

Tripura

A PROFILE

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TRIPURA, a small state in north-east India, supposedly took its name from king Tripura, the 46th descendant of the Chandra dynasty and contemporary with the legend-famed Raja Yudhishtra. Unmistakably, Tripura has a long historical past, has its unique tribal culture and its fascinating folklore. Having been ruled for centuries by native princes, it merged into the Union of India in 1949 and attained, in January 1972, the status of a fullfledged state with an independent legislative assembly, a council of ministers, and a separate high court. Today's Tripura, inhabited by 0.3 per cent of India's population, is striving hard both to preserve its cultural entity and to cope with the changing socio-economic milieu.

This book is perhaps the first ever scholarly effort to meticulously profile the land and people of Tripura. Supported by the latest statistical data, and illustrations, it delineates all that is of geographical interest in Tripura, highlighting, in particular, its physical setting; climate; soils; natural vegetation; land, water and mineral resources; wild life; industries; power; and population. The author, a geographer by training and vocation, also seeks to set out a resume of the region's history and bring within the fold of his narrative an account of Tripura's fairs, festivals and administrative divisions.

The author avoids all technical jargon, making his study—a specialized work—comprehensible to scholars of geography as well as general readers.

Rs. 80

\$ 16

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1189

TRIPURA : A PROFILE

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INTER-INDIA PUBLICATIONS

NEW DELHI-110015

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First Published 1984

© S.N. Chatterjee 1984
Surendra Nath Chatterjee (b. 1944-)

Published by

M.C. Mittal
INTER-INDIA PUBLICATIONS
WZ-96V, Raja Garden
NEW DELHI-110015
(India)

Printed at

Mohan Printing Corporation
Padam Nagar
DELHI - 110007

Preface

“Profile of Tripura—a geographical appraisal” gives an insight into the physical setting, climate, natural vegetation and soils, water, land and mineral resources, industries, transport, population and the administrative divisions of Tripura. Five photographs give ample illustration of various places of interest in Tripura.

It is written in a simple language, encompassing all that may be of interest to the reader, avoiding technical jargons as far as possible. I shall feel amply rewarded if this book proves interesting to the reading public.

I am thankful to Adhyapak Shyamal Sarkar, English Department, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan for carefully journeying through the pages and Shri Nimai Chandra Konar of Agro Economic Research Centre, Visva Bharati, for translating my handwriting into type.

15th August 1983
Santiniketan

Surendra Nath Chatterjee

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Location, Area and History,

Location and Area

TRIPURA is situated between 22°56' and 24°32' North latitude and between 91°10' and 92°22' East longitude. It is bounded on the north by the Sylhet district of Bangladesh ; on the south by the districts of Noakhali and Chittagong of Bangladesh ; on the east by the district Cachar of Assam and the Mizoram ; and on the west by the districts of Comilla and Noakhali. It has an international boundary of 850 kilometres and is connected with the rest of India by only 201 kilometres access road through the hills to the border of Cachar district of Assam. According to Survey of India it has an area of 10,477 square kilometres, accounting for 0.32 per cent of the total land area of India and occupies the 22nd position in terms of the area among the states and Union Territories of India. The length and breadth of Tripura are measured 183.50 kilometres and 112.70 kilometres respectively. Agartala, the capital of the state, is situated on the bank of the river Haora, in North latitude 23°50' 40" and 91°22' 55" East longitude.

History

The name of the state is believed to be coined in honour of the King Tripur who was the 46th descendant of Chandra dynasty, an emperor

contemporaneous with Raja Judhistir. In a report on the district of Tipperah by J.F. Browne C.S. (1866) it was stated that the country which at one time was situated in the neighbourhood of the Udaipur temple took its name from the Goddess Tripureswari in an act of honour to the goddess.

The history of Tripura can be understood from two separate sets of records : (i) the traditional period as described in the Rajamala or Chronicles of the Kings of Tipperah, a history in the Bengali language compiled by Brahmans in the court of Tipperah, and (ii) the period since A.D. 1407, recorded by both the Rajamala and the writings of Muhammedan historians.

From the two records referred to above it was known that Tipperah was a very ancient kingdom. It had been ruled by the Maharajas of Tripura for an unbroken period of thirteen hundred years.

Druhya, son of Yajati one of the lunar (Chandra) race of kings founded the kingdom. On his death his son Babru succeeded to the throne. He was crowned with the title 'King' by the sage Kapila. Some historians regard King Tripur, the 46th descendant of Chandra as a contemporary of emperor Judhistir. He was a tyrant. His subjects were so tortured that they fled in large numbers to Hiramba (Cacher) and returned after five years with the Votaries of Lord Siva who promised them a ruler by the widow of Tripura. In time the promised Prince was born named Trilochan. He was a good ruler and conquered many countries. On his death his son Dakshin succeeded to the throne. Tipperah Rajas belonged to Hindu Kshatriya caste but intermarriages with other tribes were not prohibited.

The Musalman attack on Tipperah started from 1279 A.D. but the Rajas of Tipperah had repulsed those attacks bravely for about three centuries. About 1620, in the reign of Emperor Jahangir the Mughal force under the command of Nawab Fathejang conquered Tipperah. The capital Udaipur was taken, the Raja was taken prisoner and sent to Delhi. During the reign of Dharma Manikya the Nawab of Murshidabad captured a large portion of plain Tipperah and thereafter the hill Tipperah remained under the possession of the Raja.

In 1765, when the East India Company obtained the Diwani of Bengal, Tipperah virtually came under the British rule. In 1808, the British Government recognised for the first time Durga Manikya as Raja and since this date every successive Raja has received investiture from British Government and has been received to pay tribute on his accession. In 1871, an English officer was first appointed at hill Tipperah as Political

Agent in order to protect British interest and advice the Raja. In 1878, this post was abolished and in its place the District Magistrate of Tipperah (Comilla) in Bengal was nominated as the Ex-Officio Political Agent of the British Government in Tipperah. Subsequently, a common Political Agent for all the eastern states including Tipperah was appointed by the British Government under the designation "Agents to the Governor General of India" at Calcutta. During the British rule the Rajas of Tipperah successively governed the State as semi independent princes.

During the British reign Tipperah was ruled by several Maharajas in succession. Among the Rajas of Tipperah Birchandra Manikya, Radha Kishore Manikya (1897-1909), Birendra Kishore Manikya (1909-1923), Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya (1923-1947) deserve to be mentioned. During their reign education, health and culture flourished extensively. After the death of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya on 17th May, 1947 Her Highness Maharani Kanchan Prova formed a Regency Council in order to carry out the administrative function of the State. On 15th October, 1949 the state was merged with the Union of India.

Immediately after the merger with the Indian Union the state became a Chief Commissioner's province later converted to part 'C' state administered by a Chief Commissioner. With the re-organisation of the states in 1956, Tripura became a centrally administered territory. On 1st July, 1963 a representative government was formed with a Council of Ministers under the provisions of the India Government Union Territories Act, 1963. The state attained full statehood on 21st January, 1972 under the North Eastern Regions Re-organisation Act, 1971. At present the state has a full fledged Legislative Assembly of 60 members and a Council of Ministers. It has a separate High Court and a common Governor with other states of the North Eastern region.

Administrative Divisions

In 1872, the general administration of the state was conducted at Agartala the capital and residence of the Maharaja. At that time there were two subdivisions namely north eastern subdivision of Kailashahar, opened in the year 1872 and the south western subdivision of Udaipur, opened in the year 1874. Besides these two subdivisions there were five Police Stations at Agartala, Bishalgarh, Rishyamukh, Madhabnagar and Sabrang Magrang. On 15th October, 1949 when the state merged with the Union of India the administrative units of the state were termed divisions and Tehsils up to 1952. From 1953 onwards, the erstwhile divisions were

termed subdivisions and the entire state was treated as one district territory.

In 1961, Tripura was a district territory with ten subdivisions. On 1st September, 1970 the Government of Tripura divided the Union territory into three districts viz., North Tripura, West Tripura and South Tripura with the subdivisions of Dharmanagar, Kailashahar and Kamalpur under North Tripura ; Khowai, Sadar and Sonamura under West Tripura : and Udaipur, Amarpur, Belonia and Sabroom under South Tripura without effecting any change of boundary of the subdivisions. Simultaneously, the Government of Tripura increased the number of Tehsils from 43 to 177, recasting the territorial jurisdictions of the existing tehsils without effecting the boundary of ten subdivisions.

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Conclusion

TRIPURA is the smallest state of the north eastern states of India having acquired the status of statehood on January 21, 1971 alongwith two other states namely Manipur and Meghalaya. According to Survey of India it has a total area of 10,477 square kilometres, accounting for 0.32 per cent of the total land surface of India and occupying 22nd position. As regards population it accounted for 0.30 per cent of the India's total population with a density of 196 per square kilometre. The Tropic of Cancer runs along the centre of the state. The people are largely agriculturists. Because of agricultural economy, per capita income in 1975-76 was Rupees 872, much lower than even the other north eastern states of India. Except tea there has not been any appreciable industrial activities. 68 per cent of the population of the state is living below poverty line.

The state was once a surplus area in terms of food but has virtually turned a deficit one. Agriculture which contributes 60 per cent of the state's income is no longer a commercial venture. Essential commodity prices are soaring upwards, unemployment problem is becoming acute, economic growth is very slow and purchasing power of the masses is steadily decreasing. All this has created a complex problem that do not have any simple solution. The central government has declared the state as a backward area and as much as 25 per cent industrial subsidy is now available, yet capital investment remains shy. The state offers

little scope for any large scale industry. The future line of development lies in the field of small scale and cottage industries. The state can be divided into two regions—hills and plains—for planning. While manpower planning would be the prime concern of the hill unit, that of the plain unit will be consolidating the agricultural base.

The unending migratory streams of refugees from Bangladesh specially after partition of India, has outnumbered the local population and reduced it into a minority. The tribals, the original dwellers of the land are struggling hard to adjust themselves to the rapidly changing situation which has led to social disruption, conflict, tension and frustration among them and these are being expressed through agitation and unrest in this tribal belt. The tribals are in search of a new adjustment and identity of self and Tripura is currently passing through a phase of proto-nationalism.