

Tibeto-Burmese Ethnic Group Peoples (The Tiwas)

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Abstract

The Tiwas are an important Tibeto-Burman ethnic community primarily associated with the northeastern region of India, particularly Assam and adjoining areas. This study explores the historical background, cultural traditions, social organization, language, and contemporary life of the Tiwa people. Traditionally, Tiwa society has maintained distinctive customs, community institutions, indigenous knowledge systems, and cultural practices that reflect a close relationship with the natural and social environment. Their festivals, traditional ceremonies, folk songs, dances, oral traditions, clothing, food practices, and craft traditions form important elements of their cultural identity. The study also examines the role of the Tiwa language and oral heritage in transmitting cultural knowledge and maintaining community continuity across generations. In the contemporary period, the Tiwa community has experienced significant social and economic changes as a result of education, urbanization, migration, modernization, and increased interaction with wider society. These developments have created new opportunities while also presenting challenges to the preservation of traditional practices and linguistic heritage. Particular attention is given to the importance of cultural documentation, community participation, education, and institutional support in safeguarding indigenous traditions. The study emphasizes that understanding the Tiwas requires consideration of both their historical heritage and their changing contemporary circumstances. It concludes that preserving Tiwa cultural identity while enabling social and economic development can contribute to the broader recognition and appreciation of the diverse indigenous heritage of Northeast India.

Keywords: Tiwa, Tibeto-Burman, Northeast India, Assam, Ethnic Community, Indigenous Culture, Tribal Society, Tiwa Language, Traditional Practices, Folk Traditions, Cultural Identity, Social Change.