

PREFACE

Being domiciled at Telepara Tea Garden in the Duars, I had the privilege of being acquainted with different tribal communities of the region since my early boyhood. Telepara was located on the traditional trade itinerary of the Totos and, as such, I had the first occasion to meet a group of the Totos at that place. Later on, during my visits to Lankapara on the market days, I used to find them there in the company of other tribes. But, at that time I little knew that I might one day venture to write a book on them.

It all began through my intimate association with Late Dr. Charuchandra Sanyal, a noted social anthropologist of north Bengal. It was Dr. Sanyal who had inspired me during the early seventies to visit Totopara and prepare the first Primer for the Totos with a view to impart literacy and adult education among them. Gradually it became a passion to visit Totopara as and when I had the occasion to do so. Apart from the Primer mentioned above, a number of short notes, articles and even a book on the Toto folktales were a product of such visits.

It must however be mentioned in all humility that I did not have any pretension of scholarly pursuits at that time and leaned basically upon spontaneity rather than upon a systematic organisation of what I knew because I had no grounding into the niceties of formal research efforts. The idea of such research was inserted in my mind through the inspiration that I received from Professor Bani Prasanna Misra, whom I met for the first time during a Seminar that was held under the auspices of the Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal in the year 1985.

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I was lucky enough to receive all possible co-operation and assistance from various quarters. In particular, it is difficult to single out names, but I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratitude to the following persons : Sri Pralay Kumar Banerjee, Manager, Binnaguri T.E.; Sri P.R.Singh, Manager, Bandapani T.E.; Sri Mridul Nandy, Tribal Welfare Deptt. Jalpaiguri; Sri Ranjit Mitra, North Bengal University Library; Sri Sunil Chakraborty, Azad Hind Pathagar, Jalpaiguri; and Sri Manik Sanyal, ex-M.P., Jalpaiguri. The Headmaster, Assistant Headmaster and all his colleagues of Jalpaiguri H.S. School, especially Pradip Chakraborty, Barun Guha, Ram Patra, Sitesh Bhattacharjee and Tapan Ghosh rendered their co-operation directly or indirectly in the pursuit of this research study, and therefore the author has a special word of acknowledgement for all of them. The author is also thankful to Smt. Nalanda Chakraborty for rendering her co-operation.

The Director and all other members of the Centre for Himalayan Studies have helped me whenever the occasion arose. Sri Debi Prasad Bhot took the pains in preparing the maps and Sri Aloke Kumar Roye did a neat job of typing the thesis with all the sincerity at his command. As a research scholar registered privately with the University the author was compelled to visit the house of his guide more often than what is otherwise the situation with the regular research scholars. The author conveys his thanks to Smt. Maina Roy for extending her hospitality during such visits throughout the period of his studies.

The author acknowledges his deep sense of gratitude to his uncle Late Surendra Kumar Majumdar and Smt. Sudhangsubala Majumdar who had very affectionately reared up the author in his childhood. He also remembers fondly the affection and encouragement which he received from Late Dr. (Mrs.) Asrubala

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The author owes a deep sense of gratitude to Professor Dr. Misra, who agreed to guide the author in the preparation of a dissertation on the Totos about whom there is a dearth of published material. He even took the trouble of visiting Totopara and lend his valuable advice when the field investigation was in progress. Without his able guidance and severe criticism, it would not at all have been possible for the author to complete this research work.

The author is grateful to Sri Heren Mankhin and Smt. Pritilata Mankhin for their hospitality throughout the period of his studies over the past twenty years. The author is indebted to Sri G.P. Sharma of the Tribal Welfare Centre, Totopara, who introduced the author to each of the Totos and ungrudgingly offered all possible assistance in the collection of data. The author is also thankful to Sri Muktaram Toto, Sri Dhaniram Toto, Sri Bhakta Toto and Sri Sachin Toto for rendering their co-operation during the several visits of the author to Totopara.

Smt. Kalyani Choudhury, Divisional Commissioner, Jalpaiguri, had kindly permitted the author to use the reference books from her library, and also helped him to continue the research work in various ways. Apart from her, G. Balagopal, Sunil Mitra, Dilip Rath (all of them District Magistrates of Jalpaiguri), Tusar Bhattacharjee and C.V. Murulidhar (both Superintendents of Police, Jalpaiguri), and Sri Sasinath Iswarari (then Project Officer, I.T.D.P.) extended their help and co-operation during the research work. The author expresses his gratitude to all of them.

The author is also grateful to Professor S.K. Choube and Dr. Sharit Bhowmick of Delhi University, and Professor P.K. Bhowmick of Calcutta University for encouraging the author to continue his studies in this particular discipline from time to time.

Dasgupta, Prof. Ranjit Dasgupta, Prof. Chhaya Dasgupta, Sri Surajit Dasgupta and Smt. Manju Dasgupta.

The author acknowledges his thanks to Dr. Gananath Dasgupta and Smt. Soumana Dasgupta (his son-in-law and daughter) for their encouragement and patient understanding all through the period of his studies. He also owes a deep sense of gratitude to his wife Smt. Reba Majumdar, without whose sincere effort and dedication it would have been difficult for the author to complete this research work. It is however well understood that no research is ever completed. For all the answers that are attempted to be resolved, a host of new questions crop up. The author believes that he would continue to receive all helps from all of them in the pursuit of all the incomplete answers that he may venture to provide in the future as well.

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(Bimalendu Majumdar) 31. 3. 93