in which basil leaves are dipped during the worship of different deities is definitely a Hindu religious influence on the Tiwas. In the case of the deceased, the funeral party returning from cremation performs 'mikhri-khawa-chasa' (a traditional practice of purification) and baths with sacred basil leaves in which copper, gold, and silver are dipped. Before entering the deceased home, funeral party members touched the fire.

Tiwas worshipped by different gods and deities. To name a few are- Chongkhong, Yangli, Sogra, Suniphuja, Deophuja, Kalika Phuja, Lukhimi Phuja, and Langkhon Phuja. They used banana leaves in almost all ceremonies and revealed the influence of Hindu faith. Like Hindus, Tiwas offered to the gods on the banana leaves. Lighting a lamp is quite common in the offerings of the Tiwas, as in Hindus' temples (Sharma, 1985: 76-77). Tiwa rituals were performed to pacify the deities and save society from disorder. They changed it by Hindu faith (Ramirez, 2014: 152) and practiced Shakti Dharma, similar to the Jaintia and Hindu tradition, offering agricultural yield, rice bears, goats, pigs, etc. Hinduism influenced the appointment of priests to perform rituals by the Gobha king. The king established a group of Brahmin families to perform the Shakti Dharma in the Gobha Kingdom. (Patar, 2021:110). **Impact of Modernity:**

Modernity has detribalized many Tiwas; practically, more have been for those who have long permanently been in plains areas, where modern means are common. The detribalization is greater in sub-urban localities than in the Tiwas of remote and isolated villages. Today, modern methods are used to reach remote villages. By using civic amenities and infrastructure facilities, they have become modern. With globalized social processes, the tribe's identity has undergone considerable changes. Despite growing urbanization, some semi-urban villages have retained traditional institutions and socio-cultural activities. Nowadays, they are working toward revivalism to safeguard their traditional identities through various organizations. Following tribalism and de-sanskritisation, they resisted growing detribalization and transculturation.

#### **Modern Political Institutions:**

After independence, the new Indian constitutional system introduced modern democratic political institutions. The Indian state consciously took itself the task of modernization and the development of each society. In the sense of independence, it was natural to be energized not only by visions of democracy, but also by a desire to modernize and develop a society that had long been systematically impoverished under colonial rule. Democracy and development considered the cardinal principles of the post-colonial enterprise of nation- building (Bordoloi, 2021: 216). It was earnestly believed that the state must play a central role in the development of every society in general, and tribal and other backward communities in particular. The policy of development and change embarked upon by the state had a tremendous impact on the conceptual democratization of village communities in post-colonial India. The state has come to be viewed as a positive agency for welfare and social change. Through a plethora of welfare policies and developmental programs, it aimed to change the social structure of tribes and village communities in their entirety. As a result, modern democratic institutions have opened up a new vista for modern maiden leadership to stage a debut in the present political set up for furnishing development. The modern mechanisms of tribal

development through various agencies, councils, and other local self-government institutions have made traditional institutions subordinate (Bordoloi, 2024: 84).

With the march of time, the traditional politics of the Tiwas have undergone tremendous changes in structure, power, and functioning. However, hilly people with their green mountains, rivers, and streams of enchanting courses kept the rich traditions alive. Present political institutions prefer modernization, globalization, and democratization, whereas the indigenous traditional system is much more localized and its sphere is expanded only when there is a common issue to share and then it gets a dissemination effort. The traditional system was loose and flexible to this extent, but the core goals of the system were prosperity, harmony, peace, sustainability, and responsibility for the whole community, while globalization budgies moved more towards individualism.

Until recently, the understanding of outsiders on Tiwas was very disparaging. They called the Tiwas aborigines, natives, tribals, scheduled tribes, ethnic minorities, and ethnic nationalities, connoting their backwardness and primitiveness. With such ideas, their traditional institutions were supposedly replaced with more advanced assimilative and modernized national democratic systems. However, the moderns that emerged in the post-independence period in Tiwa society did not go against the spirit of traditions. Traditional institutions, along with modern political institutions, have accelerated the tempo of politicization. However, the Tiwa inhabited areas, were divided into separate states, districts, and regions. Hill Tiwas was brought under the hills of Autonomous Districts and in the plains of the Panchayatiraj system under other departments and administrative set ups of the state government. Both institutions became very effective for development, providing people with new political philosophy, incentives, and political professionalism, and to go for the national sphere of political life instead of following only the traditions (Bordoloi, 2021: 191-193).

The introduction of modern participatory democracy, the spread of education, improved means of communication, the initiation of industrialization, and the increasingly rationalized structure of administration were other factors responsible for the process of change in transition. Modern representative democratic institutions were introduced in two phases in Assam: the universal adult franchise and democratic decentralization. The Panchayat Raj, Autonomous Councils, and establishment of a Legislative Assembly preceded the introduction of universal adult franchises. A three-tier Panchayati Raj system, namely Gram Panchayat at the village level, Anchalik Panchayat at the Block level, and Zila Parishad at the district level, came up in the Assam plain districts. The introduction of Panchayatiraj brought a significant change to the traditional Village Councils. The emergence of office bearers such as Dekadoloi, Tamulidoloi, Khataniar Patradoloi, Botadhora, Manta, Barbaruah, Bangthai, Photosilia, Kahikushia, Jithamaji, Bhitormaji, Halmaji, Dhulia, Thongabhari, Borgorokhia, Medhi, Kumar, Adparia, Gorbhitora, and Saribhitora is due to transculturation among the plain Tiwas (Gogoi, 2009:140). Moreover, changes occurred in the office bearers of the traditions of the Tiwa Rajas Council of Ministers (Rajane Munthiraw). Deoraja, Patar, Re-bhari, Shangdoloi, Shangmaji, Pandari, Koraimaji, Khamar, Jela, Hatari, Phongorai, Langthia, Hari-kunguri, Tewri, Sangot, etc. were the traditional office bearers of the King's traditional Council of Ministers, but due to transculturation, it changed to Dekaraja, Senapati, Upo-senapati, Panibhari, Doloi, Duwar-doloi Bormaji, Bordhulia Tamuli, Borbarua Medhi, Randuni, Sotradhari, Darbisoni, Gorokhia, Namati, Kuwari, Sonamoti, Pujari, Maloni, Parikha, Mohol, etc. (Bordoloi, 2021: 192).

It gave a new orientation to politics in the state and helped form a civil society, instead of a group of fragmented tribes and communities. It has also changed the outlook and broadened the



political horizon of the people by forcing them to look beyond their community (Dewri, 2011: 82-83).

Recently, the Panchayatiraj system, Sixth Scheduled District Councils, and Autonomous Council replaced the traditional institutions of administration of the Tiwas. Traditional administration is more concerned with maintaining traditional religious and customary laws. The present institutions under modern governance assert administrative control and provide infrastructural facilities and civic amenities for all round development of the people (Kalita, 2006: 59-630). Modern local self-governments have greater power and advantages than traditional governments. Modern institutions play a significant role in modern lifestyles in every aspect, and younger generations are attracted more towards the new system.

**Demographic Changes:**

The first decadal census was conducted in British India, in 1972. Since the first census, Tiwas has maintained steady growth for up to three decades. During this period, their population increased from thirty-four thousand to fifty-two thousand. In the next decade, the number decreased to seventeen thousand, ascribed only to the toll of lives taken by Kalazar (epidemics) (Gohain, 1993: 05). In 1911, an increase of four thousand was recorded. The growth rate has not remained uniform over the past 70 years. From 1911 to 1931, there was an almost uniform increase, from 5 to 6% in each decadal census. However 1941 a sharp increase of 18% was observed from 1931 to 1941. In the next decade, the rate declined to 2%, but suddenly decreased to 17%. The variations in demography cannot be explained by hand, but can be attributed to cultural shifts (Baruah, 2015: 109). A section of the Tiwas transcultured into the framework of Neo-Vaishnavism and its age-long association with the Hindu rural masses (Chaudhury, & Das, 1973:03). The Tiwa population trend from 1972 to 2011 is shown in table-1.

Table-1  
**Tiwa Population**

Year of Census	Population	Year of Census	Population
1872	34,859	1941	51,308
1881	47,650	1951	52,352
1891	52,423	1961	61,315
1901	35,513	1971	95,609
1911	39,213	1991	1,43,746
1921	41,033	2001	1,70,622
1931	43,448	2011	2,00,915

Source: Census of India

The overall demographic picture of Tiwas in 1961 shows that the total population was 61,315. In 1971, the population was 95,609. Thus, the decennial growth rate of the Tiwas in Assam (both in the plains and hills) was 36%, against the Scheduled Tribes (both in the plains and hills) growth rate of 37.90%. In 1891, Dr. Grierson found more than 40, 160 Tiwa speakers in Assam, but as per the 1961 census, the figure decreased to 10,576. During 1871/72, a regular census was undertaken throughout the state of Assam. In the early census records, the Tiwas were considered akin to the other speakers of the great Bodo linguistic family, but their ethnic entity has always been treated separately (Chaudhury, & Das, 1973: 06-08). In the 1991 Census 1, 43,746 Tiwa populations

were recorded. In the 2001 census it was 1, 70,622, but in the 2011 census, the Tiwa population was 2, 00,915.

The Tiwa population growth in 2011 was higher than any decadal census, chiefly because of the recognition of Tiwa living in the hill district of Karbi Anglong of Assam as Scheduled Tribe (Hills). Moreover, self-identity assertion due to growing consciousness was another factor contributing to a higher record in 2011. Nevertheless, the Tiwa language is currently at an endangered stage, as recorded by UNESCO in 2002. The numbers of speakers decreased daily. The census 2001 recorded 26,480 Tiwa speakers in India; in 2011, it was 33,921 in India, and in the state of Assam, it was 31,821 in persons (Kholer, 2024: 14).

Many researchers doubt and question the proper enumeration of the population because they have found disproportion in censuses. It is also true that Hill Tiwas was not recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in the Karbi Anglong district until 2002. After the Tiwa movement, the hill Tiwas of the district received recognition of the Scheduled Tribe (hills) and were made eligible to serve in government services and other purposes. However, they have not been uniformly enumerated in decadal censuses. In the western part of the Karbi Anglong district of Assam which is the homeland of the Tiwas the number recorded in the census of 1951 was 2,176 only. Further south, in the Khasi and Jaintia hills, the population was 298 in 1951 as 298 (Bordoloi, 2021:18). Other censuses were not separated from prominent tribes, namely, the Karbis and Jayantias of those areas (Gohain, 1993: 05). There are no census records available for the Tiwas living in the state of Meghalaya, as they are not enumerated as scheduled tribes in the state (Bordoloi, 2024: 31-32). Therefore, the census records did not reflect the actual Tiwa populations (Baruah, 2015: 15).

#### **Present ethnographic zones:**

Presently, the majority of the Tiwas live in the Morigaon and Nagaon districts, where the impacts of cultural transmission are very prone. Tiwas live on both hills and plains, but there were more changes in the plains (Ramirez, 2014: 20). Now the Tiwas other than hills, foothills, and some isolated areas of the plains, do not speak in their own language. The changes in traditions occurred with multiple processes of social change among them (Patar, 2018: 111-112). In Karbi Anglong (the majority in the western part), Tiwas still living with its cultural and linguistic identity. Nevertheless, a section of the Tiwas in these hilly areas was also converted to Christianity. In Kamrup District, the villagers Bherakushi, Rongdoloi, and Dimoria speak their own languages. The Tiwas of the Upper Assam were less traditional. The Tiwas living in Rajapathar and the Selabor areas of east Karbi Anglong are less traditional. The Tiwas of the east Khasi hill (Ri-bhoi) of Meghalaya converted much to Christianity, but they knew their language well and some traditions. Christianity has not materially changed the laws of inheritance, dress, and succession, and some still survive. The remaining non-converted Tiwas living in the hills of Karbi Anglong of Assam and the Ri-bhoi district of Meghalaya are more tradition-bound than plain Tiwas are. In hilly areas, such as the Amri and Duar Amla areas, villages such as Theregaon near Howraghat, Ghilani, Bhoksong, Mindaimari, etc. of Karbi Anglong, Tiwas of Ri-bhoi of Meghalaya, and some villages of foothill areas such as Amsoi, Silchang, Nellie, Jagiroad, Dimoria, etc.; areas of Kathiatoli, Khangri of Nagaon, and Hojai District still survive their traditional culture and linguistic identity (Ramirez, 2014: 41). The present status of transculturation of the area-based ethnographic zone among the Tiwas is as follows:

- (a) More Traditional (The Hill Tiwas): The villagers of Umswai, the Ulukhunji area of West Karbi Anglong, and the Mayong area of Meghalaya State.

- (b) Partly Traditional (Datialia Tiwas and Foothill Areas): Villagers of Dimaria, Jagiroad, Nellie, Silchang, Amsoi, Bhoksong, Komargaon, and Ghilani areas.
- (c) Very less traditional (Tiwas of Pachorajya and Satorajya Areas): Raha, Dharamtul, Barapujia, Bebejia, Borsila, Morigaon, Ghaguwa, Tetelia, Kolbari, and Jonbeel.
- (d) The other Tiwas were both partly traditional and less traditional. Partly traditional Tiwas are the villagers of Kaki (Khanggi), Kathiatoli, Kondoli, and Hatipara. The less traditional Tiwas were the villagers of Dhemaji, Rajapathar, Toradubi, and Selabor.

### Discussion:

Sanskritisation has several consequences. The Tiwas are divided into two distinct groups based on socio-cultural changes over the years. The religious and socio-cultural similarities between the two groups widened to a large extent (Ramirez, 2014: 20). Hill Tiwas differed from plain Tiwas, except in a few foothills and isolated village areas in terms of language, performing rituals, festivals, and overall cultural practices. The hill Tiwas speak their own language, and plain Tiwas did not know to speak in their own language; instead, they speak in Assamese. Assamese has become a native language. On the other hand, Hill Tiwa are still writing the Tiwa language as their mother tongue, since they speak the language at home and among people living in hill Tiwa villages. Plain Tiwas celebrate festivals such as Borot, Mela-uliuwa, and Pisu etc. (Dewri, 2009: 125-133) whereas Sagra, Yangli, Langkhon, Wanshuwa, and Khelchawa are celebrated by hill Tiwas (Patar, 2021: 71). Songs such as Magro Misawa, Panthairojawa, Sogra, and Langkhon are present in hill Tiwa villages, while Godalboria, Pisu, and Borot are present in the villages of plains (Dewri, 2010: 57).

Tribal organizations of the State Assam have made efforts to stop transculturation by religious or caste conversion. The All Assam Tribal Sangha, along with the state government, has made a decision in recent years. It decided not to issue Schedule Tribe certificates for those converted sections of Tiwas, who took the surname (title) of other caste people; hence, the conversion decreased considerably, and Tiwas started thinking doubly about tribal identity (Bordoloi, 2024: 87).

A section of plain Tiwas transcultured to the larger framework of Neo-Vaishnavism through the process of Sanskritisation, and a section to Christianity and other faiths. However, these processes are not always unidirectional or universally accepted. Along the presupposed process, de-sanskritisation, tribalization, and other reverse processes also worked. Many heterogeneous factors of change have always been present in plain Tiwas (e.g., Pachorajya and Satorajya). The conversion processes were restricted in the 1960s to an organized form when Lalung Darbar (an organization of the Tiwas) was formed (Radukakati, 2014; 33). In 1971, the Sadow Tiwa (Lalung) Yuba Chatra Sanmilon was formed. In 1972, the first conference of this organization was held at Nambor Lalung Gaon, where several resolutions were adopted, including a resolution to stop the conversion. In 1977, at the conference of Amsoi, the organization was renamed Sadow Asom Tiwa (Lalung) Sanmilon. Resolutions were adopted at this conference to stop conversion. In its aims and objectives, it has been included that 'unite the Tiwas living in different parts, and stop the conversion processes.' Both organizations brought consciousness among the Tiwas to fight for their cause of language and cultural protection. Under the initiative of these organizations, another organization for the converted Tiwas was formed in 1974 by the name 'Sadow Nagaon Janajati Sanskari Sangha, ' which tried to unite both the Tiwas living in hills and plains. In the preamble of the organization, it has been mentioned that for the cause of its own caste and culture, every section of the Tiwas will work, including the conversion for the protection and promotion of its own Tiwa culture. The leaders of

Maheswar Pator and Bonsing Pator played an effective role in the protection of Tiwa culture (Senapati, 1997: 112). Both organizations built consciousness to an extent and brought the Tiwas living in hills and plains into a single umbrella for common interest. In the 1990s, the movement began demanding autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India led by the All Tiwa Students' Union (ATSU). Other Tiwa socio-cultural organizations also extended their support for demand. They took a common resolution for the preservation of Tiwa cultural identity, stopping the conversion processes. The Autonomy Movement asserted socio-cultural identity through the retrospective thought of cultural revival. The Tiwas, who had been transcultured, started to revive culture and tradition, and learn the Tiwa language. They established language training centers and institution of Shamadi, performed rituals, organized cultural festivals, and so on. The reverse process brought about changes to their traditional dresses, such as kashong, phaskai, joskai, nara, thana, tagla, and phaga. Nevertheless, the process of religious conversion continues to date, both in hills and plains, may it be Sanskritisation or Christianity, threatening the Tiwa cultural extinction (Bordoloi, et al. 2021: 210).

In Assam, some ethnic groups belonging to the Other Backward Class (OBC) and the More Other Backward Class (MOBC) demanded a Scheduled Tribe status to obtain constitutional benefits over the years. The demand is giving new intensity to the tribalization process (Bordoloi, 2008: 111-114). Tribal ethnic groups have attempted to overcome these problems. They define and externalize their relationships with other caste members. They believe that ethno-cultural identity is their core question. Thus, both tribalization and re-tribalization processes were observed among ethnic groups. Many groups assert tribal identity and are involved in the ethnic identity movement, demanding autonomous councils to safeguard their rights and protect culture and languages. This phenomenon encouraged them to act as such. For this reason, Sanskritized Tiwas accepted as de-sanskritisation. This is partly because of the dysfunctional consequences of the Sanskritisation process. Thus, it has been observed that these processes have not been universal, nor have they been accepted universally and socially (Bordoloi, 2024: 86-90).

The preservation and revival of endangered cultures have become increasingly important in a world where globalization and other forces threaten the diversity of cultural expressions. International organizations, NGOs, and local communities play pivotal roles in these efforts, often focusing on revitalizing languages, traditions, and practices that are at risk of disappearing. Cultural diversity is not only a source of beauty and richness in the world, it is also a fundamental aspect of humanity's heritage. Each culture offers unique perspectives, knowledge systems, and ways of understanding the world (David, 2021: 38-40). The loss of culture diminishes the collective richness of the human experience. Therefore, it is imperative to protect and preserve this diversity. Preservation of cultural diversity is intertwined with human rights. This involves respecting the rights of individuals and communities to maintain and develop their cultural identities. The destruction or erosion of culture can be viewed as a violation of such rights. Transculturation, whether it occurs through aggressive actions or through neglect and marginalization, represents a denial of the dignity and value of people's cultural practices and identities. Moreover, cultural diversity is of practical importance (Terangpi, 2023: 170). Diverse cultures contribute to a rich tapestry of ideas, innovations, and creative expression. Ethnic cultural considerations speak of the international protection of national, religious, ethnic, and cultural groups (Pruim, 2014: 272-274).

**Conclusion:**

There have been many cases of successful cultural revival. Case studies of the Maori in New Zealand, the Ainu in Japan, and the Sami in Northern Europe demonstrate the impact of dedicated efforts at the local, national, and international levels in preserving and revitalizing endangered cultures (Youvan, 2023: 21). They highlight the importance of institutional support, community involvement, and empowerment of indigenous and minority groups in the preservation of cultural diversity. Despite the bleak picture found in the study of Tiwa culture and language, governments have instituted measures in recent years to ameliorate the adverse position of ethnic and indigenous peoples, and in many cases. These measures can be seen as contributing to the 'ethno-development' advocated by development theorists. In 1995, the government granted the Tiwa Autonomous Council. This has made strides in ethno-development. The concept of ethno-development is influenced by cultural pluralism, internal self-determination, and sustainability. Thus, an all-round response and measures are needed to preserve ethnic identity while stopping the processes for transculturation of the Tiwas in Northeast India.

**References:**

- Baruah, A. K. (1989). *The Lalungs (Tiwas)*. Gauhati: Tribal Research Institute.
- Baruah, B. (2015). *Society, Economy, Religion and Festivals of Tiwas in Assam*. New Delhi: Kalpaz.
- Bordoloi, D. (2008). *Tiwa Samajot Baishnav Dharma aru Iyar Samashyabali (in Assamese)*. In Bordoloi, J. (ed.) *Sunguri*, Jagiroad: Tiwa Mathonlai Tokhra.
- Bordoloi, L. (ed.). (2017). *Sograsal (Souvenir)*. Jagiroad: Tiwa Folk Cultural Festival
- Bordoloi, L. & Bordoloi, R. (2021). *Politics and Administration of the Tiwas*. Chennai: Notion Press.
- Bordoloi, L. (2024). *Ethnocide vs Ethnicity*. Chennai: Notion Press.
- Bordoloi, M. H. (2019). *Karbi Anglong Zilar Pahariya Tiwasokolor Somaj aru Sanskriti (in Assamese)*. Gauhati: Jagaran Sahitya Prakashan
- Bordoloi, R. (2024). *Society and Cultural Assimilation of the Tiwa*. In Das, A. K. (ed.). *Tiwa Khurang*. Morigaon: Tiwa Autonomous Council.
- Chaudhury, S. K. (2004). *Tribal Identity: Continuity and Change Among Kondhs of Orissa*. New Delhi: Rawat.
- Das, M. K. (2024). *Ethnic Issues, Political Movement and Unrest of Tiwas*. In Das, A. K. (ed.), *Tiwa Khurang*. Morigaon: Tiwa Autonomous Council.
- David, N. D. (2021). *Ethnocide and The Indigenous Aeta Magbukon*. *Thai Journal of East Asian Studies*, 25(2), retrieved from <https://researchgate.net>.
- Dewri, G. (2009). *Tiwa Jonojatir aru Bhasa (in Assamese)*. In Krishnaram Mili (ed.) *Tiwa Sanskritir reh-rup (Assamese)*. Gauhati: Hills View Publications.
- Dewri, M. (2009). *Oitijyapurna Gosain Uliuwa Utsav (in Assamese)*. In Mili, K. (ed.) *Tiwa Sanskritir Reh-rup (Assamese)*, Gauhati: Hills View Publications.
- Dewri, M. (2010). *The Socio-cultural Milieu of the Tiwas*. In Kalita, D. C. & Sarmah, H. (eds.) *The Tiwas (Lalungs): A Profile of a Tribe*. Morigaon: Morigaon College.
- Dewri, M. (2011). *Asomiya Jati aru Sanskriti Gothonot Lalung (Tiwa) Sokol, (in Assamese)*. Gauhati: Tribal Research Institute.
- Gogoi, L. (2009). *Mela Utsav aru Samajik Sampriti (in Assamese)* In Mili, K. (ed.) *Tiwa Sanskritir Reh-rup (Assamese)*. Gauhati: Hills View Publications.

- Gohain, B. K. (1993). *The Hill Lalungs*. Gauhati: Anandaram Bariah Institute of Language, Art and Culture.
- Heiskanen, J. (2021). Volume 1, Issue 4. In the Shadow of Genocide: Ethnocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and International Order, *Global Studies*, retrieved <https://academic.oup.com/doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksab030>
- Kalita, D. K. (2006). Tribal Traditions, Development and Tribal Identity. In Das, G. N. (ed.) *Tribal Tradition and Development in the Hill Areas of Assam*. Gauhati: Institute of Research for Tribal and Scheduled Castes.
- Kalita, R. C. Dewri, M. & Ali, H. (2023). *Lalung (Tiwa) Buranji*, Morigaon: Tiwa Autonomous Council.
- Kholar, V. L. (2024). *Tiwa Mate Una ba Sasti aro Pat Chona (in Tiwa)*. In Das, A. K. (ed.) *Tiwa Khurang*. Morigaon: Tiwa Autonomous Council.
- Lumphui, R. (2021). *Ribhoi Ningo Thawa Kukporja Rawgo Khasiraw Indana Karow Hono (in Tiwa)* In Darphang, B. (ed.) *Khurang*. Nagaon: Tiwa Sahitya Sabha.
- Markam, S. (2021). Elements of Cultural Pluralism in Nirad C. Chaudhuri's Manifestation. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)*, retrieved from <https://www.rjelal.com> (Vol. 9, Issue. 4).
- Patar, B. (2017). Changing Patterns of Socio-Cultural Aspects and Identity of Tiwa Tribe. In Bordoloi, L. (ed.) *Sograsal*, Jagiroad: Tiwa Folk Cultural Festival Celebration Committee
- Patar, K. (2024). *Tiwa Sahitya: Prabhab aru Pratigrahan (in Assamese)* In Das, A. K. (ed.) *Tiwa Khurang*. Morigaon: Tiwa Autonomous Council.
- Patar, M. (2018). *Tiwa Jonogusthi: Samajik Ruprekha (in Assamese)*. Morigaon: Brikya.
- Patar, R. (2021). *The Tiwa Ethnohistory*. Chennai: Notion Press.
- Prats, A. A., (2022). *Cultural Loss Under Bottlenecks – Press books Create*, retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net>.
- Pruim, S. (2014). *Ethnocide and Indigenous Peoples: Article 8 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Adelaide Law Review. The University of Adelaide, retrieved from <https://law.adelaide.edu.au>.
- Pumah, L. (2016). *A Brief of the Tiwa Tribe of North East*. In Das, S.C. & Barman, A. C. (eds.) *Sonaikhune Sonda*. Jagiroad: Tiwa Sahitya Sabha
- Radukakati, N. (2016). *History of Tiwa Kingdom*. Morigaon: Tiwa Autonomous Council
- Radukakati, N. (2024). *Tiwa Swayatta Sakhonot Lalung Dorbaror Bhumika (in Assamese)*. In Das, A. K. (ed.) *Tiwa Khurang*. Morigaon: Tiwa Autonomous Council.
- Ramirez, P. (2014). *People of the Margins Across Ethnic Boundaries in North East India*. Delhi: Spectrum Publications.
- Risely, H. H. & Gait, E. A. (1903). *Calcutta: Report of the Census of India*.
- Senapati, B. (2010). *Tiwa Jonogusthio Sanskritir Alokpat: Tiwa Samaj aru Sanskriti (in Assamese)*, Gauhati: Tribal Research Institute.
- Senapati, G. (1997). *Rahar Rahiyal Barua aru Pacho Raja Poowali*, Jagiroad: Tiwa Mathonlai Tokhra.
- Sharma Thakur, G. C. (1985). *The Lalungs*. Gauhati: Tribal Research Institute.
- Sharma Thakur, G. C. (2008). *Essays on the Tribes and Castes of Assam (Part-II)*. Gauhati: Tribal Research Institute.
- Shyam Chaudhury, N. K. & Das, M. M. (1973). *The Lalung Society*, Gauhati: Lawyers.

Srinivas, M. N. (2003). *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

Taylor, D. (1991). Transculturating Transculturation. *Performing Arts Journal*. OA. MG .Vol. 13, No. 2. DOI: 10.2307/3245476, retrieved from <https://oa.mg/work>.

Terangpi, M. (2023). Tribal Identity Question in North East India. In Chaudhury, L. R. & Narzary, D. (eds.) *Tribal Politics in North East India: Issues, Challenges and Emerging Trends*. Gauhati: AM Publications.

Youvan, D. C. (2023). *Ethnocide in Global Context: A Historical and Cultural Analysis*, retrieved from <https://researchgate.net>

**Funding Statement:** The study was not supported by grant of any funding agency.

**Ethical Compliance:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of research.

**Data Access Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its supporting information files.

**Conflict of Interest declaration:** The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

**Acknowledgements:** The authors appreciate the helps of the respondents in the field of study, institutions and individuals who supported with data for the study.



# EARN YOUR MBA

WWW.IIMPS.IN



Accreditation & Ranking



UGC / NCTE Approved.

INFO@IIMPS.IN

☎ 011-41005174

R  
S  
E  
A  
R  
C  
H  
G  
A  
T  
E  
W  
A  
Y

## STOP PLAGIARISM



**Arogyam Ayurveda**  
Holistic Healing through herbs



A  
R  
O  
G  
Y  
A  
M  
O  
N  
L  
I  
N  
E

## PARIVARTAN PSYCHOLOGY CENTER



### COLOR PSYCHOLOGY : HOW COLOR AFFECT YOUR CHILD



- BLUE** Calms your Child's Mind & Body
- YELLOW** Promotes Concentration, Stimulates the Memory
- PINK** Evokes Empathy, makes your Child Calm
- RED** Excites and energizes your Child's body
- GREEN** Improves Reading speed and Comprehension

www.parivartan4u.com



Confuse about your children's future?



**भारतीय भाषा, शिक्षा, साहित्य एवं शोध**

**ISSN 2321 – 9726**

**[WWW.BHARTIYASHODH.COM](http://WWW.BHARTIYASHODH.COM)**



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF  
MANAGEMENT SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

**ISSN – 2250 – 1959 (O) 2348 – 9367 (P)**

**[WWW.IRJMSST.COM](http://WWW.IRJMSST.COM)**



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF  
COMMERCE, ARTS AND SCIENCE**

**ISSN 2319 – 9202**

**[WWW.CASIRJ.COM](http://WWW.CASIRJ.COM)**



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF  
MANAGEMENT SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES**

**ISSN 2277 – 9809 (O) 2348 - 9359 (P)**

**[WWW.IRJMSH.COM](http://WWW.IRJMSH.COM)**



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF SCIENCE  
ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY**

**ISSN 2454-3195 (online)**

**[WWW.RJSET.COM](http://WWW.RJSET.COM)**



**INTEGRATED RESEARCH JOURNAL OF  
MANAGEMENT, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION**

**ISSN 2582-5445**

**[WWW.IRJMSI.COM](http://WWW.IRJMSI.COM)**



**JOURNAL OF LEGAL STUDIES, POLITICS  
AND ECONOMICS RESEARCH**

**[WWW.JLPER.COM](http://WWW.JLPER.COM)**

**JLPE**