

TIROT SING

GREATEST FREEDOM FIGHTER OF NORTH - EASTERN REGION

FOREWORD:

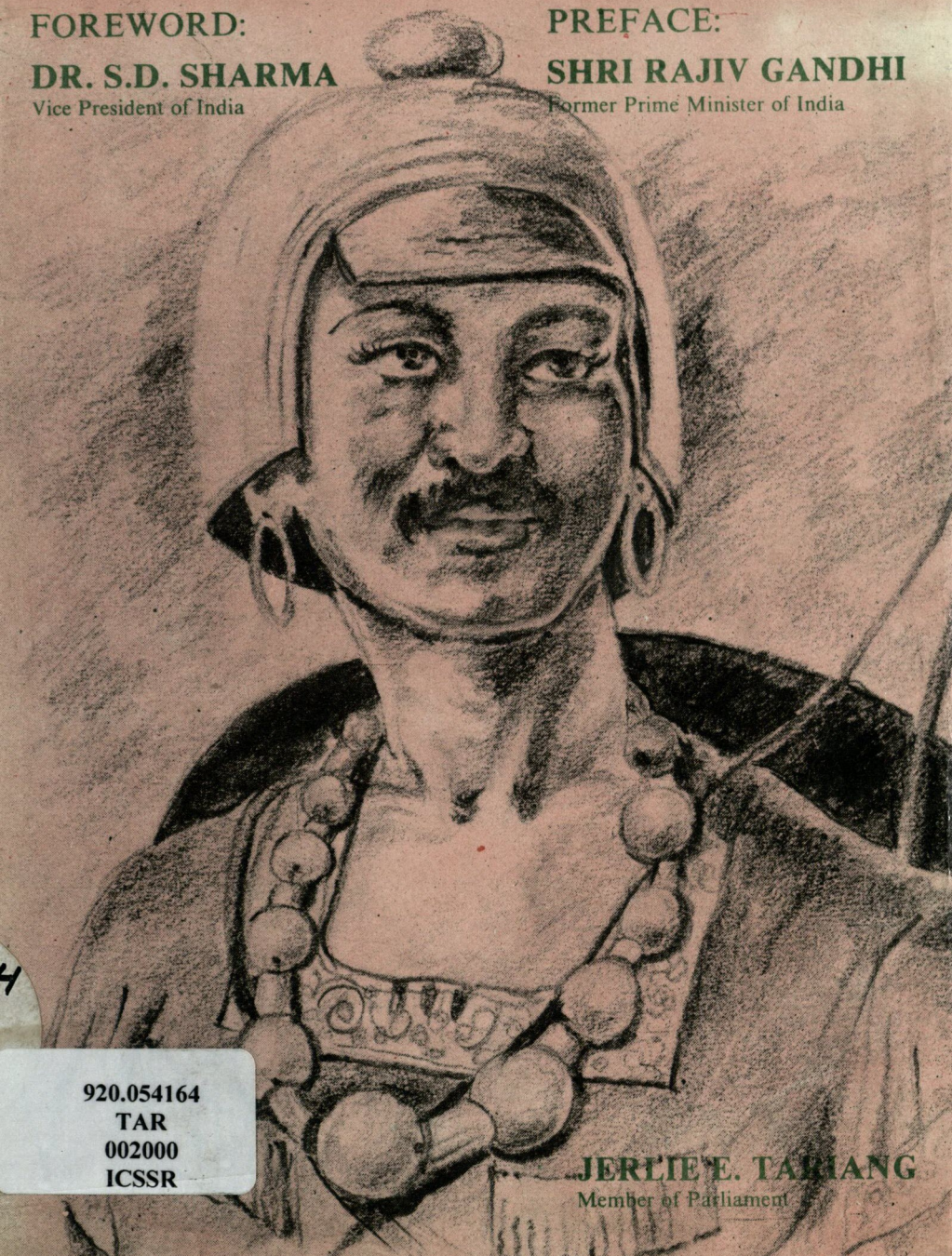
DR. S.D. SHARMA

Vice President of India

PREFACE:

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI

Former Prime Minister of India

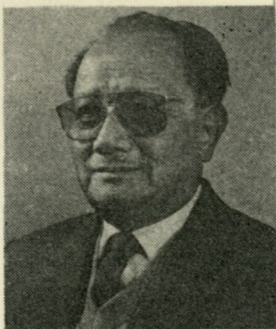


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JERLIE E. TARIANG
Member of Parliament

Here is the so far untold story of the great Khasi leader, Tirot Sing, who was the first and the greatest freedom fighter of the north-eastern region of India. The chronicle of the daring exploits of the Khasi Syiem, who faced the sustained attacks of the advancing British, as no one has done before, is of absorbing interest.

The research-based narrative by Shri Jerlie E. Tariang leads to the crucial stage when Tirot Sing had to sacrifice his liberty, in the interest of his people, on Jan. 9, 1833, and died in British custody in Burma a few years later. But the well-documented study makes it clear that his love's labours were not quite lost, for Tirot Sing had lit the torch for freedom from the British yoke. Historians, parliamentarians, politicians of all hues and the interested scholars will be interested in this timely publication, appearing as it does after the celebration of 40 years of Independence.



Born on June 27, 1922, at Mawlai, Shillong, Mr. Jerlie E. Tariang was educated at Meiktiela High School, Upper Burma, and Spicer College, Pune. After a veriegated, political career, covering various important organisations in Meghalaya, he rose to be Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha).

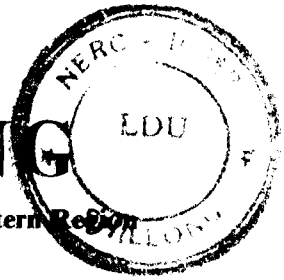
Mr. Tariang started writing for newspapers, and journals at a young age - a hobby that he has continued ever since, one that aptly compliments his numerous social, educational and political activities. Just to mention some, he founded Shon-Roy Basan High School in Shillong and is its life President; he is a jury member of the National Citizen's Award.

All along active in the politics of his State, Mr. Tariang has been Executive Member of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District Council from 1952 to 1957. He was a member of the State Planning Advisory Board of Assam from 1953 to 1957. He has been Deputy Chairman of the Meghalaya State Planning Board and is now a member of Rajya Sabha.

Mr. Tariang has travelled widely in India and abroad. Among the foreign countries visited by him (some like Europe and USA, several times over) are Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burma, Bulgaria, Italy, Nepal, Pakistan, Romania, Singapore, Sri Lanka, U.K., U.S.A. and West Germany.

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Greatest Freedom Fighter of North Eastern Region



JERLIE E. TARIANG

Member of Parliament

Foreword : Dr. S.D. Sharma

Vice President of India

Preface : Shri Rajiv Gandhi

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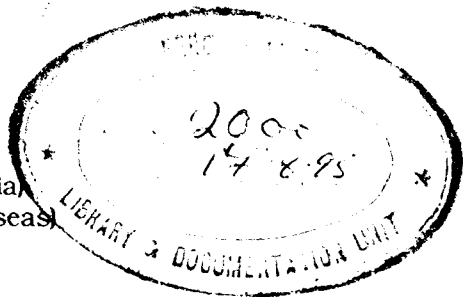
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Introduction

One of the most colourful and doughty people of the north-eastern region, the Khasis, who have inhabited the perennially green Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys, girt by the picturesque Khasi and Jaintia Hills, form the subject of this treatise, along with their great leader, Tirof Sing. The origin of the Khasis may be shrouded in myth and mystery, though researchers have established facts about their genesis, their settlements and migrations. As for Tirof Sing, the first freedom fighter of the north-eastern region, who constitutes the main theme of this research-based study, most facts of his variegated life are historical. The only lacuna relates to his date of birth and appurtenant antecedents.

Be that as it may, the chronicle of the daring and sustained exploits of the Khasi Syiem, who united the Khasis-the chiefs as well as the people-as no one had before, to face the onslaught of the advancing British forces, is of absorbing, abiding interest. Tirof Sing's was, throughout, the key role in giving battle to the determined, bull-dog functionaries of the East India Company, then head-quartered at Calcutta, and in matching their wily intrigues with his well-trained spies. We have a chapter covering some tales of heroic Khasi women who risked their lives to share the burdens of the protracted war. The various phases of the war, culminating in hand-to-hand skirmishes and fiercest battles, are described in chronological order. The success story of the guerrilla warfare, devised and conducted by Tirof Sing and leading to a massacre of British soldiery in retaliation for excesses committed by them, is indeed a significant addition to the annals of the freedom struggle of India. That most of these operations took place in an isolated terrain does not take away from their relevance to the historians of the rest of India. The circumstances in which Tirof Sing had to finally surrender to

the British are recounted in precise detail. By that act of supreme sacrifice, the great Khasi leader stopped the privations and agony that his dear people had suffered. Through long-drawn negotiations, he extracted as many concessions for the future generations of the Khasis as could be, in the given circumstances.

The British Agents and a succession of generals, including a later Viceroy (Lord Curzon), moved by the liberal strain in the British blood, showered praise on Tirot Sing, his strategies and the pre-eminent qualities of his statesmanship and military leadership. Indian historians, including K.M. Munshi, have likewise showered praise on the Khasi leader, how he became a legend in his lifetime and a cult grew around him when he was no longer dominating the scene. In 1954, the then Governor of Assam, Jairam Daulatram, unveiled the Tirot Sing Memorial Monument at Mairang. It is hoped that with the issue of this publication, the inspiring story of Tirot Sing will be read with interest all over the country.



(Jerlie E. Tariang)

March 16, 1990