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Cultural Resilience and Identity of Indigenous Communities in Tripura: Navigating Tradition and Modernity

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ABSTRACT

Tripura, a culturally diverse state in Northeast India, is home to numerous indigenous communities, including the Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, and others, who make up nearly 30% of its population. These groups have preserved distinct languages, rituals, governance, and ecological knowledge closely tied to their natural environment. However, post-independence demographic changes—especially the influx of Bengali refugees—and modernization have disrupted their traditional ways of life.

This paper explores cultural resilience among Tripura's indigenous peoples, focusing on how they navigate pressures from assimilation, urbanization, and economic change to sustain their identities. It examines challenges such as land alienation, language decline, and weakening customary institutions, while highlighting community-led responses like language revival, digital activism, ritual renewal, and youth engagement.

The study also considers the vital roles of women and youth in balancing tradition and modernity, and evaluates the effectiveness of institutions like the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in supporting indigenous autonomy. Cultural resilience is framed as an active process of adaptation, negotiation, and identity assertion. By centering indigenous agency, this research offers insights into the ongoing struggle to preserve indigenous identity amid rapid social transformation.

Keywords: *Cultural, resilience, Indigenous, Tripura, Language.*

1. Introduction:

Tripura, a small but culturally vibrant state located in the northeastern region of India, is home to a rich mosaic of indigenous communities, each possessing a unique cultural heritage, language, and worldview. Among the prominent tribes inhabiting the region are the Tripuri, Reang (Bru), Jamatia, Chakma, Halam, Mog, Uchoi, Lushai (Mizo), and Garo, among others—collectively constituting nearly 30% of the state's total population. These communities have historically lived in close harmony with the forested hills, rivers, and valleys that characterize the state's landscape, drawing from nature not just for sustenance but also for spiritual and

ritual significance. Their way of life—marked by practices such as jhum cultivation (shifting agriculture), clan-based governance, animistic and nature-centric belief systems, and oral storytelling traditions—has long formed the cultural backbone of Tripura.

Each community has nurtured its own language, dance forms, textile traditions, culinary practices, and religious rituals, contributing to the pluralistic identity of the state. Languages like Kokborok (spoken by the Tripuri and other tribes), Halam dialects, and Reang language serve not only as means of communication but also as vessels of cultural transmission across generations. Social institutions such as the Hoda Okra (the traditional council of the Jamatia) and customary laws have historically provided governance structures that were rooted in consensus-building and communal harmony.

However, the traditional lifeways and cultural institutions of these indigenous communities have come under increasing strain over the past several decades. Post-independence, Tripura witnessed significant demographic shifts due to large-scale migration, particularly following the Partition of India in 1947 and the influx of Bengali refugees during and after the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. This altered the demographic composition of the state, leading to a decline in the proportion of the tribal population and increasing competition over land, resources, and political power.

The forces of modernization, including the expansion of formal education, the spread of mass media, growing urbanization, and integration into the national economy, have further reshaped the socio-cultural landscape of Tripura. While these changes have brought new opportunities—such as increased literacy, healthcare access, and connectivity—they have also eroded traditional knowledge systems, weakened intergenerational cultural transmission, and disrupted community-based economies. The pressure to assimilate into dominant cultural paradigms has often led to language loss, ritual neglect, and disconnection from ancestral land and identities.

At the same time, the implementation of state policies and developmental projects—while aimed at integrating tribal regions into the national mainstream—have at times undermined tribal autonomy and cultural sovereignty. The establishment of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in 1985 under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution was a significant step toward self-governance and cultural preservation. Yet, ongoing challenges such as land alienation, bureaucratic inertia, and lack of adequate representation continue to limit the full realization of tribal rights and aspirations.

Thus, the indigenous communities of Tripura stand at a critical juncture—navigating a complex terrain where tradition and modernity coexist, clash, and converge. While many of these

communities are actively engaging with modern education, technology, and political participation, they are simultaneously striving to preserve their distinct cultural identities, safeguard their languages, and uphold the values and customs passed down through generations. Their efforts to adapt without losing essence exemplify the concept of cultural resilience, which becomes an essential framework to understand their contemporary experiences.

The concept of cultural resilience refers to a community's ability to retain and adapt its core cultural values and practices in the face of external pressures and changing environments. For Tripura's indigenous peoples, this resilience is constantly tested by forces such as state-led development, assimilationist policies, the spread of global consumer culture, and the erosion of traditional institutions. Yet, even within these challenges, indigenous groups continue to assert their identity through language preservation, revival of rituals and festivals, adaptation of traditional governance within the modern legal framework, and new forms of cultural expression—particularly through education, art, and digital media.

This paper explores the multifaceted journey of Tripura's indigenous communities as they navigate the tensions between tradition and modernity. It investigates how these groups maintain their distinct identity while engaging with the modern state, economy, and technology. It also examines the role of youth, women, and cultural institutions in shaping contemporary indigenous identity, as well as the structural barriers that threaten the continuity of their heritage.

2. Research Objectives:

To examine the cultural diversity and unique traditions of Tripura's indigenous communities, including their languages, rituals, and governance systems.

To analyze the impact of historical demographic changes, particularly migration, on the socio-political status and cultural identity of these communities.

To explore the challenges posed by modernization, urbanization, and assimilation on the preservation of indigenous languages and customs.

To investigate the role of youth, women, and cultural institutions in sustaining and adapting indigenous identities in contemporary Tripura.

To assess the strategies and efforts toward cultural resilience, including language preservation, revival of traditional practices, and political self-determination under frameworks like the TTAADC.

3. Research Methodology:

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the cultural resilience and identity of Tripura's indigenous communities. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with members of key tribes like Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, and Halam. Participant observation at festivals and rituals offered deeper insight into traditional and modern practices. Secondary sources included government reports, academic studies, and archival materials on demographics, policies, and governance. The research focuses on how indigenous peoples balance tradition and modernity, highlighting language preservation, social institutions, and the roles of youth and women. Ethical practices such as informed consent and respect for indigenous knowledge were maintained throughout.

4. Significance of the Study:

This study is significant as it sheds light on the cultural resilience of Tripura's indigenous communities amid rapid social, political, and economic changes. By documenting their strategies to preserve identity and adapt to modernity, the research highlights the critical role of language, traditions, and community institutions in sustaining cultural diversity. It contributes to broader discussions on indigenous rights, postcolonial identity, and inclusive development policies. Furthermore, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and activists seeking to support indigenous autonomy and promote culturally sensitive development in northeastern India and beyond.

5. Discussion:

5.1. Cultural Diversity and Historical Context:

Tripura, though geographically among the smallest states in India, holds a disproportionately rich and diverse cultural heritage, particularly due to its indigenous population. The state is home to 20 officially recognized Scheduled Tribes, each with its own distinct social, linguistic, religious, and cultural identity. Among the most prominent are the Tripuri, Reang (Bru), Jamatia, Chakma, Halam, Mog, Uchoi, Mizo (Lushai), and Garo communities. These indigenous groups are not homogenous; each has cultivated unique traditions, oral histories, and worldviews, contributing to a pluralistic and multifaceted identity for the state. This diversity sets Tripura apart from many other regions in Northeast India, which often tend to be dominated by one or two major tribes.

Historically, these communities have lived in close symbiosis with the environment, particularly in the undulating hills and dense forests that cover much of Tripura's terrain. Their subsistence-based economies have revolved around practices such as jhum cultivation (slash-and-burn or shifting agriculture), forest gathering, hunting, and seasonal fishing. Unlike

industrial or intensive agricultural systems, these practices are intimately tied to traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and reflect a sustainable relationship with nature. Spirituality among the tribes has largely been animistic, rooted in a deep reverence for natural forces and ancestral spirits. Rituals and festivals such as Garia Puja (invoking the deity of prosperity and harvest), Ker Puja, and Bushu are embedded in agricultural cycles and communal cohesion, serving as markers of both religious and cultural identity.

One of the most critical pillars of cultural continuity among these tribes has been their oral tradition. In the absence of written scripts for many tribal languages, oral narratives—including folktales, proverbs, epics, songs, and ritual chants—have served as vessels of indigenous knowledge. These oral forms not only preserved historical memory and cosmology but also functioned as tools of education, law, and socialization. They encode vital information about land boundaries, medicinal plants, moral values, taboos, and customary laws—information crucial for community governance and survival.

In terms of social organization, customary institutions have long played an integral role in maintaining order and cultural autonomy. The Hoda Okra, the traditional council system of the Jamatia community, is a notable example. These councils, often composed of respected elders and clan leaders, acted as judicial, legislative, and moral authorities, mediating disputes, sanctioning social norms, and upholding tribal laws through consensus-based decision-making. Similar systems were in place among other tribes, often based on clan lineages and totemic affiliations. These institutions not only ensured community-level governance but also reinforced collective memory and identity.

However, the cultural and demographic equilibrium of Tripura was deeply disrupted during the mid-20th century due to a series of historical migrations and political upheavals. The Partition of India in 1947 marked a turning point, with a large influx of Bengali Hindu refugees fleeing communal violence in East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh). This demographic shift was further intensified during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, when another wave of migrants entered Tripura, dramatically altering the state's ethnic composition. These migrations transformed the indigenous tribes from a numerical majority into a minority, fundamentally altering the balance of political power, resource distribution, and cultural influence in the state.

The consequences of this demographic change were not merely statistical. The massive increase in population led to encroachments on tribal land, expansion of non-tribal settlements into hilly areas traditionally occupied by indigenous communities, and a breakdown in the social and spatial autonomy of these groups. Many tribal families found themselves displaced, economically marginalized, or pushed to the periphery—both literally and metaphorically.

While state policies promised development and integration, they often failed to adequately safeguard tribal land rights, customary practices, or political representation.

This historical background is essential for understanding the current challenges of cultural resilience and identity preservation among Tripura's indigenous peoples. Their contemporary efforts to revive languages, festivals, rituals, and governance practices are not merely cultural acts—they are also political responses to historical dislocation and marginalization. The dual processes of assimilation and resistance, visible across education systems, political movements, and artistic expressions, reflect an ongoing struggle for recognition, dignity, and survival. As such, cultural resilience in Tripura must be understood as a dynamic negotiation with both the legacies of colonial/postcolonial state formation and the pressures of globalization.

5.2. Role of Language in Cultural Identity:

Language is a crucial expression of cultural identity, serving as a repository of history, spirituality, and collective wisdom for Tripura's indigenous communities. Languages like Kokborok, Reang (Bru), and Halam dialects encapsulate unique ecological knowledge, kinship systems, and oral traditions that define each community's worldview. For instance, Kokborok holds nuanced agricultural and ritual vocabularies that are untranslatable into dominant languages like Bengali or English without losing cultural meaning.

However, these languages face severe threats due to historical marginalization, demographic shifts, and the dominance of Bengali and English in education and media. Post-Partition and the 1971 refugee influx further accelerated linguistic assimilation, marginalizing tribal languages in both public and private spheres. Formal education systems rarely support mother tongue instruction beyond early grades, fostering cultural alienation among tribal youth. Urban migration, intermarriage, and exposure to mainstream media have intensified this language shift, leaving many indigenous tongues critically endangered.

Efforts to preserve and revive these languages have gained momentum. Kokborok was declared an official language in 1979 and introduced into schools under the TTAADC, though debates over script standardization remain contentious. Grassroots initiatives—including language workshops, youth-led digital content, and documentation of oral traditions—have revitalized interest, especially among younger generations. Platforms such as music, theatre, and social media are increasingly used to promote indigenous languages in modern formats.

Nonetheless, sustainable revitalization requires deeper institutional support: teacher training, culturally responsive curricula, media representation, and policy inclusion at all levels.

Crucially, families and communities must continue to use these languages in everyday life to ensure intergenerational transmission.

Ultimately, language preservation in Tripura is not just about communication—it is an act of cultural resilience and resistance. It affirms indigenous identity, challenges homogenization, and contributes to the broader richness and pluralism of Indian society.

5.3. Impact of Modernization and Urbanization:

Modernization and urbanization have significantly reshaped the cultural and socio-economic fabric of Tripura's indigenous communities. Access to formal education, healthcare, and digital technology has improved livelihoods, empowered youth, and opened new avenues for participation in state and national life. Education has enabled greater social mobility and advocacy, while digital media has allowed youth to engage in cultural expression and activism.

However, these benefits are accompanied by deep challenges. Urban migration in search of jobs and education often leads to cultural alienation and weakening of traditional practices. The shift from subsistence-based, community-driven economies—such as jhum cultivation and forest-based livelihoods—to market-driven, cash-based employment has disrupted ecological relationships and communal bonds. Land alienation, due to development pressures and demographic changes, further exacerbates economic and cultural dislocation.

Youth aspirations are increasingly influenced by modern, globalized values, often at odds with traditional customs and languages. This can create intergenerational tensions and accelerate cultural disconnect. Yet, many young tribal individuals creatively blend modernity with heritage—using digital platforms to revive languages, celebrate festivals, and reinterpret traditions in contemporary formats.

Overall, modernization presents a dual reality for indigenous communities in Tripura—offering tools for empowerment while simultaneously challenging cultural continuity. Their responses highlight a resilient effort to adapt without losing identity.

5.4. Migration and Demographic Change:

The demographic landscape of Tripura has undergone dramatic shifts since the mid-20th century, profoundly altering the socio-cultural and political fabric of the state. One of the most significant factors in this transformation has been the large-scale migration of Bengali-speaking populations into Tripura, primarily driven by historical events such as the Partition of India in 1947 and the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. This influx of migrants has had far-reaching consequences for the indigenous tribal communities, influencing their access to land, cultural continuity, and political representation.

The Partition of India resulted in one of the largest human displacements in modern history, causing millions of Hindus to flee from East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) to India. Tripura, sharing a porous border with East Bengal, became a major refuge for these migrants. The situation intensified during and after the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, when waves of refugees entered Tripura seeking safety and stability. By the late 20th century, the demographic balance in the state had shifted dramatically; indigenous tribes, who once constituted the majority, found themselves becoming a minority within their ancestral lands.

This demographic change had a profound impact on land distribution and ownership. The influx of migrants led to increased competition over fertile plains and forested tracts that were traditionally occupied or used by tribal communities. Many indigenous families were displaced or pressured to sell or abandon their lands, often without adequate compensation or legal safeguards. The state's response was at times inadequate, leading to widespread land alienation among tribal populations. This loss of land was not merely economic—it severed deep spiritual and cultural ties between communities and their ancestral territories, which are central to indigenous identity, livelihood, and ritual practices.

Culturally, the demographic shift introduced new languages, customs, and social norms that challenged the indigenous way of life. The predominance of Bengali language and culture in public life—education, administration, media, and commerce—marginalized tribal languages and cultural expressions. Traditional festivals, dress, and rituals faced pressures to conform or recede into private domains. Over time, some indigenous cultural practices became diluted or were practiced less visibly, particularly in urban and semi-urban centers where diverse populations coexisted.

Politically, the demographic changes also reconfigured power dynamics. Electoral constituencies and political representation became dominated by the non-tribal population, often reducing the political influence of tribal communities. This shift hindered their ability to advocate effectively for their rights, control over resources, and preservation of cultural autonomy. The establishment of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in 1985 was a direct response to these challenges, aiming to provide tribal self-governance and safeguard their interests. While the TTAADC has had some success, ongoing issues of political marginalization and bureaucratic challenges persist, limiting the full realization of tribal aspirations.

5.5. Resulting Marginalization of Tribal Communities:

The demographic changes have contributed to the socio-economic and cultural marginalization of Tripura's indigenous peoples. Landlessness or insecure land tenure has resulted in economic vulnerability, forcing many to become laborers, migrants, or dependents

on government welfare. Loss of access to traditional forests and agricultural land has undermined customary economic practices, eroding food security and self-sufficiency.

Marginalization is also evident in education and employment, where tribal communities often face systemic disadvantages. Although government schemes exist to promote tribal welfare, uneven implementation and structural inequalities have left many indigenous families behind. Discrimination and social exclusion in urban areas further exacerbate the marginalization.

The psychological impact of demographic marginalization is equally significant. Many indigenous people experience a sense of cultural dislocation and identity crisis, particularly as their languages, customs, and social systems confront the pressures of assimilation. The fear of cultural extinction fuels political activism and cultural revival movements, yet it also reflects the deep scars left by decades of displacement and demographic upheaval.

5.6. Institutional and Legal Frameworks:

The quest for cultural preservation, political self-determination, and socio-economic development among Tripura's indigenous communities has been significantly shaped by institutional and legal mechanisms designed to safeguard tribal rights. At the forefront of these efforts is the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), established in 1985 under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The TTAADC was created as a semi-autonomous administrative body with the aim of providing tribal populations greater control over their land, resources, cultural affairs, and local governance. It marks a critical institutional recognition of the distinct identity and aspirations of Tripura's indigenous peoples, representing an attempt to reconcile tribal autonomy within the broader framework of the Indian state.

The TTAADC exercises authority over multiple domains including land management, forest conservation, local administration, social welfare, education, and cultural promotion within designated tribal areas, covering nearly two-thirds of Tripura's geographical area. By administering customary laws, supporting traditional institutions like village councils, and implementing welfare schemes tailored to tribal needs, the Council plays a pivotal role in empowering indigenous communities. Importantly, it facilitates political representation for tribal groups, ensuring that decisions affecting their welfare and cultural survival are made with tribal participation and consent. The Council has also been instrumental in promoting indigenous languages, festivals, and arts, providing an institutional platform for cultural resilience and revival.

However, despite its significant contributions, the TTAADC and the protections afforded by the Sixth Schedule face several limitations that constrain their effectiveness. One major

challenge is the overlap of jurisdiction and administrative control between the Autonomous Council and the state government, which often leads to bureaucratic delays, conflicting policies, and inadequate coordination. This ambiguity can dilute the decision-making powers of the TTAADC, particularly in critical areas such as land acquisition and resource management. Additionally, the Council's dependence on state and central government funding sometimes restricts its capacity to implement programs independently or at scale.

The Sixth Schedule, while groundbreaking in granting constitutional recognition and autonomy to tribal areas in the Northeast, is also limited in scope when it comes to safeguarding complete tribal sovereignty. The autonomy it grants is conditional and subject to the broader framework of Indian law, which means that state-led development projects, resource extraction, and demographic policies can still infringe upon tribal rights. Moreover, the effectiveness of the Sixth Schedule varies considerably across different states and autonomous councils due to political will, administrative competence, and the strength of indigenous advocacy.

Another critical issue is representation and inclusivity within the TTAADC itself. While the Council is meant to represent tribal interests, intra-tribal differences, political factionalism, and elite capture sometimes undermine equitable governance and inclusive decision-making. Marginalized sub-groups or smaller tribes may find themselves underrepresented or sidelined within these institutional frameworks.

5.7. Cultural Resilience and Adaptation Strategies:

The indigenous communities of Tripura exhibit remarkable cultural resilience, creatively navigating the pressures of modernity while steadfastly preserving their unique traditions and identities. This resilience manifests in multiple spheres, including the revitalization of festivals, maintenance of traditional governance structures, perpetuation of indigenous crafts and rituals, and innovative use of modern technologies and educational tools.

One of the most visible expressions of cultural preservation is the continued celebration of traditional festivals such as the Garia Puja, which is central to the Tripuri community. This festival, dedicated to the deity Baba Garia, marks the onset of the agricultural season and is steeped in rituals that invoke blessings for a bountiful harvest. Despite urbanization and changing lifestyles, these festivals remain a vital forum for communal gathering, transmission of oral histories, performance of indigenous dance and music, and reaffirmation of spiritual bonds with nature. Similarly, other communities in Tripura sustain their own unique festivals and rituals, ensuring that these cultural markers continue to bind generations and foster a sense of belonging.

Traditional governance mechanisms also form a key element of cultural resilience. Institutions like the Hoda Okra (the Jamatia tribal council) persist as custodians of customary law, dispute resolution, and community welfare. These systems, though evolving, continue to coexist with formal state institutions, offering indigenous peoples a framework to exercise collective autonomy and maintain social cohesion. By adapting these governance models to contemporary legal frameworks, communities assert their agency in managing internal affairs and resisting cultural dilution.

Craftsmanship and ritual practices—such as weaving intricate textiles, bamboo and cane work, traditional tattooing, and ritual dances—serve both as cultural expression and as means of economic sustenance. Indigenous artisans are increasingly finding ways to market their crafts beyond local confines, sometimes blending traditional motifs with contemporary designs to appeal to wider audiences, including tourists and online consumers.

In response to the challenges posed by globalization and language loss, indigenous communities in Tripura have harnessed digital media and cultural documentation as powerful tools for cultural revival. Social media platforms, websites, and digital archives enable youth and cultural activists to share folklore, songs, and oral histories, reaching diasporic populations and younger generations who might otherwise be disconnected from their heritage. Video documentaries, podcasts, and online language courses are increasingly utilized to preserve endangered dialects and disseminate knowledge widely. Such digital engagement not only strengthens cultural pride but also creates networks of solidarity among indigenous peoples both within and beyond Tripura.

The role of youth activism is especially significant in this cultural resurgence. Young people are reclaiming their heritage through organizing cultural festivals, producing indigenous music and films, advocating for language rights, and participating in political movements that emphasize tribal identity and autonomy. This intergenerational engagement is critical for ensuring that cultural knowledge is not static but dynamically reinterpreted and sustained.

Education emerges as another cornerstone of cultural resilience and empowerment. Tribal communities in Tripura increasingly recognize the importance of formal education as a gateway to socio-economic opportunities and political participation. Simultaneously, there is a growing emphasis on integrating indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and history into school curricula, especially within institutions governed by the TTAADC. Bilingual education models and culturally relevant pedagogy aim to bridge the gap between modern education and traditional knowledge, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among tribal students. Education also equips youth to navigate modern economic landscapes without severing ties to their cultural roots, supporting sustainable community development.

To state that the indigenous peoples of Tripura demonstrate a multifaceted approach to cultural resilience and adaptation, blending tradition with innovation. Through the preservation of festivals, governance structures, and crafts, combined with strategic use of digital tools, youth activism, and culturally grounded education, these communities are actively shaping their cultural futures. Their efforts exemplify how indigenous identity can thrive amid changing social realities, offering valuable lessons on the power of adaptability and continuity.

5.8. The Role of Youth and Women in Cultural Continuity:

The vitality of indigenous cultures in Tripura increasingly relies on the active roles of youth and women, who bridge tradition and modernity in dynamic ways. As social and technological changes reshape society, these groups help preserve, reinterpret, and promote cultural heritage in contemporary contexts.

Youth act as cultural mediators—balancing modern education, digital fluency, and urban life with pride in their indigenous roots. They organize cultural festivals, produce films, and share music and stories online, blending traditional elements with modern forms. Platforms like YouTube and Instagram have become key tools for cultural revival and solidarity among tribal communities, especially diasporas. Their activism resists cultural erasure and affirms that indigenous identity can thrive in a globalized world.

Women, meanwhile, have long been custodians of cultural continuity. Through oral storytelling, weaving, rituals, and healing practices, they pass down ancestral wisdom and maintain spiritual and communal traditions. Their textile arts, rich in symbolism, preserve identity and history, while also serving as economic assets through modern markets and cooperatives.

In recent years, indigenous women have emerged as leaders in politics, arts, and activism. They now influence policy through bodies like the TTAADC, advocating for land rights, education, and environmental justice. Their creative and political voices challenge marginalization and promote inclusive development rooted in indigenous values. Together, youth and women form a powerful force sustaining and evolving Tripura's tribal cultures. Their intergenerational and gender-inclusive efforts ensure that cultural identity remains vibrant, resilient, and relevant in a changing world.

5.9. Tensions Between Assimilation and Cultural Sovereignty:

Indigenous communities in Tripura face a complex tension between pressures to assimilate into dominant Bengali Hindu culture and the need to preserve their distinct identities. Since demographic shifts following Partition, mainstream norms—such as the emphasis on Bengali

language and Hindu festivals—have marginalized tribal languages, customs, and spiritual practices. This creates challenges, especially for youth, who often negotiate between embracing modernity and maintaining their cultural heritage.

Indian nationalism's focus on unity sometimes undermines cultural pluralism, portraying indigenous traditions as outdated and pressuring tribes to “modernize” for equality. Religious conversion to Christianity or Hinduism adds further complexity, as it can provide social benefits but risks eroding ancestral animistic beliefs. Many communities respond by blending traditional and new religious practices, creating syncretic forms that both preserve and adapt their heritage.

This ongoing negotiation is visible in efforts to revive tribal languages, rituals, and political autonomy through institutions like the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). Indigenous peoples actively resist assimilation by asserting cultural sovereignty while engaging with wider society for development and rights. Their resilience reflects not passivity but agency in shaping their cultural futures amid socio-political pressures. Protecting this sovereignty is vital for their identity and meaningful participation within the modern nation-state.

6. Future of Indigenous Identity in Tripura:

The future of indigenous identity in Tripura lies at a critical juncture—balancing the preservation of cultural heritage with adaptation to modern challenges. As globalization and socio-political changes accelerate, indigenous communities must innovate while staying rooted in their traditions.

Reviving languages, rituals, and crafts through digital media, youth activism, and fusion cultural forms can ensure traditions remain relevant for younger generations. However, such efforts require strong policy support, including land rights, inclusive education, and representation through institutions like the TTAADC.

Legal protections under the Sixth Schedule must be effectively enforced, and development must be participatory and culturally sensitive. Collaboration with civil society and adherence to global frameworks like UNDRIP can further strengthen indigenous rights.

A resilient future envisions indigenous identity as a dynamic force—where tradition and innovation coexist, youth and elders collaborate, and cultural autonomy is respected. With inclusive support and sustained community efforts, Tripura's indigenous peoples can thrive while contributing meaningfully to regional and national life.

7. Conclusion:

In exploring the cultural resilience of Tripura's indigenous communities, it is clear that tradition and modernity are not opposing forces but can coexist through continuous negotiation and adaptation. These communities actively preserve their languages, rituals, and governance systems while embracing education, technology, and political engagement.

Indigenous agency—especially among youth and women—drives this cultural renewal. However, lasting resilience depends on both supportive policies and grassroots efforts. Strengthening institutions like the TTAADC, promoting inclusive education, and protecting land rights, alongside community-led initiatives, are key to sustaining identity and heritage.

In essence, the future of Tripura's indigenous peoples lies in a balanced path that honors ancestral traditions while constructively engaging with the modern world.

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