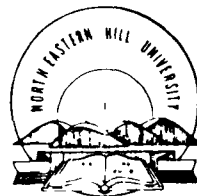


**TRANSBORDER MIGRATION:
A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT ON TRIPURA POLITICS**



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A THESIS
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Mr. Khakchang Debbarma**, Lecturer, Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, has carried out his research work on **Trans-border Migration : A Study of its Impact on Tripura Politics** under my supervision. He has fulfilled all the requirements laid down in the regulations relating to Ph.D. Degree of the North-Eastern Hill University.

The dissertation is the result of his own effort and neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it has been submitted to any University for any research degree.

I wish him success.

Shillong,
November 29, 1995


(**B. PAKEM**)
Professor and Supervisor

P R E F A C E

Immigration of large scale population from across the international border (Bangladesh) has caused significant demographic, political and socio-economic problems in Tripura. It is in this sense that the study on **Transborder Migration: A Study of Its Impact on Tripura Politics** has been undertaken. Indeed, human history to an extent is marked by migration of people from densely populated areas to sparsely populated areas, from an economically less developed or backward areas or country to developed or advanced areas or country and from an unsecured place to comparatively secured places. However, large scale migration of people from one place to another is determined by a combination of several factors such as economic compulsion, natural catastrophes or calamities, upheavals, political reasons, social factor, tortures, atrocities and above all a sense of insecurity of life.

In the case of Tripura, trans-border migration, particularly following the partition of the Indian sub-continent (1947) and the merger of the State with the Indian Union (1949), is of crucial significance which has generated a multi-dimensional problem for the indigenous or aboriginal people in particular and the State in general. The socio-political tensions connected with various problems in the State could be understood only by tracing its genesis which has been generated by the uninterrupted process of immigration of erstwhile East Pakistanis and now Bangladeshis into Tripura.

(ii)

The study investigates some important aspects of immigration on political and socio-economic structure of Tripura. It is a well known fact that the State and society of Tripura had undergone a massive change as a result of the perennial process of immigration or influx of 'foreign nationals'. With the result, the aboriginal or the indigenous people, the Boroks or Tripuris, have been reduced to a microscopic minority in the land of their own where they were the single largest majority prior to the partition of the Indian sub-continent (1947). More importantly, as the political and economic power has been in the hands of these immigrants since the late 1950s, the phenomenon has given rise to serious political and socio-economic consequences on the State in general and the development and the security of the indigenous population in particular. The various political and socio-economic problems and social tensions and different socio-political organisational movements of the indigenous people in Tripura have been to a great extent either related to or the by-product of the immigration and the consequent control of the political and economic power of the State by the immigrants. Thus, the study on **Transborder Migration: A Study of Its Impact on Tripura Politics** assumes crucial significance.

As the aboriginal tribal people are the main sufferers of the process of immigration, the study analyses its impact on particularly the tribal people's politics, society and economy in Tripura.

Chapter I of the study deals with the concept of Migration. In Chapter II, a historical overview of Tripura has been discussed. Chapter III of the study highlights the process of immigration. While the Chapter IV analyses the impact of immigration on Tripura politics, the Chapter V of the study analyses the its impact on socio-economic aspects of Tripura in general and tribal people in particular. Chapter VI which is the conclusion, summarises the findings of the study and highlights the need to check the further process of immigration and its related problems in the State.

For the completion of this thesis I express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. B. Pakem, Professor in the Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, for his untiring guidance and help without which I could never have completed this work.

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(iv)

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I express my deep gratitude to my late parents who established the foundation of my study. Further, I am indebted to my three elder brothers, my wife and other members of my family for their continuous and tireless support, help and inspiration for my study.

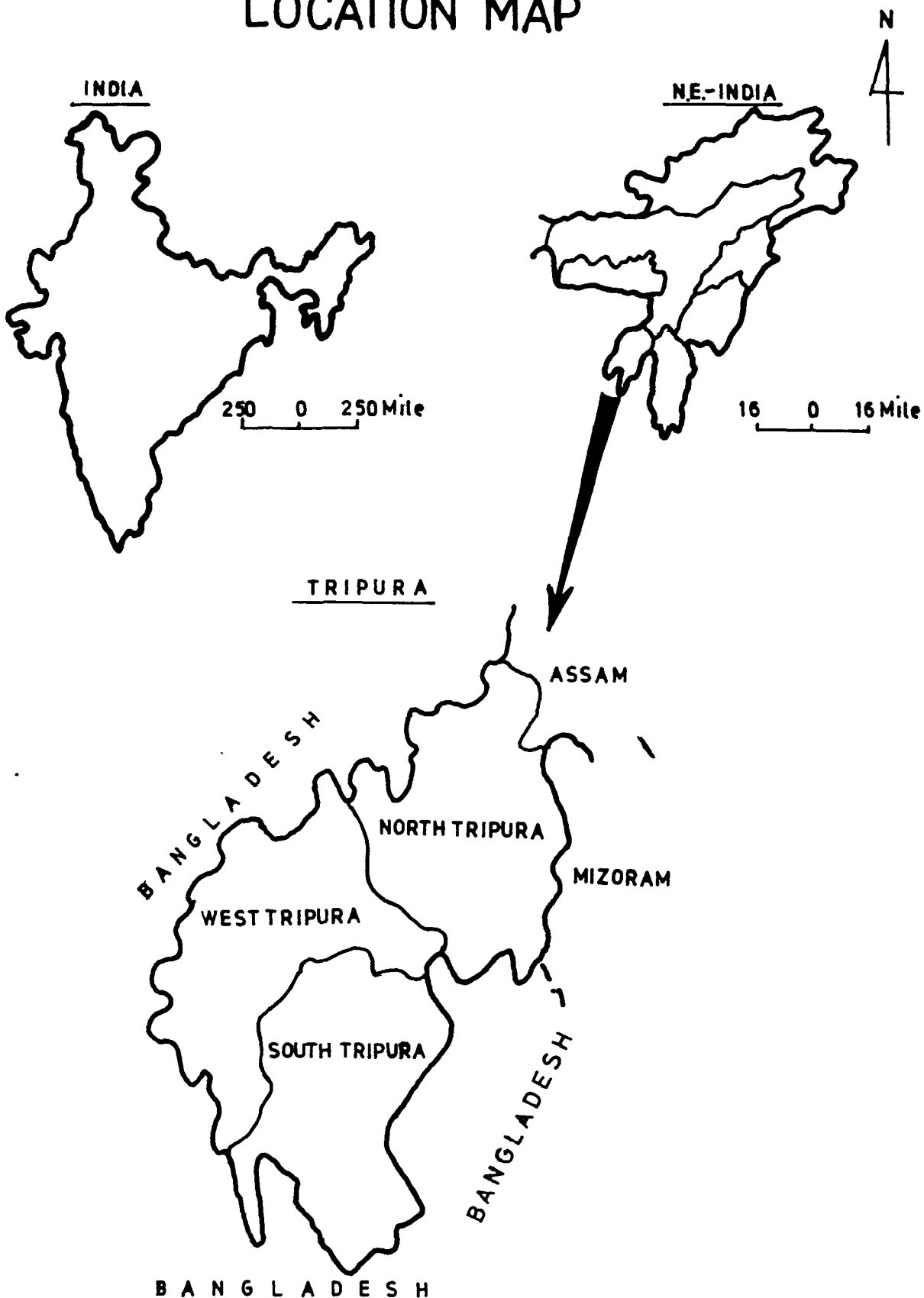
Last but not the least, I thank Dr. N. P. Goel for getting this thesis typed.

Shillong,
November 29, 1995


KHAKCHANG DEBBARMA

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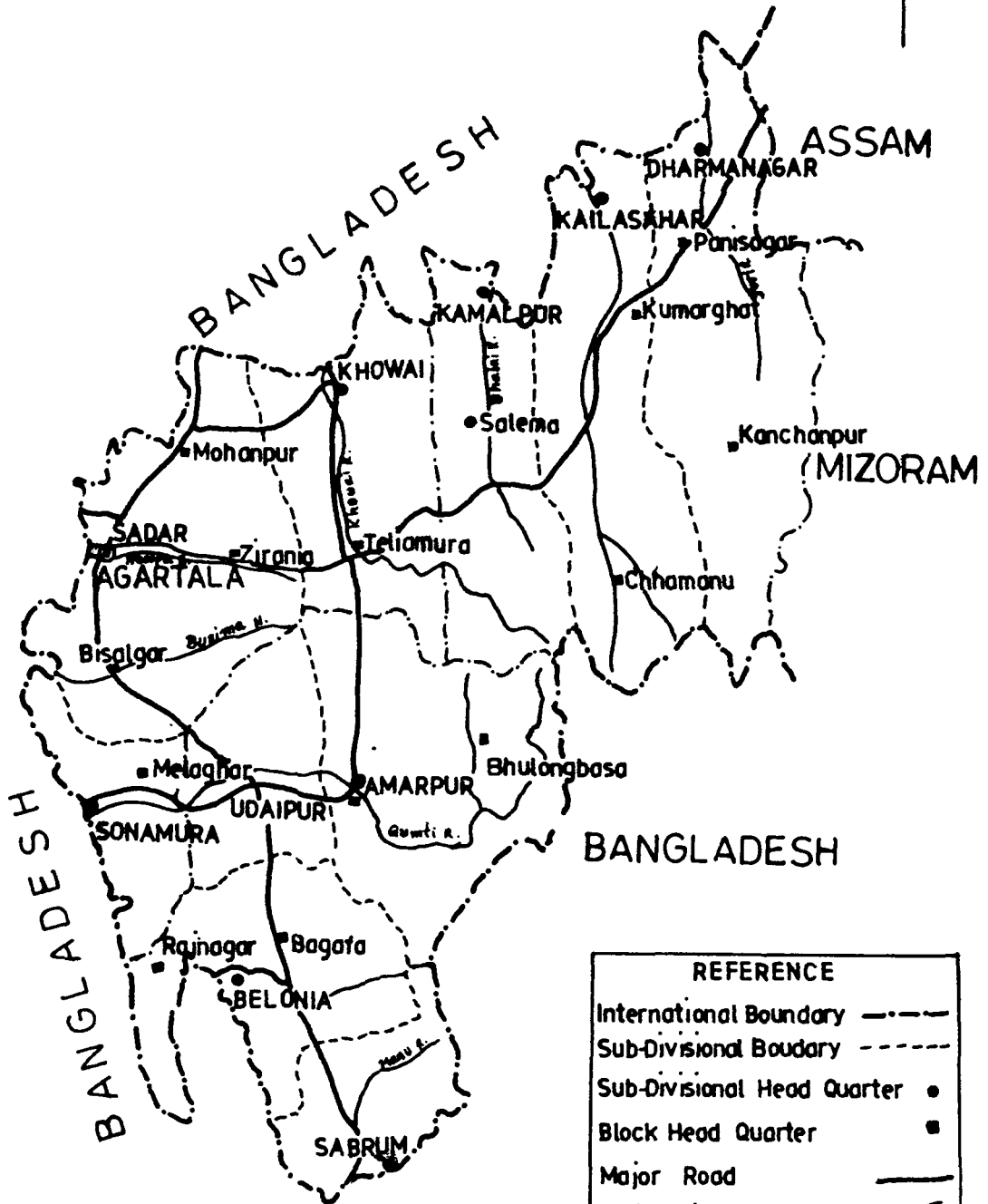
LOCATION MAP



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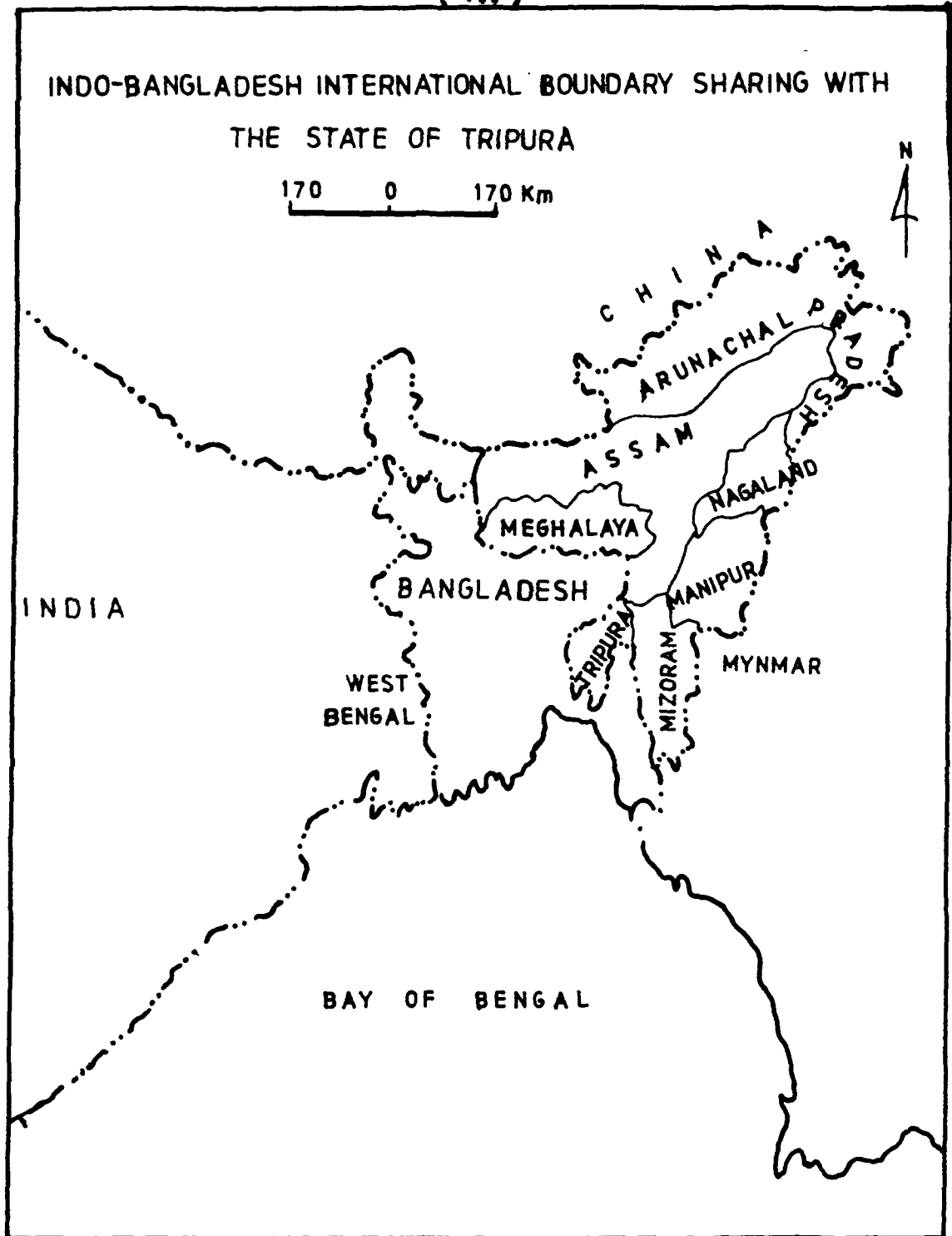
MAP OF TRIPURA

16 0 16 Miles



REFERENCE	
International Boundary	--- --
Sub-Divisional Boundary	- - - -
Sub-Divisional Head Quarter	●
Block Head Quarter	■
Major Road	—
Major River	~ ~ ~

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CHAPTER I

CONCEPT OF MIGRATION

CHAPTER I

CONCEPT OF MIGRATION

Migration of people from one place to another is a human phenomenon. In fact, migration of people has occurred throughout history. They have migrated from densely populated areas to sparsely populated areas, from less developed countries to developed countries and from an unsecured place comparatively to secured places. Even in modern times, migrations have become a part of life for millions of people. Primarily migration is an economic process but its cultural implications on the host countries are also important. Massive and large scale human migration across the international borders, oceans and continents contribute to changing the ethnic and demographic composition and cultural profile of many recipient countries or places and they have affected cultural values and life-styles of the host society.¹ In most cases, migration of people, from one place to another has occurred owing to natural catastrophes or calamities, upheavals, economic compulsions, political insecurity, torture and social factor. Migration is also conditioned by the following factors :²

(i) Disproportionate, insufficient and inadequate economic development of a region within the country.

(ii) Seasonal or recurring labour shortage in particular areas or regions both within and outside the country.

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1. Narang, A.S., "Immigration, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism in Canada", India Quarterly : A Journal of International Affairs, Vol. L, Nos. 1 and 2, January-June 1994 (Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi), pp. 77-92
 2. Singh, Karori, "Inter-State Migration in South Asia", (Unpublished paper presented at the Seminar, India and South Asia, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, March 23-25, 1987), pp. 1-19.

- (iii) Demand for skilled personnel outside the country as also in the industrial belts within the country.
- (iv) Persistence of the twin phenomena of an ageing population and decline in the rate of population growth.

Thus, the factors leading to migration vary from place to place and country to country. The steady increase of population, uneven distribution of natural resources, imbalance development and the emergence of a large number of States specially after the Second World War, made the issue of transborder or inter-State migration complex and controversial. Moreover, a vulnerable border with inadequate security measures facilitates migration of people. The proximity of a border also facilitates illicit migration; for instance, the Indo-Bangladesh border and the border between certain other South Asian States. Transborder or inter-State migration within the South Asian region has resulted in the persistent political and economic problem both within the affected country as also between the nations involved.

The past decade witnessed important changes in the migration flows between countries. In the early 1970s several European countries that had promoted immigration in order to offset the labour shortages they had experienced decided unilaterally to stop the inflow of migrant workers. In contrast, the resource-rich countries of Western Asia were faced with the necessity of importing even more foreign labour in order to accelerate their development process. Also during 1970s several of the traditional immigration countries like Austria, Canada and New Zealand

adopted policies directed towards achieving a more satisfactory balance between immigration and economic conditions. Given the generally poor performance of the world economy since the mid 1970s, these policies have often been translated into lower immigration ceilings, thus effectively reducing the flows of legal migrants. Nonetheless, despite the adoption of stringent laws, the immigration level has not been reduced. Illegal migrants are common in many countries, particularly in those admitting already sizeable number of persons who do fulfil the immigration requirements established by law.³

There is also growing importance of refugee movements, caused either by international conflicts or by national instability. In recent past, refugee movements that both originate and end in developing countries have been the rule rather than an exception. The inability of refugees to find asylum in Third World countries has meant that many poor, developing countries have had to cope with unprecedented influxes of population.⁴

Meaning

Migration in modern times has become a tenuous concept and there are different definitions and concepts as to the meaning of migration that are being used in different parts of

3. United Nations, World Population Trends, Population and Developments Interrelations and Population Policies 1983 Monitoring Report, (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, Population Studies No. 93, New York), Vol.I, 1985, pp. 207-34.

4. Ibid.

the world. Migration is leaving one's original place of residence and going to a new one either for permanent settlement or residence for a long duration of time. This may be due to the inconvenience existent in the former and the lack or absence of it in the latter. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 'migrate' means to move from one place to another to live there. Broadly speaking, migration is defined as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence.⁵ In its most general sense, 'migration' is ordinarily defined as the relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance.⁶ Migration is not merely moving continuously from one place to another but residing in a new place for a year or more. A person who goes to another country and remains there for the rest of his life, we say is a migrant; and one who pays a two hour visit to the nearest town is not.⁷ A tourist or a religious pilgrim for instance, can not be called a migrant for they do not reside in any new place but keep moving from place to place and country to country. Thus, "A migrant is a person who has changed his residence from one geographically well defined area to another area with the intention of permanently or semi-

5. Hornby, A.S., Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974), p.535.

6. Peterson, William, "Migration : Social Aspects", in Sills, David L. (ed.), International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 10, (McMillan and Free Press, U.S., 1968), pp. 286-99.

7. Ibid.

permanently settling at the new place".⁸ Migration involves movement to a new place to eke out a livelihood which also compels them to adjust to the new environment of life permanently. He who crosses an administrative boundary may be considered as migrant. International migration is termed by the recommendation of the United Nations - as permanent if the removal of the migrant from one place to another is for one year or more; while stay for a shorter period is classified as a visit.⁹ According to the United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary:¹⁰

"Migration is a form of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographical unit and another, generally involving a change in residence from the place of origin or place of departure to the place of destination or place of arrival. Such migration is called permanent migration and should be distinguished from other forms of movement which do not involve a permanent change of residence".

Here an argument may be put forth as to whether to include in the concept of migration, transhuman, transcultural migration, also the movement of people from their residence to their place of work which may be of a short duration of a month, a week or even a day. However, adverting to the basic principles of migration, this does not come under the purview of the concept of migration. Thus, migration may be defined as the movement of the

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8. For details see, Sinha, V.C. and Zacharia, E., Elements of Demography, (Allied Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1984), pp. 95-122.
9. Peterson, William, "Migration : Social Aspects", in Sills, David L. (ed.), n. 6, p. 286.
10. Cited in Bhende, Asha A. and Kanitkar, Tara, Principles of Population Studies (Demography), (Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, Second Edition, 1982), p. 306.

people from one place of abode to another due to reasons, like economic, social, religious and political.¹¹ All such reasons or factors are co-related to each other. For instance, the economic problem of a section of people may lead to a political crisis leading to a large scale migration of people as in the case of Chakma refugees of Bangladesh who have migrated to the Indian State of Tripura. Migration in most cases is selective. The working population are more prone to change their place of residence than children, women and the aged, and invariably they migrate with their families in search of employment, due to an economic crisis in their original place of residence. However, such migrations do not take place on a large scale and also do not end at a particular time. Large scale migration is caused by political crisis and upheavals leading to the suppression of the fundamental rights, demands of the people, as also torture and killing of people either by the Government or by a dominant section of the local population. This was the cause of the large scale of exodus of the Chakmas from Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to Tripura which began in May, 1986.

Significance of Migration

Migration of people can be traced back to the development and civilization of human history. In the past when

11. For details see, Chandna, R.C. and Sidhu, M.S., Introduction to Population Geography, (Kalyani Publisher, New Delhi, 1980), pp. 56-76.

transportation and means of communication were not developed unlike today, people could move or migrate only to a short distance. But today, with the development of science and technology, and the resultant advancement of modes of transportation and communication, people can travel a long distance in a short period of time. In a way, it has augmented and aggravated the problem of migration. Man's capacity to direct his mobility, increased significantly with the Industrial Revolution.¹²

Migration is not merely the shifting of people from one place or abode to another but also is most fundamental to the understanding of the ever changing 'space content' and 'space relations' of an area.¹³ It brings cultural diffusion, social integration, new political set up and also results in redistribution of population. Moreover, as migration is not a mere change of residence or place by only a single person but group of persons, it subsequently affects the whole sphere of life, such as economic, political, social, religious, etc. of the recipient country's population. No matter whether a migration is of a long or short distance involving several millions or a few hundred people, it ends invariably in the transformation of both the people of its origin and the place of reception as well. It also modifies the way of life of the migrants, such as their metabolism and mentality as they have to adapt to the new place

12. For details see, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 12 (William Benton Publishers, Chicago, 1973), pp. 210-14.

13. Chandna and Sidhu, n. 11, p. 56.

and different environment. Hence, the place of origin of the migrants; the place to which they migrate and the migrants themselves generally do not remain the same. The passage of time and change of place, not only changes the outlook of the people, but also it reshapes and reforms their whole sphere of life in the process. Thus, migration is a very significant factor of both national and international life that cannot be ignored. As a result the international organisation like the United Nations have given a wide range of reports on international migration.

Types of Migration

Migration may be of various types and they are not uniform in nature. There is a growing diversity in migration particularly in regard to cause, distance, direction, duration, selectivity etc. Therefore, different types of migration have been recognised depending on the nature of migration, causes, time, distance and motivation. Based upon these factors, short and long term migration, and short and long distance migration have been classified. If there is an economic factor that leads to migration, we call it economic migration and similarly if it is matrimonial, it is termed marital migration. We read of seasonal, temporary, periodic and permanent migration of spontaneous, forced, impelled, free and planned migration, as well as of internal, external, inter-regional, international, continental and intercontinental migration.¹⁴In the case of forced migration,

14. Clarke, John I., Population geography, 2nd Edition, (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1979), pp. 130-44.

the migrant has no decision of his own or has no say in the decision to migrate. It is rather compulsion having no choice or selection of the migrants. But in case of voluntary or free and planned migration, it is the people or community who decide or select to migrate to some other/better place for specific reasons such as, the availability of fertile land, better economic condition, relatively more security of life, etc. The studies on rural-urban migration is emphasised usually with wage labourers, age groups, the depopulation of the farm, or similar categories.¹⁵ On the whole, however, it will thus be appropriate to narrow the distinctions between various types of migrations basing it on area, that is, migration within the country and migration across the international border. The former type of migration is known as internal migration and the latter is known as international or external migration. Further, the terms emigration and immigration refer respectively to movement out of or into a particular territory and thus for instance the migrants leaving India to settle down in United States are emigrants from India and immigrants to the United States. In other words, the terms emigration and immigration are understood as movement out of a particular territory and entry from across an international border into a country. These terms are usually used in the context of inter-national migration, for instance, emigration of Indians to the United Kingdom, United States of America, etc. and

15. Dutt, Brian M. and Safa, Helen I., Migration and Urbanization: Model and Adaptive Strategies, (Mouton Publisher, The Hague, 1975), p. 4.

immigration of Hindus from Bangladesh to India or particularly to the Indian State of Tripura. It may well be noticed here that the State of Tripura to date suffers from this aspect of perennial immigration from across the international boundary, which has been creating a serious socio-economic and political problems of the State specially to the indigenous tribal people of the then princely State of Tripura. Therefore, the immigration into the Indian State of Tripura cannot be ignored but requires a special attention to safeguard the interest and identity of the tribal people.

Internal Migration

Migration within the certain specific territorial limits of a country is generally known as "internal migration". It refers to migration of people from one region to another within the limits of a country's boundary. Internal migration occurs owing to several socio-economic, and political factors. Internal migration may be classified as (a) rural to urban, (b) urban to urban, (c) rural to rural, and (d) urban to rural.

Rural to urban migration occurs because, there is as compared to the urban, always lesser facilities in every sphere of human life, in the rural areas. As found, in the urban areas there are better facilities and avenues in the fields of education, employment, health services, income generation, games and sports, transport and communication, etc. These facilities and opportunities in various fields thus, attract the rural

people and they generally migrate to the urban areas. Further, life in general in the urban areas is relatively easy and more secured. Nonetheless, migration from rural to urban areas is primarily a response to economic motives.¹⁶ Because of all these factors people are usually motivated to move always from rural to the urban areas.

Migration of people from one urban area to another is known as urban to urban or inter-urban migration. It has also been found that people tend to migrate to nearest towns and stay there for short periods before actually migrating to other bigger cities. This is generally known as step-migration. This kind of migration takes place as big cities throughout the world have become strong magnets for specially economically induced urban to urban immigrants who are attracted to these cities due to better facilities and diverse employment avenues or opportunities they provide and which are generally not available at smaller cities or towns. This has eventually resulted in the big cities growing disproportionately and demographic problems, while the smaller towns remain the same without much change. Therefore, we find there is a disparity in the levels of development between the big cities and small towns even within the country itself.

16. Clarke, n. 14, p.137. Also for details see; Todaro, Michael P., Internal Migration in Developing Countries, (Imprimerie La Concorde, Switzerland, 1980), pp. 7-14.

In predominantly agrarian countries, migration also takes place from rural to urban areas. For instance, in India, according to 1961 Census, 73.7 percent of migrants moved within rural areas.¹⁷ This type of migration occurs generally from the areas with a lower per capita productivity incomes to areas with a higher per capita agricultural productivity and incomes. In India this types of migration takes place from an over-populated to a sparsely populated area and also towards developed plantation areas, agricultural lands etc., for example, the pattern of migration in States like Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Migration also takes place from urban to rural areas. The post Second World War era witnessed the migration of people from urban to rural areas. However, such migration as compared to other types is rare. Migration of people from urban to rural usually happens due to the over-populated in the cities and depopulation in the rural areas, and also due to the growing land prices in urban areas. Such type of migration is forthcoming in the United Kingdom, United States of America and even in some of the developing countries. For instance, in Kaula Lampur, capital of Malaysia, the population densities in the core are gradually declining and similarly, in case of the entire Malay Peninsula it has been observed that certain proportion of the migrants to the city tend to return to the native village after having built up

17. Ibid

sufficient savings to buy property in the ancestral villages.¹⁸ In India also, this type of migration is noticed particularly among the retired personnel of different Government departments.

Besides the above type, there are also seasonal and periodic migrations. The seasonal migration occurs mostly in the remote corners of the country, people in these areas migrate in small groups and they are mostly food gatherers and also those engaged in hunting and fishing.

The periodic migrants are those who remain away from their permanent home town and who go periodically or from time to time, to their place of work with an objective to earn more and send it home. For example, millions of migrant labourers in Africa are of this type. The North-South movements in West Africa, the movement from East and Central Africa to Nairobi, Buganda, the Sisal areas of Tanzania and the copper belts, the movement to the mines and industries of South Africa; and the movement to the mines and towns of the Maghreb¹⁹ are all of this type that is periodic migration. Thus, in brief, these migrations are because of the 'push' and 'pull' factors²⁰ operating within the territorial

18. Chandna and Sidhu, n. 11, p. 60.

19. Clarke, n. 14, p. 136.

20. 'Push' and 'Pull' : Push factors are those conditions which compel people to migrate to other place (negative) and 'Pull' factors are those conditions which attract people to migrate to certain place or country (positive). Also See; Clark, W.A.V., Human Migration, (Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1986), p. 47.

limits of a country which are at the same time known as negative and positive factors.

International Migration

As mentioned earlier, migration of those across the international border or boundary is generally known as international migration. Since international migration refers to the movement across national boundaries, it assumes greater demographic, economic and political significance than that of internal migration, for it brings about either gain or loss to a country's population.

Some writers are of the opinion that a great deal of international migration took place from Europe to the other parts of the world including Third world countries during the period 1800 to 1939.²¹ But even in the post Second World War period till date, the flow of international migration did not subside the world over. It should be noticed that as the people of the world are not free from various and diverse socio-economic and political problems, the problem of migration in international affairs will also be a continuous phenomenon. In fact, after the Second World War, there was a compounding of the problem of international migration. To cope with the mass of displaced persons, expels, refugees, etc., about 600,000 displaced persons were enrolled by

21. For details See, Dickenson, J.P. et. al., A Geography of Third World, (Methuen and Co. Ltd., London and New York, 1983), pp. 254-56.

the international refugee organization in 1946.²² It has been said that the refugee phenomenon is one of the most tangible manifestations of the post Second World War period. There are estimated 100 million migrants or refugees worldwide who move for a variety of reasons ranging from poverty and economic insecurity to population growth and environmental degradation.²³

The European emigrations, specially the Spanish and Portuguese to Latin America are considered as relatively 'modern' and important international migration. Among other emigrants who went to North America were the British, French, German and Irish. The majority of the European emigrants went to United States, which between 1880 and the beginning of the First World War received about 40 million people.²⁴ Even in modern times, United States continues to be recipient of high rate immigrants which includes both legal and illegal. For instance, of the nearly 20 million immigrants counted in the 1990 Census, about 15 per cent were accounted for illegal immigration and it has been reported that approximately an average of 1.1 million immigrants arrive in United States each year.²⁵ Besides, America, Australia, New

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22. Demko, George J. et al., Population Geography : A Reader, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1970), pp.288-344.
23. Helton, Arthur C., "Displacement and Human Rights : Current Dilemmas in Refugee Protection", Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 47, No.2, Winter 1994 (School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York), pp.379-98.
24. Chandna and Sidhu, n. 11, p. 71.
25. For Details see, Clad, James C., "Immigration Debate : Slowing the Wave", and Passel, Jeffrey S. and Fix, Michael, "Myths About Immigrants", The Foreign Policy, (Journal), Number 95, Summer 1994 (New York), pp.139-60.

Zealand, Siberia and parts of Africa were also the recipient countries for emigrants from European countries especially from the British Isles. As compared to Siberia and Southern parts of Africa the majority of these emigrants went to Australia and New Zealand.

Nevertheless, the post First World War, noticed a decline of overseas migration from Europe, mainly due to immigration and emigration restriction, financial chaos in Europe, the world economic crisis of 1929, the introduction of unemployment and health assistance, the reduction in the amount of new land overseas and greater desire of overseas countries for skilled workers than for unskilled labourers.²⁶ On the contrary, in the 1930's, some European countries like Britain, France and Germany received more immigrants than emigrants. In the post Second World War the Jewish immigration into Israel was said to be responsible for the doubling of its population in the period from the founding of the State in May 1948 to mid 1951, during which some 600, 000 immigrants were received. Not only were the immigrants all Jewish, but in addition, immigration in their case was an absolute right for legislation as enacted in 1950 which granted every Jew the right to immigrate. These Jews were mainly from Europe particularly Russia.

26. Clarke, n. 14, p. 142.

Non-European International Migration

There were several 'forced' immigrations taking place from Africa to America. It has been found that a large number of native Africans were made to work on the Sugar and Cotton plantations in America. It is estimated that 14 million Africans were shipped to America until the nineteenth century when slavery was abolished.²⁷ In the mid 1970s due to the civil war in Angola, a large number of European settlers in South Africa, and in the 1960's and early 1970's there was also a large emigration of Asians who were mostly Indians from East Africa.

It is said that the Chinese particularly from Fukkien and Kwangtung provinces mostly migrated to South-East Asia. During 1900 to 1940 about 12 million Chinese aliens landed in peninsular Malaysia and Singapore, who mostly became workers with a few traders.²⁸ Although a small proportion of Chinese are found in Indonesia and Thailand, they form an absolute majority in Singapore and as much as 35 per cent of the population of peninsular Malaysia. But in the post Second World War period the proportion of Chinese migration to these areas had declined.

During the British rule, the Indians, mostly migrated to Sri Lanka, South-East Asia, East Africa, West Indies, Fiji as indentured labourers and they have, in course of times, settled

27. Chandna and Sidhu, n. 11, p. 73.

28. Ibid.

down in these places. The majority of the Indian emigrants were from South India, that is, Madras State which is presently known as Tamil Nadu. During the British colonial rule, as the British rulers in Sri Lanka planned to develop the plantation economy, a large population of Tamil stock from India migrated to Sri Lanka as estate labourers to work on the coffee and tea estates, and this labour force has substantially contributed to the development and growth of Sri Lanka plantation economy which served the colonial interest. Apart from this, the partition of India in 1947, also resulted in a large scale migration. However, in this case the flow of the people was a two way affair. Indian emigrants to South Africa were mostly labourers²⁹ and in other parts of Africa, they work on the plantation. As regards of Indian emigrants in England, a majority of them went from the Punjab and they work in factories as unskilled workers.³⁰

Although the Japanese migrated and settled in Malaysia and its neighbouring countries, majority of them however, were repatriated to Japan after the Second World War. Japanese also migrated to Latin American countries specially to Brazil. In the

29. For other labour migration See, United Nations World Population Trends, Population and Development Inter-relations and Population Policies, n. 3, pp. 213-25.

30. For details of Indian Migration to South Africa and England See : Metcalf, Thomas R., "Indian Migration to South Africa", and Helweg, Arthur W., "Indians in England : A Study of the International Relationships of Sending, Receiving and Migrant Societies", in Rao, M.S.A. (ed.), Studies in Migration, (Manohar, Delhi, 1986), pp.345-94.

post Second World War period Japan received hundreds or thousands of South Korean immigrants. In the 1970s migration originating from South Vietnam is estimated to be about 150,000 and most of them have migrated to the United States.³¹

Illegal or Undocumented Migration

Illegal or undocumented migration refers to those migrants who cross the international boundary and settle there either unofficially or without the permit of the alien government or country. Generally, this type of migration does not take place in a large group but as individual family or in smaller group. However, in certain cases this type of migration or influx remains perennial like in the case of Tripura and other North-Eastern States where the illegal or undocumented influx from Bangladesh has become a continuous socio-economic problems.

Illegal immigrants, or undocumented migrants, are present in all developed countries too. There may be as many as a million illegal migrants in Western European countries, one to two million in Venezuela and three to six million in the United States.³² It is said that undocumented or illegal immigrants are tolerated so long their labour is needed to the development of nation's economy. There is, however, very little solid evidence to substantiate the illegal migrants; and although illegal flows of migrants are known to exist in every region of the world,

31. Chandna and Sidhu, n. 11, p. 75.

32. Clark, W.A.V., Human Migration, n. 20, pp. 84-88.

their magnitude and evolution can, at best, be the result of an educated guess.³³

There has been a great deal of attention in the past decade to the nature and level of illegal or undocumented migration to the United States. During the past decade, illegal immigration to the United States has come into the lime light. In March 1981, a Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy estimated that there were between 3.3 million and 6 million illegal immigrants in the United States at that time. Though the magnitude of the illegal population is poorly known, there is a fair degree of agreement on the fact that Mexicans constitute a very large proportion of all illegal entries.³⁴

Some other countries which share the illegal migration are Venezuela, Hongkong, Italy, Nigeria, etc. Like the countries of Western Asia, Venezuela, having a relatively small population and rich petroleum reserves, has had to resort to foreign labour in order to propel its industrialisation and economic growth. It is estimated that the number of illegal immigrants in the country as high as two to four million of the total population of 15 to 16 million in 1980. In view of the perceived problem of illegal migrants, according to the 1980 Regulation for the Admission and Permanent Residence of Foreigners, all legal and illegal aliens

33. United Nations, World Population Trends, Population and Development Interrelations and Population Policies, n. 3, pp. 225-28.

34. Ibid., p. 226.

who have resided in the country prior to May 25, 1980 were required to register with the authorities³⁵ of the Government of Venezuela.

Attracted by its prospect, and encouraged by its "touch base" policy, which meant that Chinese national who managed to arrive undetected at the urbanised area of Hongkong could count on not being departed, a large number of Chinese nationals entered Hongkong illegally during the 1970s. It is estimated that during the period 1976-1980 nearly 400,000 Chinese "touched base" and stayed. With the addition of Indo-Chinese refugees to the picture, population growth in Hongkong reached very high level in 1979. Concerned about the impacts of continued high growth, the authorities in Hongkong adopted more stringent measures in October 1980 which have successfully reduced illegal influx.³⁶

It is estimated that as many as 500,000 illegal immigrants may have been present in Italy in 1979.³⁷ These alien foreign workers, who originate in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia are characterised as "taking the jobs that Italians don't want", just as Italians have been said to take employment rejected nationals in the Federal Republic of Germany or Switzerland. It has been reported that these workers find it easier to enter Italy than other labour importing countries.

35. Ibid., p. 227.

36. Ibid., pp. 227-28.

37. Ibid., p. 228.

In the case of Nigeria, with the decision of the Government of that country in January 1983, all illegal aliens then in the country were expelled. But many of those expelled had entered Nigeria under a protocol of the Economic community of West African States that allow free movement of nationals of Western African countries throughout the region. Migrants went to the petroleum-producing country in search of jobs and better opportunities. Soon after the exodus of illegal immigrants press releases put the number of Ghanaians, who were said to constitute the majority of illegal immigrants, at about 1 million.³⁸

Though, no global assessment of the levels and trends of illegal migration has been made, but its magnitude remains high and that an increasing number of countries are receiving illegal immigrants. Argentina is said to have about 400,000, France about 300,000, Malaysia about 1 million and Switzerland between 50,000 and 80,000.³⁹ Thus, illegal movements are a growing concern of the international community today.

Refugees

Refugee migrations are forced migrations. Throughout human history, people fearing persecution have left their countries and become refugees in other countries. There is no general universally accepted definition as regards the refugees. A 'refugee' has been defined by the United Nations 'as a person who', owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons

38. Ibid., p. 228.

of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁴⁰ In general, only persons outside their own country and only those whose "permanent resettlement" has not been achieved are counted as refugees.

Africa is said to be the major region having the greatest number of "Unsettled" refugees, more than 3 million during 1981. The main causes of refugee movements around 1972-1973 were the ethnic conflicts between Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi and Rwanda and the independence movements in the then Portuguese colonies of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. Internal strife and fighting in Zaire also gave rise to refugee streams directed towards the Central African Republic, the Sudan and Uganda.⁴¹ Refugee movements in Africa are characterised by being short-distance displacements of considerable numbers of persons that occur fairly rapidly.

39. Ibid.

40. See Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, Art. 1A(2) and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967, Art. 1 Para. 2. in United Nations, Treaty Series, Vol.189, No. 2545, p. 137 and Vol. 606, No. 8791, p.267.

41. United Nations, World Population Trends, Population and Development Interrelations and Population Policies, n. 3, pp. 230-31.

In 1981, refugees in Western Asia has been estimated approximately at 2.2 million, of which the persons of Palestinian origin, constituted the vast majority. The refugees in other parts of Asia have been estimated to be about 2.5 million in mid 1981, and the source of most of these refugees is Afghanistan. However, the situation in this area is so fluid that the estimates cited here may not reflect the latest situation adequately.⁴² Other important sources of refugees are Democratic Kampuchea, the Lao people's Democratic Republic, Vietnam, Philippine, Bangladesh, etc.

Although Latin America has smaller number of refugees of about 280,000 by 1981, it has experienced rapid changes in recent years. In northern Latin America, which includes the Caribbean and Central America, the number of refugees continued to rise during 1981. The exodus of Salvadorians, which had begun the first half of 1980, persisted and remained the largest group throughout 1981, although an increasing number of Guatemalans and Nicaraguans also sought asylum. Thus, by the end of 1981, the total refugees of northern Latin America was estimated at over 200, 000, including 180, 000 Salvadorians, of whom the largest proportion was in Honduras.⁴³

Contrary to northern Latin America, the number of refugees in South America has remained relatively stable since 1979 and

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

most of them are of European origin. Although the flows of Cuban refugees are not reported, it must be noted that by 1981 there were nearly 665,000 Cubans living in the United States.⁴⁴ Besides, there is also a growing number of refugees in the European countries. In Europe, North America and Australia, application for political asylum rose from 90,444 in 1983 to about 825,000 in 1992. Over three million applications have been made for asylum in Europe between 1983 to 1994.⁴⁵

Determinants of Migration

Migration of people is not determined by only a single factor but by a combination of factors. As there are different types of migration taking place in different places/region or country and as the nature of migration also differ from place to place, the determinants of population migration also tend to vary. For instance, the 'rural-push' and 'urban-pull' factors may to a great extent motivate people to migrate. Large scale exodus of people from one place to another, however is generally determined by a combination of various factors, namely, cultural, demographic, economic, geographical, political, social, and above all insecurity and depression. Besides, other factors which cause or motivate people to migrate from one place to another are pressure of population growth, marriage, employment facilities,

44. Ibid.

45. Keely, Charles B. and Russel, Sharon Stanton, "Responses of Industrial Countries to Asylum Seekers", Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 47, No.2, Winter 1994 (School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York), pp. 399-417.

gain or achievement, educational facilities, ethnic cultural affinity and contacts, conscious Government policies, internal strife and unfavourable topographical or climate conditions.⁴⁶ Thus, there is no single or only a particular determinant of migration. In fact, the studies on migration have often been of specific nature whose findings are usually not applicable to the migration of different situations. This is because of the fact that as there are different determinants of migration, their significance differs from place to place and from migrant to migrant. Therefore, migration is a complex phenomenon altogether influenced by a variety of factors which are not usually easy to trace. However, in most cases, the determinants of migration both internal and international are to a large extent similar. Therefore, on this basis we can arrive at certain generalisation for a better understanding of the problem of migration. Some of the important determinants or factors of migration are :

(1) Demographic

Demography is one of the important determinants of population migration that cannot be ignored. The ever growing population make the land and property scarce for which the large section of population is bound to move to the safer places. This demographic aspect in a way leads to various division, strife and conflict in the society. The rapid growth of population specially in the developing countries like India and China has been

46. See, Sinha and Zacharia, n. 8, p. 112.

regarded as one of the main causes of emigration or outmigration. With a given low mode of production within, in many Third world countries, only a part of the labour force can be absorbed by the agriculture and thus, the rest are forced to move to the other centres for employment and other living facilities. The ever increasing rural unemployment and underemployment is not only caused by the continuous pressure of population but also due to the low rate of investment in agriculture, fragmentation of land ownership, inequalities in the distribution of land and other productive assets, allocative mechanisms which discriminate in favour of the owners of wealth, and a pattern of investment and technological change which is biased against labour.⁴⁷ There is thus, a link between the resource of the area and the population growth. Therefore, the pressure of continuous population growth and the scarcity of physical resources of an area, is an important factor of demographic migration. For example, the movement of people from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to other parts of India could be retraced to this economic stress.

(2) Economic

The economic factor is one of the major forces leading to population migration. It is a general trend that migration originates particularly from economically backward and depressed areas and are directed towards the areas of greater economic prosperity with increasing employment generating potential.

47. Ibid.

People migrate from areas of low economic opportunity to areas of high economic opportunity, for example, people moving from East to West for better economic prospects. Emigration is generated from the areas suffering from chronic population pressure upon their limited agricultural resource base which compels the people to migrate to the areas where new agricultural lands are available. In recent time, such type of migration is noticed in Dandakaranya of Madhya Pradesh, Terai region of Uttar Pradesh and Northern parts of Rajasthan in India.

It was due to the economic interest that many Tamils of former Madras State migrated to Sri Lanka as estate labourers during the British colonial period. The Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950, which provided the free movement of Nepalis and Indians in each other's country together with the concomitant facilities and privileges-except political rights, was reckoned to be necessary for each other economic development. The massive infiltration of people from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh is also due to economic reasons. It is the deteriorating economic situation and acute unemployment problems that compelled the people in Bangladesh to migrate towards the North Eastern States of India particularly in Tripura and Meghalaya. Recent figures reveal that 82,012 people have migrated from Bangladesh due to economic compulsion during the period between 1982 and June 1985 to India.⁴⁸ The studies on Indian migrants to South Africa as estate

48. Singh, Karori, n. 2, p. 6.

labourers, and to England as unskilled workers in various factories and industries also reveals that the main motive behind this migration was economic.⁴⁹ Hence, it cannot be denied that economic factors play a vital role in leading people to migrate towards economically advanced and better places or countries.

(3) Political

Of late political factors have become very important for population migration. In this connection, when individual freedom has become too predominant, people usually do not want to live in the country where the political system and institution do not favour them and they tend to move away to other suitable places where their freedom will not be curtailed or dominated. For instance, some people do not like totalitarianism or dictatorship in their country, and move towards other democratic countries, for example, formerly before the recent unification of Germany, people from East Germany tended to move towards West Germany. In political factors, the fear of wars, outbreak of disturbances, internal strife, communal conflict, inflation or unstable political system, discrimination towards certain sections of people are some of the determining factors for population migration.

49. For details See, Metcalf and Helweg in Rao, (ed.), n. 30, pp. 345-94.

(4) Social

There are also migrations which are essentially a product of social custom. The social custom of a bride living with her husband after marriage, and female offsprings residing with their parents, besides the quest for religious freedom are important social causes of migration. Also people leave their original place when there is rigid social restriction and a closed system of society which do not give much scope for the uplift and development of the individual citizen. Further, a persistent social conflict and infighting among the various section of society may also cause people to migrate to other places. Among the social determinants of migration, direct and easy availability of information, free cultural and social contact, social affinity and social ties with the people of other place, the strong desire for social and community development and above all the governmental policies are considered important. The trends of development and advancement in the field of science and technology, transportation, education, etc. have altogether facilitated this type of migration. On the other hand, societies with restrictive and strong affinity, social ties and primitive traditions restrain such type of migration. Government's plan and policies in this regard may sometimes either encourage or discourage migration. For instance, the Government of the People's Republic of China from the rural to urban areas during the early years of communist

had to intervene to check the ill-planned exodus of its people regime.⁵⁰

The social factor of migration reveals the relationship in terms of kinship, family life and the social setting in which the association of people is very important. In the context of India, rural people by themselves gradually develop new associations and ties in the urban areas, and thereby drive further migration.

(5) Religious or Ethnic

Various studies on migration show that people tend to migrate to the place where similar religious ties prevail. A minority religious or ethnic group is much encouraged to migrate to the place or country where their own people have already settled. For instance, there is a tendency for initial areas of Pakistani Settlements in Britain to be attractive to later Pakistani immigrants; and in the United States the Jewish minority is concentrated in about six major metropolitan centres and within these centres there is further concentration.⁵¹ Similarly, since a certain section of the Hindus had already settled in the Indian State of Tripura during the pre-independence period, a large number of Hindu Bangladeshis have been consistently migrating to Tripura. Also the recent Chakma refugees in Tripura found religious and ethnic ties which attracted them to migrate as there

50. Chandna and Sidhu, n. 11, p. 64.

51. Cox, Kevin R., Man, Location and Behaviour : An Introduction to human Geography, (John Willey and Sons, Inc., New York, 1972), p. 62.

were a section of Chakmas already living in the State. Thus, for the person of minority ethnic or religious background the cluster of people of similar background performs social, political and cultural function and socially the group affords an assimilation into the host society. It offers channels by which housing and jobs can be obtained in the alien society.⁵² Further, it is quite obvious that the resident ethnic and religious group can render help and assistance to the new migrants to live and move freely in their new abode and this aspect attracts people to migrate easily.

(6) Insecurity

Security of life has become increasingly important today. All people in fact want security of life, liberty and property. Insecurity of life is an important determinant leading to large scale population migration. When people of a particular place or region are confronted with the sense of insecurity which may be due to natural causes like frequent earthquakes, floods and political reasons, wars, famine, etc. people naturally tend to move towards comparatively safer and secured places. During the partition of the Indian sub-continent purely on religious and political grounds, into India and Pakistan, which subsequently created a sense of insecurity in the minds of the people, a great upheaval took place in the region which compelled the Hindus of Pakistan and Muslims of India to

52. Ibid.

migrate respectively to India and Pakistan simultaneously; despite the assurance of safety and security of life to the minorities by both the countries. At that time it was estimated that the number of refugees in both direction could not have been less than a million and might have been two or three times that number.⁵³ Although, this great migration took place right after independence, sporadic spurts of migration continued thereafter due to social disruption in Pakistan⁵⁴ and Bangladesh.

Before and during the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 there were about ten million people from the former East Pakistan who migrated to India. After the emergence of Bangladesh although those refugees were said to have been repatriated, a large number of them stayed back in India and many sneaked into the Indian border State of Tripura.

This problem of population migration persists even today due to various socio-political disturbances especially in the South Asian States. For example, thousands of Tamils from Northern Sri Lanka crossed into India and over 50,000⁵⁵ Chakmas from Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh crossed into Indian border State of Tripura since 1986. This figure may vary from time to time. But the fact is that, migration is caused mainly due to

53. For details see Hodson, H.V., The Great Divide : Britain-India-Pakistan, (Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., London, 1969), pp. 411-18.

54. Singh, Karori, n. 2, p. 7.

55. "Chakma leaders refuse offer to visit Hill Tracts", The Telegraph, (Calcutta), June 7, 198, p. 4.

oppressive measures adopted by the Governments of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh respectively within their country. This oppressive policy of the governments has created a deep sense of insecurity in the lives of the minorities living there. Besides, the entry of Chakmas, more importantly, there are other illegal or undocumented immigration of Hindus from Bangladesh into the tiny Indian State of Tripura, which still persists and is further compounding the socio-economic and political problems of an erstwhile pre-dominantly tribal and princely State of North-East India.

IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

Migration does not take place in a vacuum. As such when people move, they affect both the place they leave and the place they move into. The impacts of migration cannot be overlooked in our study. In fact, the intensity of migration can be comprehended only when its effects and consequences are given due attention. Impacts of migration can be evaluated in relationship to the changing structure of society as a whole. Migration is connected with the transformation from a traditional society into a modern one.⁵⁶ In early traditional stages there are rapid rise in fertility, a consequent growth of population, and the emergence of rural to urban migration and the setting up of towns and cities. In effect, the rural to urban migration transforms society from rural set up to urban set up and the process of

56. Clark, W.A.V., Human Migration, n. 20, pp. 24-26.

migration not only brings the overall growth of towns and cities but also changes the internal structure of the city. Historically speaking, migrants have moved to the central areas of the cities, and after a period of adjustment and socialisation, they move to outer areas of the city. This pattern of growth and change of migration into the inner city and then, over the years, moves to more affluent suburban surroundings or peripheries has been recorded for European and American cities.⁵⁷

It has been noticed that the impact of migration is greater than the recipient place or country than on the place or country of origin of immigrants. It is logical that wherever there is migration from one place or country to another, the population in the recipient place or country increases, while the population of the place or country of the migrant's origin decreases. In most cases it is the young people of productive age who migrate to other countries and subsequently the population growth rate in these countries will be higher than that in the country of their origin. For instance, the over 50,000 Chakma refugees sheltered in Tripura has increased the population of India while it has decreased the population of Bangladesh correspondingly. Thus, migrations have impacts on the demographic or population structures, and the rate of population growth of both the countries.⁵⁸ Moreover, like in the case of the State of Tripura,

57. *Ibid.*

58. Peterson, William, "Migration : Social Aspects", in Sills, David L. (ed.), n. 6, p. 289.

as a result of rapid population growth, resources also get depleted.

Besides, the demographic aspect and its impacts, the migrants also have the problem of adaptation in the new place and new environment. Of course, when people migrate to a new country where their own ethnic groups are already settled, the new migrants do not face much problem and difficulty of adaptation and adjustment, as against the place where their own people are not present. It is quite obvious that people of the same ethnic or religious group also encourage the new migrants by rendering all necessary and possible assistance, for it increases their strength and numbers and consequently strengthens their claim in all matters of life including political rights. Those migrants hailing from the countryside and rural to industrial towns and from underdeveloped to much advanced and developed countries, unlike their place of origin, may suffer from lack of unpolluted air space, and fresh diet, which may lead to various respiratory diseases. Further, physical contact of people of contrasting areas create pathogenic complexes. For instance, increased movement between Africa and other continents of the world has upset the pathological balance of the Africans and as a result many diseases formerly endemic and relatively inoffensive, have now become active and deadly like malaria in the twentieth century.⁵⁹

59. Chandna and Sidhu, n. 11, p. 65.

Also, whenever, the immigrants arrive in large groups, they are able to preserve their language and religion, as the Bengali Hindu immigrants today in Tripura. Further, if the migration and influx is perennial and continuous and in great number, over the years the immigrants are able not only to influence the local inhabitants with their own language and religion, but also can force them to make their culture for adoption. For example, in Tripura due to the perennial and continuous inflow of Hindu Bengali speaking migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh, the indigenous tribal people have been influenced by their language, religion and culture. This is a very unfortunate picture of the State which deserves a great attention in our study of trying to prescribe certain solutions for socio-political issues. As a matter of fact, the indigenous people of Tripura who were like any other tribes of North East India - originally animistic - have miserably undergone a change with the influx of these Bengali refugees. In fact, the so called animist tribal people of the State, with the coming of the Bengali Hindu priests and refugees, have been Hinduised to a certain extent in their religious beliefs and practices to a large extent. Thus, today a large section of indigenous people of Tripura are made to practice a religion which is to an extent an admixture of Animism and Hinduism. In fact, the religion which the large section of the tribal people of Tripura practise today, are not of their own. Further, the immigrants in Tripura have been successful even in giving names to the indigenous people in alien language, thereby

making the identity crisis. The local names being influenced and changed to aliens names, such as Sachlang to Sambhu, Nobrai to Noba Kumar, etc. are few examples of such a change caused by aliens in local names. The naming of socio-political organisations like Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS), Tripura Upajati Karmachari Samity (TUKS), etc. are also examples of such change or impact.

Still further, it is generally noticed that wherever, there is a continuous influx of migrants, the immigrants not only over a period of time outnumber the local population, but also begin to wield and control economic and political powers which is the core of the governmental machinery. This type of domination leads to and creates socio-economic and political tension naturally between the indigenous people and the immigrants. The Indian State of Tripura is a concrete instance of this phenomenon where the continuous inflow of migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh has confronted this North-Eastern State with serious ethnic, socio-economic and political problems. As a result of this new trend of development, the indigenous tribal people have become the victims. Besides immigration away from developing countries creates shortage of skilled workers, especially in the professions, and in the long run creates problems for economic development in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and even countries of Western Europe like Greece.⁶⁰

60. Clark, W.A.V., Human Migration, n. 20, pp. 81-82.

Migration also brings an impact on the redistribution of income. One of the main reasons for both internal and international migrations is for the migrants to be able to send money to their families in the parent country. The higher wages earned in foreign centres are important source of income in countries where these remittances form a significant portion of family support. Thus, financial exchange is important in terms of economic expansion and development as it stimulates domestic industries and hence economic development of the less developed countries.⁶¹

In United States, the domestic reaction to immigration was intensified in 1993 as the weak economy focused popular discontent on immigration seen as competing for scarce jobs and sensational incidents involving illegal immigrants. The arguments of popular unease about immigration range from demographic, environmental, and cultural concerns to broader if less articulate convictions that immigration does "more harm than good". During 1993, in California, polls showed that a majority of Orange country residents believed illegal immigration to be a "major problems". Other politically important areas such as Florida, Texas, and the eastern sea board cities also showed a similar unease.⁶² This phenomenon is making concern over the domestic and foreign policies of the United States to center on combating runaway population growth.

61. Ibid.

62. For details see, Clad, James C., "Slowing the Wave", The Foreign Policy, n. 25, pp. 139-50.

CHAPTER II

TRIPURA : A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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Geographically speaking, Tripura, an ancient princely and independent State of North East India, is surrounded on the North by the Cachar District of Assam, on the West by Comilla and a part of Noakhali Districts of Bangladesh, on the South by Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and on the East by the Mizo hills of Mizoram. It covers at present about 182.4 kilometres in length from north to the south and 112 kilometres in breadth from east to west. The total area of the State at present is about 10,491.69 square kilometres.¹ More than 60 per cent of the total area of Tripura is covered with hills, hillocks, hilly terrains and valleys and rest with somewhat more or less flat and cultivable land.

Some of the important names of the hills are : (1) The Atharomura; (2) The Deotamura; (3) The Jampui; (4) The Sakan; (5) The Longtra; (6) The Baramura and (7) The Sardeng. Besides, as mentioned there are innumerable hillocks and valleys in the State which are covered with thick forests, trees, bamboos, jungles and bushes constituting a rich sources of natural wealth and jhumming or shifting cultivation.

1. Saha, Sudhanshu Bikash (ed.), Tribes of Tripura -A Historical Survey, (Janashiksha Co-operative Printing Works Ltd., Agartala, 1986), p. 1; Also see, Government of Tripura, Tripura At a Glance 1993-94, (Directorate of Statistics, Agartala, 1993-94), p. 2; and Government of Tripura, Annual Plan 1995-96, Tripura State, Part 1, (Planning and Coordination Department, Agartala), p. 1.

The geographical barriers of Tripura on all sides were not insurmountable for migration and communication, particularly during peace-time. So people from all directions migrated to Tripura which continues even today. When in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., various Mongolian tribes, one after another started immigrating from the east, south-east and north-east and occupied the hills in the east and west of Tripura, they were the first group of people to settle and establish themselves there in the State (Tripura).²

The dominant tribes of North-East India such as those of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura have been identified with the Kiratas (mentioned in the early Sanskrit texts), or better known as the Mongoloid origin. On philological and ethnological considerations, it is believed that the original home of the Indo-Mongoloid tribes, was near the upper courses of the Yangtse-Kiang and the Hwangho rivers in western China. The fore-fathers of the present Indo-Mongoloid did not all move at a time. They moved in different waves and at different times. Each major successive wave of immigrants pushed its forerunner further, and thus, different groups got spread all over Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Arakan, Burma, Cachar, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Mymensingh, Nagaland, North-Bengal, Tripura and other

2. Chaudhuri, J. Gan, A Political History of Tripura, (Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1985), pp. 2-3.

adjoining areas.³ Linguistically they belong to the Sino-Tibetan group or family.

Name of Tripura

Among other Mongoloid groups of North East India, the Tripuri community, better known as Borok or Kokborok community, was one to emigrate from China. In their original homeland, they were neither majority nor dominant tribe and they lived a semi-nomadic life based on primitive productive system. Population pressure was not the primary factor for emigration in centuries back. The practice of head hunting and consequent feuds were a major aspect of life of many of the tribes of the ancient period. In fact, with several tribes of North-East India, head-hunting prevailed even upto the nineteenth century. Factors such as social, psychological, political, economic, religious, enmity, etc., prompted them to practice it and this subsequently led to anarchy and enmity resulting in a mass movement of population. Besides, search for productive and fertile land, resourceful forest, suitable climate were also the causes of migration of these people.

3. Ibid., p. 3.

It is believed that Tripuris or Kokborok speaking people, today better known as Boroks⁴ (also described as Tipperahs or Tipras), left China in 65 AD, long before the Sui dynasty (589-618 A.D). The Boroks were animists at the time of their immigration. The common reference to the Mongoloid peoples as Kiratas and Cinas in the early Sanskrit texts of India undoubtedly indicates their arrival to the Assam hills and other North East India in the dawn of the Christian era.⁵

According to one source available, the Tipperah, or Tipras or Tripuris did not constitute an important political force neither in China nor in Assam, but a political force was established only when they moved further down the course of the Brahmaputra and reached in the Nagaon region of Assam. Thereafter as they could not move northward beyond Nagaon due to the opposition of Varman dynasty (310-650 A.D), they moved westward, crossed the North Cachar hills and the plain lands of Cachar. The administrative nucleus which had germinated in Nagaon of Assam, sprouted in Cachar as well as in the fertile valley of the Barak river. So long as the Boroks or Tripuris were in

4. The term Tripuri is the distorted and modern version of Tipras or Tipperahs by which the indigenous people of Tripura were known. But for the proper identity, the term 'Tripuri', according to the recent or new school of thought of the indigenous people, is not correct and acceptable. In their language or mother tongue, Kokborok, they always refer themselves as Borok which was never recorded in written form. Today therefore, while searching for real identity, they are better known and described as 'Boroks'.

5. Choudhuri, n. 2, p. 12.

Cachar, they had to acknowledge the overlordship of the Varman dynasty (310-660 A.D). There, their fractricidal feud of succession compelled them to migrate further south-west in the tract which subsequently came to be known as Tripura. Thus, the Tipras, who entered Tripura through its North-Eastern corner, settled there and slowly and gradually extended their settlement and suzerainty over the whole of Tripura.⁶

However, there is another mythology as regard the origin of Tripura, which of course, the Tripuris today believe and accept it as fact. According to this mythology, the Boroks (Tripuris) came from China through Burma and reached Tripura. Initially they reached the hills of Tripura and started living besides the stream or water areas-which they call Twisa/Twi (water). Subsequently as they begin to group together as village, they came to call the area or region as Twipra in Kokborok language which represent Twi-water and Para-near or village and the Twipra has subsequently corrupted as Tipra. Gradually by modification and changes, the modern version of Tripura came from the word Twipra and the people who lived there came to be known as the Tipperahs-Tipras-Tripuris. In brief, the name 'Tripura' is derived from the indigenous people's language-Kokborok whose original form was Twipra meaning thereby a land adjoining to water areas. Thus, it indicates that the Kokborok speaking people are the first settlers and indigenous people of the State. In this manner, the

6. Ibid., p. 13.

Tripuris or Boroks were the first tribe to occupy the present land of Tripura, where they gradually consolidated the Twipra or Tipperah kingdom over the centuries.⁷ In fact, from the name "Twipra", it was known as "Hill Tipperah" State by the British India and the designation or name of "Hill Tipperah" State was changed to that of the present "Tripura" State on October 9, 1920. Thus, the name of the "Tripura" State was formally accepted by the Government of British India since 1920 and thereafter the State has been known as Tripura.⁸

Tribes of Tripura

The Kokborok speaking community or the indigenous people of Tripura, often described as Tripuri or Borok, today comprises of various clans namely the Debbarma or Tripuri (earlier known as Tipra or Tipperah), Reang, Jamatia, Koloi, Noatia, Rupini, Uchoi, Kaipeng, Tripura, Halam, Molsom, Hrankhawl, Ranglong, Morasing, Bongcher, Chorai, and the like. The Debbarma (Tripuris) were known as the ruling class while the Reangs and the Jamatias were productive class and army group respectively. Although there are similarities of these groups and yet the different titles were said to have been given according to their occupations of life as

7. Based on the interview with a cross section of Borok elders and educated groups in Tripura. Also Menon, K.D., Tripura District Gazetteers, (N.K. Gossain and Co., Calcutta, 1975), p. 1 and pp. 144-45.

8. For details see, Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, Tripura Administration the Era of Modernisation, (Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1986), p. 150.

well as for the smooth running or functioning of administration during the princely rule.

However, according to a myth, in the olden days the Reangs were said to have lived in the Maiyanithlang area of Lushai Hills and migrated to the Karnaphuli Valley of Chittagong Hill Tracts during the reign of Ratna Manikya in the fourteenth century where they set up small settlements. Later, when the Kukis too followed them there and sought to reassert their authority over them, they fled to Hill Tipperah (now Tripura) and gradually spread to the whole North District of the State. As the Reangs settlements spread over Tripura, there followed years of constant intercourse with the Tipras (Tripuris) or Boroks as a result of which their dialect got synthesised with the Tibeto-Burmese or Sino-Tibetan language which the latter spoke. Their culture and customs also got intermixed with that of the Tripuris. Their first known contact with the Tripura ruling class was when they worked for them as palanquin bearers. In other words, the Reangs were (brought in Tripura as) the palanquin bearers of the State.⁹ Gradually, over the years, they got absorbed in the armed and productive forces.¹⁰ However, they were latter included in the Borok or Tripuri community.

9. Allen, B.C., Imperial Gazetteer of India - 1909, pp. 605-12.

10. For details see, Saigal, Omesh, Tripura, Its History and Culture, (Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, 1978), pp. 94-102.

Jamatias

The former rulers of Tripura used to recruit his army from more interior areas, who were not only warriors but also had proved their loyalty to him. A fair proportion of his armed forces were drawn from amongst the Jamatias who formed a group in his army, and it was from this fact that they derived the name of their clan. They were given a special position in the army and were exempted from paying family tax and also given settlements in the Udaipur sub-division areas. As a result of this, the Jamatias, though belonged to the Tripuri tribe, managed to evolve a political system of their own.¹¹

The present trend in the State is that with the growth of population and political consciousness, there is a psychological inferiority complex not only among the Jamatias but more so among the Reangs. Psychologically, in the fear of being dominated by the Tipperahs, they want to form a separate identity group. This phenomenon is spreading fast among the Reangs who said to have claimed as different from Tripuri or Borok. This psychological fear in fact has been generated in them by some external political forces who want to divide the old ridden tradition of tribal unity among the Tripuris. Therefore, this type of divisive forces must be carefully analysed and find out if it would certainly jeopardise the cultural religious, traditional and political affinity and unity of the Tripuris or Boroks.

11. Ibid.

Besides, as mentioned, there are also other smaller clans among the Tripuris (Boroks) and they are known as the Koloï, Noatia, Rupini, Uchoi, Tripura, Morasing, Halam, Molsom, Hrangkhawl, Ranglong, Kaipeng, Bongcher, Chorai, etc. The Tripuri dialect is known as the Kokborok which is spoken by all the clans of the Borok or Tripuri. This dialect belongs to the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Burmese group.

Other Tribes

Besides, the Borok or Tripuri community there are also other smaller tribes who appeared in the State much later. They are the Kukies, Lushai or Mizos, Darlong, Mogs, Garos, and Chakmas. It was in the mid nineteenth century and at the time of partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 that some Chakmas of Chittagong Hill Tracts have migrated and settled in Tripura. It is said that Rani Kalindi (1855) the last of the independent Chakma rulers sought the help of the Kukies and Lushais mainly to suppress the revolt by Nilachandra Dewan (Chakma rebel) against her. Dewan consequently retaliated by inviting British intervention. This led to the British expedition and influence in the Chakma inhabited areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is thus believed that as a consequence of this conflict the Chakmas in great numbers started emigrating to Tripura.¹² The Chakmas today speak the dialect which is an admixture of Sanskrit, Bengali and Pali.¹³

12. Varman, S.B.K. Dev, The Tribes of Tripura, (Jantra Leekha, A Tripura Government Publication, Agartala, No Year), pp. 11-12.

13. Saigal, Omesh, n. 9, p. 112.

The Mogs

The term Mog is commonly used by the plains people for robbers and pirates in east Bengal and this may be one of the reasons why many of them now prefer to call themselves Marma, which in Arakanese tongue means Burmans. According to Maharajung, a Burmese book, Sakya Singh was one of the rulers of the Mog clan, and he was succeeded by one Adhiraj during whose reign there was an internecine warfare as a result of which he was forced to transfer his capital to Tagaon on the banks of the Irawati. When he died his two sons, Kanrajagi and Kanranji, fought over the throne. However, when the younger son was elevated to the throne, the elder brother left the State and established his empire in lower parts of Arakans. The Mogs claim to be the followers of this king.¹⁴ It is said that the Mog tribe appears to have migrated from the Arakan Hills, to Tripura as both Burmese and English accounts of the eighteenth century made frequent references to the Marma refugees who were driven out of Arakan by the Burmese invaders in 1783-84.¹⁵ Today they follow the Hindu religion.

Kukies and Lushais

The Kukies are said to have migrated to Tripura from Lungleh in the eighteenth century.¹⁶ Some Kuki villages are found now in the West District of Tripura, called Hawaibari near the foothills

14. For details see Saigal, Omesh, n. 10, pp. 112-14.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

of Baromura mountain. Today they practice the Christian religion. The Kukies like other tribes are also known as warrior clans.

The Lushais are believed to have come to Tripura in 1912 after the terrible Mizo district famine in 1911, and set up their first village at Phuldungsei on the Jampui Range under the leadership of Hrunghbunga Sailo who was conferred with the title of Raja by the then king of Tripura. They, then slowly spread over to the Tripura-Mizoram border areas of Jampui hills and towards Sakan range as well. The Lushais in Tripura are concentrated mainly in more than 10 villages in the Jampui hill and more than three villages in the Sakan hill ¹⁷

The Lushais who were once head-hunters and animists, today, practice the Christian religion. They live a simple life and practice jhumming which is similar to other tribes of Tripura. One of the main sources of income of the Lushais of Jampui hills is the plantation of orange.

Besides, the Darlongs, a smaller tribe are quite similar to the Kuki-Lushai group and they are known as the Darlong community. Their way of life, culture, tradition and customs, religion and even dialect are similar to that of Kuki-Lushai groups. They are confined in some parts of the North District of Tripura.

17. Based on the Survey of the hills areas and interviews with the inhabitants during May-June, 1988.

The Garos

The date of Garos emigrating to Tripura, who originally belong to the Garo Hills, can not be exactly traced back. But they seem to have been living in Tripura since a long period of time.

From the above accounts, it is thus clear that the Tripuris or Boroks were the first to settle and became the sole owners of the land in Tripura. The State prior to its merger with India (October 15, 1949) was ruled by as many as 184 kings of Tripuri tribe. During the periods of king's rule, more than 95 per cent of the population of Tripura were indigenous people, but of course they remained totally illiterate.¹⁸

But today, the entire political, economic, socio-religious, cultural and traditional scenario of Tripura is not the same as in the past. The rich princely State of Tripura has undergone a tremendous change mainly due to the continuous and perennial influx of the non-tribal-Bengalis mostly from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh and other parts of the country as well, since the mid-twentieth century. As a result of this influx of the non-tribal people the tribal peoples of Tripura have not only been influenced, but also, they have become a minority in their

18. Deb, Dasarath, "Evolution and Activities of the Gana Mukti Parishad", in Saha, Sudhanshu Bikash (ed.), Tribes of Tripura - A Historical Survey, (Janashiksha Co-operative Printing Works Ltd., Agaratala, 1986), pp. 19-24.

own homeland. So much so that the political and economic powers of the State are in the hands of the recent immigrants who determine the fate of the indigenious people and of the State. This is indeed a tragedy in the human history which should not only be overlooked but carefully and analytically studied.

Social Custom of Boroks or Tripuris

The Tripuris are scattered in all the three districts namely, the West, the South and the North Districts of Tripura. The West District is divided into Sadar, Khowai and Meleghar Sub-divisions; the South District into Udaipur, Subroom and Amarpur; and the North District into Dharmanagar, Kailashahar and Kamalpur Sub-divisions. The former Gandhachera Sub-Division had become a new District called the Dhalai District. Among the Borok or Tripuri community and other tribal people, the Tipras or Tipperahs (or presently known by the title Debbarma) are the largest followed by Reangs, Jamatias and other smaller tribes in the State of Tripura. Today, the Tipperahs, although scattered in many places of the State, are mostly concentrated in the West District, whereas the Reangs and Jamatias are mostly concentrated in the North and the South Districts of Tripura respectively. However, the Tipperas are found in all the Sub-divisions of the State.

Naturally as the different clans of the Boroks (Tripuris) have occupied and settled, and concentrated in different Districts over the years, each had developed some different social custom and traditional way of life. Nevertheless, there

are some common features which may be highlighted bringing out some differences which are completely distinctive.

The Boroks generally live on the slope of hills or hillocks in a group of fifteen to even more than one hundred families. Their houses are built of bamboos and raised five to six feet high above the ground, mainly to avoid the dangers of wild animals. Houses are not much large but enough for the family members to dwell in. Of course there are some big and large houses which one used for community gathering purposes as well. The married couple of the family is usually given a separate house. Nowadays even for the young members of the family, a separate house, as preferred by youth, are built. The kitchen and dining house is either separated from the living house or attached to it. Traditionally as they are semi-nomadic, they are fond of even changing the site of villages in new places. But nowadays, the scarcity of land along with the rapid growth of population have made them to settle in one place occupying their own land to cultivate as well.

Like other tribal women of the North-East India, the Borok or Tripuri women generally leave their head uncovered and wear a scarf which reaches down upto the knees. They weave in their loom a small piece of cloths which is called risa and rig-nai. The risa (ri-cloth, sa-something small) is used as their breast garment, and the rignai (ri-cloth, gnai-slightly bigger) is used as their dress for down portion of the body. As with all

the tribal people, the Borok women are fond of scented flowers and leaves, and the use of metal ornaments among them is quite common nowadays. The Boroks (Tripuris) are also fond of music and dance.

Livelihood

Their main occupation is of shifting cultivation or jhumming from where they derive their livelihood such as rice, different types of potatoes and other vegetables. But presently, with the scarcity of suitable jhumming site many are forced to start a settled cultivation and this aspect of life had led many Boroks or Tripuris poor or face starvation and poverty. Because, unlike the plain people, the Tripuris are not expert and capable of living in a settled system of cultivation. They still continue to till lands, fetch fire wood from the deep forests, and collect wild vegetable from the jungles.

The Borok (Tripuri) women weave traditional cloth in their traditional loin-loom, both for men folks and themselves. At home they rear some domestic animals and also outside help-men at the time of jhumming in the field or hilly terrain. At present, of course many Borok youth are becoming educated, good technicians and mechanics and are being employed in various services of the Governmental departments and earn their livelihood. They also plant various vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, chilly, bananas, brinjal, yam, onion, ginger, garlic, gourds,

beans, etc. These days, those who can afford, are found of having fishery ponds of their own.

The Borok men are expert in hunting the wild animals like deer, wild pig. and other animals found in the jungle. Usually, the owner of the gun and the one who kills the animal, gets the major portion of the hunted meat and the rest being equally distributed among the rest of members of the hunting group. In the olden days, the village headman also gets the major portion of one back thigh but these days as the village headman administration system is disappearing in many villages, this practice is also disappearing.

Both men and women during summer used to go to the jungles in a group, to collect various wild vegetables like bamboo shoots, wild potatoes, yam, roots, eatables leaves, etc. Besides, in winter they go to the forest to collect fire woods for the year. Nowadays the poor masses go as day labourer to the nearby places and they live almost a life of hand to mouth. Besides, there are also very minor and negligible section of society who spend their time in making traditional wine or rice beer and sell it for their livelihood but this aspect is not much important as the entire livelihood does not depend on it. Moreover, the selling is not regular like in the shop but found in their respective houses or huts, and this practice has been found to produce very low profit compared to the cost of commodities or ingredients, flour, etc. Therefore, slowly this practice of

making wine is disappearing from Borok or Tripuri society with the spread of education, excepting few who make it for their own use and for certain occasions. Thus, the livelihood or the way of life of the Borok is very simple and still quite traditional in many respects.

The customary laws of the Boroks or Tripuris, over the decades and centuries, have undergone certain changes, and now are not as rigid as in the past. Each Borok village has its own headman which is known as hodakra and the Reang calls him as Rai (headman), who acts as the judge to settle all cases to bring about justice in the society. However, with the modernization of administration and spread of democratic principles, the system of the village headman is fast losing its character.

Any dispute between the groups or family members is directed to settle among themselves before it is being brought to the notice of the headman. But if they fail to settle, then it is decided by the headman in a meeting which comprises of himself, some elders and the parties involved in the dispute. The decision of the village headman is considered as final and in case any party fails to comply with the decision, then the punishment is meted out against the violator. The punishment may be in the form of fine involving certain amount, in cooperation by the rest of the villagers in times of needs or in some serious matters, or the culprit is being asked with his family to leave the village and never allow to come back in the future.

Nowadays, the criminal case is reported to the nearby police station. The land dispute which seldom occurs among the Tripuris, is generally mutually settled with the help of the village headman and elders. The headman and the elders are highly respected and obeyed by the younger people. In certain cases, the headman and elders are consulted in terms of making some family decisions. In this manner, the headman as well as the elders occupy important key-positions in their particular village and society. Disputes between the villages, parties or groups involving more than one or two villages are settled by the headmen and elders of those involved villages in a joint meeting.

Anyone being found stealing anything from other family, is brought before the headman and asked to repay whatever has been stolen and the thief is given a severe warning. And if he repeats the act, he is meted out with punishment which may involve imposition of extra fine, physical punishment by the villagers. However, in all these the victim's family is always consulted and sometimes if the victim family wishes, then the culprit may be set free without any punishment with the spirit of understanding, good will and apology received from the culprit. In minor cases, no action may follow with the idea that it may create a personal and family enmity.

Traditionally, exchange of labour is rendered by the villagers in groups specially among the women while doing jhumming or cultivating the land. In this, they go to the family in need of help, and in return they are also being repayed in the same manner in times of their needs. For instance, if a particular woman has rendered help for a week or so to as many as seven to eight families, the same amount of help given, will be received in times of her needs. While thus working in the jhum field in such a manner and in group, they enjoy in sharing some old stories, myths, belief, incident of the past, some tragedy and comedy, singing songs (expressing certain meanings), preparing food and eating in the spot. While doing so, they come to know not only each other's problem but also become more intimate to each other and help each other in times of needs in kind or cash. In this way, the Borok women enjoy working together in the field. At the end of each family's jhumming and harvesting or reaping, a feast is arranged by each family to mark the happiness and gratitude among the helpers or workers and relatives. In such a feast, traditional and local made drink is provided, and after a bit of intoxication, the old men and women start singing the traditional songs of love, mystery, and tragic events. This type of Borok or Tripuri song is known as Jaduni which is a question and answer type, if a party questions in the form of songs, the other party will reply in the same manner. In this manner when they are heated up both by drinks and songs, they even start competing in dance. Sometimes, it lasts more than a day and night

or so. Besides, drinking, singing and dancing during the feast, they eat a lot of rice, meat, either pork or chicken. Their stable food is rice and meat.

Marriage

Child marriage is unknown and not practised among the Boroks (Tripuris) but marriage takes place only after the attainment of a certain age. Although, boys and girls reached their maturity at the age of about 20 and 16 respectively, yet marriage usually takes place after crossing this maturity age. Nowadays girls and boys, prefer to marry at the age of about 20 and 25 respectively. Traditionally, the Borok/Tripuri girl does not cover the breast before she is considered as teenage or matured or marriageable. When a girl reaches her teenage, a function is usually arranged where the elders of the village both men and women, would gather and she is brought before this gathering, and an eldest woman would cover her breast in front of all with a small piece of their own weaved cloth called risa. Henceforth, she would use the risa to cover her breast and be considered and known as the marriageable. But this practice is losing its sight today in the Borok society with the spread of modernization.

Like most of the tribes of North East India, the Borok society is based on patrilineal system, where girls go to the husband's house after marriage. A man staying with his wife in his father-in-law's place is hardly found unless in certain exceptional cases. This system of man staying in his father-in-

law's place is known as chamri kao. It happens only in very exceptional cases specially when the man is very poor, has no parent, no house or plot of land of his own, and the girl is the only child or daughter in the family. This however, depends on the marriage agreement. On the whole, the Boroks practice the patrilineal system of society. It is the general practice that even when the circumstances demand, no man would like to stay in his father-in-law's house, because he feels it will be losing his prestige in doing so. Also if he feels looked down by the society, and not able to provide livelihood to his wife and family he would strive hard not to face such a situation. However, in general both man and wife of the family work hard to maintain their own livelihood.

Traditionally speaking, parents and relatives play a vital role in arranging the marriage, although it is done with the consent of the boy and the girl. In other words, the marriage is conducted with the consent and willingness of both the parents and the son or daughter to be married. However, all along love marriage has always been in practice and prevalent in Borok (Tripuri) society and in fact, presently this aspect is becoming the practice and order of the day. parents usually give their consent when a boy and girl are deeply in love with each other. Parents saying no to this aspect is very exceptional as the case may lead to elopement. The marriage ceremony usually takes place in a bride's place. On the day fixed for the marriage, the groom

with the party go to the bride's place riding on the elephant, as the places being mostly hilly terrain. The ceremony is conducted by either exorcist or elders of the society which is followed by a big feast. Usually, immediately after the ceremony and the feast, the bridegroom along with the parties return to the groom's place, riding on an elephant, and the parties follow them on foot which may sometimes take the whole night, if the place is far off. On their arrival, another feast is arranged in groom's place and thereafter both the newly married couple live together and start a new family life. All along the ceremony, beating the traditional drum and some music are also practised. Like in any other ceremony, lot of drinks are also offered to the elders specially those who are habituated to drinking. It is a general practice that most people take, if not much, at least a little wine on such occasion.

However, today, with the spread of Christianity among the Kokborok speaking people, most marriage ceremony takes place only in the church, conducted by the Reverend and Pastor in which drinking is completely prohibited.

Any girl, illegally becoming pregnant and any illegitimate child being born is not at all common to the Borok society. People are aware and afraid of the fact of disgrace and shame that it brings not only to the family but also to the society and they are also afraid of subsequent severe punishment which follows in case any one found indulging in such act. However, in

some very rare cases, when the girl becomes illegally pregnant, the man with whom she had conceived the child, has to marry her and thereafter live together.

Although in olden days, the groom has to pay a certain amount of bride's price to the family which is known as pom, nowadays, this practice has been completely eliminated from the society. The dowry system is unknown to the Borok society. The newly married couple receive gifts and presents from both the families, relatives, friends and so on. It is the parent and relatives of bride's family who usually give the maximum gifts and presents of furnitures, clothes, ornaments, etc., as she leaves the family for the rest of her life to be with the husband. In certain cases, she is given even a plot of land.

Generally, the properties including land of the parents, are shared among the male folks of the family and the female child does not have any right to claim the landed property. Although, the landed property of the parents is equally shared among the male members of the family, the youngest male member of the family, is always given the maximum of not only the land but also other items or properties. This is mainly practised as the youngest male member of the family is supposed to look after the parents in their old age.

Intermarriage is not much in prevalence in the olden days even among the different clans of the Kokborok speaking people,

the reason being different clans lived in far off places. But now-a-days, intermarriage among the different clans or tribes is prevalent, and there is no restriction either from the parents or society so long their children like each other. Although, there are very rare cases, specially among the city dwellers, the indigenous people do not marry the non-tribal persons (immigrants Bengalis) in general, as there are strict basic differences in culture and tradition, social customs, beliefs, religious faith, etc., which made them difficult to get adjusted. It is a fact that this feeling of differences in the minds of both the communities is becoming stronger with the passage of times, and even mere association is becoming less and less, sharply after 1980. In short, although there is no bar for intermarriage among the different tribes, most people marry within their own tribes and clans.

Widow re-marriage is allowed and found in practice in Borok society. Although there may be very exceptional cases, divorce is not a common practice among the Boroks. After marriage both husband and wife live happily being committed and faithful to each other.

In certain circumstances, though husband and wife lived separately, they have a re-union even after a gap of many years. The Tripuris are an emotional, sincere, honest, kind and open hearted people and they flare up as quickly as they cool down. This is perhaps the case with most of the tribal people who,

being intrinsically honest and open-hearted, are led by impulse than cool calculation, when something happens contrary to their accepted code of conduct.¹⁹

Religion

In the present context, it is difficult to say with authority to which religion the Boroks or Tripuris belong to. There is no doubt that they were once pure animistic believers. In other words, their religious belief was based on animism which worships nature. However, with the acceptance of Hinduism by the Tripura King at one point of time, the same was imposed upon the subjects, though they did not like it. Moreover, with greater number of Hindu immigrants to the State (Tripura), a large section of Borok society was influenced by Hinduism. Combined with these two factors, the Boroks and the other tribal people of Tripura were influenced by Hinduism to a certain extent, which perhaps prompted many to form the idea that the Boroks and other tribal people of Tripura practise Hinduism. But this idea is contrary to the true picture of Borok or Tripuri society.

Although, there has been an influence of Hinduism, in practical and real life, the Boroks still practice animism. For instance, they still believe in some super natural power. They believe that any kind of sickness or calamity occurs due to the displeasure of this super-natural power. Accordingly, when anyone

19. For details see, Menon, K.D., Tripura District Gazetteers, n. 7, pp. 129-58.

falls sick, it is a common practice, that some animal, birds, or cocks are offered for sacrifice to that power of god in the jungle to please the same, so that their sickness gets cured. They believe in various gods and worship sun and moon. These rituals are performed by their own exorcists. Some of the names of gods which they believe are :

1. Mwtai Kotor - principal god/Supreme God.
2. Twima - god of river and water.
3. Mailima - god of wealth.
4. Lampra-bothop - god of path.
5. Burasa - goddess of witchcraft.
6. Haichukma - god who hides people.
7. Goria - powerful god - which is worshipped mostly by the Jamatia clan.

They believe Mwtai kotor as Supreme and Almighty God. When everything else is tried; they finally turn to this Supreme God in prayer to bless them for any particular thing. Thus, on the basis of their religious belief and practices, it will be more appropriate to call animism as the religion of the Boroks or Kokborok speaking people.

But what is more important in the religion of the Boroks today is the spread of Christianity in their society over the decades so much so that many of the Boroks are Christians and have completely given up the old nature of religious practices.

Churches are growing in all the villages of Tripura, particularly among the Boroks. This trend is fast moving among the Tipra or Debbarma and Jamatia clans as compared to the Reangs who still continue to live with their traditional life. Here a mention may be made that since August 5, 1987 there has been a revival movement among the Borok or Tripuri Churches. However, the Christian churches are yet to be well-established. With the present trend, it is believed and expected that the whole Kokborok speaking people will turn to Christianity one day. This is the picture of religious practices among the Boroks at present.

Hence, it is quite clear that there has been some dilution of Borok or Tripuri culture and society with greater number of Bengali immigrants in Tripura. At the same time there is no doubt that the Boroks (Tripuris) have a distinct culture, religion, social customs, livelihood and way of life.

CHAPTER III

MIGRATION THROUGH THE AGES

CHAPTER - III

MIGRATION THROUGH THE AGES

The problem of immigration is one of the peculiar features of Tripura which started since the princely State period and exists till date. The inflow of immigration people in Tripura has been a perennial phenomenon. Considering the trend of migration in the past and present, if no concrete and preventive measures is undertaken and implemented, the problem of immigration will still continue even in future in greater degree. In fact, the present socio-economic and political problems in the State are generated from this aspect. Tripura, which was once inhabited completely by the indigenous tribal people of Mongolian origin, is presently over populated by the immigrant non-tribal Bengali speaking group and today, the indigenous tribal people have been reduced to a minority in their own home land. Actually the hills, forest and swamps, which mainly comprise the geographical area of the State, may not appear very attractive for the immigrants to come from outside. But paradoxically, among all the hilly States of North-East India, Tripura has the highest density of population today due to the steady and continuous inflow of immigrants into the State over the years.¹ According to 1981 Census of India, the density of population per square kilometre in the North-Eastern States is as follows. Tripura 196, Manipur 64, Meghalaya 59, Nagaland 47, Mizoram 23 and Arunachal Pradesh 7 and

1. Ganguli, J. B., The Benign Hill : A Study in Tripura's Population Growth and Problem, (Tripura Darpan Prakashan, Agartala, 1983), pp. 1-5.

this depicts the clear picture of the population problem of Tripura. According to 1991 Census, the density of population of Tripura is 262 per square kilometre. For a better understanding of the nature and problem of immigration into Tripura, it would be proper to analyze it into three phases, namely,

- (i) Princely State and After.
- (ii) Union Territory and After; and
- (iii) Statehood and After.

(i) Princely State and After

Although no definite date as regards the establishment of Tripura Kingdom under the effective political control of a monarch can be authentic, it is believed that Chengthung Fa was probably the first Tripura Chief to claim as King over the entire territory during 1431-1462 AD (847-872 Tripura Era.). Even before that there were more than 100 kings who ruled the kingdom but not much records about dates were maintained to trace the suzerainty of this reign. After him Achang, Kichang and Dangai Fa became the kings respectively.²

It is believed that Dangai Fa had as many as seventeen sons among whom Ratna Fa was the youngest and ascended the throne in 1467 A.D. Upon testing, Ratna Fa was found to be the most intelligent and was said to have been sent to the Council of Nawab of Gour and Bengal to learn about the art of administration

2. Sen, K. P., Sri Rajmala, (A Tripura King's Publication, IInd Lahar or Vol. 2, 1927/1337 T.E., Agartala), p. 196.

where he received the title of Manikya. Since then all the latter kings had the title of Manikya, but before that all the kings had the title of Fa which resembled with the Thai-Shan dynasty, that is Fa (king). Ratna Manikya on his return brought along three Bengalis belonging to Brahmins, Vaidyas and Kayasthas from Bengal into Tripura. This was the first case of immigration of non-tribal people into the State.³ Subsequently, the latter kings also brought some high caste Bengalis to record the King's reign, but they were very few.

Tripura had a feudal antiquity of long years. Rajmala described that about one hundred eighty four tribal kings had ruled Tripura for an uninterrupted period of thirteen hundred years since the legendary period. The princely Tripura kingdom entered into a new era in 1765 when the king of Tripura tendered his allegiance to the British East India Company. The kings of Tripura claimed that they were independent. To all intents and purposes, the princely Tripura until its merger with the Union of India on October 15, 1949, was referred to as "Independent" territory and "Hill Tipperah" by the British and the emblematic seal of "Independent Tripura" was used on the official papers and correspondences.⁴

3. Based on Interview with B.C. Debbarma, Retired Advocate, on January 17, 1992 at Agartala.

4. Mohanta, Bijan, "The Status of Princely Tripura During British Rule in India" in Bhattacharjee, J. B. (ed.), Proceedings of North East India History Association, Sixth Session, Agartala, 1985, (Singhania Printing Press, Shillong, 1986), p. 285.

The later Manikya or the modern period in the history of Tripura may be said to have begun from the time of Birchandra Manikya (1862-96). The period indicates the transition from the primitive form of administration to the modern one. Imbued by the spirit of renaissance in Bengal, and effects of British administration, Birchandra Manikya planned to reshape the administration of the State on the British model, which was of course not an easy task. He introduced an advanced form of reform in the executive and judicial administration of the State. The tempo of administrative reforms which started during Birchandra's time, was further carried out in the reign of his illustrious son Radhakishore Manikya (1896-1909). Although, the basic structures remained the same, the contents, methods and jurisdiction of administration got comparatively enlarged, diversified and systematized. Radhakishore Manikya was succeeded by his son Birendra Kishore Manikya (1909-23) who followed the footsteps of his predecessors in administration.⁵

Birbikram kishore Manikya succeeded his father Birendra Kishore Manikya on August 14, 1923 at the age of 16 only,⁶ and remained on the throne till 1947. During his reign he maintained good relations with the British. When the British Government joined the World War II in September 1939, the king placed his personal services and the entire resources of the State at its

5. Dutta, Jyotish Chandra, An Introduction to the History of Tripura, From Monarchy to Democracy, (Book Home, Calcutta, 1984), pp. 28-42.

6. Ibid., p. 33.

disposal. With spectacular victories of Japan in the Far-East theatre in 1941-42 and the Japanese menace on the Indian frontier of Assam and Manipur, the princely State of Tripura attained a height of importance in the Anglo-Tripura relations.⁷ On the question of influx from outside, it is said that king Birbikram Kishore Manikya was quite aware of the danger of continuous immigration of Bangalis for the existence of indigenous tribal people but with his premature death the plight of the future of Boroks or Tripuris was worsened.

During the princely State era, with the royal patronage, the Bengali Hindu settlers could easily propagate their religious, linguistic and socio-cultural ideas among the indigenous people which encouraged further inflow of immigrants from Bengal. In the initial stage, it was royal patronage, and to some extent, religious zeal that inspired the Bengalis to come to settle in Tripura. But later on, economic compulsions brought a growing number of Bengalis into this kingdom. As kings wanted to raise their own economic, social and political status to modernize their kingdom by expanding educational, medical and other public services, they (kings) offered various incentives for settlements of Bengalis into Tripura and this facilitated the influx. Since at that stage of development, land revenue and taxes on agriculture duties on imports and exports were the main sources

7. Ibid., p. 35. Also based on Interview with B.C. Debarma, n. 3; and Aghore Debarma, a Veteran Political Leader, on July 10, 1995, Agartala.

of revenue, the rulers thus encouraged land settlement and expansion of agriculture activities in the State. Mention may be made that as the tribal people generally practised only jhumming in the hills and as such were not familiar with the mode of settled cultivation of plains land, the extension of agriculture through reclamation of valley lands was possible only by the ploughmen coming from Bengal. Despite all encouragements and incentives, immigration on a large-scale was forced by economic and other compulsions for the immigrants to leave their ancestral homes. Thus, the history of immigration of population into Tripura requires to be understood in terms of the intolerable economic hardships that drove thousands of Bengali families to move from their homeland to Tripura. Further, an ample opportunities for employment as officers, engineers, teachers, daily wage labourers, etc., have also encouraged the immigration process in the State.⁸

As has already been pointed out, the modernization process of the administration in Tripura was said to have been initiated by Birchandra Manikya, who ascended the throne in 1862. This process of modernization was the initial stage of immigration in Tripura. Although no cultural and linguistic affinity with the Bengalis was recorded, the kings of Tripura had to admit Bengalis into their kingdom to mainly run the administration and other offices. It was this process which made Birchandra Manikya to

8. Ganguli, J. B., n. 1, pp. 3-5.

appoint Rai Umakanta Das Bahadur as his Minister from 1890-92 and Babu Nilmani Das as the Dewan who was given authority in the spheres of revenue and judicial administration. This process necessitated the appointment of a number of administrative, judicial, police officials in various fields, etc. As the educated persons among the tribal people were very few, most of the officials, teachers, doctors, engineers, etc. were Bengalis. Businessmen and traders, professionals like the barbers, washermen, artisan, etc. also followed the process of migrating into the State during the 1930s.⁹

During this period there was no established census in the State. Although, some Census works were said to have been taken in the later part of the nineteenth century (1880s), those were not authentic. According to Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XIII, 1908, in 1901, there was only one town, namely, Agartala and 1,463 villages.¹⁰ As such there was no proper and authentic census. Indeed till the 1950s no serious Census on population in the State was undertaken. Although there are some records on population structure right from 1911, these are said to be misleading because they could not give a correct picture of population strength from the tribal belts.

9. Ibid., p. 7; Also see, Bhattacharjee, Pravas Ranjan, Economic Transition in Tripura, (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1993), pp. 14-33.

10. Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part I(C), 1967, p. 506.

It may be understood that when the modernization process was taking place in the State, the indigenous people were not encouraged for education. As a result, the educated immigrants from Bengal came to occupy the place in Governmental departments.¹¹ The introduction of new administrative system indicated the need felt by kings of the services of the educated persons from outside the State. As a consequent of this, many educated people from Bengal, particularly Calcutta University started migrating for better employment opportunities. It is said that since the early twentieth century, the problem of educated unemployment assumed serious proportion in Bengal which further accelerated the immigration of Bengalis into the State. Thus, it can be said that the 'push' and 'pull' factors were initially responsible for immigration problem in Tripura. As regards the middle class Bengalis, also, both the 'pull' factor of Tripura State attractive terms for settlement on the one hand, and the 'push' factor of economic hardship in Bengal's countryside on the other, accounted for the growing tempo of immigration of the tillers of the soil into the State.

As per the report of the political Agent posted at Agartala by the British Government, the immigration of needy cultivating families from the adjoining districts of Bengal did not assume any significant proportion until the twentieth century. This may be better understood by the following table :

11. Based on Interview with a cross section of old educated people of Tripura on February 12,13,19 and 20, 1993.

Table 3.1 : Immigrants from Different Provinces and States.

Province or State	1911	1921	1931
Bengal	48,042	46,061	67,946
Assam	27,506	36,978	33,262
Bihar-Orissa	2,002	5,077	4,153
Madras	1,066	2,675	2,166
Central Province	1,341	2,227	1,432
United Province	1,282	1,685	2,116
Ajmer-Marwar	1	70	9
Punjab	50	44	80
Bombay Province	1	77	82
Indian Native States	244	1,244	2,591
Burma	4	8	12
Nepal	94	218	523
Other Countries other than India	34	9	11

Source : Debbarma, Somendra chandra, Census Report, 1340 TE (1931 A.D.) Agartala, Published by Tripura Administration, 1933, p. 22.

The table 3.1 reveals that not only the Bengalis but people from other provinces of India also came to Tripura, all of whom of course did not settle in Tripura. However, there is no denying the fact that the Bengalis from the adjoining districts of Tipperah, Sylhet, (in Assam Province), Noakhali, Chittagong and Dacca constituted the bulks of the immigrants. During those periods the migration was however, internal and there was no case of transborder migration in Tripura.

The table 3.2 shows that during 1901 to 1921, the rural population has been swelled by 1,59,252 persons or by 115 per cent and this substantial increase is due to immigration, and not by natural increase.¹² With the objective of raising the revenue and bringing about all-round development of the State, the rulers

12. Ganguli, n. 1, pp. 14-17.

did not strictly prohibit the immigration of land-holders and rayots (who actually tilled the soil). The ruler's idea of development was connected in the increase in number of rich and cultured persons and also of ordinary tenants besides an increase in revenue yields and agriculturists migrating to Tripura hailed mainly from the adjoining areas of Tripura namely Noakhali, Sylhet and Chittagong.

**Table 3.2 : Changes in Rural (R) and Urban (U) Population
1901-1921.**

	1921		1911		1901	
	R	U	R	U	R	U
Tripura State	2,96,694	7,743	2,22,782	6,831	1,63,812	9,513

Source : 1931 Census Report of Bengal and Sikkim, part I-Vol. V by Porter, A. E. and published as Appendix IV to Census of India, 1961, Vol.XXVI Tripura,Part 1 (C) 1967,p.522.

Tribal and Manipuri Immigrants

It is said that until the beginning of the fifteenth century, Tripura did not emerge as some form of a State within an effective central authority exercising political control over the people living in the area known as Tripura State. At that time the inhabitants of the State were mainly the Kokborok speaking people - Tipperahs (called Debbarmas latter), Reangs, Jamatias, Noatias, Kolois and other clans speaking the same Kokborok language, and they are the indigenous people of the State.

The Kukis who were divided into two groups namely, Darlong and Lushai lived in the Jampui Hills in the North District of the State. The Kukis also inhabited the Lushai Hills (presently known as Mizoram) and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. It is said that the immigrants of these people into Tripura took place long back and there had been a constant movement of these people within this area in course of their economic pursuits, that is practising of jhumming. In 1911 and 1921 there was 760 and 1,434 immigrants respectively from Lushai District of Assam. In 1931 their total population was 3,654 consisting of 2,175 Lushais and 1,479 Darlongs.¹³

The Chakmas and Mogs have also come to settle in Tripura from Chittagong Hill Tracts. As said, it is believed that in the early eighteenth century, under Queen Kalindi, the Chakmas settled over the area extending from Chittagong Hill Tracts from Arakan.¹⁴ But the Chakmas started coming to Tripura only since the early 1930s. During that period some Chakmas and Mogs, both belonging to Buddhist religion, were said to have migrated to Tripura in search of jhum lands. According to a survey report, "The village first came to be inhabited by four Chakma families headed by a Chakma leader, Dwarika Talukdar in 1927. They were followed by Mogs and Muslims in the following years, particularly

13. Ganguli, n. 1, pp. 14-17.

14. Chaudhuri, Dulal, Chakmader Adi Bashbhumi, The Original Home of the Chakmas, Published in 'Tripura Prasanga' (Tripura Affairs), Public Relations and Tourism Departments, Government of Tripura, (Agartala, 1975), p. 49.

in 1940, 1945 and 1951".¹⁵ According to 1931 Census it is learnt that in those years (1930s) the population of the Chakmas and Mogs in Tripura were 8,730 and 5,748 respectively. It is said that while jhum cultivation was the predominant form of economic activities among the Chakmas, a good number of Mogs took to plough cultivation as the main occupation retaining jhum cultivation as the subsidiary occupation.¹⁶

There had been also immigration of other tribal peoples from neighbouring State of Assam mainly the Garos, the Assamese, and the Khasis during the early decades of the twentieth century. By 1931 the population of the Garos rose to 2,143 while that of Khasis 23 only. Both these tribes came there for agricultural pursuits, namely, jhumming. As regards the Khasis immigration, it is said that towards the end of the third decade of the twentieth century, some Khasi families came to Dharmanagar sub-division for the purpose of growing betel leaves.

During the same period there were Manipuri immigrants from the State of Manipur via Cachar. It is said that in about 1741, Chandra Debi, daughter of the then Manipuri ruler of Cachar, Chourajit, was a very good dancer. She was married to the then king of Tripura and since then the relation between the courts of Tripura and Manipur became closer which had encouraged Manipuri

15. Quoted in Demographic and Socio-Economic Profiles of the Hill Areas of North-East India by Roy Burman, B. K., Census of India, 1961, New Delhi, 1970, p. 336.

16. Debbarma, Somendra Chandra, Census Bibaran, (Census Report), (Agartala, 1340 T.E. 1931, A.D.), pp. 90-93.

immigration into the State. In 1931 Manipuri population in Tripura was 19,210 whose main occupation was plough cultivation.¹⁷

There were also immigration of tea garden labour in Kailashahar sub-division of North Tripura which started in 1916. By 1931, the number of tea gardens increased to 50 in the State covering an area of 8,386 acres (3,394 hectares) and producing 12,49,374 pounds of tea. The total number of labourers employed in the tea gardens was 5,451 out of whom 2, 896 were men and 2,555 women. All of these labourers migrated from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Madras and Orissa. These immigrants gradually settled down in the State as permanent inhabitants either as tea garden labourers or as cultivators. These immigrants were said to be tribals from those areas.¹⁸

However, a review of tribal people immigration into the State has shown that while such immigration involved a variety of tribes coming from both East and the West, the total number of such settlers from outside was proportionately much less compared to the immigration of Bengali agriculturists from the neighbouring districts. It appears that the immigration from the East was indirectly and practically checked by the heavy immigration from the West. As Bengali settlers took up more and more

17. Datta, Brajendra Chandra, Thirty Years in Tripura, (in Bengali), Dharmanagar Divisions, (A Government of Tripura Publications, Agartala, 1972), p. 11.

18. Debbarma, Somendra Chandra, Census Bibaran, (Census Report), (Agartala, 1340 T.E. 1931, A.D.), p. 87 and pp. 89-90.

land in the plains for reclamation and cultivation, lands available for the tribal farmers to shift from place to place for jhumming progressively had shrunk. This had discouraged the prospective tribal immigrants from across the border who might have otherwise migrated to Tripura. Moreover, initially the tribal people tried to avoid living in close proximity to non-tribal settlements which is evident from the fact noted by Brajendra Chandra Datta in his account of Udaipur. He writes:¹⁹

The hill subjects prefer living in relatively isolated places inside the forests with the extension of plough cultivation and increase in the number of Bengali tenants, they (hill men) have been forced to quit the plains lands and return to the hills.

According to A.E. Porter, the increase of population in the State was actually due to immigration than to increase of the native born population.²⁰ With this trend of continuous immigration of non-tribal people from outside, the demographic set up of the indigenous people began to be affected.

There was a phenomenal growth rate of population during 1931 to 1941 which indicated a heavy immigration of population from outside. This immigration might have been caused due to the fact that following the world-wide economic depression, the cultivators

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19. Datta, Brajendra Chandra, Udaipur Bibaran, (An Account of Udaipur) (A Tripura Government Publication, Agartala, 1931), p. 44.
20. Porter, A.E., 1931 Census Report of Bengal and Sikkim, Part I, Vol. V, Published as Appendix IV to Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part I(C), p. 515.

of the eastern districts of Bengal were severely affected which subsequently created a negative multiplier effect in the income of the cultivators. The depression also affected negatively in the volume of employment in industries, government offices and various urban establishments. This widespread economic distress in Bengal might have encouraged a large number of agriculturists as well as middle class people to migrate to Tripura in search of jobs and other means of livelihood. The Second World War period might have also influenced population immigration on account of the fact that the tempo of Governmental activities called for the services of more people in Tripura. For political reasons also, some people might have migrated to Tripura for shelter and for organizing freedom movement. In the wake of Raipur riot in 1941 in Dacca district of undivided Bengal, many Hindu Bengalis sought refuge in Tripura to cope with which the relief and rehabilitation cell under the Revenue Department was created by the Maharaja. In the wake of the Noakhali riot in 1946 also a large number of Hindus came to Tripura for shelter.²¹ As mentioned, during the partition of the Indian sub-continent purely on religious and political grounds, into India and Pakistan, a great upheaval took place in the region which compelled the Hindus of Pakistan and the Muslims of India to migrate respectively to India and Pakistan; despite the assurance of safety and security of life to the minorities by both the countries. At that time it was estimated that the number of

21. Ganguli, n. 1, pp. 46-47.

refugees in both directions could not have been less than a million and might have been two or three times that number.²² According to the Tripura unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party President Mr. Kajal Roy Burman, lakhs of people from erstwhile East Pakistan had migrated to Tripura during the partition (1947).²³ A large number of these refugees entered the Indian border State of Tripura thus, swelling the population of the State to a great extent. During 1941-51 decade, the population increase in great number in the State was mainly due to the influx of displaced persons from the then East Pakistan. In 1950-51 alone as many as 1,84, 000 displaced persons entered into Tripura.²⁴

It may here be noted that though, Tripura was still under the status of princely State(till 1949), the partition of Indian sub-continent(1947) indeed marked the beginning of transborder migration, prior to which there was only the case of internal migration in Tripura. Therefore, it may be understood that the transborder migration in Tripura started since the partition of the Indian sub-continent(1947) and the merger of Tripura with the Indian union (1949).

22. For details see, Hodson, H.V., The Great Divide : Britain-India-Pakistan, (Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., London, 1969), pp. 411-18.

23. "BJP Movement", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), April 28, 1994, p. 5.

24. Bhattacharyya, A. K., Tripura - A Portrait of Population, (Census of India, 1971), p. 54.

Union Territory and After

The royal and princely dynasty continued till the period of King Bir Bikram Manikya, the last powerful king of Tripura, who died in May 1947 prior to the independence of India. Since then and after the independence of India, Tripura became very weak and inactive which continued till its merger with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, after which the administrative legacy of the State was handed over to the Government of India. As said, following the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, a successive communal riots occurred in different places of erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). As a result, refugees in enormous number from those areas entered Tripura and settled in various parts of the State. As there was an administrative gap since the death of King Bir Bikram Manikya (1947), there was no powerful royal successor to resist the immigrants coming from erstwhile East Pakistan. As a result, the population of non-tribal immigrants had tremendously increased.²⁵ So much so that in 1952, late Govinda Ballav Panth, the then Home Minister of India declared that "Tripura reached to a saturated point in respect of population. Not a single refugee will be rehabilitated here further more".²⁶ But in spite of this declaration, there was

25. Debbarma, Harinath, Chief Executive Member, A.D.C., Tripura, Indigenous Peoples' Self-Determination, Self-Government and the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, (Paper Presented in the Workshop on "Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Struggle for Right of Self-Determination and Self-Government", held from April 9 to 11, 1994, Shillong), p. 1.

26. Ibid.,

no drastic measure to prevent the refugee immigration from across the international border.

Indeed, it was the general aspiration of the people that after the merger of the State with the Indian Union, Tripura would be protected not only from immigration problems but also in other aspects. It was also expected that the State would develop both politically and economically and the indigenous people would be in a much better position. But such aspirations were far beyond being fulfilled and the entire situation in respect of population growth began to be from bad to worse.

On October 15, 1949, the State of Tripura was integrated with the Indian Union and became a centrally administered area as a Part C State. Henceforward the development in the State continued according to the policy of the Government of India and the changes were made from time to time with a view to gradual democratization, through main steps taken in 1953, 1963 and 1972. As the final orientation of the policy, Tripura was given the Statehood of the Indian Union on January 21, 1972.²⁷ It is a fact that just after the departure of the Monarchy rule, the administrative legacy was handled by the non-tribal people who had just migrated to Tripura. So, naturally the administration was designed in the interest of the non-tribal people. The tribal people were deprived from various facilities of the Government

27. For details see, Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, Tripura Administration, The Era of Modernisation, (Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1986), pp. 209-38.

and the benefits of whatever development that took place, were enjoyed by the non-tribal immigrants.²⁸

As pointed out, the general expectation of the people of Tripura was that after the integration with the Indian Union the State would not only be protected from infiltration of people from across the international border but also hasten the development process. But the administration established after integration could not satisfy the aspiration and political consciousness of the people. The constitution of India which came into force from January 26, 1950, divided the States into three categories and included in Parts A, B and C of the First Schedule of the Constitution. Part C States were ten in number including Tripura. For administrative, strategic or other special reasons, Central control was considered necessary in the case of Tripura which became a centrally administered area on October 15, 1949 as evident from a message of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on the occasion of the merger of Tripura, an extract of which is quoted as:²⁹

The State of Tripura, with its isolated situation, yet occupying a position of strategic importance on the Eastern Border of India, has an ancient history and a rich culture. The partition of the country has however brought in its train for this State a host of problems which, in the present State of its development, it was impossible for it to solve unaided. The Government of

28. Debbarma, Harinath, n. 25, p. 2.

29. Tripura State Gazette, Extra Ordinary Issue, October, 15, 1949, p. 4, Quoted in Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, pp. 230-31.

India and her highness the Maharaja Regent, acting on behalf of the minor Ruler, have come to the conclusion that in the interest of the State and its people and of the country as a whole, it was essential that the Centre should make itself directly responsible for the administration of the State and the well-being of its people. Tripura, thus becomes from today the Centrally administered area.

Though all the ten part C States were created to develop through direct central administration, Tripura, along with other three Part C States, Bisalpur, Kutch and Manipur, was deprived of the representative institutions provided in other six Part C States. Under the Constitution the Part C States are to be administered by the President through the Chief Commissioner or a Lt. Governor to be appointed by him. The Constitution empowers the national Parliament to create by law of legislature for the State whether nominated or elected or partly nominated and partly elected. The Parliament is also empowered to allow a Council of Advisors or ministers to function as the executive of the State for the purpose of aiding the Chief Commissioner or Lt. Governor in the administration of the State. Further, the Parliament is also empowered, where there was already a legislature in existence at the time when the Constitution came into force, to allow the State-legislature to continue to function.³⁰

Despite the clear provisions of the Constitution, Tripura having a Council of Ministers, working for about a decade from

30. Bhatthacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, pp. 231-32.

1939 to 1948 and proposed and promised Legislature under the Constitution of Maharaj Bir Bikram, was deprived of having a legislature and the Council of Ministers provided by the Government of Part C States Act 1951. There were movements against this action of the Central Government and demands for responsible Government in the State were reiterated by the people of Tripura. On August 6, 1951, the Forward Block held a meeting of Tripura Forward Block-Workers in its local office and unanimously adopted a resolution that responsible Government be established in this border State of Tripura within a short period and requests the Government to take that step.³¹

The Tripura Sangha which was a royalist organization demanded a Council of advisors for Tripura according to Article 240 of Part VIII of the Indian Constitution and to make an arrangement for constituting a legislature. In response to the demand, Dr. K. N. Katju, the then Home Minister of India, visited Tripura at the end of 1952 and proclaimed in his speech on December 1, 1952, at Agartala Umakanta Academy Ground, that the declaration for appointment of a Council of Advisers for Tripura would be made within a few weeks time. But he expressed the views of the Government of India with regard to the rejection of the demand for a legislature, and after a few months the Tripura (Council of Advisers) Order, 1953, was passed. The President appointed three Advisers in the State of Tripura with

31. Debbarma, Monimoy, "Tripurar Katha", The Dainik Sambad, (A Daily Newspaper, Agartala), April 27, 1978, p. 1.

effect from April 14, 1953. They were Sachindralal Singha, Jitendra Mohon Debbarma, and Shukhamoy Sengupta.³²

The appointment of the Council of Advisers was said to be the first step towards democratization of the Tripura Administration under the Constitution of independent India. Among the three Advisers appointed, two were local Congress leaders and one was the leader of the Tripura Sangha. But they could not be said to have represented all the people and opinion in the State. The State Congress had its followers among Bengali refugees in the State. The Tripura Sangha also represented only a small section of the Boroks (Tripuris) in and around the capital. A large part of the political opinion shared by the majority of the hilly and indigenous people remained unrepresented. Besides as the important portfolios like Home, Border Security, etc. were not distributed to them, the powers of the advisers were also limited. Further, the process followed in their appointment was not democratic. They were neither elected by the people nor the people of the State were consulted before appointing them. Hence, the procedure of their selection was no better than that of the Council of Ministers appointed by the late King.³³ Thus, it has been observed that the integration of the State with the Indian

32. File No. 1-79/53, Tripura Government Secreatriat, Home (Political) Department, Appointment of Advisers (Agartala, 1953), Also see, Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, pp. 233-35.

33. Ibid., p. 236.

Union discontinued the process of modernisation and the course of development followed by the princely rulers. In the process, the indigenous people became the main sufferers even till date.

It is obvious that the appointment of advisers could not satisfy the people of Tripura, particularly in the background of the provision of Legislative Assemblies and Ministries in other six Part 'C' States. So there were repeated demands by all sections of the people for a democratic government in Tripura. For quite some times there was a movement for reorganisation of State on the linguistic basis. The first-linguistic State was set up in Andhra. This gave an impetus to the supporters of the idea of linguistic States and ultimately Prime Minister Nehru made a statement in Parliament on December 22, 1953, to the effect that a commission be appointed to examine 'objectively and dispassionately' the question of the reorganisation of the State of the Indian Union 'so that the welfare of the people of each constituent unit as well as the nation as a whole is promoted'. The Commission was appointed under a resolution of the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Fazl Ali was appointed the Chairman of the Commission and its two members were Panit Hridayanath Kunzru and Sardar K.M. Panikkar. The Commission submitted

its report to the Government of India on September 30, 1955, and it was released to the public on October 10, 1955.³⁴

The States Reorganisation Commission had recommended the merger of Tripura with Assam. But the people of the State strongly reacted against this recommendation and there were movements in other parts of India against the recommendation of the Commission. As a consequence of this reaction, the States Reorganisation Act, passed on August 31, 1956,³⁵ undid a large portion of the recommendations of the Commission in different parts of India, and Tripura became one of the five Union Territories under this Act.

Part VIII of the Constitution, as amended in 1956, provides that every Union Territory shall be administered by the President acting, to such extent as he thinks fit, through an administrator to be appointed by him with such designation as he may specify. Thus, the Chief Commissioner was called the 'Administrator' in Tripura. The Territorial Council of Tripura was composed of thirty two members of whom thirty were elected by the people on the basis of adult suffrage and two were nominated by the Central Government. The tenure of the members of the Territorial Council was five years.³⁶

34. Mahajan, V.D. and Mahajan, Savitri, Constitutional History of India, (S. Chand, Seventh Edition, New Delhi, 1967), pp. 640-41.

35. Ibid., p. 642.

36. Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, pp. 246-47.

The Constitution of the Territorial Council and consideration of its formation and working in Tripura might seem to have created some impression towards democratisation and development of the State. But the actual scenario was contrary to the aspiration of the people, as the Council seemed to have functioned only for the elite group of the urban dwellers. The benefits were indeed enjoyed by the educated immigrants who shared the major power in the Council. In the election to the Council in Tripura, the Congress secured fifteen seats which was just half of the elected members. The two members nominated by the Central Government were chosen naturally from the Congress party which added the strength to the Congress party in Tripura to form the Government in the Council.³⁷

Thus, it appeared that the Council was so designed to serve a section of the society only. The indigenous people of the State, as majority of them lived in the interior places, were completely neglected by the Council. As a result, the Communist party of Tripura found a fertile land to mobilise and the struggle of Communist party in Tripura was able to bring the tribal population under its influence and banner. The party launched for various movements seeming to project the interests of the tribal people and poorer section of the society in the State. Being a political party, its main aim and objective was to come to power. The leaders of the Communist Party of India,

37. Ibid., p. 251.

Tripura Wing, realised that it was not at all possible to come to power without the support of the indigenous people and the refugees. Therefore, they followed the open door policy for the entry of the Bangladeshi (erstwhile East Pakistan) refugees into the State right from the 1950s.³⁸ A comparative study of the elections of 1957 and 1962 reveals an increase in the influence of the Indian National Congress during the period. Tripur Chandra Sen wrote : "In fact, Congress had no organisation among the tribal people up to the April 14, 1953, and before this date, the refugees had no alliance upon the Congress organisation".³⁹ But during the period of the rule of Advisers and that of the Territorial Council, a large number of refugees were rehabilitated in the State and began to pay their allegiance to the Congress Party.⁴⁰

During this period of the Congress Government, at the direction of the Central Government, the State government wanted to deport the excess refugees to West Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. This step hit the minds of the non-tribal communist leaders tremendously. So they decided to resist the deportation and launched a massive movement in favour of refugee rehabilitation. They could also convince the tribal Communist leaders to launch a resistant movement against the government. Under the leadership of Dasarath Debbarma and Nripen Chakravorty,

38. Based on Interviews with a cross section of tribal leaders in Tripura during January 1992 and July 8 to 15, 1995.

39. Cited in Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, p 256.

40. Ibid.

the Communist Party launched a series of mass movement including 'hunger-strike, violence movement, killings, etc.'. Their main slogans were to stop the deportation of refugees and for their settlement in Tripura with all facilities, and the entry of more refugees from East Pakistan. Their main objective in doing so was to get the support of the refugee electorates to come to power. Thus, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, thinking about the gravity of the agitation, reviewed the deportation order thereby resettling all the refugees in the State. Though Nehru wanted to deport those refugees, but due to opposite steps taken by the tribal Communist leaders, many unwanted refugees were resettled which has not only increased the non-tribal Bengali population but also encouraged for further inflow of refugees. Since then no refugee was refused to be enrolled in the State. In brief, by taking the advantage of the Communist agitations, the State Government led by non-tribal agencies, followed an "Open-door Policy" for the East Pakistani immigrants into the State.⁴¹

Today, many of the educated tribal leaders argue that the tribal Communist leaders at that point of time were completely misguided by the misconception of power and politics which has led to the suffering of the indigenous people of the State. They failed to foresee the adverse future consequences of the refugee resettlement. They were guided and influenced by the instinct of enjoying power in the State.

41. Based on the interview with Aghore Debbarma, a Veteran leader of Communist Party of India, Agartala on July 10, 1995.

As a result, a series of massive influx of refugees took place right from the partition of the Indian sub-continent and the merger of Tripura with the Indian Union (October 15, 1949). Thus, the explosive increase of population in Tripura by 78.71 per cent in 1951-61 decade is directly attributable to the influx of Bengali refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). During this decade alone the population had increased by more than 5 lakhs which is almost equal to the total population of 1941. In the same period (1951-61), the annual rate of increase was 5.98 per cent which was the second highest among the Indian States and Union Territories, the highest being 7.45 per cent in Andaman and Nicobar Islands which was until then almost uninhabited. The annual growth rate for the whole country in that decade was 1.98 per cent.⁴²

A different scenario appeared in 1960, the year in which the non-tribal immigrants outnumbered the indigenous people in Tripura. It was then only ten years since the merger of State with the Indian Union that the tribal people had lost the administrative power in their own homeland or soil. In this context, marking a different turn in the political scenario of Tripura since 1960's, a veteran tribal political leader, Harinath Debbarma wrote:⁴³

The indigenous tribal people were the owners of the land and the rulers of the State but now a subordinate subjects to the outsiders, a thing of grace in their hands. Since then the tribals lived sometimes fed, sometimes half-fed and sometimes fully starved. The fate of the tribals depends upon

the grace and mercy of the alien administrators. Now they have nothing to do but to wait for any unfortunate event to come upon them.

This is the expression and feeling of many leaders of the indigenous people since the turn of 1960's. Today, many had realised the mistake committed by the leaders in allowing the massive influx to take place. As the economic, political and administrative powers are now in the hands of the alien people, the tribal people's leaders are in many ways found themselves in a helpless situation.

Realising the need to gain the support of the indigenous people, the Congress party seemed to have taken some measures to please and mobilise the tribal people. The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960, came into effect from April 14, 1961. One of the salient features of the Land Reforms Act was the restriction on land alienation from the indigenous tribal people.⁴⁴ This caused an extension of popularity of the Indian National Congress among the people of this State which resulted in clear victory of the Congress in 1962 Territorial Council election, by securing 17 seats out of the 30. Being satisfied at the result of the election, the Congress party at the Centre took further step towards democratisation of the administration of Tripura along with other Union Territories of the country. Thus,

42. Paul, C.R., Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura Part I(i), New Delhi), p. 27.

43. Debbarma, Harinath, n. 25, p. 3.

44. Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, p. 256.

the Union Territories Act came into being in Tripura in 1963.⁴⁵ It was expected to be a great leap towards a fully responsible Government in this territory. But practically there was hardly any different towards safeguarding the tribal interests. Because, although some improvement towards democratisation of administration was shown, the leadership of the Government was not changed. Further, there was no improvement in the party's ideology along the line of indigenous people's interest. Thus, the indigenous people were the prime sufferers of all the political and administrative development that took place in the State since 1950s.

It is quite evident from table 3.3 that the population growth in Tripura is mainly due to the perennial influx of non-tribal people refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan since the partition of Indian the sub-continent (1947). As shown in table 3.3, after the partition in the decade from 1947 to 1959, the total influx of refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) figured 3,73,500 and in the year 1964-65 itself 1,00,304 people migrated to Tripura. The total number of immigrants or refugees entered into Tripura within the period from 1947 to 1971 is estimated to be 6,09,998.⁴⁶ These were the recorded figures of influx of refugees but there were innumerable un-recorded and illegal immigrants of the same group of people, resulting in the steady increase of non-tribal population in the

45. Ibid.

46. Bhattacharjee, S. R., Tribal Insurgency in Tripura : A Study in Exploration of Causes, (Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1989), pp. 29-49.

Table 3.3 : Influx of Registered Displaced Refugees into Tripura from 1947 to 1971.

Year	Number Displaced Refugees	
1947	8,124	
1948	9,354	
1949	10,575	
1950 (February)	67,151	
1950-51	1,84,000	
1951-52	23,300	
1952-53	80,000	
1953-54	3,200	
1954-55	4,700	
1955-56	17,500	
1956-57	57,700	
1957-58	3,600	
1958-59	-	Registration of refugees was discontinued.
1959-60	-	
1960-61	-	
1961-62	-	
1962-63	-	
1964-65	1,00,340	
1965-66	13,073	
1966-67	1,654	
1967-68	12,299	
1968-69	3,120	
1969-70	4,334	
1970-71 (March 24, 1971)	5,774	
Total	6,09,998	

Source : Cited in Bhattacharyya, Gayatri : Refugee Rehabilitation and Its Impact on Tripura's Economy, (Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1988), p. 14.

State. Consequently, the waves of migration described above caused demographic imbalance in the State. It is a well known fact, that Tripura State is an example in India in which the indigenous population had been outnumbered by inflow of immigrants.

The Government of Union Territories Act, 1963

The Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 was passed in May 1963 which was an Act to provide for Legislative Assemblies and Councils of Ministers for certain Union Territories. The Union Territories for which the Act was passed were Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Goa, Daman and Diu, and Pondicherry. Section three of this Act provides for a Legislative Assembly for each Union Territory with forty elected members in case of Himachal Pradesh and thirty in case of any other Union Territory including Tripura. The Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, came into force in Tripura from July 1, 1963 and the Territorial Council ceased to exist from that date onward. A Legislative Assembly was set up with the existing members of the Territorial Council. The Council of Ministers were constituted with the Chief Minister, S.L. Singh, and another Minister S. Sengupta. Besides, there were three Deputy Ministers - M.L. Bhowmik, Dr. B. Das and Raj Prasad Chowdhury. The Ministers were assisted by the Chief Secretary, Development Commissioner, two Secretaries, one Deputy Development Commissioner, seven Deputy Under Secretaries and one Assistant Legal Rememberancer.⁴⁷ This reveals the fact that right from the inception, indigenous people were not presented in the Legislative Assembly. The entire political and administrative powers were handled by the non-tribal immigrants. This phenomenon naturally generated a great discontentment among the indigenous population. Here, it may be mentioned that after the Fourth

47. For detail see, Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, pp. 256-68.

General Elections held on February 18, 1967, in the Territory, the President appointed Sachindra Lal Singh to be the Chief Minister and on the advice of the Chief Minister, he also appointed Tarit Mohan Dasgupta, Prafulla Kumar Das and Raj Prasad Chowdury as Ministers and M. Ali as Deputy Minister with effect from March 13, 1967.⁴⁸ This further indicates that the indigenous tribal people were not presented in the Ministry.

The designation of the Head of the Territory was known as Chief Commissioner upto January 30, 1970. A.L. Dias, Lt. Governor continued as the Administrator of the Union Territory upto August 8, 1971. Badeswar Prasad succeeded him and continued as the Administrator upto January 20, 1972. With effect from January 21, 1972, the Union Territory of Tripura was declared as a State and Braja Kumar Nehru assumed the office of the Governor of Tripura from January 21, 1972.⁴⁹ So the era of Union Territory came to an end. Prior to the attainment of Statehood in 1972, the two wars namely the Indo-Pak War of 1965 and the War of Bangladesh Liberation of 1971 resulted in a great number of influx of refugees into the State. According to the Indira-Mujib Pact of 1971, all the refugees of 1971, were to be repatriated back but the majority of refugees sneaked into the State which was made possible because by then many non-tribal Bengalis were already

48. The Administrative Reports, Government of Tripura, 1966-67.

49. The Administrative Reports, Government of Tripura, 1971-72.

settled in the State.⁵⁰ As a result, it was not possible to detect those refugees sneaking into the non-tribal belts.

The two main factors, in particular, which encouraged the heavy influx of refugees into the State were, firstly, there was no perceptible local resistance to the immigration of refugees during this period mainly on humanitarian ground and due to the ignorance of its future consequences. Secondly, on the other hand, a sizeable non-tribal Bengali speaking population already living in the State provided all necessary help and assistance to their incoming brethren.⁵¹

Statehood and After (1972)

The people of Tripura in general, were not fully satisfied with the introduction of Legislative Assembly and the Ministry and its overall functioning under the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963. The Marxist Communist Party and other organisations launched movements demanding full-fledged Statehood of the Indian Union. There were other Territories like Himachal Pradesh and Manipur which were also demanding for Statehood. Thousands of struggling people joined the meetings, processions and movements led by the Marxist Communist Party in the State. At last, when the threat of mass Satyagraha was led out, Indira Gandhi promised that Tripura would be given the position of full-fledged Statehood of the Indian Union.⁵² Moreover, there were demands for the same from the Congress as well. There were also movements in Manipur, Meghalaya and other parts of North-East India for a

full-fledged State. To meet all these demands, the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, was passed in the Parliament and assented to by the President on December 30, 1971. According to this Act, Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya attained Statehood of the Indian Union and, in Tripura the Act was given effect to on and from January 21, 1972.⁵³ After attainment of Statehood, the State Assembly consisted of sixty Assembly seats according to the Constitution.

The first election to the State Assembly was held in March 1972, in which the Congress secured forty seats out of sixty. The swearing in ceremony of the new Congress Ministry took place on March 20 and March 31, 1972. The new Council of Ministers was led by Sukhamoy Sengupta as Chief Minister, and Haricharan Chowdhury, Monoranjan Nath, D.K. Chowdhury and Khitish Chandra Das as Ministers, while Munchar Ali, Sailesh Chandra Shome and Smt. Basana Chakravarty were sworn in as the Deputy Ministers. The Council of Ministers were assisted by a well organized Secretariat. To cope with the gigantic task of refugee relief, the administrative set-up of several departments was strengthened. It may be recalled that, in the Bangladesh War of 1971, Tripura had a large contribution for the independence of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Also it bore the burden of responsibility of a large

50. For details see, Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, Refugee Rehabilitation and Its Impact on Tripura's Economy, (Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1988), pp. 9-20.

51. Ibid., p. 16.

52. Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, n. 27, p. 265.

53. Tripura Gazette, Extraordinary Issue, February 26, 1972, pp.1-10.

number of refugees almost equal to its whole population facing along with the other horrors of war.⁵⁴

However, inspite of these events, the decadal growth rate seemed to have declined to 36.28 per cent in 1971 and further to 31.91 per cent in 1981. But the fact was that there was no stop to population migration. More importantly illegal immigration continued all throughout the years. The steady growth of population due to the continuous immigration, the indigenous tribal population was further reduced proportionately during the Statehood period. The following Table 3.4, indicates the growth of tribal and non-tribal population in Tripura since 1971 or during the Statehood and after.

Table 3.4 : Growth of Tribal and Non-tribal Population in Tripura Since 1971.

Year (1)	Total Population (2)	Tribal Population (3)	Non-Tribal Population (4)
1971	15,56,342	4,50,544	11,05,798
1981	20,53,058	5,83,920	14,69,138
1991	27,57,205	8,53,345	19,03,860

Source : Various Census Reports.

The above table 3.4 shows as to how over the years and decades, the population of non-tribal population had increased and became a majority in their alien State resulting in the indigenous tribal population being reduced into a minority. The

54. The Administrative Reports, Government of Tripura, 1971-72, pp. 5-17.

abnormally high growth of non-tribal population is not due to the demographic factors like fertility, mortality rate, etc., but it largely accounts for a great influx of unrecorded and illegal refugees, that the State has been receiving since its merger with the Indian Union.⁵⁵ The contribution of immigration to the overall population growth in Tripura in particular since 1971 may be better understood by Table 3.5. The Table 3.5 shows that during the decades 1971-81 and 1981-91, of the 31.92 per cent and 34.30 per cent decennial growth rate of population respectively in Tripura, the process of immigration alone had contributed 12.44 per cent and 16.75 per cent during the decade 1971-81 and 1981-91 respectively, as against all India level of 4.66 per cent (1971-81) and 2.24 per cent (1981-91) of the overall India's population growth rate of 24.66 per cent (1971-81) and 23.50 per cent (1981-91). This clearly shows and proves that the immigration in Tripura accounts for 38.98 per cent and 48.83 per cent during 1971-81 and 1981-91 respectively to the overall growth of population in the State, as against all India level of 18.90 per cent (1971-81) and 10.55 per cent (1981-91). This also indicates that whereas in case of the country (India) as a whole the contribution of immigration to the growth of the decennial growth has shown a decreasing trend, in the case of the State of Tripura it has shown upward trend, which is an alarming sign of problem for the State and the Government has to be sensitive and

55. Bhattacharjee, S. R., n. 46, p. 34.

Table 3.5 : Contribution of Immigration and Natural Growth to the Increase in Population in Tripura and India during 1971-91.

State/ Country	Decennial Growth	A.B.R.	A.D.R.	N.G.R.	Net Immi- gration	Percentage Share to Growth	
						N.G.R.	Imm.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Tripura							
1971-81	31.92	30.08	10.60	19.48	12.44	61.02	38.98
1981-91	34.30	26.04	8.49	17.55	16.75	51.17	48.83
India							
1971-81	24.66	34.52	14.52	20.00	4.66	81.10	18.90
1981-91	23.50	32.50	11.23	21.02	2.48	89.45	10.55

Note : Col. 3 - Col. 4 = Col. 5; Col. 2 - Col. 5 = Col. 6;

Col. 7 = (Col. 5) x 100/Col. 2;

Col. 8 = (Col. 5) x 100/Col. 2

A.B.R./A.D.R. = Average Birth Rate/Average Death Rate;

N.G.R. = Natural Growth Rate; Imm. = Immigration.

Source : Government of Tripura, Annual Plan 1995-96, Tripura State Part I (Planning and Co-ordination Department, Agartala), pp. 3-4.

carefull in this respect to take the measures to completely stop the process of further immigration into the State. The Table 3.5 also clearly indicates that if immigration of the Bangladeshis had not taken place, the overall population growth in Tripura during the decade 1971-81 and 1981-91 would have remained to 19.48 per cent and 17.75 per cent respectively. Therefore, there is no doubt about that the main factor of high rate of population growth in Tripura, even during the Statehood Period (1972) and after, had been accounted to the process of illegal and undocumented immigration.

More importantly, a micro-analysis of Tables 3.4 and 3.5 reveals the actual number of immigrant population during the decades 1971-81 and 1981-91 as 1,93,620 and 3,43,835 respectively. Thus, since 1971 to 1991 or during the period of Statehood and after alone 5,37,455 net immigrants or refugees from across the international border had entered Tripura which had culminated the already worsening demographic and socio-economic problems in the State. Taking into account the number of documented refugees of 6,09,998 during the period of 1947 to 1971, and the illegal immigrants of 5,37,455 during the period of 1971 to 1991, the total figure is depicted as 11,47,453 net detected immigrants even without their natural growth during the five decades that is since 1947 to 1991. And with their natural growth, combined with many other undetected illegal immigration into the State, it is not surprising that the indigenous people or population who were once more than 90 per cent during the 1940s, to be outnumbered and reduced to a minority in their own homeland by the overwhelming presence of immigrants in Tripura. The trend and process call for and require a genuine, sincere, strict and responsive measures of the Government to protect the downtrodden indigenous population of Tripura.

Further, on the other hand, there is a point to be noted that although, the indigenous people were reduced to a minority by the constant influx of refugees particularly since the 1960s, but the proper census was not carried out in the interior areas

of tribal belts. The census officials who constitute mostly the non-tribal persons, were not practically interested to visit and have door to door census in the tribal areas. So they would sit in one of the houses of the area assigned and record on an approximate number of people and families in the area. This may be due to certain factors involved in it. Firstly, most of the tribal people live in the interior hilly terrain and jungle side where there are no facilities for transportation and information media. This makes it difficult for the census officials to go to all the places of the tribal belts. Secondly, as the way of life of the tribal people is quite different from that of the non-tribal people and since the non-tribal persons (census officials) were never accustomed to those ways of living, they are afraid to penetrate to the hearts of the tribal villages. They feel a sense of insecurity of their life and therefore, prefer to take an approximate census with the help of some local leaders who would spell out the names of those persons they could remember. Thirdly, interviews with a cross section of tribal people in Tripura reveal that during the 1950s and 1960s, the Communist Underground Naxalites group was so strong and operative in the tribal belts and interior areas in Tripura that the Census officials or for that matter Government officials could not move freely in the tribal areas for recording a proper census. This also resulted in showing their figure lesser than their actual strength. Fourthly, the majority of the tribal people being illiterate, having no sense of democratic rights, they are not aware of the meaning of

census and found mostly not interested. Finally, as the political power in the State has been in the hands of non-tribal immigrants, the Government has not been taking any keen interest to have a proper census of the tribal people for their own political gain. Therefore, as per the census records of the State, the tribal people have been somehow shown comparatively less than what they actually were. In this way, even the entire census of Tripura have been manipulated by the non-tribal officials much to their own interest and advantage.

However, since the 1980s, there has been some consciousness among the tribal people regarding the census. This consciousness is being found in comparatively advanced tribal villages. The census of Tripura 1991 shows tribal people constituting more than 8,53,345 marking a great increase. Indeed, the tribal people constituted about 8 lakhs in 1981 itself but as there was no proper census due to the June riot 1980 in the State, the tribal population was shown as per the past approximate record. Therefore, the 1991 record shows a steady increase in tribal population. In fact, some of the tribal leaders are of the opinion that by 1991, the indigenous tribal people have already exceeded 10 lakhs out of the total 28 lakhs population of the State.

On the other hand, there was no restriction to include the non-tribal immigrants in census (voter's list). It is a well known fact that there has been continuous illegal non-tribal immigration till date in the State. None of them were denied with

the citizenship in the State as most of the issuing authorities belonged to the non-tribal community. This trend further strengthens and encourages continuous inflow of non-tribal people into the State. One of the objectives of the non-tribal people in the State is that they want to make Tripura a 'mini Bengal'. Therefore, they encourage the entry of more and more non-tribal Bengalis in order to completely outnumber the tribal people and control the economic, administrative and political powers.

According to the 1971 census the number of migrants from East Pakistan was 4,20,847 out of the total 7,30,017 migrants to Tripura.⁵⁶ These were only the officially recorded migrants but there were innumerable illegal migrants all along the decades. As a result of continuous influx of refugees, most of the towns in Tripura have also grown particularly since 1970s. The density of population which was only 61.6 per square kilometre in 1951, increased to 149 per square kilometre in 1971 and rose to 196 in 1981⁵⁷ and 262 in 1991. During these periods many refugee families were rehabilitated in different parts of the State, of which very few were recorded or shown officially. For instance, in the year, 1974 there were 885 families being rehabilitated. Another 480 families were rehabilitated during 1975-76. They were provided

56. Census of India, 1971 Series 20, Tripura Part-IIID, Migration Tables, Table D. I, pp. 26-27.

57. Ghosh, Kamalini, Tribal Insurrection in Tripura : A Study in Relative Deprivation, (Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, 1984), pp. 17-54.

with lands and some amount of money to start with settlement and business.⁵⁸

It is a well known fact that the process of immigration into Tripura continues unabated till date. As mentioned, this process has outnumbered the indigenous population of the State. So much so that, the indigenous people, today has been reduced and marginalised to about 30 per cent of the total population of the State. Besides, the continuous illegal immigration of the non-tribal people there are over 50,000 Chakma refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, who entered into the State since April 29, to May 3, 1986 onwards. They have been encamped in five different refugee camps situated in the South district of Tripura. Although, there have been several rounds of talks and attempts to repatriate them into their original homeland, till date they have not been repatriated.

Thus, all along, following the partition of the Indian sub-continent (1947) and the merger of Tripura State with the Indian Union (October 15, 1949), there had been a series and continuous process of immigration of non-tribal people into the State from erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh. This phenomenon has created multi-dimensional problems and impacts upon the socio-economic and political aspects of Tripura which will be discussed in details in the subsequent chapters.

58. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, n. 50, p. 41.

CHAPTER IV

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF TRIPURA

CHAPTER IV

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF TRIPURA

The infiltration of non-tribal erstwhile East Pakistanis and now Bangladeshis into Tripura has become a perennial problem for the border State of Tripura, which otherwise was a princely independent and peaceful State prior to its merger with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949. As the State shares an international boundary with Bangladesh, since the partition of Indian sub-continent (1947), a large number of Bangladeshis have crossed and still continue to cross the border and entered the State. Of all the North Eastern States, Tripura has been confronted with the problem of the influx of foreign nationals from across the border with a greater magnitude. This phenomenon of influx of foreign nationals into the tiny State has created a multi-dimensional problem bringing its impact upon all aspects of life and society of the indigenous population of Tripura. Indeed the consequences of migration are very serious which cannot be overlooked in our study. The intensity of migration can be comprehended only when its effects and consequences are given due attention for analytical study. Before the analysis of the impact of immigration on Government and politics of Tripura, its impact on demographic structure of the State may be examined.

Impact on Demographic Structure

As discussed, it has been noticed that the impact of migration is greater on the recipient country or place than on the country or place of origin of the immigrants. It is logical

that wherever there is migration from one country or place to another, the population in the recipient country or place increases and population of the country or place of origin of the immigrants decreases. The effect is that the population growth rate in the recipient countries will be bound to be greater and higher than that in the country of their origin. Thus, migration have effects on the population growth of both the countries of its origin and recipient.¹

In the case of Tripura State, the growth rate of population has been enormous since the 1950s. Expansion in population with the passage of time contributes to so many problems. The rapid growth of population caused by the large scale immigration affected the genetic, ecological, geographical, economical, social, religious, cultural and political aspects of the society. As discussed, in Tripura, the growth of population has been so phenomenal that over a decade following the partition of the Indian sub-continent (1947), the territory registered more than twenty times increase in its population. This abnormally high growth of population is not due to the factors of fertility, mortality rate, etc. but it largely accounts for a great influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh.²

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1. Peterson, William, "Migration: Social Aspects" in Sills, David L.(ed.), International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 10, (Macmillan and Free Press, New York, 1968), p. 289.
 2. Bhattacharjee, S.R., Tribal Insurgency in Tripura : A Study in Exploration of Causes, (Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1989), p. 34.

This also resulted in wide variations of the percentage of indigenous population to the total population of the State.

It was estimated that the total number of registered immigrants (refugees) entered the State within the period from 1947 to 1971 was 6,09,998.³ Besides, it was recorded that in the year 1961 out of 5,87,754 number of migrants, 3,94,883 were recorded to be from erstwhile East Pakistan. According to the 1971 Census the number of immigrants from Bangladesh was 4,20,847 out of the total 7,30,017 migrants to Tripura.⁴ These figures mentioned above were only the officially registered refugees who were subsequently rehabilitated in different parts of the State. Thereafter, the influx of Bangladeshis were continuous and perennial that it has not been possible for the State Authority to record and register them officially because they entered the State illegally. As a result, the entire demographic structure of the State has been badly affected. The decadal growth rate and density of population in Tripura since 1931 is shown in the following Table 4.1:

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3. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, Refugee Rehabilitation and Its Impact on Tripura's Economy, (Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1988), p. 7.
 4. Ghosh, Kamalini, Tribal Insurrection in Tripura : A Study in Relative Deprivation, (Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, 1984), p. 19.

Table 4.1 : Decadal Growth and Density of Population 1931-1991.

Year	Population	Decadal Variation of Growth	Percentage of Decadal Growth	Density of Population per Sq. Km.
1931	382450	78013	25.63	36.50
1941	513010	130560	34.14	48.96
1951	639029	126019	24.56	60.99
1961	1142005	502976	78.71	109.00
1971	1556342	414337	36.28	148.54
1981	2053058	496716	31.91	195.95
1991	2757205	704147	33.69	262.00

Source : Census of India Reports, 1991.

The Table 4.1 indicates that the percentage of decadal growth rate of population has been consistently very high. As per this Table, 1961 recorded the highest rate of growth so far which was quite an abnormal rise from 24.56 per cent in 1951 to 78 per cent in 1961. The density of population per square kilometre has also been always on the increase. The density of population in 1931 was only 36.50 which has gone up to 262.00 in 1991.

The growth rate of non-Tribal immigrants has been much higher than the indigenous tribal population particularly since 1951. This fact can be clearly shown with the help of the following Table 4.2 :

DECADAL GROWTH AND DENSITY OF POPULATION IN TRIPURA (1931-1991)

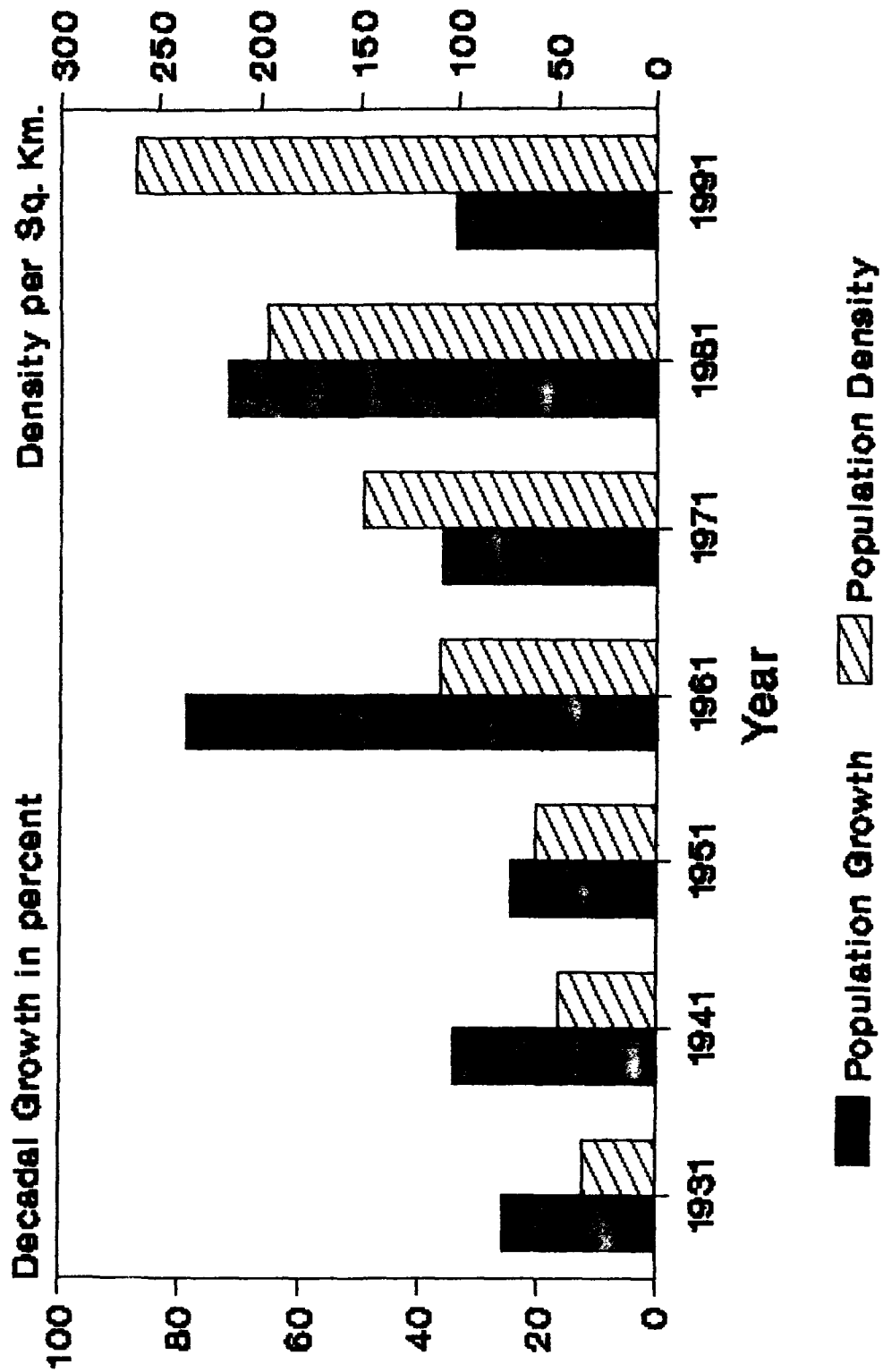


FIG. - 1

Table 4.2 : Growth of Tribal and Non-Tribal Population in Tripura.

Year	Population	Tribal Population	Non-Tribal Population	Tribal Growth (%)	Non-Tribal Growth (%)
1941	5,13,010	2,56,991	2,56,019	33.68	34.60
1951	6,45,707	2,37,953	4,01,074	(-) 7.40	59.26
1961	11,42,005	3,60,070	7,81,935	51.31	91.76
1971	15,56,342	4,50,544	11,05,798	25.12	41.41
1981	20,53,058	5,83,920	14,69,138	29.60	32.85
1991	27,57,205	8,53,345	19,03,360	46.14	29.56

Source : Census Reports of India, 1991,
see also Bhattacharjee, S.R., n. 2, p. 39.

The Table 4.2 indicates that the growth rate of non-tribal population as compared to the tribal population has always been on the higher side. If this trend of population growth in the State continues, the tribal people will be reduced to a complete minority with each passing decade. The rise of growth rate of non-tribal population is mainly due to the inflow of continuous migration into the State. This has affected the entire demographic structure of the State reducing the indigenous tribal population into a minority in their own land. The indigenous population today constitutes only about 30 per cent of the total population of the State. The gap in the size of the population between the indigenous and non-tribal groups have been widened in the last four to five decades or so. In the present trend of population growth of non-tribal people, it is not possible to bridge the gap between these two sections of population. Indeed, the indigenous tribal people will continue to be reduced and marginalised by the immigrants. The size of the tribal population

GROWTH OF TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL POPULATION IN TRIPURA

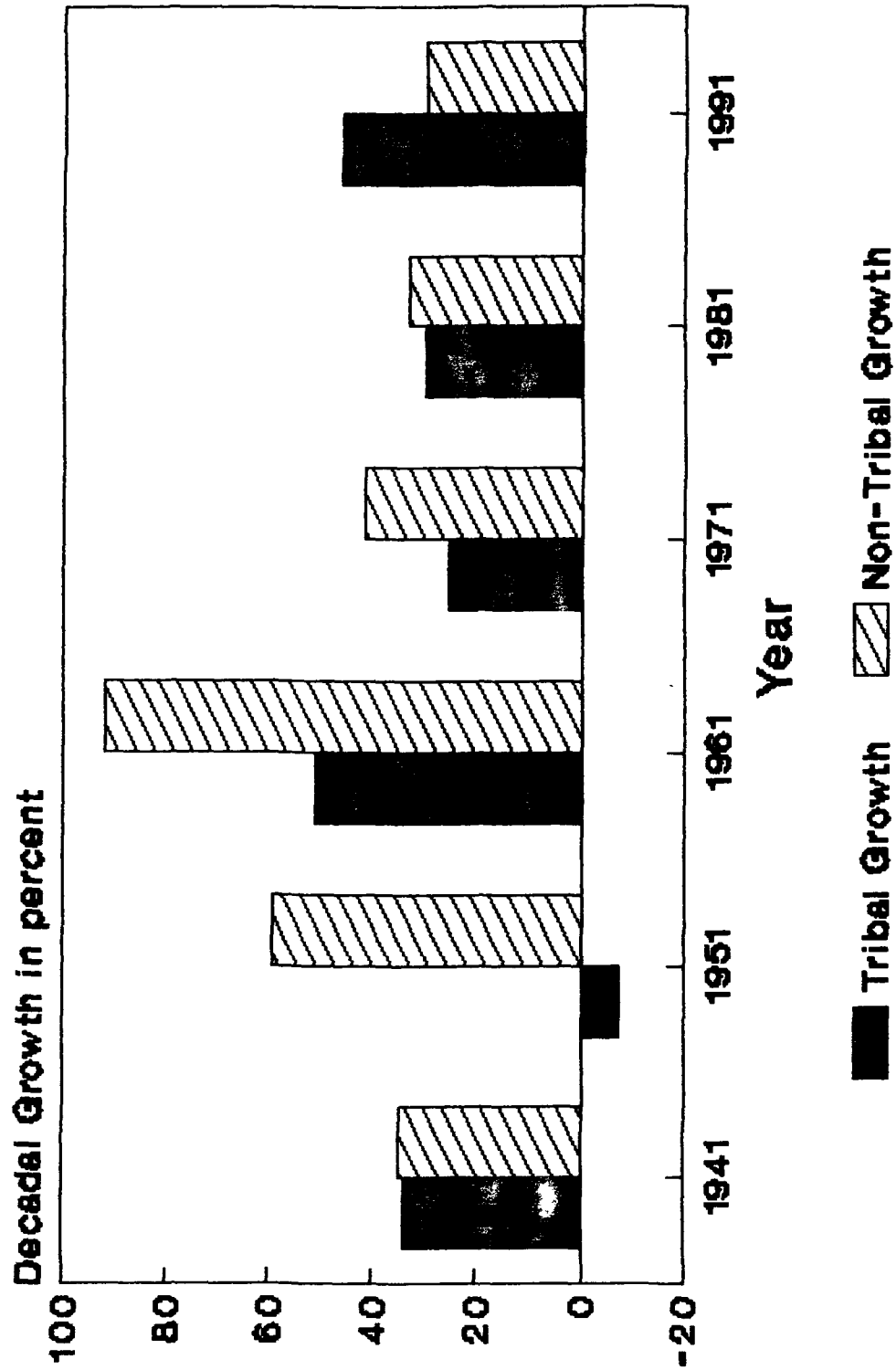


FIG. - 2

is becoming lesser and lesser while the size of the immigrants is always on the rise.

The continued increase of immigrants population may be attributed to two factors namely (1) birth rate and (2) continuous influx from outside. It has been found over the decades that the birth rate of non-tribal persons in Tripura has been much higher than the tribal people. Presently as they are a majority in the State even with the normal rate of birth, they would still rank higher than the indigenous population. Secondly, added to the higher birth rate, the inflow of non-tribal people into the State continues unabated. The Assam Tribune newspaper report of April 9, 1991, says that the continuous influx of foreigners into Tripura would not only upset the demographic profile of the border State but also retard its economic growth. Demographers have warned, if such a heavy infiltration is allowed to continue at this alarming rate, it would spell 'disaster' for the State. The high rate of population growth in Tripura could have been reduced if there was a check on infiltration from across the border. This fact has been highlighted by a noted economist, Prof. J.B. Ganguly in a paper entitled 'First Thought on 1991 Census in Tripura'. As a result the decadal growth rate in 1981-1991 has gone up to 33.69 per cent from 31.92 percent in the previous decade.⁵ A district-wise analysis of the census figures

5. Ganguly, J.B., "Tripura : Influx of Foreigners to Retard Economic Growth", The Assam Tribune, (Guwahati), April 9, 1991, p. 3.

shows that South and West Tripura districts have recorded a higher growth rate compared to North Tripura district due to the heavy infiltration of refugees from Bangladesh. Though two-thirds of the State's area consist of hilly terrain, its density has gone up from 196 persons per square kilometre in 1981 to 262 in 1991. Prof. Ganguly said and warned of 'serious consequences' if the problem is not tackled immediately. Also expressing concern over such large scale infiltration the noted author S.R. Bhattacharyya in his book, Tribal Insurgency in Tripura, pointed out that Tripura is the only State in India where the early dwellers (indigenous) have been outnumbered by the inflow of immigrants.⁶ As mentioned, the indigenous people of Tripura, who were in great majority till 1950, were now gradually marginalised and reduced to a minority by the Bengali immigrants.⁷

On the other hand, it has been reported that the growth rate of the indigenous population of the State has been on the lower side which is clearly understood by Table 4.2 cited earlier. Moreover, as the main system of agriculture of the tribal people is that of shifting cultivation, many of the tribal people of North Tripura particularly the Reangs, have been reported to have crossed the border State and entered Mizoram areas mainly in

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6. Ibid. Also for details see, Bhattacharjee, S.R., Tribal Insurgency in Tripura : A Study in Exploration of Causes, n. 2, pp.29-48.
7. Ahmed, Syed Zubair, "'Outsiders' Helpness in N.E. Ethnic Tension", The Sunday Times of India, (New Delhi), June 5, 1994, p. 9.

search of shifting cultivable lands⁸ and for security of life. Thus, combined with comparatively lower rate of population growth (of the tribal people) and some shifting cultivators migrating to border areas of Mizoram, the indigenous population of Tripura would never be in a position to compete with the immigrants in terms of their size. The gap between these two sections will always be bound to remain wide. Even if the growth rate of the tribal population is made higher, since the non-tribal population constitutes about 70 percent of the total population, the gap in their size will not be bridged. For instance, as per the 1991 Census, although the growth rate of the tribal population was much higher than previous decades, and yet, they were still lesser by two lakhs - the increase of tribal population in 1991 was 2,69,425, while the non-tribal population was 4,34,122. Hence, if this trend continues the indigenous tribal people will be completely outnumbered by the immigrants in due course. This calls for stringent measures of both Union and State Governments to check the infiltration of 'foreign nationals' to protect the rights of the indigenous people of Tripura. It is, thus, clear that the process of immigration had hit and changed the demographic profile of the State.

8. Based on Interviews with TUJS Leaders, Tripura Students' Federation Leaders on December 27 and 28, 1993, January 4 and 5, 1994 and Student Leaders from Mizoram on May 22, 1994. Also see, Dutta, Sekhar, "Tribal Forced to Flee Homes in Tripura", The Telegraph, (Calcutta), January 15, 1995.

Birth of Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS)

Politically speaking the indigenous people of Tripura led an isolated life. Their traditional administrative patterns were village-based and confined to village itself. Each tribal community had its own elementary social and administrative organisation starting from the village level to the chiefship of the whole tribe. They enjoyed freedom under their traditional self-administrative system. The King used to exercise the authority by collecting taxes from the subjects through the Village Chiefs and Officials.⁹ But the entire traditional system of political administrative structure was changed after the 1950s as mentioned mainly due to its merger with the Indian Union, large scale influx of 'foreign nationals' and democratisation of political administration.

It is a well known fact that the State and society of Tripura have undergone a significant change as a result of the perennial influx of 'foreign nationals' into the State. As said earlier, it is also understood that the infiltration of refugees into the State is not a sudden development but it has been a continuous process since the 1950s. Hence, the State even today suffers from the infiltration of refugees from Bangladesh. Significantly, the Hindu Bengali migrants, who constitute the largest population of the State, have come to dominate and control all aspects of life of the people of Tripura such as

9. For details see, Bhattacharjee, S.R., n. 2, pp. 123-40.

political, economic, social, religious, etc. More importantly, the political and economic powers in the State which ought to have been with the local population, have been in the hands of these immigrants since the 1950s. This had serious socio-economic and political consequences on the State in general and to the development of the indigenous tribal population in particular. The various socio-economic and political problems, social and ethnic tensions and the various socio-political movements of the indigenous people of Tripura have been the by-product of the immigration and the consequent control of the economy and politics of the State by the immigrants. Thus, the transborder migration from Bangladesh in the case of Tripura assumes crucial significance.

While there is a general lack of development in the State by and large, the indigenous tribal people of Tripura have been the worst sufferers as a result of this phenomenon.¹⁰ In the event of all these factors and developments, the indigenous population began to feel that their rights have been taken away by the immigrants. They began to feel insecured both economically and politically. They came to realise that the different political parties like Congress (I) and CPI(M) which were led by the Hindu immigrants, were not serving the interests of the tribal people but rather felt being encroached by immigrants in every sphere of

10. Das Gupta, Malabika, "Regionalism and Separatist Forces in Tripura", in Pakem, B. (ed.), Regionalism in India with Special Reference to North East India, (Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1993), p. 309.

their life. Further, it has been noticed that "the bulk of the benefits of whatever little development that took place in the State was captured by the Bengali immigrants."¹¹

It was the aspiration of the tribal people that the two national political parties namely the Congress and the CPI(M) Wing of Tripura would serve and protect their interests. With this expectation, they supported the movements of the CPI(M) and it gained momentum with the support of the tribal people. But contrary to their expectation, these two political parties were not practically protecting the interests of the tribal people thus leading to their frustrations with the existing political parties. As said, it may be mentioned here that the indigenous people of Tripura were first politically mobilised by the Communist(CPI) party. However, when even after the four general elections in 1952, 1957, 1962 and 1967 the Communist Party could not defeat the Congress (I) and capture power and give benefits to the tribal people, a section of educated tribal youth started thinking along a different political line. They felt that their existence has been continuously threatened with the ever increasing presence of the non-tribal people and they came to realise at last that the tribal peoples' demands cannot be fulfilled by just being under the CPI(M) or any other political party. They felt the need to mobilise support of all the indige-

11. Ibid.

nous tribal people from a different political platform which would serve and protect their own interest.¹²

Thus, there was a growing political consciousness among the tribal intellectuals. The economic and cultural imbalances between the tribal people and the non-tribal people, the general lack of development in the State, the domination of the non-tribal immigrants over the indigenous people, the disillusionment of the tribal intellectuals with the national political parties including the CPI(M), and the fear of the tribal people that their economic and political interests will not be served by their ally with any existing political party led to the birth of the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS).¹³

The TUJS was born at Kaintakwprapara (a tribal village) a few miles east of Agartala in a Conference held from June 10 to 11, 1967. The Conference aimed at discussing and arriving at a solution to the political crisis among the tribal people. As such, the Conference was attended by all walks of tribal people such as employees, graduates, politicians, religious and social workers, students and youths, etc. Since the meeting was convened to discuss about the indigenous people's problems, a series of heated debates had arisen beginning with Dasarath Debbarma of CPI(M) and Aghore Debbarma of CPI. The Conference discussed at length about the problem of the indigenous tribal people and

12. Based on interview with Shyama Charan Tripura, the then party President (TUJS), on January 5, 1993 at Agartala.

13. Ibid.

the threat to their existence under the banner of any national political party. It also expressed the loss of confidence in the CPI(M) and the Congress (I) leadership that they were not interested to protect and serve the rights and interests of the indigenous tribal people. Thus amidst heated debates and discussions a new political party known as TUJS was born on June 10, 1967 and a new leadership of the indigenous tribal people was emerged.¹⁴

The organisation of the party is an hierarchical system divided into a Central Committee, Central Executive Committee, Divisional Committee, Regional Committee and Primary Committee. Its headquarters is based in the capital city of Agartala. Immediately after the formation of the TUJS, Mr. Dasarath Debbarma proposed on behalf of the CPI(M) that it should function as the tribal wing of the CPI(M). Upon the refusal of the proposal, the CPI(M) withdrew its representatives namely, Lien Prasad Reang, Gangamanik Debbarma and Ramani Mohan Debbarma from the Executive Committee of the TUJS thus leading to the rivalry between the CPI(M) and the TUJS.¹⁵

14. Based on interview with a cross section of TUJS Leaders particularly who were present at the Conference on January 5, 6, 17, 18 and 19, 1991 at Agartala.

15. Based on an interview with Mr. Rabindra Drbbarma, the then Minister of Power, Government of Tripura, and the General Secretary of TUJS on September 2, 1991 and December 27, 1992 in Shillong and at Agartala.

The Primary demands of the TUJS were four-fold : 1. Creation of an Autonomous District Council in the hill areas under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India; 2. Restoration of tribal peoples' lands from the non-tribal people which were illegally transferred; 3. Recognition of Kokborok language (mother tongue of the indigenous people of the State); and 4. Adoption of the Roman Script for the Kokborok language.¹⁶ Besides these four charters of demands, there were other demands included from time to time manifesting the interests of the indigenous people like in the fields of education, job reservations, etc.

As the TUJS was manifesting the interests of the indigenous tribal population, soon it came to be recognised as the prominent regional political party in the State. It tried to mobilise the entire indigenous population through its ideology of protecting and promoting the rights and interests of the tribal people. The TUJS began to organise various meetings, conferences to mobilise the tribal people and demanded for the formation of an Autonomous District Council for the indigenous people and also pressurised the Government to fulfill other charter of demands of the party. The movement gained momentum when the Government of Tripura through an ordinance reduced the Tribal Reserve formed by the Maharaja of Tripura by 300 square kilometers in 1968 out of 2060 square kilometres and declared Bengali as the official language.

16. Ibid.

A twenty-four-hour fast was organised by the tribal people at Agartala and a memorandum was submitted to the Union Home Minister in Delhi, highlighting their demand for the establishment of a tribal reserve as a safeguard for the tribal people. In 1969 the Hanumanthia Commission recommended the implementation of the Sixth Schedule for some States in the North-Eastern India. This strengthened the demand of the TUJS for the implementation of the Sixth Schedule and that was the central theme of their Annual Conference held in January 1969 at Durga Choudhury Para near Agartala.¹⁷ This demand for the establishment of an Autonomous District Council was strongly supported by various organisations of the indigenous population of the State such as students' organisation, tribal employees' Association, etc.

The TUJS emerging as a regional political party was inevitable at the backdrop where the indigenous population were relatively deprived which according to them was not possible to be mitigated through the framework of the national political parties. In 1968, the Tribal Students' Federation (TSF) and the Kokborok Sahitya Sabha were formed by the TUJS. Meanwhile, in the 1971 Parliamentary elections, the CPI(M) captured both the seats and the performance of the TUJS was found to be a poor one. It could secure only 8,833 votes in the unreserved Parliamentary

17. For details see, Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, pp. 61-84.

Constituency out of the total valid votes of 1,95,354.¹⁸ It supported the Tripura Maharaja who contested as an independent candidate and lost. In the 1972 State Assembly elections the CPI(M) won 16 seats (of the 19 seats reserved for the tribal people, it secured 12) while the Congress secured 41 seats. The TUJS contested for the first time in 1972 Assembly elections and had put up six candidates and had supported five other independent tribal candidates,¹⁹ but unfortunately all of them had lost.

The TUJS continued its movements and vehemently protested against the 1974 amendment with regard to Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act. The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 provided a restriction on transfer of tribal lands to the non-tribal parties. In 1974, this Act was amended and as per the provision of this amendment lands illegally transferred only since 1969 onwards could be restored to the tribal people.²⁰ The TUJS however, demanded that the provision of the Act should be applied retrospectively from 1960, as the large amount of land transfer took place even prior to 1960. The dissatisfaction of the tribal people grew stronger. On July 10, 1974 the tribal people protested in the form of massive rally in front of the

18. Ibid., p. 78

19. Dasgupta, Malabika, n. 10, p. 311.

20. For details see, Datta, Narendra Chandra, "Land Reforms", in Choudhuri, Jagadis Gan, (ed.), Tripura : The Land and its People, (Leeladevi Publications, Delhi, 1980), pp. 105-23.

Agartala Secretariat under the leadership of the TUJS.²¹ Thus, this issue became one of the support bases for the TUJS campaign in the 1977 State Legislative Assembly elections.

However, a new turn for the TUJS started in the 1977 Assembly elections. It received much wider support from the indigenous population. Some of its slogans which were appealing to its supporters were:

- (i) Kwchak Kuphur Chwng-Sia, buini tola chwng tonglia (we do not know Red or White; but we shall no more remain under the banner of any party). By 'red' and 'white' they meant the Communist and the Congress parties respectively.
- (ii) Mua chanai chakhwi chanai thangsa wngdi (Bamboo shoot eaters and all the tribal people be united)
- (iii) Chini hao tongna hwnkhe, chini kokno maswrwnqnai (The medium of instruction in educational institutions should be our language and if you want to stay in our land, you must learn our language).

These kinds of political slogans carried in local language could penetrate down to the heart of the tribal belts both among the literate and illiterate people thereby gaining the tribal mass support in many places of the State. However, as many of the tribal population were committed to the Leftist ideology, the tribal votes were mainly divided between the TUJS and the CPI(M). In the 1977 State Assembly elections, the CPI(M)-led Left Front swept the polls capturing fifty six out of the sixty Assembly seats in Tripura and the TUJS captured the remaining four seats

21. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, pp. 78-79.

and became the sole opposition party in the Tripura Assembly. The Assembly Poll in 1977 saw the total eclipse of the local Congress and the TUJS came out as a second force in the vacuum. This poll introduced the TUJS, a regional party, to the floor of the State Assembly for the first time.²²

Ever since the General Elections of 1952, the Congress and Communist parties were the two major contestants for political power in Tripura. As noted earlier, the Congress party was in dominance till the 1977 elections in the State. But with the coming of the Communist (CPIM) party into power in 1977 the hope of the congress ever coming alone to power was shattered unless and otherwise with the support of the indigenous population. The leadership of the Congress came to realise the importance of the support of the TUJS, a tribal regional political party. Indeed, the 1977 Assembly elections proved that without the support of the indigenous tribal peoples, no political party can secure an absolute majority and come to power. This situation and realisation ultimately led the high command of the Congress (I) in New Delhi, Mrs. Indira Gandhi to have a dialogue with the TUJS leader for a coalition.

Thus, the TUJS-Congress (I) alliance was signed in New Delhi for the Assembly elections of 1983. As per the terms of the

22. Dutta, Jyotish Chandra, An Introduction to the History of Tripura from Monarchy to Democracy, (Book Home, Calcutta, 1984), pp. 49-50.

alliance, the Congress (I) agreed to fulfil the charter of the TUJS demands including the creation of an Autonomous District Council under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India and sharing of power in the State. It also aimed at crushing down the power politics of the CPI (M) in the State particularly, with the help of the TUJS support. Accordingly, massive political campaigns were launched together both by the TUJS and the Congress (I) in support of their coalition which for sometime seemed to have given a new aspiration to the TUJS supporters of the tribal people. But the result of the 1983 elections was rather frustrating to the alliance groups as they failed to secure majority votes. The TUJS and the Congress (I) could secure only 10.47 and 30.51 per cent respectively, whereas the CPI (M) alone enjoyed the support of 46.77 per cent²³ which led to the formation of the left Front Government in the State for another successive term of five years.

However, the TUJS had come out as the powerful political platform of the indigenous tribesmen focusing the views and aspirations of the younger generation in particular. By then, the support base of the TUJS seemed to have increased resulting in polling 33.46 per cent of votes in the 1985 District Council elections vis-a-vis 42.47 per cent of votes polled in favour of the CPI(M), which was then in power in the State. Further, the

23. Bhattacharjee, S. R., n. 2, p. 135.

TUJS-Congress(I) alliance was voted to power in the State Legislative Assembly elections of February 2, 1988. The TUJS could secure eight seats and the Congress (I) managed to secure twenty three seats thereby the TUJS-Congress(I) becoming the majority by a very minor margin. Thus, after the gap of a decade, the Congress(I) was somehow resurrected to power mainly with the help of the TUJS. This led to the formation of Congress(I)-TUJS coalition Government in the State.

Many from among the few TUJS members elected were inducted as Cabinet and State Ministers, which had created new hopes and aspirations in the minds of the tribal people. The TUJS supporters were hopeful of the Government of not only fulfilling the demands of the tribal people but also uplifting and developing the economic and social conditions of the tribal masses. But contrary to the aspirations of the peoples, the TUJS leaders were unable to function independently of the Congress(I) Ministers who practically came to control the entire policy-making and administration of the State which turned mainly in favour of the the non-tribal population. As the TUJS leaders could not fulfill the aspirations of the indigenous people, the supporters of the party in particular and the tribal people in general became completely frustrated with the party and its leadership. In brief, this situation led to the total failure of the party in the Assembly elections of 1993 which could secure only a single seat. It was not only the failure of the TUJS but

also the Congress(I) thereby giving way to the victory of the CPI(M) which formed the Government. Further, even in the Panchayat elections of August 21, 24 and 27, 1994, the performance of the TUJS was very poor.²⁴

The conflict and factionalism among the TUJS leaders surfaced prominently with the decision of the Central Executive Committee of the organisation to expel its Party President and the Chief Executive Member of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), Mr. Harinath Debbarma - a founder and veteran tribal leader - from the party on May 15, 1995. This led to the split of the TUJS and the formation of yet another Regional Political Party called the Tripura Tribal National Conference (TTNC) in Tripura, with Mr. Harinath Debbarma and Mr. Diba Chandra Hrangkhawl as its President and General Secretary respectively, on May 17, 1995, in a convention held at the TTAADC headquarters, Khumulwng. The TTNC is being said to have a wide range of support base of the tribal people including the three frontal organisations of the TUJS - Tribal Students Federation (TSF), Tripura Upajati Karmachari Samity (TUKS) and Tripura Sundari Nari Bahini (TSNB).²⁵ The TTNC leader, Harinath Debbarma said that 80 per cent of the TUJS party workers and leaders had joined his party. In a press conference at Agartala on May 19, 1995, Mr. Debbarma said that the TUJS had deviated from its basic

24. For details see, "LF leads in Tripura Panchayat Elections", The Times of India, (New Delhi), August 30, 1994, p. 7.

25. "TUJS Splits TTAADC Chief Forms New Party", The Shillong Times, (Shillong), May 19, 1995, p. 3.

ideology and alienated itself from the backward tribal people. While a large number of tribal people in the State died of starvation every year "but the tribal based party and the State Government remained a silent spectator he said, adding that human flood from across the international border was capturing the tribals' land and property every year."²⁶ However, as per the news reports, this split within the TUJS was largely the main factor responsible for the landslide victory of CPM in thirty seated TTAADC elections held on July 26 and 29, 1995 by capturing 23 seats of the 24 constituencies where the elections were held.

Tripura National Volunteers (TNV)

In 1978, there was a problem among the TUJS leaders mainly with regard to the inadequate financial reports. This led to the resignation of Mr. B.K. Hrangkhawl from the post of General Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the organisation only after two hours of his election to the post.²⁷ The genesis of the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) can be traced to the split in the TUJS leadership. The political turmoil in the entire North-Eastern region of India is another reason for the organisation of the TNV. This turmoil is due to a number of factors, namely, political, economic, social, cultural domination of the indigenous people by other sections of the society. This

26. "Set-Back for Opposition", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), May 21, 1995, p. 3 and "Landslide Victory for CPM in TTAADC Polls", The Shillong Times, (Shillong), August 1, 1995, p. 3.

27. Based on interview with B.K. Hrangkhawl, TNV President, on April 6, 1995, Agartala.

has led to psychological and ethnic clashes in the region leading to armed struggle in different forms and with different objectives.

Political instability is yet another factor for the formation of the TNV. Tripura political instability may be compared to the political instability in many parts of the Afro-Asian and Latin American countries which is due not only to relative deprivation of some sections of the people in comparison with other section but also to the utter corruption and brutal economic, political and cultural exploitation and domination perpetuated by the alien ruling elite. This was the situation in Cuba, Nicaragua, Ghana and South Vietnam. This is true in the case of Tripura (India), etc. Thus internal factors like limited resources, tyranny, extreme corruption, deprivation, rising expectation, 'tradition vs. modernity' conflict, ethnicity and external factors, namely, colonial exploitation, imperialism, political, socio-economic and cultural dominations have been the major causes of great and small revolutions, insurrection and secessionist movements.²⁸

Like any other armed struggle groups in the world and North East India, a micro study of the armed struggle in Tripura also reveals the movement as a fight not only against the influx of 'foreign nationals' and the domination of outsiders and 'foreign nationals' in the fields of culture, economic, political, social,

28. For details see, Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, pp. 89-105.

etc., but also against internal colonisation, deprivation and massive exploitation by the immigrants upon the lives of indigenous tribal peoples.

In Tripura, the indigenous people having lost their faith in the mainstream political parties, gave a call to all the indigenous tribal people of Tripura to be united under a common political platform to fight for their existence. This made the inroad of the TUJS into the political scenario of the State mainly to safeguard the interests of the tribal people. The TUJS tried its best in its initial stages to extract as much benefits as it could from the ruling party. But as the achievement was too slow a process and meagre, there was a growing impatience and dissatisfaction among the tribal youth within the party itself. This group started losing confidence in the constitutional and moderate methods of achieving their objectives. And thinking that it was their birth right, they wanted to achieve the objectives outrightly through any means and immediately which finally led to the breakdown of the TUJS in the early 1980s.

The analysis of the functioning of the early history of TUJS reveals that there existed three schools of thought. Firstly, the moderate school of thought which was led by Mr. Shyama Charan Tripura, believed in the 'communal political strategy'. Methods must be of democratic and constitutional to achieve the desired goal, and at the same time agitation is a must for exacting benefits. Contrary to this, the second school of thought led by

B.K. Hrangkhawl, the then leading member of the TUJS, believed in militancy only. Agitational strategy was not good enough for achieving the desired objectives. To this school of thought, 'Armed struggle' was the only means of achieving the demands of the indigenous people. The tribal youths have no other way except to take up the arms to fight for their protection and existence. The third school of thought led by another leading TUJS leader and the then Chief Executive Member of Tripura Autonomous District Council, Mr. Harinath Debbarma, did not subscribe to any of the above mentioned means. His strategy can be called as a strategy of "controlled violence". Demands will be pursued but an amount of violence was also needed to threaten the system and also for demonstration of support base and power. Thus, the methods of the third school of thought combines the means of both the first and second schools of thought.²⁹

All these differences and contradictions finally led to the breaking away of the TUJS and the formation of the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) in 1978. It may be relevant to mention here that prior to the emergence of the TNV, an armed struggle organisation known as Sengkrak was born in 1967, for the second time. Earlier this was initiated by some indigenous tribal people in 1947 at Agartala. The self-styled militant leaders of this organisation from its inception proclaimed their object of creating an independent indigenous tribal State by overthrowing

29. Ibid., pp. 116-17.

the immigrants existing Government by forcible means.³⁰ But it could not sustain itself for long. The other organisation was the Tripura Sena which was led by B.K.Hrangkhawl. This organisation came into being existence in 1976-77. Thus, within the TUJS led by B.K.Hrangkhawl, the commander-in-chief of Tripura Sena continued their activities to rear up the members of the organisation. In 1977-78 'Tripura Sena' units came up in all the Subdivisions of Tripura and its volunteers and members rose up to 6,000 who were trained with militant ideology.³¹ Training in unarmed combat with lathis was also imparted in all the Subdivisions to its militant members. Land, language and political power had always been the principal bones of contention of the organisation.³²

Meanwhile, when the State Government was taking some steps to form the District Council and the restoration of tribal lands, some immigrant Bengalis being instigated by some non-tribal political leaders became annoyed. They vehemently opposed the decision of the Government and formed an organisation called 'Amara Bengali' (AB) on September 17, 1978. The AB which was against the interest of the indigenous people, called for a Tripura Bandh and also organised mass meeting to oppose the formation of the District Council. Some untoward incidents occurred at Teliamura of West Tripura during the Bandh called by

30. Bhattacharjee, S. R., n. 2, pp. 129-130.

31. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, p. 118.

32. Choudhuri, J. Gan, A Political History of Tripura, (Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1985), pp. 57-61.

AB, in which people belonging to both tribal and non-tribal communities were involved.

Under such circumstances and as a culmination of a series of incidents that took place, some tribal youth and members of the Tripura Sena contacted B.K.Hrangkhawl for future course of programme. Mr. Hrangkhawl convened a secret meeting at Kachima of South Tripura in which Chuni Koloi, Dulal Hrangkhawl, Karna Singh Jamatia and others were present. After a series of discussion in the meeting they formed the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) towards the end of 1978 with the aim to establish an independent Tribal State of Tripura by outsting the existing system of Government through armed struggle.³³ After the formation of the TNV, some selected members were sent to Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh for receiving training in arms and guerrilla warfare under the leadership of the Mizo National Front. Within a short period of time, the TNV had become successful in attracting the tribal youths in the ideologies of armed struggle and was responsible for staging several combat operations in 1980.

The Riot of June 1980

The communal Riot of June 1980 was not a sudden development but it was a culmination of the series of conflicts that were developing in the State since the 1970s mainly between the two communities-the indigenous people and the non-tribal immigrants.

33. Bhattacharjee, S.R., n.2, pp. 131-32.

Also see, Constitution of the T.N.V. Estd. 1978, (Janapad Prakashan S. S. Ltd., Agartala, 1989).

By 1978, the communal tensions in the State was mounting high. The State Assembly elections of 1977 also witnessed the shifting power from the Congress (I) to the CPI(M).

Since 1978 onward the TUJS started agitating for the establishment of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, which was aimed at protecting the rights and the interests of the indigenous people. The party also threatened the newly formed Left Front Government to take an unilateral action if this demand for the Council was not conceded to by December 1978.³⁴ Meanwhile, encouraged by the movements for the expulsion of 'foreigners' raging in Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya during 1978-79, the TUJS also gave a call for the deportation of all 'foreigners' (non-tribal immigrants) who had entered Tripura after October 15, 1949³⁵ (as mentioned, the date of Tripura's merger with the Indian Union).

On the other hand, as a reaction to the political development and the anti-Bengali campaign (non-tribal immigrants), a pro-Bengali movement called "Amara Bengali" sprang up during 1978, apparently with the backing of pro-Bengali political leaders and reportedly under the inspiration of the Anand Marg. This group started attacking tribal people wherever

34. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, p. 95.

35. Das Gupta, Malabika, "Regionalism and Separatist Forces in Tripura", in Pakem, B.(ed.), Regionalism in India, n.10, pp. 308-17.

they were found in a minority.³⁶ This group's main aim at that moment was to counter attack the various demands of the indigenous tribal people of Tripura and at the same time to protect and foster the interests of the Bengali community. They raised the slogan 'come let us pledge ourselves that we will give our life but not allow a partition of Tripura'. There were posters all over saying 'how many times should we become refugees?'³⁷ Further, as a measure of counter-attack and to fight against the tribal extremist groups namely the Sengkrak and the Tripura National Volunteers, in many Districts and Sub-divisions of Tripura, the members of the 'Amara Bengali' equipped themselves with arms and ammunitions. Thus, on the face of this, it was not surprising for the untoward incidents to take place between the tribal and non-tribal communities. The Tripura Government however, decided not to ban this Communal organisation in October 1979. This kind of a political scenario further aggravated the already created fear-psychosis and tensions between these two communities which reached its height by early 1980.

The much coveted Autonomous District Council being achieved by June 20, 1979, the next step for the TUJS and the tribal people was the elections to the Council and the deportation of the aliens.³⁸ The executive committee of the TUJS wanted the

36. Hazarika, Sanjoy, Strangers of the Mist, Tales of War and Peace from India's North East, (Viking Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1994), pp. 123-25.

37. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, p. 96.

38. For details see, Chaudhuri, J. Gan., n. 32, pp. 57-68.

State Government to arrange for the elections to the Autonomous District Council by the end of 1979. On the other hand, the Bengali population of Tripura, not knowing fully the meaning and implication of such a Council, felt extremely threatened and began opposing the demand of the TUJS. This created the atmosphere of distrust, fear and a sense of insecurity among the tribal and the non-tribal people in the entire State. On June 9, 1979, thirty persons were killed in Teliamura of West Tripura District where the 'Amara Bengali' attempted to physically stop a meeting convened by the then ruling Communist Party. Incidents of violent clashes were also reported from other places.³⁹

The Twelfth Annual Conference of the TUJS was held at Twidu (South Tripura) from March 12-15, 1980 in which various demands were discussed and formulated. One of the main demands of this conference was the deportation of 'foreign nationals' from Tripura, particularly all those who have entered the State after October 15, 1949. The party simultaneously announced its decision to launch for agitations on the failure of the Government to fulfill its demands. The contention of the party was that the perennial influx of 'foreign nationals' (Bangladeshis) was the root cause of all the socio-economic and political problems in the State. The Twelfth Annual Conference at Twidu also passed a resolution of taking two courses of action, namely, (i) deputation and demonstration in front of all Block offices simultaneously

39. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, p. 96.

on May 21, 1980 and (ii) the boycott of all markets in the State, by the indigenous tribal population during the first week of June 1980.⁴⁰ The deputation and demonstration manifesting the demands of the TUJS in all the Block offices on the date scheduled was by and large a successful one and all the tribal people were mobilised under the same banner and their common interests. Though the market boycott programme was meant for the indigenous tribal population, in many interior places even the non-tribal people had also boycotted out of fear of clash.

The entire situation in the State was going from bad to worse and it came to a flash point in the first week of June. Further, despite the mounting tension, the Government of Tripura decided to go ahead with the preparations for the elections to the Autonomous District Council after the Bill had received the Presidential assent on July 20, 1979. After the Autonomous District Council Act came into operation, communal violence erupted in Tripura in June 1980, leading to the loss of life and property on both sides.⁴¹

Meanwhile, in support of the deportation of 'foreign nationals', the Central Committee of the TUJS on May 25 and 26, 1980 decided to resort to observe bandh, boycott and picketing in

40. Based on an interview with Mr. Shyama Charan Tripura, TUJS leader on January 5, 1992 in his residence at Agartala. Also based on observation in the field during that period.

41. Das Gupta, Malabika, n. 10, p. 312.

the tribal belts from June 4, 1980. As this agitational programme was in support of the demand to deport the non-tribal immigrants, clashes between tribal and non-tribal people started right from the first day of June 1980. Meanwhile, as the TUJS leaders were mobilising to make the bandh a success, the 'Amara Bengali' incited the Bengalis to resist the tribal people with arms.⁴² This marked the starting point of the riot that went beyond the control of the State apparatus.

It was in this inflammable atmosphere of mutual suspicion, hatred and conflict that a minor incident between some tribal youths and non-tribal persons at Lembuchhera market (West District) on June 6, 1980 provided the spark of communal riot in the State. On June 6, 1980, there was an altercation between a Bengali pineapple dealer and a tribal man. A tribal man was hit with a dao. This was the spark and the immediate cause that lit the fire of the communal riot of June 1980, and for four to eight weeks Tripura witnessed an angry of violence raged on an unprecedented scale.⁴³ The anger on both sides of the communities was released in a series of bloody incidents that summer (1980). At Maharani Ampa, Amarpur, Teliamura, Udhaipur and several other areas of the West and South Tripura Districts both tribal and non-tribal people lost their lives and properties in orgies of

42. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, pp. 97-98.

43. For details see, Mukherjee, Bhabanand and Singh, K. S., "Tribal Movements in Tripura", in Singh, K.S. (ed.), Tribal Movements in India, (Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1982), pp. 317-35.

senseless killing, violence and destruction. The worse of them was a massacre of Bengalis at Mandai Bazar, 15 kilometers away from the capital city of Agartala, where 300 families were affected. While the figure of death toll varies from one source to the other, the officials put the figures of those killed and injured at Mandai to 450 and 125 respectively.⁴⁴ Within no time the flame of carnage was spread in every nook and corner of Tripura, particularly in South and West Districts. Houses and huts, cattles and crops and many other valuable properties were burnt wherever possible. Many villages were empty as people in groups ran away to the jungles and other safety places.

The June carnage was thus on both sides. The 'Amara Bengali' played the major role in accelerating and aggravating the carnage which were much to the advantage of the non-tribal people. It was estimated that out of 1.46 lakhs riot victims there were about 40,000 tribal people and out of 3,72,048 population affected, the tribal population figured at 1,44,549 and the non-tribal population 2,27,499⁴⁵. But this figure is misleading as many tribal victims living in the interior places could not be recorded due to lack of communication or other technical difficulties. The tribal people were attacked and their properties were looted and burnt. About 40,000 of them crowded in relief centres and about 2,00,000 of them fled to the jungles⁴⁶

44. Ibid., p. 331.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

where they faced acute shortage of food and essential commodities. Thus, in comparison with the less percentage of tribal population of only about 30 per cent of the total population of the State, the tribal people were the worst sufferers of the riot of 1980. The fact was that while the non-tribal people ran towards relatively developed and urban areas for refuge and safety, the tribal people on the contrary went to the jungles and interior areas. As a result they were bound to face with the shortage of essential commodities.

Further, the tribal people used only self-defensive weapons and conventional bows and arrows, daos and pipe guns. Their spokesman insisted : "Insurgency and violence are not the tradition of Tripura tribal people. They use daos (chopper) and lathi for self-defence."⁴⁷ A member of the TUJS blamed the press for accelerating the riot in Tripura because all newsmen were Bengalis who gave an exaggerated account of it.

However, by any standard, what has happened in Tripura in June 1980 is comparable to the riot accompanying the partition of the country in 1947 allowing, of course, for the difference in territorial scale between the two. Besides casualties, counted in hundreds over three lakhs people out of a total population of about 19 lakh or over 16 per cent of the total had to seek refuge in camps and most of them have been reduced to destitution.⁴⁸

47. Ibid. p. 331.

48. Roy, Ajit, "CPI(I)'s Shortsightedness", The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XV, No. 33 (Bombay, August, 16, 1980), pp. 1385-86.

Thus, in terms of the proportion of uprooted humanity, damage of lives and properties, the toll of the Tripura tragedy is perhaps heavier and greater than that suffered by the country as a whole at the time of the partition.

The utter helplessness of the Left Front Government in the critical situation during the carnage can be seen from the following excerpts from the CPI(M) Weekly, People's Democracy, (Agartala, July 13, 1980) :⁴⁹

"... Under cover of police firing, anti-social elements carried on killings, burning and looting ...

The tribals were at a disadvantage. While almost all the Police Stations, Government offices, hospitals, towns and big market were in predominantly Bengalee areas, tribal compact areas remained cut off for a long time. Those who lost their near relatives could not lodge complaints with the police stations against the murderers and miscreants. People with bullet injuries could not be brought to hospitals for treatment. People who lost their huts, houses and belongings had to pass their nights in jungles for several days without food, till it was possible for the Government to admit them in relief Centres...."

The aftermath of the communal riots was beyond what people could ever thought of. The relief camps, where thousands of uprooted men, women and children have taken shelter, were entirely under the control of bureaucrats. The growing and continuous cases of terror and tension which made thousands of people homeless, could not return to their home towns for almost

49. Ibid., p. 1385.

a year untill May 15, 1981.⁵⁰ The leaders of various other national political parties, other than the CPI(M) also came post haste to Tripura after the communal riot but found, to their dismay, the situation beyond their comprehension and so made the required noises and flew off to Calcutta by the earliest available flights.⁵¹

Thus, baring other incidents according to the report of The Times of India, "the only explanation for the Mandai Bazar genocide is that the tribal people pent up feeling of hatred against their perceived exploiters (non-tribal Bengalis) had exercised their minds to such an extent that they temporarily lost their sanity and turned savage."⁵² Comments like : "we are made to feel nobody in our own homeland", or "we have become conspicuous by our looks when we go to the city they give us amused looks and also snigger hearing the way we speak Bengali"⁵³ were heard very often.

The actual normalcy of life that prevailed in the State prior to the riot, has not been restored in the real sense of the term even after more than a decade. This fact can be understood from the growing tensions and conflict between the indigenous tribal people and the non-tribal Bengali immigrants. The CPI(M) and its allies or any other political parties in Tripura will

50. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, p. 101.

51. Roy, Ajit, "CPI(I)'s Shortsightedness", n. 48, p. 1386.

52. Singh, J. D., "Tripura Gross Neglect its Tragedy", The Times of India, (New Delhi), June 22, 1980, p. 1

53. Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 4, p. 105.

take decades to recover from this shattering development, even if appropriate and corrective measures are expeditiously taken by any party that comes to power. It may take years to mend particularly the kind of conflict and tension which has been generated by the riot of June 1980, even if appropriate schemes are taken and implemented by both Central and State Governments to completely eradicate its root causes.

Rise of TNV and Peace Accord

The years that followed, Tripura witnessed the rise of Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) and the mobilisation of the 'Amara Bengali' organisation. The later organisation was over-ground in nature and soon it turned out to be a political party. It contested the State Legislative Assembly elections in 1983 and out of 60 Assembly seats, the party contested in 53 seats. But no candidate was elected while the TUJS made some progress winning six seats out of 14 seats it contested.⁵⁴

The TNV organisation under the leadership of Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl had made its presence felt in every nook and corner of the State following the June riot of 1980. The TNV came into the limelight when it, along with the MNF, attacked a Border Security Force patrol at Bironjoypara in North Tripura on July 21, 1979 killing two BSF personnel. In the absence of Mr. Hrangkhawl in the Headquarters, the TNV was not properly organised and by December 12, 1980 the All Tribal Peoples' Liberation Organisation

54. Chaudhuri, J. Gan., n. 32, p. 74.

(ATPLO) was formed with Binanda Jamatia and Dulal Hrangkhawl as president and Secretary respectively, Chunilal Koloi was the 'General' of its arms wing. Koloi and Jamatia fell apart and started operating on their own.

At this, members of the TNV felt the need of Hrangkhawl's presence to strengthen the organisation. Thus, on August 14, 1982, Hrangkhawl and his family were kidnaped and taken to the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. By November 10, 1982 on his arrival to the Headquarters, Hrangkhawl revived the TNV.⁵⁵ Around this time, due to some internal differences within the organisation, Binanda Jamatia along with his supporters, ran away from the Headquarters and led the ATPLO. Meanwhile, as he was said to be the CPI(M) supporter, through the negotiations of the Left Front Government, Binanda Jamatia along with 295 members of the ATPLO came to surrender by July 23, 1983.⁵⁶ This surrender led the people to think that the TNV was disorganised and the insurgency in Tripura would soon be over but it was not really so. On the contrary, the TNV was able to re-establish its contacts with the MNF which had revitalised and strengthened the activities of its organisation. The organisation, to a certain extent was again weakened when Chunilal Koloi, the second in command of the TNV was arrested by the Central Reserve Police

55. Tarapot, Phanjouban, Insurgency Movement in North-Eastern India, (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993), pp. 173-79.

56. Ibid., p. 179.

Force (CRPF) on April 7, 1983 and was sentenced to life imprisonment along with two of his associates.

The TNV leader, Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl, despite the set back within the organisation caused by the surrender of Binanda Jamatia and the arrest of Chunilal Koloi, formed the "Independent Government of Tripura" in exile at his Sinlung camp in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh on July 31, 1983 with five Ministers including himself. The other Ministers were Ananta Debbarma, Kartik Koloi, Mujib Marak and Dilip Alias Soviet Koloi. His contact with the MNF and the Bangladesh Government has emboldened one of the members of his 'exile Government' to write a letter to a local daily stating that they would oppose the "Indian Colonial Government of the Left Front" and establish an "independent State of the indigenous tribal people who had been reduced to a microscopic minority by the foreigners."⁵⁷

It was against this backdrop and to undermine the importance of the surrender by Binanda Jamatia and others the terrorist activities of the TNV during this period of time was concentrated in South District of Tripura. On June 28, 1984, at Raibari in Belonia Sub-Division of South District, the TNV ambushed a police patrolling party killing eight police personnel including a Sub-Inspector of Police and six CRPF personnel and took away four SLR, one 303 rifle, one revolver, one stengun, one LMG and a

57. By a Special Correspondent, "Tripura: Tackling Terrorism Politically", The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XIX, No. 38, (Bombay), September 22, 1984, p. 1650.

large quantity of ammunitions. This group of TNV had looted the nearby Lakshmi Chherra market and set it on fire on the previous day. Again, on July 5, 1984 at Totaibari under the Ampa Police Station of South District, the TNV attacked a CRPF post which killed four and injured three personnel. There were several such attacks on the police station including the attack on the Deputy Speaker (Bimal Sinha) of the State Legislative Assembly in July 1984.⁵⁸ Thus, despite the appeared set back, the TNV has succeeded in demonstrating its capability in carrying out insurgent raids.

This scenario was followed by reactions from various organisations in the State. For instance, the Youth Congress(I) organised a 24-hour Tripura Bandh on August 7, 1984 demanding the extension of the Disturbed Areas Act to the entire State and the imposition of President's rule. The TUJS accused the Left Front Government of its failure to contain the insurgent activities. The Tribal Students' Federation (TSF) gave a call for boycotting classes in schools and colleges on August 20, 1984 to press its demands for the deportation of all foreigners (that is immigrant Bengalis), introduction of the Inner Line Permit System, etc. The 'Amara Bengali' also called a 24-hour Tripura bandh on August 21, 1984 demanding the scrapping of the laws relating to the Constitution of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) and the restoration of the alienated tribal

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 1650-1652.

people's land, dismissal of Left Front Government, suppression of insurgent activities, etc. The Government on the other hand, opposed all these bandhs and boycotts. While the boycott of classes by the TSF was a total success, the bandh called by the Amara Bengali evoked a poor response.

In retaliation to the TNV activities while invoking combing operations, the CRPF were found torturing the innocent villagers in the tribal belts. For example, Sukhadayal Jamatia, a TUJS leader, after touring some areas in South District charged the CRPF for their ill-treatment and torture of innocent tribal people.⁵⁹ Clearly enough without taking appropriate steps to remove the root cause of the tribal peoples' discontentment, insurgency cannot be stopped simply by the use of military force which results in the suffering of the innocent people only. In the Bengali speaking major population of Tripura, there are many who would admit that the tribal people of Tripura have genuine grievances of being deprived of land, employment and economic and political powers.

Therefore, notwithstanding the various measures both by the Central Military personnel and the State Government to curb the insurgent activities in Tripura, the TNV activities could not be suppressed. Indeed, when the Election Commission on December 26, 1987 announced February 2, 1988 to be the date of elections to the State Legislative Assembly, the Congress(I) had expressed its

59. Ibid., p. 1651.

apprehension that the elections would not be free and fair owing to the deteriorating law and order situation caused by the continuing TNV insurgency.

While it has been 'normal' for extremist violence to increase significantly just on the eve of any election, violence tendency was found even long before the announcement of the election date. For instance, six non-tribal people were killed at Taidudhepa on December 18, 1987, two people were killed near Killa on December 23, 1987, and again, on December 25, 1987 six more people were gunned down at Shibpara by the TNV. After the announcement for the elections and within the first week of January 1988 itself, the TNV killed twelve people.⁶⁰ These 'carnages' have been followed by 'bandhs' called by different political parties and organisations which have not always remained peaceful. The 'bandhs' did also paralyse the entire State at times for upto 36 hours at a stretch.

It was at this point of time that the Centre has realised saying that the TNV problem affects not only the State but also the national interest. This realisation resulted in the agreement signed by the then Union Home Minister-Buta Singh and the Chief Minister of Tripura -Nripen Chakravorty urging the Centre to treat the TNV insurgency as a threat to the whole nation.⁶¹ This

60. Das Gupta, Malabika, "Congress (I) Moves Misfire Pre-Election Scene in Tripura", The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, (Bombay), January 23, 1988, pp. 119-121.

61. Bid., p. 119.

followed the deployment of additional Central para-military force during the electioneering period.

Meanwhile, the TNV was targeting towards disrupting the entire process of election as that would not mean anything to the protection of tribal people's interest. Its contention was that whether the CPI(M) retains power or the Congress(I)- TUJS coalition comes to power, the plight of the tribal people would remain the same. Thus, the tribal people should not be the party to the electorate which would not fulfill the aspirations of the tribal people's interest. It was with this background that the TNV gave a strong call for 'boycott' of the entire election process of the Assembly elections by all the tribal people. They circulated and pasted pamphlets, posters, etc. in support of boycotting the elections. There were new recruitments to the TNV during this period as well. There was also a sharp increase in the number of raids by the TNV all over the State including the nearby capital town of Agartala. As stated, these insurgent activities were followed by 'bandhs' which paralysed the free movement of people and made even election campaign a difficult one. It was seen that in many tribal compact areas, the non-tribal people were not found moving. This kind of situation created more tensions and conflicts not only between the tribal and non-tribal communities but also among various political parties. Moreover, there were clashes and killing taking place from time to time basing on the party conflicts. This has

aggravated the already deteriorating law and order problems in the State.

The pressure of non-ruling political parties and the deteriorating law and order problem caused by insurgent activities and party conflicts compelled the Centre to extend the Disturbed Area Acts almost to the entire State excepting Sadar sub-division just prior to February 2, 1988 elections. This decision of the Centre was greatly opposed by the CPI(M) alleging that it was a calculative decision of the Centre and the State Congress(I) to defeat the Left Front in the elections.

However, amidst the unhealthy political atmosphere, the Assembly elections were held as scheduled on February 2, 1988 in which the Congress(I)-TUJS alliance was voted to power after a gap of a decade - two terms. As expected, the turn out of the voters, particularly in the interior areas was very poor. The TUJS for the first time making its inroad to share coalition power, has created a new hope and aspirations for the tribal people who are generally simple and peace-loving. This also created a new chapter in the history of the TNV.

The posting and mobilisation of the Central armies at vulnerable places before the Assembly elections of February 2, 1988, in Tripura, in one way, created a serious problem and obstacle to the mobility of the TNV insurgents in their areas of operation. The army carried out some systematic combing

operations and recovered some arms and ammunitions in several hide-out of the insurgents in the hills.⁶² Besides, the political problems in Bangladesh and the surrender of the MNF in Mizoram had placed the TNV to a certain extent at a disadvantageous position.

It was at this juncture that the TUJS leaders took initiative to contact some members of the TNV with a view to bringing them to the main stream of national life.⁶³ All the above situations might have led the TNV leader, Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl to write a letter to the then Governor of Tripura (Gen. K. V. Krishna Rao, Retd.) on May 4, 1988 for a peaceful solution to the problems of the tribal people of Tripura through negotiation within the framework of the Constitution of India.⁶⁴ Positive responses both by the Central and State Governments in the matter led the several rounds of talks in the direction of solving the TNV problems.

As a result of series of discussions with the representatives of the TNV culminating in a tripartite agreement, to end the eight-year old insurgency, was signed on August 12, 1988 in New Delhi by the Union Government, the Government of Tripura and the TNV. According to the agreement, the TNV had assured to come overground within a month of the signing of

62. Bhattacharjee, S.R., n. 2, p. 174.

63. Based on an interview with Devi, B.K., Congress (I) M.P. from Tripura, on January 25, 1993 in New Delhi.

64. Memorandum of Settlement signed by the TNV, Central and State Governments on August 12, 1988, in New Deldi, p. 1.

formal ceremonial home-coming of the TNV members were observed in the presence of the then Chief Minister of Tripura, Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar and the then Governor of Tripura, General K. V. Krishna Rao, (Retd.), on September 13, 1988.⁶⁷

With the signing of the agreement the common masses in Tripura and even elsewhere in the region, thought that the chapter of insurgency in the State was over. While some people opined that the accord had been arrived at to solve the basic problems but still there were others who believe that the accord did not touch upon the root causes of the problems of the indigenous people that forced them to resort to insurgent activities. Among the tribal youths, there were still some sections, who did not welcome the accord on the ground that it did not fulfill the basic problems of the tribal people. To this group, the accord should have also included a solution to the problem of 'foreign nationals' issue and their deportation.

Nonetheless, in general, the peace accord was welcomed by all political parties, different socio-economic organizations, religious organizations and the common people as a whole. Politically speaking, the increase of three more reserved seats in the State Legislative Assembly seemed to have been the concrete achievement of the TNV from the tribal people's perspective. Although there was some opinion of the TNV merging with the TUJS, but the TNV declares themselves as a separate

67. Ibid., p. 176.

regional political party subsequently after the home-coming of the TNV members. Further, with the sharing of the TUJS in the State power and its achievement in much a brief period, initially the tribal people's hope, aspirations and the confidence on the leadership of the party had greatly increased. The tribal people expected a new chapter to begin in the history of the State.

New phase of Insurgencies in Tripura

The mid 1989 marked the beginning of the new phase in insurgencies in Tripura as contrary to the expectation of the political leaders who viewed that the TNV accord signed on August 12, 1988 was the end of it. Following a tripartite agreement (August 12, 1988) of the Central Government, State Government and the TNV, the State seemed to have remained peaceful till the emergence of another militant organization - the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF) following the TNV accord and became active sometimes in mid 1990.⁶⁸ The ATTF believed in armed struggle and finding no favourable response to its demands neither from the Central or the State Governments it indulged in terror tactics and went on killing spree in the North and West Districts in Tripura.

In a signed statement, the ATTF Field Secretary, Malin Debbarma said, the Central Executive of the organisation has

68. 'Fresh Violence in Tripura', The Statesman, (Calcutta), December 29, 1990.

Also "ATTF For Separate Homeland", The Assam Tribune, (Guwahati), June 15, 1991.

decided to continue "relentless struggle" till its demands were being conceded to. The Charter of demands includes besides the setting up of a 'Separate Homeland' for the tribal people, introduction of Inner Line Permit in the Autonomous District Council (ADC) areas, bringing the entire Tribal reserved area under article 370 of the Constitution of India, deportation of 'foreigners' who have entered Tripura since 1971 following the Indira-Mujib Treaty, preparation of new voters' list deleting the foreigners and broadcast of programmes in indigenous tribal peoples' language-Kokborok-from the local Station of the All India Radio at least six hours daily.⁶⁹

Although now there may be many groups indulging in militant activities the more prominent is the National Liberation Front of Twipra (Tripura) -NLFT- formerly called as TNLF (Twipra National Liberation Front) which had surfaced in the State in mid-1989 which was led by some former TNV leaders particularly, those who were not satisfied with the process and implementation of the TNV Peace Accord. Besides, the other groups functioning are, the Tripura Liberation Organization Front (TLOF); Tripura Rajya Rakshi Bahini (TRRB), Tribal National Front (TNF) and Tripura Tribal Volunteers Force (TTVF).⁷⁰ However, among all, the ATTF

69. Ibid.

70. "ATTF, TRRB Demand Homeland within Tripura" The Assam Tribune, (Guwahati), February 24, 1992;

"Tripura militants give up arms at CM's behest", The Telegraph, (Calcutta), June 17, 1992; and

"Bank Looted in Tripura", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), December 19, 1992.

and NLFT has surfaced as the prominent groups and their activities have been more significant than the others. A new phase of insurgency has been plaguing Tripura since 1989 and thus several extremist organisations has surfaced creating serious problems for the State administration. The ATTF and NLFT had looted many arms and ammunitions from the State police personnel in their various raids. As per the newspaper reports, the NLFT is more organised than ATTF as some of the former TNV members joined the group.⁷¹ The modus operandi of the NLFT cadres showed competence and skilled actions in their first operation which led the Tripura police to observe that the attack was carried out by well trained militants.⁷²

The aim and objective of the NLFT is different from and much more concrete than that of the ATTF in the sense that it wants a 'sovereign or independent Tripura'.⁷³ Besides, one of its aims includes the deportation of non-tribal immigrants or 'foreign nationals' who have entered the State since October 15, 1949.⁷⁴

71. "Alarming Rise of Insurgency", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), May 27, 1992.

72. "Hrangkhawl aide goes underground", The News of North-East, A compilation of clippings, (Guwahati), December 1991, p.1109.

73. Ibid.

74. Like other tribal organisations, the NLFT believes that the Continuous unabated influx of 'foreign nationals' particularly since the merger of Tripura with the Indian Union on October 15, 1947 is the root cause of all the problems facing the indigenous tribal people in Tripura. The indigenous people today being reduced to a minority in their own land cannot enjoy the political power in the modern democratic system. Thus, the deportation of 'foreign nationals' is one way of solving the problems which will ultimately pave the way to regain political power and the independent princely State status which the State enjoyed until October 15, 1947.

However, excepting the growing strength of the NLFT, all other extremist groups have not maintained the continuity in keeping with their aims and objectives. The ATTF which was forceful and made its presence of operations felt in the State from 1990 also could not remain for long to achieve its objectives. There have been a series of surrender of the various extremist groups from time to time. The ATTF numbering about 1,800 insurgents had laid down arms and returned to normal life as a result of a bipartite agreement signed between the State Left Front Government and the ATTF in August 1993.⁷⁵ According to a Government spokesman, over 1850 extremists belonging to the ATTF, NLFT and All Tripura Tiger Force have surrendered to the Government since the third Left Front Government came to power on April 10,1993. About 1,650 more tribal guerrillas of various other outfits also laid down their arms before the State Government during the Congress(I)-TUJS coalition rule in Tripura that is from February 1988 to April 1993.⁷⁶ But it has been found that despite the surrender of more than 3,500 tribal guerrillas since September 1988 till June 1994 the number of extremists outfits is still on the rise in Tripura,⁷⁷ which is plagued with insurgency problem for nearly two decades now.

75. "ATTF Threat to Return to Militancy", The Times of India, (New Delhi), November 8, 1994, p.1.

76. "Extremists still active in Tripura", The Times of India, (New Delhi), June 13,1994.

77. Ibid.

The Left Front Government in Tripura, in an agreement signed with the ATTF in August 1993, promised for various facilities and economic rehabilitation for the surrendered extremists. It also promised to take up various schemes to ensure all round development of the backward indigenous tribal people.⁷⁸ But to the horror of the public of Tripura there is no end to the extremist movement in the State⁷⁹ mainly due to the failure of the Central and State Governments to fulfill all the provisions of the agreements and accord signed with the various extremist groups including the TNV accord. More importantly, there has been a lack of initiative and honesty on the part of the State or Central Governments to look into the root causes of the problems leading to extremism and decide for the appropriate action plan. For instance, Mr. Lalit Debbarma, the President of the surrendered ATTF, has threatened to 'return to the jungles' to resume the extremist activities unless the bipartite accord signed in August 1993 is being implemented soon. The provisions agreed upon in the accord are (a) deportation of 'foreign nationals' who had entered Tripura after 1971, (b) extension of areas and redemarcation of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council prior to its next elections of July 1995, (c) restoration of alienated tribal people's land, (d) increase of number of reserved seat for Scheduled Tribes in the State Assembly from 21

78. "Insurgent Activities go on Unabated in Tripura", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), June 13, 1994.

79. "Militants' Surrenders in Tripura : A Farce", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), August 12, 1993.

to 25 and named of the proposed constituencies, and (e) security to the returnees and tribal villages afflicted by attacks.⁸⁰

Even the TNV leadership has not been happy and satisfied over the non-implementation of the TNV accord (August 12, 1988). As a result the TNV threatens a State wide mass movement and to take up arms again as the Government did not implement the provisions of the tripartite peace accord.⁸¹ In October 1994, the Government of Tripura had to give a special red alert throughout the State in view of the TNV's call for an indefinite road blockade from October 23, 1994 due to the non-implementation of the accord.⁸²

Under such a political atmosphere and given the nature of unique socio-political and economic problems and the nature of continuous trans-border migration, Tripura has, over the years and decades, become a fertile ground for various insurgent movements by the indigenous tribal people. Today, the growth of the NLFT in its strength demanding a Sovereign State of Twipra (Tripura) has worried not only the people of different circles of the State but also the Government.⁸³

80. "ATTF Threat to Return to Militancy", The Times of India, (New Delhi), November 8, 1994.

81. "TNV Threatens State-Wide Mass Movement", The Assam Tribune, (GUwahati), June 16, 1991.

82. "Tripura Alert Against TNV Road Block", The Times of India, (New Delhi), October 22, 1994.

83. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, Genesis of Tribal Extremism in Tripura, (Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991), pp. 154-55.

On the other hand, and positively speaking, no doubt, to a certain extent the process of trans-border migration into Tripura, which had reduced the tribal people into a minority in their own land, has made the indigenous people politically more conscious today. The various political parties, social and religious organisations working for the protection and interests of the tribal people are quite aware of the adverse impact of the continuous influx of the non-tribal 'foreign nationals' into the State. The Government of Tripura, is more politically active and cannot completely ignore the demands of the public in general. The various regional and national political parties which are active in the State are well aware of the continued and growing problems of the impact of immigration.

Nonetheless, this kind of minor positive impact of immigration in terms of political consciousness of the tribal people, cannot surpass the plight of the indigenous people of Tripura. The perennial problems of infiltration in the small North-Eastern State of Tripura, particularly for the indigenous tribal people, has been turning acute.⁸⁴ In this regard, participating in the budget, the then Chief Minister of Tripura, Mr. Sudhir Ranjan Majumder, announced that the Government was going to constitute a Committee at the political level to find out unauthorised infiltrators and the illegal issue of false

84. For details see, "Problem of Infiltration in Tripura Turning Acute", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), January 29, 1990.

citizenship cards.⁸⁵ In a reply to the question, the then Chief Minister of Tripura, Mr. Samir Ranjan Barman, admitted that the continued infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals into Tripura was becoming a major problem.⁸⁶

Reacting over the issue of infiltration and its serious impact on the tribal people of the State, the Tribal Students' Federation (TSF) has been demanding for the introduction of the 'Inner Line Permit' system in Tripura.⁸⁷ Reiterating the importance of the system, the TSF leadership expressed that the introduction of the Inner Line Permit system will atleast put a check from further infiltration in the future.⁸⁸ In June 1984, during the visit of a central team to study the problem of the region, the Left Front Government of Tripura had urged the Centre to promulgate inner line regulation in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) areas to protect the tribal people's identity and stop further infiltration by non-tribal people. The Tripura Chief Minister, Mr. Dasarath Debbarma said that the inner line regulation should be imposed in the States'

85. "Firm Steps Against Infiltration into Tripura", The Telegraph, (Calcutta), February 17, 1991.

86. "Tripura Concern Over Infiltration", The Telegraph, (Calcutta), February 25, 1992.

87. "TSF Demand Inner Line Permit", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), September 25, 1990.

88. Based on the interview with the TSF General Secretary, Mr. Suresh Jamatia on January 2-3, 1994 at Agartala.

tribal areas following the unabated influx of aliens from across the international border.⁸⁹

The nature of infiltration and its subsequent impact has also put an alarm to the other North Eastern States as well. The issue of 'foreign nationals' is one of the major concerns of the North-East Students Organisation (NESO) today. This organisation, NESO, demands that the Central and respective State Governments of the North East should take an appropriate measure to solve the issue. The NESO, in support of this demand and "to protect against the unchecked influx of foreigners into the North East and the Centre's neglect of the region, called for a twelve-hour North East bandh on August 11, 1993, which was reported to be a success."⁹⁰

The 'foreign nationals'-Bengali-Muslim people feel insecure today in the North East mainly due to the rising movements of the indigenous people. It is reported that "the larger presence of Bengalis from Bangladesh, whose numbers continue to swell, only adds to the rivalries between the indigenous people and the outsiders which have been the root cause of ethnic tension and violence in the region."⁹¹ So is the case in Nagaland where one of the Dimapur residents, outsider - businessman says : "the

89. "Controversy Over Inner-Line Regulation", The Times of India, (New Delhi), June 28, 1994.

90. "12 Hours NE Bandh Total", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), August 12, 1993.

91. Ahmed, Syed Zubair, "Outsiders Helpless in N. E. Ethnic Tension", n. 7.

anti-outsiders feelings run deep in the Nagas and their hostilities against them reached an all-time high."⁹²

The Mizos (Mizoram) are equally aggressive against outsiders. But their anger is only directed against the Sylheti-Bengalis. The tension between the Mizos and Bengalis is acute which resulted in violence in Mizoram from September 28, 1994 which was directed to drive out the outsiders.⁹³

The May 28, 1994 massacre of 22 Bengali Muslim Settlers in Assam's Kokrajhar District by Bodo Militants was not an isolated incident. Incidents of violence against 'foreigners' or 'outsiders' by indigenous group have been in nearly all the seven States of the region⁹⁴ including the present 'anti-foreigners' movement in Arunachal Pradesh.⁹⁵ Today one of the demands of the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), Meghalaya, is the settlement of 'foreign nationals' problem.⁹⁶

All these groups of the North East, driven by fear of being devoured by an ever multiplying strength of the aliens and in

92. Ibid.

93. For details see, Sailo, L., "Violence Rocked Mizoram", The Times North-East News Digest, Vol.I, No.2, (New Delhi), November 1994, pp. 4-5.

94. Ahmed, Syed Zubair, "Outsiders Helpless in N. E. Ethnic Tension", n. 7.

95. "Solve Aliens Issue or Else no Polls : AAPSU", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), December 21, 1994.

96. For details see, Ahmed, Syed Zubair, "Anti-Foreigner Stir Revives in Shillong", The Times of India, (New Delhi), June 9, 1994. Also see, "Pariat Admits Gravity of Foreigners Issue", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), June 5, 1994.

some cases fired by deep chauvinistic zeal, advocate ethnic cleansing. The fact is that all the indigenous groups of the North-East justify their act by citing the example of Tripura, where the tribal people, who were in a majority in their own land till 1950, were gradually outnumbered by continuous influx of Bengalis.⁹⁷ Thus, the impact of trans-border migration in Tripura did not remain confined to the State alone but also covered the entire North-Eastern States. Today the entire North-Eastern region is stirred by the foreign nationals issue. If the Governments of all the North-Eastern States and the Centre do not take any action plan it may turn out to be more problematic in future. The policy of the introduction of photo identity cards for the voters and the discussion of border fencing surrounding the international borders are in fact the response of the Central Government towards the problem. But a more concrete action plan by the Governments is required.

97. Ahmed, Syed Zubair, "Outsiders Helpless in N. E. Ethnic Tension", n. 7.

CHAPTER V

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TRIPURA

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The society, religion and economic conditions of Tripura had undergone a tremendous change with the process of immigration of the non-tribal people. It is quite natural that wherever there are two divergent communities living close to each other, an interaction between cultures and societies are bound to take place. In such cases, it is possible for the larger community to influence, dominate and modify the society of other relatively weaker community. As such, migration is significant because it changes not only society and culture of the weaker one, but also the demographic and economic balance of groups within a given space. Hence, the "protection" of space and economic opportunities that exist within it are often central objectives of the local population, while the expansion of opportunities within that space is a central objective of migrants. Migration within a multi-ethnic society or two-ethnic society, therefore, frequently has destabilizing effects and tends to arouse intense conflicts.¹ By and large, the presence of migrants in Tripura has shaken the foundations of the Boroks' or Tripuris' (indigenous people) socio-economic, religious and political structures and weaken the cultural ties among the various clans of the indigenous tribal people. Trans-border migration has been a force for social, cultural, economic and political change in Tripura. It provides us with an opportunity to see the problems and conflicts

1. Weiner, Myron, Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India, (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978), p. 3.

that arise from inter-state or trans-border migration in a low income State with a high population growth and high density of population. The Bengali Hindus who took refuge in Tripura were largely employed in different capacities by the Kings during the 1940s. Particularly in the years following the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, the Bengalis have started living in Tripura as the close neighbours of the indigenous tribal communities. In such a situation, the inflow of the Bengali cultural elements and their economic impact into the indigenous people's society became almost inevitable.²

To understand the impact of immigration on socio-economic aspects, an analytical study of Tripura society is required.

IMPACT ON SOCIETY

The socio-cultural and religious environment is vital in shaping and developing the socio-culture of any society. A society may grow either towards good or bad depending upon the nature of social environment of a particular society. An average child comes into the world with the inherited capacity for acquiring the general ways of life of any society. The continuation of a human social system is not guaranteed by an hereditary pre-disposition, but it depends on social environment and learning. The socio-cultural environment has a force that can shape

2. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, Genesis of Tribal Extremism in Tripura, (Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991), pp. 55-56.

and influence the thinking, attitude, outlook, philosophy and the entire ways of life of a person.

The impact of non-tribal immigrants seems to have been so great upon the Tripura tribal society to the extent that the hilly peoples of Tripura seemed to have now lost their own distinct identity in some respects.³ This is evident from the way the tribal peoples were given with non-tribal names such as from Wakhirai to Banikantha, Naphurai to Mahananda, and Kwplai to Bijay. The tribal people bearing the non-tribal or plain peoples name can be attributed to certain factors, which many of the intellectual tribal people today believed it as the imposition of Hindu culture upon the tribal society. To them it was so designed that the mass of the indigenous peoples could not realise it until recently.

There is no exact date of this impact on the tribal society. But the history says that till the medieval period, even the tribal Kings of Tripura had names in their own original dialect. In the medieval period, the chief (King) of the Tipra (Tripura) tribe who defended his country against the Muslim power of Bengal as recorded in Rajmala, was Chengthung Fa.⁴ Later, the King of

3. Ibid.

4. Rajmala, written in Bengali language, is the recorded administrative book that depicts the history of the rule of indigenous tribal Kings of Tripura. Chengthung Fa means the father/chief of the genesis/beginner (Chengthung-genesis/origin, Fa-a title means Father/Chief). Perhaps he was the first to have faced the challenge of any other power and defended the kingdom from Muslim invasion. Thus, it is not surprising that this King was named as Chengthung Fa.

Tripura dropped the original title Fa, and assumed the title Manikya and hence their dynasty came to be known as Manikya dynasty. As said earlier, the modern scholars believe and describe that the Tripuris like the other tribes of North-Eastern India were of Mongoloid origin.⁵

There are two schools of thought with regard to the change of the King's title from Fa to Manikya. Chronologically speaking, Chhengthung Fa was succeeded by his son King Dangai Fa. According to Rajmala and local traditions, King Dangai Fa divided his kingdom into seventeen provinces/divisions and placed them under his seventeen princes. While Ratna Fa, the youngest prince of Dangai Fa was the most intelligent, the rest of the sons were incompetent to be Kings. Ratna Fa was sent to the Council of the Nawab of Bengal by his father Dangai Fa and spent several years there. During his stay, the Sultan of Gour was highly pleased with the charming manners and uncommon intelligence of the prince. There the Sultan and the prince came to an unholy alliance. The prince got military help from the Sultan/Nawab to capture entire Tripura kingdom for himself on his father's death. With the help of the mercenary forces, he defeated his elder brothers and declared himself the King of Tripura. As a mark of gratitude Ratna Fa presented the Nawab with some elephants and a valuable ruby. In return, the Sultan of Gour conferred the title

5. Roy Choudhuri, Nalini Ranjan, "The Historical Past" in Chaudhuri, Jagadis Gan, (ed.), Tripura : The Land and its People, (Leeladevi Publications, Delhi, 1980), pp.13-42.

'Manikya' to Tripura King and recognized Ratna Fa as Ratna Manikya.⁶ The second school of thought believes that King Dangai Fa had seventeen sons among whom Ratna Fa was the youngest and ascended the throne in 1467 A.D. Upon testing, Ratna Fa was found to be the most intelligent and was sent to the Council of Nawab of Gour and Bengal to learn about the art of administration. After being proved intelligent, Ratna Fa was presented with the frog diamond by the Nawab of Gour from which he derived the title of Manikya. Since then all the latter Kings had the title of Manikya, but prior to that all the Kings of Tripura had the title of Fa which resembled with the Thai-Shan dynasty, that is Fa (King).⁷

Henceforth, the aboriginal title 'Fa' meaning father was shed off by the rulers of Tripura. As said, King Ratna Manikya brought with him three Bengalis from Lakshanabati - Bara Khandab Ghosh, Pandit Raj and Jaynarayan Sen. With their help, the King established an administrative system in the Muslim pattern to maintain a close relation with the Muslim rulers of Bengal. This period marked the beginning of the entry of Hindu Brahmins into the administrative court of the Kings of Tripura who began to slowly influence the Kings and their subjects.⁸ It is believed

6. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

7. Based on interview with B.C. Debbarma, Retired Advocate on January 17, 1992, Agartala, and Suresh Chandra Debbarma, a Retired Primary School Headmaster on February 5, 1992.

8. Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, Tripura Administration, The Era of Modernisation (1870-1972), (Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1986), p. 14.

that Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak Shah, 1455 to 1476, of Bengal was the contemporary of Ratna Manikya who probably helped Ratna Fa to usurp the kingdom.⁹ The Hindu Brahmins were successful in influencing the succeeding Kings and royal families with the Hindu culture with the help of a view that the tribal culture and religion were not as developed as that of Hinduism in terms of its rituals. The Kings of Tripura wanted to be Hinduised mainly with a view of maintaining good relations with other kingdoms and also for a better recognition by the outside world, without much realization of its subsequent impact upon Tripuri society.

However, for long, the influence of Hindu Brahmins particularly with regards to the change of tribal names to plains names or Hindu names was strictly confined to kings and royal families at the capital, Agartala. The reason for this confinement was that probably the royal families wanted to maintain a distinction of high class from the general masses. Thus, the influence of the plain people to change tribal names to Hinduised/plain names among the tribal people of Tripura is a modern phenomenon particularly towards the closing period of Kings' rule. However, the exact date or period, of the indigenous people being influenced by Bengali-Hindu names cannot be ascertained. But certainly, the process of influence upon Tripuri society could be attributed to mainly two factors : Firstly, the immigration of Hindu Bengalis population in large number since

9. Roy Chaudhuri, Nalini Ranjan, n. 5, p. 21.

the 1940s and along with them the subsequent advent and influence of Hinduism in the State. Secondly, the introduction of education among the indigenous people of Tripura.

(i) Influence of Hinduism Upon Tribal Society

As it has already been mentioned, influx of thousands of refugees from the then East Bengal (now Bangladesh) owing to communal riots in Noakhali, Dacca, Mymensingh and other places took place during the partition of the Indian sub-continent (1947) or both before and after the death of King Bir Bikram Manikya (he died on May 17, 1947, just three months before Indian independence).¹⁰ As already pointed out earlier, it is a well-known fact that like any other tribes of North-East India, the Tripuris, or the Borok people practised the tribal religion called animism. And some of the names of their gods are, Mwtai Kotor (Almighty God), Burasa (god of evil), Mwtai Kaham (god of goodness), Lamprabothop (god of path), Twima (god of water), Noksu (god of house), Malima (god of crops/food), Haichukma (god of hidden), Thumnaibonai (god of evil wind), etc. They had gods for all occasions and purposes with different names and functions and all these gods are still being worshipped by the indigenous people of Tripura.

But with the Kings bringing Hinduism and the Brahmins to perform Hindu rituals and with the large number of immigration of

10. Chaudhuri, J. Gan, A Political History of Tripura, (Inter-India Publications, New delhi, 1985), pp. 47-49.

Bengalis in the 1940s and 1950s, the practice of the Hindu rituals had penetrated among the tribal society. Moreover, as Hinduism was more developed in ritualistics than animism, the kings of Tripura wanted all the subjects to accept Hinduism. But as the tribal people were not familiar with Hinduism, (it being quite new for them), many Hindu Brahmins came to settle in every tribal village in order to perform the Hindu rituals for all occasions. Besides land and houses, the Brahmin families were provided with everything they wanted by the villagers while performing the rituals. The Brahmins were consulted and called for on every occasion including at the time of child's birth, naming, death, etc. And whatever they (Hindu Brahmins) said were blindly believed, followed and obeyed by the tribal people. But as the Brahmins naturally were unfamiliar with Kokborok language (Borok or indigenous people's language), they started giving Hindu-Bengali names to the Boroks or Tripuris discarding their own original and indigenous names in their own language, Kokborok. To the tribal families, the Hinduised names given by the Brahmins were not easy to pronounce and remember and therefore the Brahmins used to keep the record in a written form in the respective family. As such, excepting official purposes, the Hinduised names were not in use both by the Tripuri family members and general people. Thus, all members of the family have names of their own language.¹¹

11. Based on observation and interview with some tribal leaders : Late Binode Behari Debbarma (in February 1984), Suresh Chandra Debbarma, Har Kumar Debbarma of Amtali village, (P.O. Brajapur), Bimal Debbarma of Morgangkami, K.K. Debbarma of Bairahathai, Chandradhan Debbarma of Kamalpur, Rajani Kaipeng and Dakshina Reang of Mission Compound, Agartala, on January 10-15, 1991 and July 8-15, 1995.

(ii) Introduction of Education in Tribal Society

The second factor that had influenced upon the Tripuri society with the plain people's names is the introduction of democratisation of administration and spread of education among the indigenous people. Education was never given any importance among the tribal people of Tripura until the closing period of Kings' rule, 1940s. It was felt necessary only among the non-tribal people for getting jobs. On the contrary, as the Tripuris were having everything in plenty including lands, crops, resources and agricultural revenues to sustain themselves, they did not feel it necessary to have education and work in the offices. Most Tripuris felt it easier to cultivate and sustain themselves than to take trouble to study and work in offices. As such the need for education among the Tripuris was never felt important. Further more, besides having their own economic limitation for studies, there were no educational facilities provided to the indigenous people of Tripura.

Nonetheless, the situation did not remain the same. Since the early twentieth century Kings like Bir Chandra Manikya, Radhakishore Manikya, and Birendra Kishore Manikya introduced the modern system of administration, along the line of democratic principles. For example, King Birendra Kishore Manikya introduced the Civil Service examination system in the State prior to 1923 which gradually transformed the autocratic administration and the

aristocratic society into a democratic and bureaucratic one.¹² The work of modernisation was further carried on by King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya who was formally installed as king at the age of twenty in January 1923. After he died on May 17, 1947, his son Kirit Bikram Kishore was only fifteen years old and thus, a council of Regency was constituted to administer the State. Finally, as mentioned earlier, the administration of the State was taken over by the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, as per the Merger Agreement signed by Maharani Kanchanprabha Devi on behalf of the minor Maharaja Kirit Bikram on September 9, 1949.¹³ Thereafter, the modernisation process was further accelerated in the State.

To spread education among the indigenous people, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya established some educational institutions including Primary and High Schools in the capital city of Agartala. Thereafter many Primary Schools were established in almost all the interior areas with a view to mainly spread education among the Tripuris. For instance, in 1945, the Tripura Rajya Jana Sikhya Samity was formed. This organisation had an important role in spreading mass education in the Tripuri society and many Primary Schools were opened at many places in the State.¹⁴ By then, there were already few Tripuri educated people capable of even running King's administration or

12. Chaudhuri, J. Gan, n. 10, p. 47.

13. Ibid.

14. Roy Chaudhuri, Nalini Ranjan, n. 5, pp. 40-41.

to be in King's Council of Ministers. But only the Bengali non-tribal immigrants were appointed as teachers and Council of Ministers which further paved the way for further immigration of both educated and common non-tribal Bengalis into Tripura from elsewhere like Dacca and other parts of Bengal.¹⁵ As a consequence of the non-tribal Bengali immigrants being appointed as teachers in all the educational institutions, it was quite inevitable that Bengali was made the medium of instruction of education in Tripura since the 1950s.

This process of development made the Tripuris almost compulsorily to go to the Primary Schools and thereafter to higher educational institutions depending upon their success and interest. Interestingly enough, in the process, when the tribal people had started coming to the primary schools for admission, the non-tribal Bengali teachers found it very hard and difficult to pronounce and spell out indigenous people's names in Kokborok and therefore, started giving them Bengali names for official purposes. The tribal people were happy being told that they were given good and new names. This process slowly made the Tripuris to accept and practice giving the non-tribal names to their children. The process was made further possible in the subsequent generation of tribal society due to the large scale migration of the non-tribal population to the State since the 1940s and

15. For details see, Ganguli, J.B., The Benign Hills : A Study in Tripura's Population Growth and Problems, (Tripura Darpan Prakashani, Agartala, 1983), pp. 1-3.

thereby making the indigenous population a minority in their own homeland since the 1960s.¹⁶ Thus, on the face of these circumstances and combined with the influence of Hinduism and education, it became a common practice for tribal people to have the non-tribal names not realizing the future consequence of their identity crisis. Thus, almost all the indigenous people of Tripura have aliens names.

However, the situation did not remain the same. By the mid-1980s the situation had changed the trend of tribal society in different directions. During this period the Hindu Brahmins are losing ground of their control or domination on the tribal society. Today, the Hindu Brahmins are not seen moving in the tribal villages as they have been driven away by the tribal people due to the dissatisfaction over their activities and subsequent demands of the Hindu priests. The fact is that the Borok people (Tripuris) had lost their faith and confident upon the Hindu priest perceived in the line of rationality. Tribal people now are not found performing the rituals of Hinduism on all occasions. As such the indigenous original names among the tribal people - Boroks - are slowly found resurrecting in the Tripuri society today. Some grown up people are also found changing their plain names to the original names in Kokborok by an affidavit in the Judicial court. For instance Rev. Mahananda Jamatia had changed his name to Naphurai Jamatia

16. Based on interviews with a crossed section of tribal leaders, n. 11.

(on December 21, 1988 Agartala), Jogendra Debbarma to Joshua Debbarma (on January 30, 1989, Khowai, West Tripura) and Mrs. Sadhana Debbarma to Salkati Debbarma (July 7, 1995, Khowai, West Tripura) by an affidavit in the Judicial Court. It may also be mentioned here that since the Tripuris could not wipe out the practice of animism even with the advent of Hinduism, they still practice the religion which is an admixture of both animism and Hinduism and many are being found converting themselves to Christianity today as well. This can be evident from the fact that under the Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU), there are 12 Associations, over 400 Churches including fellowships and 69 full time workers, 41 Pastors and 28 Evangelists besides about 50 to 60 missionaries from Mizoram and Manipur working in Tripura in different capacities. Although an exact figure is not available but there are about 50,000 Christian members under TBCU and each year an average of 2,500 to 3,000 new conversion to Christianity from other religious backgrounds are recorded.¹⁷

The most notable and remarkable feature of development of Tripura society since the 1970s and more importantly the June riot of 1980, is the fast growing trend of Christianity among the indigenous people of Tripura. In fact, Christianity could have

17. Based on interview with Rev. R. Kaipeng, General Secretary of Tripura Baptist Union at A.D. Nagor Mission Compound on July 14, 1995. Also, Tripura Baptist Christian Union Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1938-1988, (Tripura Baptist Christian Union, Agartala, 1988) pp. 66-73 and a pamphlet, Tripura Baptist Christian Union Doing Mission.

spread and developed much earlier, had the Christian Missionaries been permitted during the King's dynasty to enter Tripura. It was only during the last part of the King's rule that the New Zealand Baptist Missionaries were permitted and established a Mission Compound at Agartala in the land donated by the King of Tripura. However, they were not permitted to preach the Gospel among the King's subjects, Tripuris or Boroks, until King Bir Bikram's death (May 17, 1947). But today, Christianity in the Tripuri society is growing so fast that one can find Christian groups and a church in every tribal village. If the present trends of growth of Christianity among the Borok people or in the Tripuri society continues, then within a decade or so the entire Tripuri society would be converted to Christianity. This can be evident from the fact that the Borok or Tripuri Christian leaders are striving hard to convert the entire indigenous people to Christianity.

Impact on names of places in Tripura

The impact of immigration over the names of places in Tripura also cannot be overlooked. It was quite natural that the non-tribal Bengali teachers, officials, clerks, etc., who constituted a large number in administration, found it difficult to pronounce, spell out and record the original names of places in Kokborok language. Most of the important offices like post-office, Kacharis, Secretariat, etc., have been headed by the non-tribal people. As a result, in the process of development of Postal Communication, transport system and other aspects as well,

the non-tribal Bengalis (as they faced the difficulty of pronouncing the Kokborok names of places) slowly started changing the original Kokborok names of places to Bengali names. And as the original Kokborok names of places were not recorded in the offices, in the process the new changed names were being recorded for all official purposes. This is a very modern phenomenon. For instance, the Tripuris call the capital of Tripura as Agula or Aguli or Ah-ghor which means a place where plenty of fishes are available but this has been modified and recorded as Agartala. All the places in Tripura in fact had their own original names in Kokborok which are not found in official records. For example, the original name of Ramnagar of Bishalgarh Police Station, Tripura West was Twidu Khampar, and the original name of Rangapania of the same Police Station was Chwitan. Similarly, Twisakuphur, Twidu Police Station and Twisarangchak, Ampu Police Station of South Tripura District have been changed to Dolachhara and Sonachhara respectively and Twithaiplok, Teliamura Police Station of Tripura West to Chailtabari. The name of the Headquarters of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council is Khumulwng, but the non-tribal plains people refer to it as Radhapur. These are some of the few examples of the impact of immigration upon the changes of the original names of places to the non-tribal plains in Tripura. In brief, excepting the tribal compact belts, all the names of urban areas have been changed by the non-tribal officials. Today, the names of all the towns,

important places and urban areas have been transformed and named in alien's names.

Impact on Traditions and Customs

The impact of immigration is also found upon Borok or Tripuri customs, traditions and ways of life as well. As the immigrants became a majority and dominant, and live in close contact with the Boroks or Tripuris, they have been influencing their culture, tradition, customs and ways of life in many respects. For example, in the custom and tradition of the Boroks, at the time of marriage, the groom did not usually demand anything, gifts, money or any other property from the bride's side, except those items given out of free will of bride's parents. But today, many Tripuri grooms are being found practising to demand from the bride's parents either in cash or in kind, even apart from those items of free will. This practice never existed in the Borok's custom and tradition. Of course this kind of practice is not prevalent in the entire Tripuri society, but only among a limited section of society particularly those who have been badly affected by Hinduism. Although all the Tripuris do not practise the culture of Hinduism, but it has greatly influenced the Tripuri society in their custom and tradition of marriage and in certain cases bride's parents are seen coming forward to offer all the attractive gifts proposals including money and landed properties in order to get a suitable and better off groom for their daughters. Nonetheless, this practice has been facing a series of criticism by the affluent

tribal society particularly by the intellectuals and the Christian groups. The Borok(Tripuri) Christian Society in fact opposes it as an evil practice of the society.

Further, the immigrant population had also influenced the Tripuris in their ways of life and mode of dressing. The tribal men folks have been influenced by Longis, Dhotis, etc., which were unknown to them earlier, while the tribal women folks were badly influenced with sarees and blouses leaving aside their own traditional dresses, that is puidre-puichang for men and Rignai and Risa for women. In fact, in most of the schools, sarees have been made school uniform and the tribal women studying in those institutions are not exempted. Many tribal women employees are also found attending offices with sarees and blouses as they feel quite uncomfortable to come with their traditional dresses Rignai. This is quite natural on the face of the immigrant Bengali population which constitutes the majority of not only the total population of the State but also in the State administration.

However, the impact of immigration on dresses of tribal people had become counter productive in the early 1980s with the Tribal Students' Federation (T.S.F.) taking the initiative to revive the culture by imposing the tribal women to wear their own traditional dresses. The TSF also demanded the State authority to instruct the heads of the schools in tribal areas to allow the tribal women students to attend classes with their traditional dresses in lieu of respective school uniform. This demand had

been complied with by many school authorities in tribal compact areas. Furthermore, today the Tripuris are giving more importance to their own culture and dresses resulting in most tribal women wearing their traditional dresses. The tribal women dress shop namely The Rignai Choice had also been opened recently at Krishnanagar in Agartala where one can buy indigenous traditional dresses of her own choice.

It may be noted that at one stage of time, speaking Kokborok, the mother tongue of the Tripuris or Boroks, among the Tripuris was not considered as civilized or standard particularly by the urban dwellers. In many offices and in urban areas speaking Kokborok was even mocked at by both the immigrants and tribal people of urban dwellers. This was made possible as the Tripuris became outnumbered by the immigrants. Furthermore, it may be attributed to not only the marginalisation of tribal people by the immigrants but also the Kings of Tripura who recognized Bengali as one of the languages in the State and wanted his subjects to learn and speak Bengali. It is believed that Radha Kishore Manikya who reigned the State from 1897-1909 was a great patron of literature and learning. The Tripura Gazette, an official newspaper was first published during his reign in Bengali language. He was an intimate friend of Rabindra Nath Tagore, a famous Bengali poet and writer. He also gave financial help to the great Bengali Scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose for his researches in Science.¹⁸ The succeeding Kings,

18. Roy Choudhuri, Nalini Ranjan, Tripura Through the Ages, (Sterling Publishers Pvt.Ltd., New Delhi, 1983), pp.55-57.

Birendra Kishore Manikya (1909-1923) and Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya (1923-1947) were also patron of Bengali literature. They took keen interest to spread the education and tried to develop the modern means of road and communications. King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya composed many songs and wrote a historical drama Jayabati, and on the occasion of 80th birthday of Rabindra Nath Tagore, the King held a special Darbar and conferred the honorific title Bharat Bhaskar or Sun of India to the poet.¹⁹

Thus, under the above circumstances when Bengali received a great impetus from the Kings of Tripura, it was not much surprising that most of the royal Tripuri or Borok families living in Agartala giving more importance to Bengali language. As Kings wanted, all the royal families and Borok people living in the capital (Agartala) did not speak in their mother tongue, Kokborok even at home and outside but spoke only in Bengali. As a result, slowly they started forgetting Kokborok and eventually their children and generation could not speak any word in Kokborok and had completely forgotten their mother tongue. This was the situation of Tripura till the early 1980s.

Indeed, since the late 1970s there were movements by the TSF and a regional political party, the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS) for the introduction of Kokborok as the official language in the State. This demand, together with the movements of other organisations such as, the Tripura Sena and Tripura National

19. Ibid., pp. 57-60.

Volunteers (TNV), had brought some renaissance of Tripuri or Borok culture, tradition and ways of life not only among the rural dwellers (of Borok people) but also the city dwellers.

More importantly, the post- riot of June, 1980 has been marked by a strong renaissance of Tripuri/Borok people's culture and tradition. Since the riot of June, 1980, most of the Boroks or Tripuris living in Agartala and other urban areas and who once lost their own culture and tradition including their own mother tongue (Kokborok), had started rethinking and learning Kokborok. Many educated affluent Borok people in Agartala had taken keen interest in learning and speaking Kokborok and reviving their own culture. It may be mentioned here that due to various movements and demands of the different socio-political organizations of the tribal people of Tripura, Kokborok has been recognized as one of the official languages of the State in the recent past.

Further, the beginning of the 1990s is marked by the emergence of various socio-cultural organizations of the Borok people in Tripura. For example, the Kokborok Community Welfare Society (KCWS) was established in 1989 (Registration No. 1618) under the initiative of Rev. J. B. Debbarma, Rev. K. K. Debbarma, Mr. Sridam Debbarma, Rev. Naphurai Jamatia and others. Its main purpose is to develop the socio-cultural and economic aspects of the community. Apart from the various socio-cultural service to the community, the KCWA is involved and engaged in imparting adult education to the community in the rural areas of the State.

In 1989, Mr. Joshua Debbarma (teacher) felt the necessity of unity among the indigenous people of Tripura through socio-cultural development. Hence, under his initiative, a meeting was held at Madhuti Tribal Rest House on June 27, 1989 at 5 p.m., which was presided over by Maharaja Kumar Sahadev Bikram Kishore Debbarma. Among others, the meeting was attended by Braja Kishore Debbarma, Narendra Debbarma, Becon Jamatia and many other well-wishers. Finally, the meeting ended with the formation of Tripura Tribal Socio-Cultural Development Organisation (TTSCDO). Its main objectives are to revive the history of Tripura, to preserve the historical monuments of Tripura, to bring about the unification among the indigenous people of Tripura through cultural development, and to develop and preserve socio-cultural identity among the indigenous people of the State from the grass-root level. As part of reviving the history of Tripura, the TTSCDO had published the Tripura Calendar called the Tring in Kokborok language in 1993-94 which depicts the Tripura Era. Since its inception, the organisation has been engaged in various activities to bring about the socio-cultural development of the Borok people and the renaissance of their own culture.

The Kokborok Tei Hukumu Mission (KOHM) with Rev. Naphurai Jamatia, Mr. Kwchangrai Debbarma, Mr. Braja Kishore Debbarma and Mr. Gohnga Jamatia as its founders, was established in 1993 (1403 in Tring Calendar). Its main aims and objectives are :

- (a) to do research and dig out the original Kokborok people's customs, traditions and cultural life styles;

- (b) to encourage the Kokborok speaking people to speak, read, write and publish Kokborok literature in Roman script;
- (c) to bring about language unity among the Borok people; and
- (d) to preserve and promote Borok people's culture in the national and international level.

This organisation has been emphasising on the development of Kokborok language. Many leaders of the organisation are also engaged on research works to find out reasons of many tribal people living in Agartala who did not learn and speak their own mother tongue, Kokborok. Presently, some leaders of the organisation are engaged in the second edition of the Kokborok to English Dictionary. Besides, the Kokborok Sahitya Sabha Society is also doing some works to develop the Kokborok literature through writing and publications of books, counting methods, etc. in Kokborok language.

In the recent past, under the initiative of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, a Kokborok film called Langmani Haduk depicting the economic life and culture of the indigenous people of Tripura, was completed and shown in and around the cinema halls of the State.

Further, the Borok peoples' Human Rights Organisation (BPHRO) and the Borok Peoples' Women Forum (BPWF) were formed in the State on July 7, 1994 and February 18, 1995 respectively. The main objectives of these organisations are to voice and fight against the violation of Human Rights such as torture, killing of innocent tribal villagers, rape cases, etc.

All these organisations are thus, found committed to preserve and promote the socio-cultural life and interests of the Borok people of Tripura. They are today doing a commendable service, so as to bring about a complete renaissance in the Tripura society.

Thus, the impact of immigration on the Tripura society in the 1980s and 1990s has been that of reversed effect and revival of the Tripuri culture. The tribal people in Tripura are quite aware and conscious of reviving their culture, tradition, custom and more importantly of their identity and rights. The emergence of the various socio-cultural organisations such as the Borok People's Human Rights Organisation and the Borok People's Women Forum are the indication of the new trend in the Tripura society, which are committed to fight against the cases of Human Rights Violation and socio-economic discrimination in the State.

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON TRIPURA ECONOMY

It is quite natural that the ever increasing rate of population growth without substantial revenue resources of development would certainly retard the economic development. The State of Tripura is one of the glaring examples in North-East India of such a phenomenon where the continuous and unabated influx of foreigners/Bangladeshis into the State had retarded its economic growth.²⁰ The fact is that the continuous unabated high

20. For details see, "In Tripura, Influx of Foreigners to Retard Economic Growth", The Assam Tribune, (Guwahati), April 9, 1991, p. 3.

rate of population growth caused by influx of outsiders and natural birth, has a significant impact on the local economy. The impact may hit in both directions, that is, positive or negative. But by and large with the lack of industrial and technological development, it is bound to have more of negative impact than the positive aspect. The study of the case of Tripura would in one way substantiate this phenomenon. Besides, as already mentioned political and social impact of immigration, the impact of immigration particularly on the indigenous people's economy has been far more significant.

Introduction of Plough Cultivation

No doubt the refugees or immigrants acted as growth booster in the State. In one way they have been the main source of both skilled and unskilled labour-input. One of the significant contributions of the immigrants is the introduction of plough cultivation to agricultural development on a large scale. The increase of State total revenue is primarily dependent on the agricultural products. In the initial stages the immigrants occupied the vacant lands and introduced plough cultivation on an extensive scale as against the practice of shifting cultivation of the local people. This naturally had given a considerable increase in the production of rice/paddy.²¹ This had resulted in the change of shifting cultivation to plough cultivation which

21. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri : Refugee Rehabilitation and Its Impact on Tripuras Economy, (Omsons Publication, New Delhi, 1988), p. 111.

Table 5.1: Total Net Area Sown, Total Area Under Rice Cultivation and Total Yield of Rice.

Year/Decade	Total Net Sown Area (Area in Hectares)	Total Area Under Rice Cultivation (Area in Hectares)	Total Yield of Rice (Yield in metric tonnes)
1953-54	1,87,203.7	1,58,110.00	1,36,980.00
1961-62	2,27,176	1,74,830.00	1,69,680.00
1970-71	2,40,000	2,86,060.00	2,56,100.00

Sources : 1. Statistical Abstract 1964 (government of Tripura, Agartala, 1965), p. 36.
2. Statistical Outline of Tripura 1971 (Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1973), pp. 34-35.

seemed to have increased the quantum of food production till the 1970s. Since 1953-54 till 1970-71, there has been a steady increase of food crops. As a result, there has been an ever growing demand for more lands in the plains for plough cultivation.²²

Nevertheless, although there has been a steady increase of crops production due to settled plough cultivation introduced by the immigrants, it could never substantiate particularly with the high growth rate of population caused by a large scale influx of erstwhile East Pakistanis and now Bangladeshis into the State during these periods. On the phase of the increase of population and cultivators, it is bound to increase the food crops, but at the same time the amount of consumption also increases correspondingly. Thus, practically the settled cultivation could not indeed contribute much to the economic development of the

22. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, n. 2, pp. 56-57.

State as claimed by some sections of the society. It only made a section of the immigrants richer in the new abode.

Urbanisation

Growth of urbanisation in Tripura may be attributed to the growth of population mainly caused by the process of unceasing immigration. As such urbanisation in Tripura is comparatively a modern phenomenon. Even Agartala, the capital of Tripura, was a village of moderate size with a population of 875 in 1864.²³ But Agartala accounted for the majority of the urban population in Tripura till 1991 census and as such it may be said that the growth of urban centres in Tripura has taken place with Agartala as the nucleus. Urbanisation in Tripura has been associated with the immigration of middle class from Bengal and inflow of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan and Bangladesh. Untill 1951 urbanisation in Tripura was not much prominent as Agartala was the only centre of all administrative and business affairs in the State. The growth trend of urbanisation since 1951 may be better understood with the help of Table 5.2.

23. Hunter, W.W., A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VI, (Trubner and Company, London, 1876, Reprinted by D.K. Publishing House, New delhi, 1973), p. 496.

Table 5.2 : Growth Trend in Urbanisation of Tripura Since 1931.

Year	Total Population No.	Population Decadal Growth	Urban Population No.	Urban Population Decadal Growth	Population of Agartala No.	Population of Agartala Decadal Growth
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1931	3,82,450	25.63	9,580 (2.50)	23.72	9,580 (100.00)	23.72
1941	5,13,010	34.14	17,693 (3.45)	84.68	17,693 (100.00)	84.68
1951	6,39,029	24.56	42,595 (6.67)	140.74	42,595 (100.00)	140.74
1961	11,42,005	78.71	1,02,997 (9.02)	141.80	54,878 (53.28)	28.84
1971	15,56,342	36.28	1,62,360 (10.43)	57.63	1,00,264 (61.75)	82.70
1981	20,53,058	31.92	2,25,568 (10.99)	38.93	1,32,186 (58.60)	31.84
1991	27,57,205	33.69	4,18,986 (15.26)	85.75	1,57,636 (37.62)	19.25

Note : Figures within brackets in column 4 and 6 refer to percentage of urban population to total population of State and percentage of population of Agartala to total urban population in Tripura respectively.

Source : Various Census Reports.

As shown in Table 5.2, although trend in urbanisation in Tripura started since 1931, but it was during the decades 1941-51 and 1951-61 that the urban population increased sharply by 140.74 per cent and 141.80 per cent respectively in comparison with overall population growth rates of 24.56 per cent and 78.71 per cent in those decades. As these are decades of heavy inflow of refugees and their rehabilitation in Tripura, it may be inferred that the majority of refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) chose urban areas of Tripura for their settlement. The scope of settlement in and around urban centres for the refugees was provided by the expansion of administrative infrastructure

itself. More importantly, a large number of educated persons and businessmen among the refugees facilitated themselves to join in different sectors of government services and in business establishment.²⁴ According to various census reports as indicated in Table 5.2, since 1971, above 10.43 per cent of the total population live in urban centres and the percentage has increased to 15.26 in 1991. This shows the growing trend of urbanisation in Tripura since the middle of the twentieth century. This trend of urbanisation in Tripura may thus be undoubtedly attributed to the heavy influx of refugees. For instance, about 19,286 displaced persons entered Sadar Sub-division (urban centre) upto 1951, and upto March 1961, more than 11,501 displaced families settled in urban areas and thereafter the settlement of population in urban areas has been on the rise.²⁵

With the growth trend of urbanisation in other areas as well, by 1961, Agartala ceased to be the only urban centre of Tripura, particularly, with the status of towns being accorded to other five subdivisional headquarters namely, Belonia, Dharmanagar, Kailasahar, Khowai and Udaipur (Radhakishorepur). This happened with the effects of refugee influx and subsequent expansion of administration outside Agartala. During the period

24. Bhattacharjee, P.R., "Urbanisation of Tripura : Pattern Problems", in Ganguli, J.B.(ed.), Urbanisation and Development in North East India : Trends and Policy Implications, (Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1995), pp. 283-98.

25. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, n. 21, pp. 95-96.

1971-81, four new towns, namely, Amarapur, Kamalpur, Sabroom and Sonamura came into existence.²⁶

An analysis of the number of persons per house revealed that persons per house has increased just after partition, particularly in the urban areas. In 1941, persons per house was 5.2, but it rose upto 10.0 in 1951. This phenomenon is attributed to the immigrations of refugees who initially shared shelters with their relatives and acquaintances living in urban centres.²⁷

A comprehensive idea of urban development in Tripura may be drawn from 1991 census shown in Table 5.3 which accounts for the growth of towns in Tripura. Table 5.3 shows that as many as 18 different places in Tripura have been recognised as towns or urban centres as per 1991 census, and of these only Agaratala is accorded the status of class I town. The number of towns and urban population in Tripura have been on the rise particularly after 1961. This may be better explained by Table 5:4. Thus, as the growth of urban areas in Tripura is greatly attributed to the unceasing influx of refugees following the partition of India (1947), it is needless to say that all the urban centres are occupied by the immigrants. They have not only settled in urban areas but also control, dominate and dictate all the affairs of urban centres.

26. Bhattacharjee, P.R., n. 24, p. 287.

27. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, n. 21, p. 96.

Table 5.3 : Towns of Tripura According to 1991 Census.

Name of the Town	Area in Sq. Km.	Population	Population Size Class	Rank in Population	Rank in Density of Population
A. West Tripura					
1. Agartala City	15.80	1,57,636 (9,977.0)	I	1	1
2. Badharghat CT	12.51	35,082 (2,804.3)	III	2	8
3. Barjala CT	7.60	14,583 (1,918.8)	IV	9	12
4. Gandhigram CT	8.76	7,524 (858.9)	V	16	17
5. Jogendranagar CT	7.72	26,961 (3,492.4)	III	4	4
6. Khowai NA	4.40	12,553 (2,853.0)	IV	12	7
7. Pratapgarh CT	3.29	13,881 (4,219.1)	IV	10	3
8. Singarbil CT	8.17	9,160 (1,121.2)	V	13	15
9. Sonamura NA	3.42	8,135 (2,378.7)	V	15	11
10. Teliamura NA	27.12	27,663 (1,020.0)	III	3	16
B. North Tripura					
11. Dharmanagar NA	7.77	25,898 (3,333.1)	III	5	5
12. Kailasahar NA	6.19	16,166 (2,611.6)	IV	7	9
13. Kamalpur NA	2.41	4,300 (1,784.2)	VI	18	14
14. Kumarghat NA	17.29	14,640 (846.7)	IV	8	18
C. South Tripura					
15. Amarpur NA	3.57	8,548 (2,394.4)	V	14	10
16. Belonia NA	4.13	13,268 (3,212.6)	IV	11	6
17. Sabroom NA	2.53	4,763 (1,882.6)	VI	17	13
18. Udaipur NA	4.14	18,222 (4,401.4)	IV	6	2

Note : Figures within brackets in Column 3 indicate density of population per Square Kilometre.

NA : Notified Area, CT : Census Town

Source : Various Census Reports.

Table 5.4 : Growth of Towns and Urban Population in Tripura (1971-91).

State	No. of Towns			Urban Population			Decadal Growth Rate of Urban Population (%)	
	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991	1971-81	1981-91
Tripura	6	10	18	1,62,360 (10.41)	2,25,568 (10.99)	4,18,983 (15.26)	38.93	85.75

Note : Figure within bracket indicate urban population as percentage of total population.

Source : Census of India 1991, Paper 2 of 1991, Provisional Population Total, Urban Distribution, pp. 387-91.

Development of Transport Communication

It has been argued that the increase of population caused by large scale influx into the State, had led to the development of modern means of transport communications which had in one way removed the life of isolation in Tripura society. The improved means of transport communication further made the indigenous tribal community to come in direct contact not only with the Government agencies but also with the outside world. It made the movement of tribal people increased considerably whereby going from place to place for jobs, works, earnings, etc., became easier. It is said that this development has been all due to the influx and penetration of the immigrants into the tribal belts.²⁸ Further, the development of transport communication is due to pressure of population-mainly of the refugees-who have greater demand for consumer's goods which are to be imported or exported to and from different parts of the country. Moreover, they were

28. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, n. 2, pp. 60-64.

not habituated to pass through the narrow hilly paths. Thus, this practical problem of movement combined with the pressure of immigrants ultimately made the Government of Tripura give highest priority to the development of roads in the plans.²⁹

The Growth of Market

With the coming of immigrants, the tribal people became more conversant with the money economy and a transition from a simple barter economy to money economy of trading took place even in the interior places. The wide circulation of money through trading and its market values in terms of its economic pursuits have made the tribal people realised its utility as a medium of exchange. Thus, a tendency to produce more and more cash crops like jute, rice, cotton, etc. both in jhum and plough fields, was developed amongst them. Producing fruits like jack-fruits, oranges, pine-apple, bananas, etc., also received great importance in seasons. Because of these factors, together with the coming of settlers, communications in the interior places, markets with shops selling textile, utensils, tools, different metalware and some luxuries were opened at various places of the State.³⁰

The cash crops of the tribal people along with the wild and jungle products and vegetables are usually marketed in the nearby local markets. Most of the times, even brokers or traders

29. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, n. 21, p. 117.

30. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, n. 2, p. 62. Also Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, n. 21, p. 122.

belonging to non-tribal immigrants purchase their produces from the tribal villages and these middlemen sell these purchased goods to the traders for exports much in higher prices. Generally, the tribal people carry their cash crops and other products to the weekly fixed local markets for selling and buying their necessities. Although, earlier there were very less number of markets in the tribal areas, nowadays, the number of markets have increased covering its range even to the hilly region.³¹ A distinguishing feature of the tribal market place is the absence of any permanent shop for stocking and selling goods but only temporary thatched hut structures for displaying goods to be sold. Recently, in many areas of tribal markets, the government had constructed a permanent structure. In the absence of any cash crop at their disposal the tribal people would collect wild vegetables or other products for selling them in the market. They are found often bringing their domestic animals and birds like cattle, Tok (Cock), Quaksa (piglets), Pun (goats), etc., to the local market for selling them. In seasons they use to bring to the markets cash crops like jute, paddy and also fruits like jackfruits, pineapple, etc. But in most cases the non-tribal traders or middlemen or businessmen would come and contact the

31. In the past, the tribal villagers had to walk a long distance of 20 to 25 kilometres or in some cases even more, to attend the weekly markets and buy their necessities and stock them for a week or two. But today with the development of roads and Transport Communication and with the establishments of the markets everywhere, the tribal people are not faced with the hardship of walking a long distance for marketing.

owners personally to the villages for purchasing and transporting those items of larger quantities. One of the reasons for the businessmen coming to the villages is to get those items in much lower rate than the prevailing market rate. This has encouraged at least those very few tribal people having lands to produce more crops. Thus, the ever growing markets in Tripura may undoubtedly be attributed to the large scale immigration of the non-tribal people into the State from across the border.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned development of markets, the immigration had brought more plight to the entire society of Tripura. It has its own negative bearing or impact. Indeed the negative impact of immigration is more significant than the few positive impacts as discussed. A careful analysis on Tripura society reveals the fact that the introduction of plough cultivation, development of transport communication, growth of markets, etc., have only benefited a section of the society that is the non-tribal traders or businessmen. Needless to say that as a result of immigration and subsequent development, the indigenous tribal population have become the victims of suffering with regard to their economy and livelihood.

The pressure of population from outside the State and the limited resources available inside have aggravated the economic hardship of the vast number of indigenous tribal people who have

been mostly living at the peripheral areas all their life.³² Indeed the contribution of the immigrants to the tribal people in the field of plough cultivation has not been much significant excepting the immigrants themselves. As compared to the non-tribal immigrants, plough cultivation did not help much to develop the tribal people's economy. The tribal people were not familiar with the technology and methods of plough or settled cultivation and they are much backward in that field than those of the immigrants. Thus, the introduction of plough cultivation did not boost or benefit the tribal people's economy. Rather their economic position was worsened. Earlier there was no dearth of shifting cultivable lands, but with the large scale immigration of the non-tribal people contributing to the growth of population, the scarcity of lands or forests became quite acute resulting in the impossibility of jhum cultivation by the tribal people. This non-availability of sufficient forests or jhum fields, unlike in the past for producing their livelihood has been largely responsible for deterioration in their economic condition day by day.³³ The situation would be clearly understood with the subsequent analysis on the 'alienation of tribal land in Tripura'.

The fruits of the development of transport communication and growth of markets in Tripura are also not shared equitably between the refugees or immigrants and the tribal people. The

32. For details see, Ghosh, Kamalini, Tribal Insurrection in Tripura : A Study in Relative Deprivation, (Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, 1984), pp. 16-54.

33. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, n. 2, pp. 69-72.

major share is enjoyed by the immigrants.³⁴ The commercial and business centres in Tripura have been captured by the immigrants. They have been investing huge capitals and finance in carrying out the trades and commerce or business, in exploiting the backward tribal people in the commercial sectors. After capturing the towns and the market places of the urban areas first they have also come to capture the rural markets along with lands in the tribal compact areas.³⁵ This kind of development naturally had been the economic boost to the non-tribal business community while cornering the indigenous population to more economically backward positions.

Alienation of Tribal Peoples' Lands in Tripura

As said, the indigenous people of Tripura, Boroks or Tripuris, which comprises of the Debbarmas (Tipras or Tipparahs), Reangs, Jamatias, Kolois, Noatias, Rupinis, Halams, Hrangkhawls, Ranglongs, Kaipengs, Tripuras, Morasings, Molsoms, Mogs, Bonchers, Chorais, Uchois and the like were known to have practised shifting cultivation as the main source of their livelihood. They have been also referred to as jhumias which applies to those tribal people who practise shifting cultivation like the other tribes of North-East India and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.³⁶

34. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, n. 21, p. 123.

35. Debbarma, Harinath, "Indigenous Peoples Self-Determination, Self-Government", a paper submitted in the workshop held from April 9-11, 1994 (organised by Khasi Students Union (K.S.U.), in NEHU Campus, Shillong), p. 3.

36. For Details See, Misra, Bani Prasanna, Socio-Economic Adjustments of Tribals, (People's Publishing House, New Delhi. 1976). pp. 1-8.

Shifting cultivation or jhumming was the traditional means of livelihood and source of revenue of the tribal people of Tripura.³⁷ In contrast to the settled cultivation, under shifting cultivation, hill slopes are cleared off from their forest cover which are set on fire after which the area is made ready for cultivation of crops like paddy, cotton, chillies, maize, jute and different kinds of fruits and vegetables. The jhum fields are abandoned after the crops are harvested and new fertile sites are being selected each year for the same. The once cultivated area becomes recultivable after an abandoned period of five to six years.

Jhumming at one time was universally practised by the indigenous people of Tripura because not only the technique of settled cultivation was unknown to them but it (settled cultivation) was contrary to their tradition. Moreover, as they lived in hill areas, the tribal people of Tripura find the hill slopes unsuitable for plough cultivation.³⁸ However, this mode of agricultural production, which was once universal in Tripura, is being gradually losing its practice and substituted by settled cultivation which has been prominently emphasized particularly during the post independence period that is, 1947 and after.³⁹

37. For details see, Das Gupta, Malabika, "Continuity and Change in Tribal Societies : A Study of Economic Aspects of Tribal Jhumia Society in Tripura", in Sangma, Milton S. (ed.), Essays on North East India, (Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994), pp. 147-63.

38. Ibid., p. 148.

39. Misra, Bani Prasanna, n. 36, pp. 5-6.

The large scale immigration of the non-tribal Bengalis in the post-independence period, which has subsequently outnumbered the indigenous people of Tripura had significantly affected the tribal economy. As a result of large scale influx of refugees, non-tribal people, there has been huge alienation of tribal people's land to the non-tribal people in the State. Some people indeed identify alienation of tribal lands which had destroyed the bases of tribal economy, as the root cause of all kinds of socio-economic and political unrest in Tripura. As stated earlier, this alienation of tribal lands has resulted mainly from the influx of immigrants from adjoining erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh since 1947. The unceasing influx of 'foreign nationals' had its undoubted impact in the form of loss of indigenous tribal people's land and employment opportunities.⁴⁰ The settlement of a large number of refugees in both the plains and hilly lands in the State created a great problem of non-availability of land for rehabilitation of jhumias and for distribution among landless tribal people.

Going by the tradition of shifting cultivation, land was held collectively by the community, and the rights of ownership enjoyed by an individual tribal person over a particular area of jhumming or shifting cultivable land was neither permanent nor

40. For details see, Baroah, Debo Prasad, "Silent Civilian Invasion : India's Danger in the North East" in Abbi, B. L.(ed.), North East Region : Problems and Prospects of Development, (Centre for Research for Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, 1984), pp. 287-300.

alienable or transferable to any person or inheritable from any person.⁴¹ The needs and production required of the jhumia tribal people were few and could be met from their own production and as such they neither needed nor were allowed to transfer lands⁴² and the question of alienation of tribal land did not arise.

Each tribal family had a huge area of wet land under their possession although those lands were no use to them as they were not habituated to settled cultivation. To induce his subjects, the indigenous people to settled cultivation and to increase State' revenue, King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya (1923-47) reserved for the tribal people a large fertile ploughable area of lands by order in 1931 and 1943 covering the areas of 110 square miles and 1,950 square miles respectively.⁴³ Thus, technically speaking, all the fertile cultivable lands were made reserved for the King's subjects and many families have settled in reserved areas and taken to ploughing by the 1940s.⁴⁴ Further, as a measure to protect his subjects the last King of Tripura declared that no land in the tribal reserve areas could be transferred to others without the permission of the Government. But despite this declaration and safeguard, the compact and reserve areas of the

41. Misra, Bani Prasanna, n. 36, pp. 75-76.

42. Das Gupta, Malabika, "Land Alienation Among Tripura Tribals", The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXVI, No. 36, (Bombay), September, 7, 1991, p. 2113.

43. Chakravarti, Mahadev, "Land in Tripura : The Tenurial System and Transfer", in Bhattacharjee, J.B. (ed.), Studies in the Economic History of North East India, (Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1994), p. 126.

44. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, n. 2, p. 67.

tribal people ultimately lost its balance, particularly after the partition of India (1947) and Tripura's merger with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, following which the rate of inflow of immigrant population increased very sharply and thereby utilising the reserved areas for building up refugee colonies.

While there has been a general lack of economic development in the State, by and large, the tribal people of Tripura have been the worse sufferers as a result of this phenomenon.⁴⁵ The massive influx of refugees into the State from erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh which had made the indigenous people into a minority in the land of their own origin, has added fuel to fire and accentuated the process of tribal land alienation despite legislative measures to prevent land alienation.⁴⁶ Besides, the immigrants brought with them the superior agricultural technology of plough cultivation, while the main system of agricultural practised by the tribal people of Tripura was shifting cultivation. Though a handful of tribal people had tried to adopt plough cultivation, the majority of them lost their plain lands to the non-tribal people and were compelled to retreat into the hills and forests, in the interior places of the State. Many of the Bengali immigrants had taken to trading and money lending and steadily the tribal people came under the

45. Chakravarti, Mahadev, n. 43, pp. 126-27.

46. Das Gupta, Malabika, "Land Alienation Among Tripura Tribal", n. 42, p. 2113.

exploitative influence of the Bengali immigrant moneylenders and traders.⁴⁷

The failure of the jhum revenue to meet the growing needs of the tribal people in one way led to their dependence on non-tribal money lenders and businessmen for loans to buy the needed items they could not produce. Loans with interests to be repaid within fixed periods of time, were given to the tribal people only against the mortgages of their plain lands. Meanwhile the moneylenders could use mortgaged lands for plough cultivation for themselves. As their productions gradually became very limited, the tribal people were unable to repay the debts within the stipulated time. Once in debt, the tribal people were caught in a debt trap by the moneylenders, traders and businessmen who subsequently gained permanent possession of the mortgaged tribal people's lands when they failed to repay their debts and interest charges within fixed times. The bulk of the 'jhumias' or tribal people taking to settled cultivation were not prosperous farmers but were the victims of land alienation through moneylending system.⁴⁸ As a result, the tribal people suffered in many ways in the exploitative hands of the businessmen, traders, money lenders and others, the consequences of which have been the alienation of

47. For details see, Das Gupta, Malabika, "Regionalism and Separatist Forces in Tripura", in Pakem, B.(ed.), Regionalism in India with Special Reference to North East India, (Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1993), pp. 308-17.

48. For details see, Das Gupta, Malabika, "Land Alienation Among Tripura Tribal", n. 42, pp. 2113-18.

the tribal people from their own lands and their general pauperisation.⁴⁹

Although, the educated affluent section of the tribal society succeeded in getting Government jobs, "it is a fact that the bulk of the benefits of whatever little development that took place in the State was captured by the Bengali immigrants".⁵⁰ Thus, to make the matter worse, while on the one end Tribal Reserved Areas were broken due to the increasing rate of inflow of immigrants, and on the other end, the Government of Tripura prohibited large scale jhumming since 1952 and restricted the customary rights of the tribal people and the free movement, on the ground of its being an unscientific and wasteful practice and harmful to forest.⁵¹

This policy of the government combined with the large scale influx of the refugees, had adversely affected the tribal people's economy as there was very little wet land left for them.⁵² Also the policy deprived the tribal people of their sources of livelihood as they were not provided with a viable alternative.⁵³

49. Bhattacharyya, S.R., Tribal Insurgency in Tripura : A Study in Exploration of Causes, (Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1989), p. 114.

50. Das Gupta, Malabika, "Regionalism and Separatist Forces in Tripura", n. 47, p. 309.

51. Chakravarti, Mahadev, "Land in Tripura : The Tenurial System and Transfer", n. 43, p. 121.

52. Mukherjee, Bhabanand and Singh, K.S., "Tribal Movements in Tripura", in Singh, K.S.(ed.), Tribal Movements in India, Vol. I, (Monohar Publ., New Delhi, 1982), p.321.

53. Das Gupta, Malabika, "Regionalism and Separatist Forces in Tripura", n. 47, p. 309.

As a measure to check the alienation of tribal land, a special provision was included in the Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960. The Act imposed restriction on transfer of land from tribal people to the non-tribal people. Section 187 of the Act provided that no transfer of land by a person who is a member of a Scheduled Tribe to a person who is not a member of such tribe, shall be valid unless the transfer is made with the prior permission of the Collector in writing⁵⁴. However, the Act was not at all sufficient to prevent the transfer of tribal lands to the non-tribal people as it provided the scope through the permission of the Collector. Avoiding all the legal impediments, the immigrants began to purchase lands from the tribal people through the 'Benami deeds'. For instance, if the value of a plot of land between the tribal people was Rs.5,000/-, the non-tribal people purchased it at Rs. 10,000/-. It is evident that the motive of the non-tribal immigrants, by and large, was to occupy the tribal land by any means.⁵⁵ Further, a large number of immigrants penetrated into the most interior places and permanently settled into the tribal belts. These people exploited the indigenous people much to their interest and occupied the lands and Government Khas lands. Also the refugees began to exploit the tribal people by acquiring their land at nominal price or in settlement of outstanding loans.⁵⁶

54. Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act of 1960 (No. 43 of 1960, Government of Tripura, Agartala).

55. Debbarma, Harinath, n. 35, p. 4.

56. Bhattacharyya, Gayatri, n. 21, p. 98.

Although the Land Reforms Act of 1960 prohibited the transfer of land by tribal people to non-tribal people without prior permission of the Government, but in practice, due to its ineffective implementation, an indiscriminate transfer of land from tribal people to non-tribal people took place in contravention of the legal provisions.⁵⁷ In a Block level survey of indebtedness and land alienation conducted by the Directorate of Tribal Research, Tripura, Agartala in 1974, it was found that indebtedness was directly and positively correlated with the alienation of tribal land.⁵⁸ In most cases it was revealed that heavy load of indebtedness particularly after drought years of 1965 and 1972 forced the people to sacrifice part of their land.

Thus, the Land Reforms Act 1960 could not prevent the transfer of tribal lands to the non-tribal people. Besides, in this Act there was no provision for restoration of illegally transferred land, and therefore, the Act was amended in 1974, which provided for the restoration of all tribal lands transferred on or after January 1, 1969, in contravention of the Act, to the transferor or his successor-in-interest.⁵⁹ By keeping the lands transferred before January 1, 1969, outside the scope of the Land Reforms Act, legal recognition was given to the transfers

57. For details see, Datta, Narendra Chandra, "Land Reforms" in Chaudhuri, Jagadis Gan (ed.), Tripura: The Land and its People, (Leeladevi Publications, Delhi, 1980), pp.105-23.

58. Government of Tripura, Indebtedness and Land Alienation Survey of Tribal Family Under Mohnpur Block, Vol. 1, Part I, II and III. (Bulletin of the Directorate of Tribal Research, Agartala, 1974).

59. Datta, Narendra Chandra, "Land Reforms", n. 57, p. 119.

of land made before that date. This has been done as it has already become difficult to restore to the tribal people possession of land transferred long ago. The problem of restoration of tribal land is also highly complicated in view of the fact that in many areas the boundaries of the tribal reserve areas were not well defined and maintained. It is also a fact that tribal lands have not only been grabbed by unscrupulous persons and money lenders, but in many cases the refugees acquired such lands without any necessary permission from the Government.⁶⁰ The socio-economic considerations of the State demand that the interests of the tribal population of the State be adequately safeguarded.

Further, in order to protect the interest of the indigenous people in the areas predominantly inhabited by them, the Tripura Land Reforms (Third Amendment) Act, 1975 provides that if any non-tribal people intends to sell land within 42 Tashils and 133 villages specified in the Act, then the members of the Scheduled Tribe shall have the preferential right to purchase such land.⁶¹ But in practice, there was hardly any non-tribal community intending to sell land to the tribal community. On the other hand, the tribal people were not in a position to buy as they are comparatively and economically much backward.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., p. 120.

Therefore, notwithstanding the several Land Reforms Acts made since 1960, the plight in connection with the alienation of tribal land could not be minimised at all. The fact is that the rural tribal people are in general poor, illiterate and have no knowledge about the intricate process of litigation. Going to the court of law for redressal is also beyond their capacity. Moreover, the urban centered judiciary also in fact causes inconvenience to the tribal people since litigation under Indian legal system is extremely costly and time consuming. It may here be pertinent to quote one of the observations made by the Dinesh Singh Committee constituted by Government of India to suggest measures for restoration of peace and normalcy in Tripura after the violence of June 1980. It says:⁶²

Two features of this Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act caused dissatisfaction, firstly, with regard to the choice of the end of 1968 as cut off point. This virtually legalised the transfer of tribal lands that had taken place before January 1969. Secondly, the progress of restoration has been lamentably tardy. It received some impetus in 1978, part has again languished thereafter. Out of nearly 1,00,000 petitions received only 4,300 had been disposed of in the petitioners favour and just 7,700 acres of land have been actually restored upto March 31, 1980.

Though, the above observation seems to reveal an idea of some restoration of tribal land, but in practice it was not completely materialized. So the plight of the tribal people is that they remain alienated from their own land despite the

62. Cited in Bhattacharyya, S.R., n. 49, pp. 116-17.

lipservice measures initiated by the Government not only to protect but also to restore the alienated lands to the tribal people.

It is in this background, that the issue of land alienation of tribal people and its restoration has all along been pertinent in the context of the political scenario of Tripura. This issue received importance in the ideological objective of various socio-political organizations of the indigenous people of the State, such as the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS) and Tripura National Volunteers (TNV). One of the main demands of these two organizations were to stop the alienation of tribal lands and restoration of alienated lands. However, the TUJS could not pressurise the Government, even when it shared power in the State (1988), towards the achievement of this objective.

On the contrary, the TNV was persistent towards the restoration of alienated lands, and therefore, this scheme was inserted in the tripartite agreement-to lay down arms and ammunition-made on August 12,1988. As per the Memorandum of Settlement with regard to the restoration of alienated lands to the tribal people Section 3:6 of the Agreement relates the following measures to be taken :

- (i) Review of rejected applications for restoration of tribal land under the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960;
- (ii) Effective implementation of the law for restoration; and
- (iii) Stringent measures to prevent fresh alienation.⁶³

63. "Memorandum of Settlement of TNV", August 12,1988, New Delhi.

Though this Memorandum of Settlement was made by a tripartite agreement between the TNV, the Government of Tripura and the Union Government, this part of the agreement relating to the restoration of lands to the tribal people was not implemented. The TNV has been demanding for the complete implementation of the restoration of alienated lands for which it threatened the Government to launch for agitational programme. The surrendered members of the TNV even declared that they would again go back to armed struggle activities, if the provisions of the accord signed were not fully implemented. The demand for implementation of Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act received a wide range of support from not only TNV, TUJS regional political parties and Tripura Students Federation (TSF) but also from all sections of the tribal society.

The CPI(M) led Left Front Government in Tripura under the leadership of the tribal Chief Minister, Dasarath Debbarma, has initiated certain measures to implement the restoration of alienated lands to the tribal people. The Left front Government passed the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Sixth Amendment) Bill 1994 and declared 1994-95 as the year of land reforms. This bill aims at reinforcement of all provisions of the Land Revenue and Land Reforms Acts of 1960, 1974 (as amended), 1975 (as amended), 1982 (as amended), particularly with the restoration of lands to tribal people. It also inserted the provision of prevention of re-transfer of restored lands to the

non-tribal people.⁶⁴ This Act provides the provisions to safeguard the interest of the indigenous people who otherwise had become the victims and sufferers due to the massive influx of refugees. As per the provisions of the Act, the government initiated to implement to restore all the alienated lands to the tribal people from the non-tribal people. In many areas the non-tribal land holders were served with a notice and an order to transfer lands to the tribal people.

Nonetheless, the bill has been greatly opposed by all sections of the non-tribal people in the State.⁶⁵ They were determined not to transfer lands to the tribal people. A regional political party known as "Amara Bengali" strongly reacted against the bill as expressed by one of the local newspaper editors on July 12, 1995. They are ready in anyway to prevent the restoration of the lands. This recent phenomenon has created a conflict and enmity between the tribal people and the non-tribal people. It is reported that the non-tribal people are now organising themselves to protest against the implementation of

64. For details see, "Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Sixth Amendment) Bill 1994", (Tripura Bill No.4,1994).

65. Based on observation and on interview with one of the officials of the Land Revenue Department, Government of Tripura on July 13, 1995. Also see Dutta Bhowmik, Bhupen, "Tripura Bhoomi Ainer Shastha Sangshudhoni Bill 1994 Pratyahar Kartei Hobe. Noile Dakishuddha Mansa Bisarjon. Kintu Kena?" The Dainik Sambad, a daily newspaper in Bengali (Agartala), May 3,4,5 and 6, 1994, p.2; and Choudhuri, Badal, "Bhoomi Sangshkar Ainer Shastha Sangshudhani Bill - Prakrita O Aingata Abastha", The Syandan Patrika, a daily newspaper in Bengali, (Agartala), June 8, 1995, p. 2.

Land Revenue and Land Reform Act 1994. This is made possible because of the fact that the non-tribal people are the majority in their alien land.

With all these developments, the present situation in Tripura is marked by tensions and communal disharmony. Tension was running high at Teliamura area in West Tripura, following the massacre of six members of a non-tribal family on April 29, 1994. As the people of Thangsai (Teliamura area) became panicky and were feeling insecure after the incident of April 29, 1994, the State Government had to take measures to instil confidence among the people and security forces were keeping a close vigil on the situation. It might be recalled here that the massacre occurred within a week of the State Government's declaration of 1994-95 as the year of land reforms.⁶⁶ The Tripura Government had also sounded a special alert to all the police stations, sub-divisional and district heads of police to maintain a maximum vigil on the prevailing situation and taken measures to prevent any communal violence in the State. It was in this connection that the police Chief had instructed the concerned police officials to be ready for any untoward situation and take stern actions against those, responsible for lawlessness and disharmony. Meanwhile, it was reported of the tension that was

66. Reference D/h(R)TPA, TLM-P.S. Case No. 76/94, U/S 148/149/302 and IPC and 27 Arms Act, West Hawaibari, April 29, 1994. Also "Rajye Ain Shrinkholar Abonoti Jati Sangat Bridir Ashanka", The Dainik Sambad, (Agartala), May 1, 1994, p. 1; and "Tension Prevails in Tripura", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), May 3, 1994, p. 1.

prevailing in several parts of the State, following the massacre of six people of a non-tribal family on April 29, 1994, at Hawaibari of West Tripura. As the tension was mounting, the Chief Minister Dasarath Debbarma, through telecast message on May 9, 1994, had to appeal to the people to maintain peace and communal harmony among the tribal and non-tribal people in the State. According to the Director General of Police the situation at that time in the State was a "dangerous" one reminiscent of the 1980 riot and frequent murders were taking place which led to a "fear psychosis" in the mind of the people.⁶⁷

In fact, the rising problem with regard to the restoration of land is due to the non-implementation of Land Revenue and the Land Reforms Act 1960. If the Act is not fully implemented, the future of the tribal people and their economy cannot be conceived. As per the Sentinel Newspaper reports of May 11, 1995, at the end of TNV's sixteen day long march (April 24 to May 9, 1995) in the entire State in support of their demands, a five-member delegation, led by its President, B.K. Hrangkhawl, met the Tripura Chief Minister, Dasarath Debbarma on May 10, 1995 and submitted a memorandum containing their five-point charter of demands. Among other things, the demands included the deportation of foreign nationals and physical restoration of alienated tribal

67. D.G.P.'s Alert Circular Wireless Message No. C. 41(1)/PHQ/92/13991-14034, cited in "Rajye Prai 1980 Saler Anurup Paristhiti Srishti Hayeshe: D.G.'s Shikriti", The Dainik Sambad, (Agartala), May 10, 1994, pp. 1, and 7; and "Red Alert in Tripura", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), May 11, 1994, p. 1.

lands, both of which are within the provisions of the Peace Accord signed on August 12, 1988. The TNV has threatened to paralyse the entire State if their demands are not met soon.⁶⁸

Poverty

Poverty is one of the current and increasing phenomena or characteristics of the Third World countries including many Indian States. High growth rate of population concomitant with the low rate of income and economic resources is one of the basic causes of poverty. Poverty is understood by uneven social stratification or division arising out of unequal distribution of society's economic resources, wealth and basic requirements of life. Poverty is marked by a poor distribution of minimum basic needs of life like food grains, shelter, and clothing; and low level of income resources, lack of medical care, malnutrition, poor and unhygienic housing, lack of clean drinking water, hand to mouth daily wage labourers, starvation, indebtedness, illiteracy, high growth rate of population, unemployment problem, etc. By the modern estimate more than 65 per cent of the Indian population has to pass their days, without even a square meal a day. "In Indian life poverty reigns as the omnipotent reality and is the impediment of country's economic and social progress".⁶⁹

68. A Memorandum by TNV dated Agartala May 9, 1995 submitted to the Chief Minister of Tripura. Also See, "TNV Warns Government", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), May 11, 1995.

69. Mahanta, Dharanidhar, "Politicians, Poverty and Populism", The North East Times, (Guwahati), May 13, 1995, p. 4. Also see, The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), May 13, 1995, p. 4.

Like many other parts of India, Tripura is also badly affected with the chronic problem of poverty and unemployment. There is a shortage of proper housing which is prominent among the tribal people living in the interior and hilly areas of the State. There are no proper and permanent houses in many hilly and plain areas inhabited by the tribal people. The rural Tripura was inhabited by more than 90 per cent of the total population of the State. It has been observed that in general, this population suffers from the chronic problems of not only shortage of food grains but also from malnutrition, joblessness and a State of utter distress. Even the western segment of the State where people were said to have an access to some benefits of education job opportunities and permanent cultivation,⁷⁰ suffers from the symptoms of poverty today. The percentage of people living below poverty line which was 63.2 in 1969-70, has gone up to more than 80 per cent in the recent times.⁷¹ The problem of housing is rampant not only in rural areas but also in urban centre like in Agartala, where there are problems of sanitation, drainage and road systems as well. The unabated ever increasing population in and around Agartala has further aggravated the already worsened situation of scarcity of lands and health hazards. Though the Tripura Housing Board is engaged in solving the housing and other related problems, its achievement has been very meagre.⁷²

70. Based on observation and also see; Ghosh, Kamalini, n. 32, pp. 27-28.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

72. Bhattacharjee, P. R., n. 24, p. 295.

Furthermore, the uneven socio-economic development has aggravated the poverty ridden tribal society into pauperisation. In Tripura, while some urban areas have an access to development and welfare activities, the rural areas are deprived of even basic amenities of life such as food grains, drinking water, medical care, etc., which had placed more than 85.5 per cent of the rural tribal population below the poverty line. The constant decadal high growth rate of population, 78.71 (1961), 36.28 (1971), 31.91 (1981) and 33.69 (1991), as against about 25 per cent of All India decadal population growth had made its own adverse effect on the economic development process in the State.⁷³ The widespread rural poverty in Tripura may largely be attributed to the failure of government machineries to eradicate poverty and uplift the living standard of the common masses. Since 98.78 per cent of the tribal population live in the rural areas and had not been benefited from whatever development schemes of the government, the situation of widespread poverty had much adversely effected the tribal people and thereby became pauperised.⁷⁴

The problem of poverty among the tribal people in Tripura may be inferred or better understood from the incidences of starvation and death taking place in rural areas of the State in

73. Bhattacharyya, S. R., n. 49, pp. 100-103.

74. Gupta, Mohan Das, "Tripura : Tribal Unrest", The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XIX, No. 11, (Bombay), March 17, 1984, pp. 450-51.

the recent past⁷⁵. To focus about their starving condition, thousands of people agitated in Kanchanpur Block and other affected Blocks in North Tripura District on June 30, 1989 and altogether 21 people were reported to have died of starvation during June 30, 1989 to July 29, 1989. The all pervading food crisis besetting Tripura is no doubt due to her insufficiency of food production and lack of Government supply of food grains to the needy rural population. Damchera, a tribal hamlet, in North Tripura District was reeling under an acute shortage of rice in 1988-89 mainly as reported, due to the mal-administration and corruption of the local fair price ration shop dealers. The already critical situation in the hilly interior areas of the State was reported to have been further aggravated by the total non-availability of work for the rural poor under poverty alleviation schemes on which their subsistence became dependent to a great extent.⁷⁶ With all these prevailing critical situations in Damchera area, it was impossible for the poor people to afford even ration rice when it was available and thus buying rice at higher rates prevailing in the market was out of the question for them. It was under such background instead of helping the poor people, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on July 27, 1989 shot at the hungry crowd, which left four starving people dead and injured nine others, for their 'heinous'

75. "Gulibiddha Dhamchharai Chaol Jaini: Prahara Shakta Hayeshe", The Tripura Darpan, a daily newspaper in Bengali, (Agartala), July 29, 1989, p. 1.

76. Ibid.

crime of asking for rice free of cost after enduring starvation for months on end.⁷⁷ The Economic and Political Weekly, further explained the entire episode of the incident which can be quoted in brief as under:⁷⁸

Unable to bear their near-starvation condition anymore, about six to seven hundred starving tribal people of Damchera and surrounding villages irrespective of their political affiliations, had staged a spontaneous march to Damcherra Police Station at 11.00 a.m. on July 27, to ask for free rice to feed themselves and their starving children The OC of the Police Station, pleading his inability to meet their demand, sent a radio message to the SDO at Dharmanagar and the DM at Kailashahar asking for instructions. He received a wireless message from SDO of Dharmanagar ... that men would be sent to Damcherra within two to three hours. The hungry crowd then slowly moved towards the Damcherra food godown after requesting the Police authorities to register their names for the issue of two Kgs. of rice per head and waited patiently for SDO's men to bring them relief. It was only at 5.30 p.m. that help came to the starving people in the form of a truck load of stengun and SLR weilding CRPF men under the leadership of the SDOP. On seeing the kind of help that had been sent, the waiting crowd naturally became upset.... and attempts were made by some hungry women to break open the doors of the godown as the crowd was at the end of its tether. The CRPF retaliated brutally by suddenly attacking the women with rifles butts and then firing indiscriminately on the unarmed and fleeing crowd with the intent to kill.... Never before in the history of Tripura has such a cold-blood murder of innocent and starving men and women taken place for the 'crime' of wanting food.

Notwithstanding the demand of the judicial inquiry on the incident by various political parties, the fact remains that

77. "Bullets instead of Rice", The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXIV, No. 37, (Bombay), September 16, 1989, p.2055.

78. Ibid.

the innocent tribal people have suffered and died of starvation due to shortage of foodgrains. Although as many as twenty starvation cases were reported in the State between March 1988 and July 1989,⁷⁹ no protective measures were initiated by the Government to prevent from further starvation and death in the State. As a result more escalating starvation and death occurred in Tripura towards the end of 1991.

Tripura witnessed yet another period of starvation, disease and death starting from Rina Debbarma (8 years) of Atharomura of North Tripura, who died of starvation on October 3, 1991. This followed the death of four more from the same place out of starvation. The starvation was the result of the failure of jhum crops in autumn 1991 and lack of Government's care to supply food, which had effected not only Teliamura block of West Tripura but also Chhamonu and Kanchanpur blocks of North Tripura in particular and the entire District of North Tripura in general. For several months, thousands of tribal people in the hill ranges of Baramura, Atharomura, Deotamura, Longtraï and Sakantang of West and North Tripura Districts, were living in a State of semi-starvation and their bodies were unable to resist an enteric attacks. Combined with the failure of jhum crops due to excessive rains, and the non-supply of foodgrains to the fair price shops,

79. Ibid.

the hill people were made to live without food whatsoever.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, ordinary rice sold for Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 a kilogram, salt at Rs. 4.00/- to Rs. 5.00/- per kilogram, and kerosene at Rs. 15 to Rs. 30⁸¹ or even Rs. 40 a litre, in the hill areas open markets which were beyond the capacity of the tribal people to afford. Their purchasing power was paralysed, as there was no work in the various anti-poverty schemes operated through department of Agriculture, Forestry and Public Works. Under such circumstances, initially, the jhumias (tribal people) tried to keep the wolf from the door by pawning utensils and other household articles - in fact, anything the traders would take. Later over 292 families pawned their ration cards for meagre sums. Finally, thousands upon thousands families were subsisting on wild roots, leaves and tubers.⁸² Taking advantage of the situation, unscrupulous money lenders had come to grab ration cards from the tribal people in return for small loans which they know cannot be repaid. In most cases, it was this dire poverty

80. "Chhamanu Blocker Gramgulite Mahamari Akare Antric Chharatshe: Jaruri Ushodh Pathate Barta", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), November 1, 1991, pp. 1 and 4.

Also see, "Famine in Tripura's Hill Areas : 450 Die", The Assam Tribune, (Guwahati), December 31, 1991, p. 3.

81. Ibid., Also see, Chakraborty, Sujit, "Tripura Hill Areas Facing Famine Condition", The Assam Tribune, (Guwahati), November 5, 1991, p. 1; and "Chhamanu Blocke Antric Ruk Uddyekjanak Babr Chhariye Parshe : Mritu Anksha Teish", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), November 8, 1991, p. 1.

82. "Khudar Jalai 292 Paribar Ration Cards Bikri Abhabi Manusher Dharnai Office Achal", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), November 13, 1991, p. 1. Also see Ray, Tapas, "Tripura: Death in Autumn, Starvation and Disease in Tripura", The Frontline, Vol. 8, No. 24, (Madras), December 6, 1991, pp. 16-19.

that forced them even to sell their ration cards to money lenders at nominal prices. The money lenders used those cards to draw food supplies from local fair price shops for selling them at higher rates in the black market.⁸³

The six-member parliamentary fact-finding delegation team led by Mohan Singh (M.P.) which visited worse-affected Chhamonu block areas of North Tripura in the first week of May 1992 said that in the absence of any integrated 'food for work' Programme and failure of jhum crops during two successive terms, a "near famine situation" prevailed in the entire tribal belt, specially in Chhamonu block for the past couple of years. As a result, when all means have failed, people in these areas (1990-91), driven by sheer hunger, were forced to eat wild roots, grass leaves, tubers and wild berries. Besides, with no arrangement for supply of safe drinking water in the affected areas, people were compelled to drink contaminated water. All these factors together contributed to the breakout of the killer diseases.⁸⁴

While the parliamentary team put the death and affected figures to over three hundred (202+102=304) and to more than two

83. Ibid. : The Tripura Darpan, November 13, 1991, Also see, Munshi, Debashish, "Starvation Stalks Tripura Tribals", The Times of India, (New Delhi), November 10, 1991, p.7.

84. "Antric Aro Mritu : Sankramaner Karon Nirnaye Bisheshagya Dhal", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), November 17, 1991, p. 1, Also see, 'Over 300 died in Tripura', The Telegraph, (Calcutta), May 11, 1992, p. 5.

thousand people respectively,⁸⁵ there are other reports which said that more than four hundred and fifty or over five hundred tribal men, women and children had died due to starvation and famine related diseases in Tripura during 1991-92.⁸⁶ No doubt, it may be difficult to ascertain the exact figure of death and whatever may be the controversy over the death figures but the fact remains that many tribal people of the State had died of starvation and many families were severely affected. Mr. Harinath Debbarma, Chief Executive Member of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), after inspecting the affected areas said that besides, thousands of tribal people's ration cards being mortgaged to money lenders, more than one lakh tribal people have been affected by the food crisis and as many as seventeen families from Ratan Nagar areas of Gandachhera, and thirty and twenty families from Bagirathpara and Sidhapara of North Tripura District respectively, had migrated to neighbouring State of Assam in 1991.⁸⁷

Forecasting upon more severe food crisis in the days to come, Mr. Debbarma says : "The only way out is to give gainful employment to the tribal people so that they can survive on their

85. Ibid., Also see, Debnath, Dibakar, "Tripura Epidemic Claims 300 Lives", The Eastern Panorama, News Magazine for North East, Vol. I, No. 3, (Guwahati), June 1992, pp. 24-25.

86. "Starvation Killing Tripura tribal", The Telegraph, (Calcutta), December 30, 1991, p. 4.

87. Munshi, Debashish, n. 83, and "Longtraai O Atharomurai Tibra Khadyabab : Upajatira Dale Dale Bhinna Rajye Chole Jachhe", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), December 27, 1991, p. 1.

earnings". Further the Chief Minister of Tripura in defending the Government, admitted stating : "We have food-for-work programme. But our major problem is the abnormal growth in population due to infiltration from across the borders. We make plans for a certain number of persons, but find the population growing up in no time".⁸⁸ But the social activists point out that funds allocated for poverty alleviation programmes rarely percolate down to the poor tribal people who need them most. The sorry state of affairs, they point out, is reflected in the fact that an overwhelming majority of the population in the State live below the poverty line.⁸⁹

As said, the root cause of the trouble is the growing population pressure on the hills, the declining productivity of the jhum crops and inadequate government schemes for development of the hill areas or region. Despite funds received from Central Government, New Delhi, rural development programmes are nonexistent in these remote hills of Tripura. It has been pointed out by local editor of the Eastern Panorama, Bhupan Dutta Bhaumik, that while "Kalahandi in Orissa got lot of attention for the starvation deaths but Tripura anguishes in one far corner of India and no one cares".⁹⁰

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Debnath, Dibakar, n. 85, pp. 24-25.

Indebtedness and Unemployment

Alienation of tribal people's lands and subsequent poverty have an aggravating bearing impact upon indebtedness of the tribal population. The problem of the poverty ridden tribal society in particular and the people of the State in general is a serious phenomenon. Today it is said that "the tribal people born in debt and die in debt".⁹¹ The ever widening gap between their earning and the basic minimum needs for survival has been one of the main underlying factors of growing indebtedness of the tribal people. As a result of the restrictions of jhumming, exploitation of forests on modern lines and diminishing productivity in shifting cultivation concomitant with the absence of viable alternative resources, the tribal people today are left with no other choice than to go to the money-lenders who are non-tribal in general. The jhumia villages are now frequented by money lenders who lend money on exorbitant interests against the mortgage of landed property. Due to the exorbitant interest rate and unrealistic repayment conditions, in many cases the clutch of the money lenders goes on generation to generation in the tribal society. Indeed, the jhumias or the tribal people are now living in perpetual debt and poverty because for repaying loans, the jhumias have no other means but to sell their agricultural lands either to the money-lenders or to others thereby resulting in the alienation of lands. The problem of indebtedness is more serious not only among the jhumias but also among the lower income group

91. Bhattacharyya, S. R., n. 49, p. 103.

of people such as labourers, marginal workers, etc. which usually incurred for consumption purpose. Thus, being divorced from their forests, jhum fields, agricultural lands, traditional life patterns and being deprived of their acquisitions, many tribal people have now been forced to become daily wage-earners working as casual labourers in Government Forest Department or in any contractor's firms.⁹² Today, many men, women and even young children are found on the hill areas of Assam - Agartala highway road side waiting for works on daily basis. The contractors and at times Government Forest Department Officials would take them on truckload to their places of works and send them back at the end of the day with the minimum of day's wages. But in most cases these workers are required to go on their own either by truck or on foot to the contractors' firms or places of works. They are also found working on the highway road construction or repairing. On days without works would ensure them without food or starvation. In the process and at the end of the works or while returning home from works, it is reported of many tribal women and workers being mistreated by some people belonging to the dominant section of the society. Yet they have to carry on the process as 'hand to mouth labourers' for survival because their subsistence in a way, is dependent on others.

92. Bhattacharyya, Suchintya, n. 2, p. 71.

In the hill areas, in the absence of works, the male folks would go to the deep forests for cutting the bamboos, trees and bringing other wild vegetables. They would bring bamboos and trees from densely forested areas and place them on the highway road side to sell to the businessmen who would buy them at the nominal prices and supply them to the urban centres at much higher rates. As their livelihood is largely dependent on the selling of those items, the tribal people are compelled to sell them even at the minimum rates. All these have resulted in the traders, businessmen, money lenders, contractors, etc., becoming richer while the tribal labourers become poorer. At the backdrop of this situation, education on which the future employment in Government sectors is dependent, is out of the question for them and their subsequent generation.

The process of immigration in Tripura has naturally contributed towards the growth of unemployment problem in the State. The increasing number of unemployment had led the Government machineries to provide employment either through the back door systems or through political affiliation. Today, unlike the past there are many tribal educated people without any Government jobs. One of the recent phenomena is that there is an increasing number of daily rickshaw pullers or daily-wage-labourers among the tribal youth in the capital city of Agartala. There is no industry in the State which can generate employment opportunities to the growing population. The Jute Mill near

Agartala which started more than a decade back (1980s) has not been productive and could not generate employment schemes as expected. Thus, in the absence of employment generation and high rate of population growth mainly due to unceasing influx, the unemployment problem is bound to be acute with each passing day.

Another aspect of economic impact of immigration is the monopoly control of the market by the immigrant non-tribal traders, businessmen, money-lenders and shopkeepers. Besides, the tribal people being inefficient in the commercial and business fields, they have not been provided with scopes and openings for establishing themselves in commercial and business sectors. This is reflected in the fact that all the rural and urban markets are being run and controlled by the plain people or the immigrants. Even the aspiring tribal youths in business are not forthcoming to venture in the field of trade mainly due to the lack of capital avenues and from the security point of view as the commercial and business market is controlled by the immigrants. As a result, the tribal people could not develop and establish themselves economically in the State but in the given situation (as expressed by some truck businessmen belonging to the indigenous people of Tripura based in Guwahati and Shillong) they would prefer to venture into business outside the State.⁹³

93. Based on observation and interview with some of the established truck businessmen from Tripura based in Guwahati and Shillong on June 15, 1995.

Realising the importance of trade and commerce, business and market for the development of economic conditions of the indigenous people, a State level business organisation of the tribal people called the United Tribal Business Association was formed on November 9, 1991, under the leadership of Joshua Debbarma, Chandan Tripura, Rabindra Debbarma, Aichuk Debbarma, Mantulal Koloi, Suresh Ch. Jamatia and Alindra Debbarma. The organisation aims at capturing the market not only at the headquarters of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, Khumulwng, but also all the rural markets in the State.

To develop the indigenous tribal population the involvement of the government is inevitable. The growing number of landless tribal labourers need to be provided with adequate expanding opportunities and scope for higher wage earnings system of cultivation which would call for introducing technological changes leading to more intensive use of forest and farms lands.⁹⁴ The Government must be responsive to the ever increasing needs of poor masses. It must be committed to uplift the down-trodden masses by providing them with all incentive of economic avenues and development. As the Delhi Declaration of the recently concluded SAARC Summit designates 1995 as "the SAARC Year of Poverty eradication", the Government, non-governmental organisations, leaders of various socio-economic organisations

94. Ganguly, J.B., "The Problem of Tribal Landlessness in Tripura", in Dutta, B.B. and Karna, M.N. (eds.), Land Relations in North East India, (People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987), pp. 231-32.

must fight against poverty and ill health.⁹⁵ More importantly, as the process of unceasing immigration into Tripura had created immeasurable political and socio-economic impacts upon the State and badly affected the indigenous population, measures should be taken to solve and eradicate this root causes of all problems. In this context, it may be mentioned as pointed out by Debo Prasad Baroah in his article "Silent Civilian Invasion : India's Danger in the North East", in A.L. Abbi (ed.), North East Region : Problems and Prospects of Development, (1984) that:⁹⁶

"The presence of the illegal infiltrators and foreign nationals in different areas of the region constitutes a grave threat to the security and integrity of India : they have threatened the national individuality, distinctive personality and socio-economic life of the people. The influx of foreign nationals - that is the enemy with all its diabolical designs. It is India that is endangered in its North Eastern Region due to the influx of foreign nationals in the form of a silent but determined civilian invasion over all these years".

Thus, the 'foreign nationals' issue particularly in Tripura and elsewhere in the North Eastern Region of India assumes a crucial issue which any responsible government cannot afford to neglect. Unless such problem is tackled rationally, no matter whatever developmental programmes and schemes the government may plan and implement, the various socio-economic and political problems would always find its roots in one form or the other. In

95. "Delhi Declaration", The Meghalaya Guardian, (Shillong), May 13, 1995, p. 4.

96. Baroah, Debo Prasad, n. 40, p. 291.

the context of Tripura's present population structure where the indigenous people have been reduced to a minority due to an unceasing influx of 'foreign nationals' and where the economic and political powers have been in the hands of the majority immigrants, special and extra economic, political, social, and legislative privileges and provisions for the indigenous population have to be created and implemented. In doing so it is expected that the all round and speedy development may take place whereby their protection, security and safeguard will be ensured.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

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Trans-border migration or immigration of large scale population has been the root of all the socio-economic, political and demographic problems in Tripura. Migration is a human phenomenon. Indeed human history to an extent is marked by migration of people from densely populated areas to sparsely populated areas, from an economically less developed/backward areas or country to developed/advanced areas or country and from an insecured place to comparatively secured places. Large scale migration of people from one place to another is however, determined by a combination of several factors such as economic compulsions, natural catastrophes or calamities, upheavals, political reasons, social factor, torture, atrocities and a sense of insecurity of life.

Migration is leaving one's original place of residence and going to a new place either for permanent or semi-permanent settlement. To 'migrate' means to move from one place to another to live there. Broadly speaking, migration is defined as a permanent or semi-permanent change of one's own residence. However, 'migration' is ordinarily understood as the relatively permanent movement of people over a significant distance. According to the United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary, "Migration is a form of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographical unit and another, generally involving a change in residence from the place of origin or place of departure to the place of destination or place

of arrival. Such migration is called permanent migration and should be distinguished from other forms of movement which do not involve a permanent change of residence".¹ Depending upon the various nature, causes and situations, migration may be categorised as short and long term, economic migration, marital or social migration, seasonal or periodic migration, temporary or permanent migration, forced and compelled migration, as well as internal, external, inter-regional, international, continental and intercontinental migration. Migration of people within the territorial limits of a country is usually known as 'internal migration' whereas of those across the international border or boundary is generally known as 'international migration'. While the term immigration means movement of people into a particular area, emigration refers to movement of people out of a particular territory and both the terms are usually used only in connection with international migration.

Impact of migration is more significant or greater on the recipient place or country than on the place or country of origin of the immigrants. It causes the increase of population in the recipient country, while it decreases the corresponding number of population of the country of the immigrants' origin. Further, large scale immigration causes various epidemic diseases, socio-economic problems, political and social conflicts or tensions,

1. Cited in Bhende, Asha A., and Kanitkar, Tara, Principles of Population Studies (Demography), (Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, Second Revised Edition, 1982), p. 306.

cultural and linguistic conflicts, etc., between the indigenous people and the immigrants. In places like Tripura State of North-East India, where the indigenous people had been outnumbered and reduced to a minority by the immigrants, the process of immigration had even jeopardised the overall existence of the indigenous people.

Tripura a hilly, small and erstwhile princely State located in North-East India, presently covers an area of 10,491.69 square kilometres and comprises of hills, green valleys and more than sixty per cent of the total area is covered by forests. It is surrounded by Bangladesh in North, West and South (three sides) and by Assam and Mizoram in the East (one side). The economy of the State predominantly depends on agriculture.

Among other Mongoloid groups of North-East India, the Tipperah or Tripuri or Borok people (Kokborok speaking people) were one to emigrate from China in 65 A.D. and in the process reached in the present territory of Tripura and they became the first occupants and settlers and thus they are the indigenous people of the State. Their language or mother-tongue is called Kokborok. When the Tripuris or Boroks, in the process of emigration, arrived in the present State of Tripura, they started settling besides Twisa or Twibupra which means streams. As they lived together in families grouping in the form of village, they called the place as Twipra and people living there came to be known as Tipras or Tipperahs. Gradually, by modifications and

changes, from its original name Twipra to "Hill Tippera" State, the modern version of the name "Tripura" State was adopted since October 9, 1920.² Thus, the name Tripura is derived from Kokborok language, the mother tongue of the indigenous people whose original form was Twipra. The word Twipra, which is a combination of two words Tw (water) and Bupra or Pra (tributaries or adjoining areas) means a land adjoining to stream or water areas. Thus, it undoubtedly and clearly indicates that the Kokborok speaking people, described either as Tipras/Tripuris or Boroks were the first settlers and are the indigenous people of Tripura. It was the Tipras or Boroks who gradually consolidated the Twipra or Tipperah Kingdom. In fact, historically speaking, Twipra was ruled by about one hundred and eighty kings belonging to the indigenous group, the Borok people.

The Borok people today comprises of different titles or clans such as Debbarma (earlier known as Tipra or Tipperah), Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Koloi, Rupini, Uchoi, Bongcher, Tripura, Halam, Molsom, Kaipeng, Morasing, Chorai, Hrangkhawl, Ranglong, Mog and the like. This division in different clans were made depending upon their respective vocation or occupation for the smooth functioning of administration during the princely reign. Besides, there were also other tribes of Mongoloid stock namely

2. File No. Political Department, year 1330, T.E./1920 A.D., B1/58 (Agartala Secretariat), Cited in Bhattacharyya, Banikantha, Tripura Administration: The Era of Modernisation (1870-1972), (Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1986), p. 150.

Garo, Kuki, Lushai and Darlong who much later arrived in the territory and came under the sozereignty of Tipra or Borok Kings.

However, the dramatic change of demographic structure caused by increasing immigration since the 1940s and the infusion of external political forces, had resulted in a serious problem of unity among the Borok people in the recent past. With the growing political consciousness, there is a psychologically inferiority complex and fear among the comparatively smaller clans to be dominated by the larger clans within the Boroks. With the fear psychosis of being dominated by the largest or larger clans, there is a divisive forces to establish a separate identity within the same Kokborok speaking people. This kind of infusion of divisive forces leading to the fear psychosis, generated in them by some external political forces or interest, in a way, is a manifestation of a policy of 'divide' and 'rule' and to weaken the tradition of unity among the Borok people.

The indigenous Borok people were, by far the largest majority in the State until the partition of the Indian sub-continent (1947) and the merger of Tripura with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949. Until the princely State period, Tripura was peaceful and endowed with all forests and natural resources of revenue and in most respects the indigenous people had a self sufficient subsistence economy.³ However, today, the entire

3. For Details See, Bhattacharjee, Pravas Ranjan, Economic Transition in Tripura, (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993), pp. 6-67.

political, economic, socio-cultural and religious conditions had undergone a massive change due to the ceaseless process of influx or immigration of non-tribal people-Bengalis, which had reduced the indigenous people into a minority in their own homeland.

Therefore, today, the crux of various socio-economic and political problems in Tripura is connected with the perennial influx of 'foreign nationals' from across the international border of erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh. Chengthung Fa, belonging to the indigenous people was the first Tripuri/Borok chief to claim as king over the entire territory of Tripura during 1431-1462 A.D. (841-872 Tripura Era). After him Achang Fa, Kichang Fa, Dangai Fa became the kings successfully. Dangai Fa was succeeded by his youngest son Ratna Fa who was sent to the council of the Nawab of Gour in Bangal to learn the art of administration where he received the title 'Manikya' in place of Fa. On his return, Ratna Manikya brought along three Bengalis belonging to Brahmins, Vaidyas and Kayasthas from Bengal to Tripura which was the first case of immigration of non-tribal people into the State. Thereafter the later kings also brought some high caste Bengali Brahmins to record the kings' reign, but they were very few.

The tempo of modernisation of Tripura and administrative reforms, initiated by Bir Chandra Manikya (1862-1896) was further carried out in the reigns of Radhakishore Manikya (1896-1909), Birendra Kishore Manikya (1909-1923) and Bir Bikram Manikya

(1923-1947). This modernisation process necessitated the appointment of a number of Bengali immigrants in the fields of administration, education, police, judicial, health, engineering, etc. Businessmen, traders, professionals, like the barbers, washerman, artisan, etc. also followed the process of migrating into the State in the 1930s. With the modernisation process many educated and middle class Bengalis from Bengal started migrating into the State in the 1930s for better employment and economic opportunities.

The constant high growth rate of population in Tripura in the 1940s and thereafter was undoubtedly mainly due to the heavy immigration of non-tribal people-Bengalis from Assam, Bengal and other regions.⁴ The world-wide economic depression in the 1930s had affected Bengal negatively in the volume of employment in industries and Government offices. This factor together with the worsening commercial relation with the demand for Pakistan and the riots in Raipur and Dacca in 1939 and 1941, compelled many Hindu refugees from undivided Bengal to take refuge and settle in Tripura. Besides, the needy cultivating families from adjoining districts of Bengal and Assam were attracted to settle in Tripura because of the facilities and opportunities provided to those land-hungry cultivators by the princely administration mainly for increasing revenue. The merciless exploitation of peasant by the

4. For Details See, Ganguli, J. B., The Benign Hills - A Study in Tripura's Population Growth and Problems, (Tripura Darpan Prakashan, Agartala, 1983), pp. 46-57.

Zamindars in Bengal, insecurity of tenure, the plight of the share-croppers, heavy pressure of agricultural population, etc. in Sylhet and Bengal also led to the continued influx of large population into Tripura. Further, a much larger influx of refugees took place in Tripura in the wake of Noakhali riot in 1946. Since that year the refugee influx in the State went on in an unending fashion, sometimes in streams and sometimes in trickles for many years.⁵ Table 3.3 shown in chapter III gives an account of influx of documented or recorded refugees since 1947. However, the total figure of 6,09,998 refugees shown in table 3.3 does not provide the exact picture of the influx, as many refugees had settled in Tripura without being registered and without any rehabilitation facilities from the Government.

The refugees were mostly rehabilitated in land-based occupations and all plains lands and urban areas were captured by the refugees. Refugee rehabilitation on a large scale as shown in table 3.3 in chapter III had created a feeling of insecurity of future in the mind of the indigenous people which was greatly responsible for tribal people's unrest in the hill areas during 1948-50. Also the continuous inflow of refugees had pushed and cornered the tradition bound local or indigenous people into the interior forest areas of higher altitudes of the State, shortened the jhum cycle and thus hastened the ecological decay which culminated in a sort of disaster.⁶ The problem of refugees in

5. Bhattacharjee, Pravas Ranjan, n. 3, pp. 48-64.

6. Ibid., pp. 51-55.

Tripura became so acute that the then Home Minister of India, late Govinda Ballav Panth, in 1952, declared that "Tripura reached to a saturated point in respect of population. Not a single refugee will be rehabilitated here further more". However, due to the lack of proper measures, continuous inflow of refugees were not prevented.

As a result of the perennial inflow of refugees, the demographic structure of Tripura was dramatically affected whereby the indigenous population had been outnumbered by the refugees or immigrants since the 1960s. The Liberation War of Bangladesh 1971 also further aggravated the large scale refugee inflow into Tripura. Thereafter, there has been an unabated perennial immigration of illegal or undocumented Bangladeshis into the State which continues even today. This resulted in the marginalisation of the indigenous people by the immigrants. The indigenous people, who were the single largest majority in the State till the independence and partition of India (1947), are today being reduced to a minority in their own homeland⁷ and as per 1991 census, they constitute only about 30 per cent of the total population of 28 lakh in the State.

The continued and perennial influx of Bangladeshis which had swelled the non-tribal population in the State, had created a feeling of insecurity among the indigenous population. This

7. Das, J.N., A Study of Land System of Tripura, (Law Research Institute, Eastern Region, Gauhati High Court, Guwahati, 1990), pp. 86-87.

resulted in the growth of political consciousness among them in the 1960s. Besides, the failure of the two national political parties, namely the Congress and the Communist Party of India, Tripura Wing, to protect and promote the interests and aspirations of the indigenous people, had led them to the realisation of forming a different political platform for protecting and securing the interests of the indigenous tribal population. Thus, factors like the economic and cultural imbalances between the indigenous people and the non-tribal immigrants, the domination of the non-tribal immigrants over the political and economic affairs of the State, the disillusionment of the local intellectual people with the national political parties and the fear of the indigenous people that their economic and political interests will not be served by their ally with any existing political party led to the birth of a regional political party, the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS), in a conference held at Kaintakwprapara from June 10 to 11, 1967. The primary demands of the TUJS were : (a) Creation of an Autonomous District Council under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India; (b) Restoration of alienated tribal lands; (c) Recognition of Kokborok as official language in the State; and (d) Adoption of the Roman script for the Kokborok language.

The TUJS contested for the first time in the 1972 State Assembly elections in six constituencies but could not secured any seat. In the 1977 State Assembly elections, the CPI(M) led

Left-Front swept the polls capturing fifty six out of the sixty Assembly seats and the TUJS captured the remaining four seats and became the sole opposition party in the Tripura Assembly. These elections shattered the hope of the local Congress ever coming alone to power and thus, the Congress (I)-TUJS alliance was signed in 1983 and contested the Assembly elections jointly. But the result of the 1983 elections was frustrating to the alliance parties as they failed to secure the majority support. It was however, only in the 1988 Assembly elections that the TUJS-Congress(I) alliance could secure thirty one seats in the sixty seated Assembly and came to power in the State. As many among the eight elected TUJS members were inducted into the Ministry, it was the aspiration of the indigenous people that the TUJS leadership would not only protect and promote the interests of the indigenous people but also improve their socio-economic conditions. But the TUJS leadership failed to satisfy the aspirations of the indigenous people which resulted in the collapse of power of the TUJS-Congress(I) alliance in the 1993 State Assembly elections. Further, the intra-party conflict within the TUJS and the ineffectiveness of its leadership led to the split of the party - TUJS - and the formation of a new political party, the Tripura Tribal National Conference (TTNC) on May 17, 1995.

Besides, the genesis of Tripura National Volunteers (TNV), formally an underground organisation can also be traced to the fraction of the TUJS leadership during 1977-78. The intra-party

faction, both with regard to its finance and ideological methods (moderates and militants), finally led to the formation of the TNV in 1978. Meanwhile during 1978-79, when the State Government was initiating to form the Autonomous District Council and to restore the alienated tribal lands a section of immigrants vehemently opposed the policies of the Government and formed an organisation called 'Amara Bengali' (AB) on September 17, 1978. The culmination of all these developments resulted in the riot of June 1980 following which the TNV became a strong underground outfit till the tripartite Agreement of the TNV, the State and Central Governments signed on August 12, 1988. However today both the TNV and Amara Bengali have become regional political parties in the State.

The 1990s has been marked by the emergence of many militant organisations, all belonging to the indigenous population in Tripura, the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF) and National Liberation Front of Twipra (NLFT). While the major portion of ATTF have returned to overground through an Agreement signed in August 1993, the NLFT seems to be more determined and has been trying to establish strong support bases among the indigenous or aboriginal population. As all the underground organisations of Tripura are organised and led by the indigenous people and project to protect the interest of the tribal people, it indicates that the indigenous people have not been satisfied with the socio-economic and political state of affairs in Tripura. The

problem which appeared in the State since the 1950s are, either the direct or indirect offshoot of the perennial influx of Bangladeshis in Tripura. As a result of the immigration of non-tribal people into the State, the indigenous people, Boroks, of Tripura have lost political power and suffered from political division. The division and disunity among the indigenous population along the different political ideologies, have further weakened the support base of the indigenous people for any substantial political gain. At the same time the external political forces, the immigrants political leaders, have been successful in keeping the indigenous population divided and weakened.

Besides the political impact, the society, religion and economic conditions of Tripura had undergone a tremendous change with the process of immigration of the non-tribal people. The non-tribal immigrants had influenced the tribal religion, Animism, by Hinduism to a large extent. To an extent, the process of education had helped in the spread of education among the indigenous people in the State. But, at the same time, the spread of education combined with the influence of Hinduism had affected the local society, indigenous people, with the names in alien's Bengali language. The indigenous people bearing the names in alien's language or the non-indigenous names, had in fact apparently created a serious problem to their distinct identity. Further, the immigrants being now the majority, have been successful in discarding the original names (in local

language Kokborok) of the places in the State and naming them in alien's language Bengali such as Twidu Khampar to Ramnagar, Khumagati to Kumarghat, Twithaiplok to Chailtabari, Twisarangchak to Sonachhara, etc.

Though, the tradition, customs and culture of the people had been influenced by the immigrants, the 1990s seem to mark the beginning of the renaissance of the cultures and traditions of the indigenous people through different socio-cultural organisations such as the Kokborok Community Welfare Society (KCWS), Kokborok Tei Hukumu Mission (KOHM), Tripura Tribal Socio-Cultural Development Organisation (TTSCDO) etc. These organisation aim at not only preserving the customs and traditions but also promoting the socio-cultural life and identity of the native/Borok people.

Economically speaking, the immigrants seemed to have brought some changes in the mode of agricultural system and production by introducing settled/plough cultivation as against the traditional jhum or shifting cultivation of the indigenous people. The growth and development of urbanisation, markets, transport and road communication, etc. have been accentuated with the process of immigration. Until 1951, Agartala, the capital of the State was the only centre of all administrative and business affairs but today according to the census report of 1991, there are as many as eighteen towns in the State. The growth of markets has also been noticed even in the interior places of the State.

Nevertheless, the process of immigration has its own adverse and negative impact particularly upon the economy of the local people of Tripura. Excepting the majority of the immigrants, the tribal people in particular have not been benefitted with the growth and development of urban centres, transport and road communication, markets and business centres in the State as the fruits of whatever limited developments that are taking place have not been equitably shared between the immigrants and the indigenous people. Needless to say that the process of immigration and the subsequent introduction of settled cultivation which was presumed to boost the economy of the State, has rather resulted in the alienation of tribal lands, to the immigrants. The alienation of tribal lands combined with the restriction of the Government on large scale jhumming had destroyed the economic base and foundation of the indigenous population while on the contrary the entire process had helped to build up the economy of the immigrants.

Although, various Land Reforms Acts were promulgated by the State Government in 1960, 1974, 1975 and 1994, in order to prevent alienation and to restore the alienated lands to the local or indigenous people, but the Acts were not effective and could not yield the desired result. With the result, there have been an increasing rate of poverty particularly among the indigenous people in the rural areas and the high growth rate of unemployment problem in the State. The problem of unemployment in

Tripura has undoubtedly been aggravated in an explosive dimension by demographic changes mainly caused by immigration.⁸ The number of the registered unemployed which was only 15,794 in 1971, 59,214 in 1977 had gone up to 1,6,722 in 1989, 2,11,752 in 1993 and 2,26,299 in March 1995,⁹ and this trend clearly shows the increasing gravity of the unemployment problem. The fact is that the immigrants have been in a far better off position for having the monopoly control over all the economic and business affairs and centres in the State. More importantly, the economic and political powers, the source of protection and all round developments, have been indeed dominated and controlled by the immigrants. Needless to mention that such situation in Tripura has been undoubtedly made possible because of the ceaseless process of immigration thereby making the immigrants a large majority, who today constitute about 70 per cent of the total 28 lakh population in the state.

The vulnerability of the location of Tripura sharing border areas with Bangladesh in three sides, the West, South and East sides of the State had greatly facilitated the large scale and perennial immigration. The location together with the continuous socio-economic problem in Bangladesh and the lack of legislative and constitutional measures to prevent the influx, had greatly

8. Bhattacharya, Pravas Ranjan, n. 3, pp. 143-45.

9. Government of Tripura, Some Basic Statistics of Tripura 1993, (Directorate of Statistics, Agartala, 1993-94), p. 4. and information given by the Directorate of State Employment Exchange Office, Agartala, Tripura on July 13, 1995.

facilitated the immigrants to cross the border areas and to enter and settle in Tripura in an unending process. Although the Border Security Forces of India are placed in some sensitive international border areas like in Belonia, Sabroom, Sonamura and some parts of West District of Tripura, the movement of people from Bangladesh in the border areas could not be checked properly. There have been cases of trespass, border crimes, forcible harvests, lifting of crops, cattles and forest products despite vigilance in the border areas.¹⁰

The increase level of politicisation is another phenomenon in the State which had affected the indigenous people. Mainly on political ground, there has been a controversy over the adoption of the Roman script for Kokborok, the language of about ten lakh indigenous people in Tripura. The controversy sparked off when the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) decided to introduce the Roman script in the primary schools of the TTAADC, where Kokborok is the medium of instruction.¹¹ Although, adoption of the Roman script was one of the major demands of not only the TUJS, but also the entire indigenous population of Tripura, however, today, the matter has been made a political issue which has greatly been hampering the development

10. Bhattacharya, Pravas Ranjan, n. 3, p. 62.

11. For Details See, "Roman Horophe Kokborok, Jela Parishad Dirapratigya", The Dainik Sambad, (Agartala), April 3, 1995, p. 8; Also See "Row Over Introduction of Roman Scripts", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), May 31, 1995, p. 3; and Debbarma, Kharukbai "Bampanthi Aro Dakshinpanthi Sab Dalai Akoi Pather Pathik", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), June 21, 1995, p. 2.

of Kokborok language and literature. While the CPI(M) leaders, Dasrath Deb, Aghore Debbarma and Anil Sarkar do not favour the Roman script but prefer the Bengali script,¹² there are besides the TUJS, other organisations like Kokborok Community Welfare Society (KCWS), Kokborok Tei Hukumu Mission (KOHM), Tripura Tribal Socio-Cultural Development Organisation (TTSCDO), Tripura Student's Federation (TSF) which want the introduction of the Roman script for Kokborok language. In fact, in a press release, the Tripura Students' Federation of Shillong wing said that the failure of the introduction of the Roman script for Kokborok will harm the development of the language as most of the words of the Kokborok like Kwbang, Kwtal, Twi, Kwchak, Kwsrang, Mwrwimwrwi, etc., and all words beginning with 'wh', which is very common in Kokborok language, could in no way be possible to be written with and be pronounced in no other than the Roman script. The Federation said that the matter should not be made controversial as the adoption of the Roman script for Kokborok had already been decided upon through various seminars and conferences held in various places in the State during 1992-93,¹³ as it (Roman script) is more suitable for pronunciation and has wider scope for the

12. Ibid.

13. For Details See, "TSF: Introduce Roman Script", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), June 19, 1995, p. 1; Also See Choudhuri, Pranab, "Manipuri Abang Asomiyara Bangla Lipi Grahan Kare Unnota Hayni ?", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), June 21, 1995, p. 2; "Introduce Kokborok in Roman Script, Demands TSFS", The Shillong Times, (Shillong), June 23, 1995 and Majumdar (Debbarma), Sharbari, "Upajati Prakalpa Unnayaner Name Rashi Rashi Kharach Hole O Sufal Pushaini", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), July 6, 1995, p. 2.

language to be developed. However, whatever may be the case, it will be in the fitness of things to let the Kokborok speaking people adopt for themselves any script suitable to their language without any political interference or without making the issue politicised or else as it appears the development of the language and its literature would certainly be hampered to a great extent.

As mentioned earlier, the process and the impact of immigration in Tripura, where the indigenous people have been reduced to a minority in their own homeland, has also made the other North-Eastern States of India realise of the future consequences of immigration. Indeed Tripura State had become a case of reference of the problems and consequences of the process of immigration where the indigenous people have practically been cornered and became subjugated by the immigrants. The fact that the North Eastern States are surrounded by international borders makes them more vulnerable to all kinds of problem, the important one being the problem of silent stream of influx from across the borders. "The problem is easy to understand but extremely difficult and ticklish to solve".¹⁴

Undoubtedly the impact of immigration has negatively pervaded all aspects of life, particularly the indigenous people of Tripura. The overwhelming presence of the immigrants has created a lot of problems for the local Borok people. The massive

14. Mukhim, Patricia, "The North East Out of Focus", The Eastern Panorama, The News Magazine of North East, Vol. III, No. 8, (Shillong), June, 1995, pp. 24-25.

perennial influx of population from erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh, following the partition of India (1947), and the merger of the State with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, created a host of problems in Tripura the solution of which today had become difficult tasks ahead and challenge to both the State and the Central Governments. As a result of the continuous process of immigration, the indigenous people became the victims in the land of their own. Tripura, in which the density of population according to the 1991 census had gone up to 262 per square kilometres as against India's 267, is now facing a critical situation of imbalance between not only the indigenous people and the immigrants but also the growing population and the limited natural resources. With hilly topography and about 70 per cent of the State being covered by forests and uncultivable for field crops, overcrowded agriculture and lack of any industrial infrastructure, Tripura is already relatively an overpopulated State today. The slow growth rate of the State income is not compatible with the fast changing demographic structure which is contributing to the increase of poverty in the State. Combined with the immigration and the natural growth of the non-tribal population, the ratio of the indigenous population to the total population in the State naturally has been falling since the 1950s. This phenomenon has undoubtedly denied the tribal population from economic and other opportunities and placed them to the greater onslaught of the adverse market forces or economy.

The demographic picture of Tripura undoubtedly presents the effects of uninterrupted influx of people from across the international border and therefore the growth of population in the State is not entirely accounted for by natural growth but also by additional net immigration each year.¹⁵ Hence the immigration based pattern of population growth has changed the demographic composition in the State. The decennial population increase in the State has been always higher than the India's growth rate since 1950s. The table 6.1 shows the continuity of State's higher growth rate of population compared to that of the country as a whole.

Table 6.1 : Decennial Population Growth in Tripura and India 1951-1991.

Year	Tripura	India
1951-61	78.71	21.64
1961-71	36.28	24.80
1971-81	31.92	24.66
1981-91	34.30	23.85

Source : Census of India.

The various socio-economic and political problems in the State are thus related to the abnormal growth of population caused mainly by immigration. This calls for the need to strictly check the free immigration process by making the State's international borders non-porous. To check the continuity of further influx of population from across the border, steps have to be

15. Government of Tripura, Annual Plan 1995-96, Tripura State, Part I, (Planning and Coordination Department, Agartala, 1995-96), pp. 3-4.

initiated both by the State and Central Governments to seal all the bordering areas to prevent any entry of people. Efforts should be made from all directions and authorities to completely prevent any further entry of people into the State. Whatever may be the ideological and political differences of various political parties, and people in general, all must come to a common point of understanding of the problems confronting the State without which no concrete and feasible steps are possible. If all political parties in the State and the Centre keep playing their own game of politics, such problem of immigration in Tripura would never be solved. In fact, there has been a long standing talk both at the State and Central Governments level for fencing the international border areas in Tripura but so far there has been no concrete step or development towards it.

The Citizenship Certificate is vital because it is through this document a person's belongingness to any particular place or country is being recognised. In case of Tripura, many immigrants have been legalised through the issuing of Citizenship Certificate. The illegal immigrants from across the border have manipulated the advantage of getting the Citizenship Cards as the issuing authorities in different Districts of the State have mostly been belonging to their own community. Therefore, in the case of Tripura, it may be in the fitness of things to let the Citizenship Cards be issued by not a single authority, Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), as it has been practised but by a

Committee which may comprise of ten to fifteen members belonging to the indigenous people, who may be Officers working under the State Government Departments like Police, Judicial, Civil Administration, Home, Political, and Education. The various relevant documents such as date and place of birth Certificate, Permanent Resident Certificate, Ration Card, school Certificate, etc., of the applicant basing on which the Certificate of Citizenship is issued, must be strictly scrutinised by the constituted Committee in different stages. As West Agartala dated the November 8, 1994 PS case No. 272/94 under section 468/420/471/472- 34 IPC, reveals the case of forgery of issuing different Certificates including Citizenship Card, it is very necessary that a strict vigilance of all Government Departments may be ensured to prevent such occurrences. Malpractices in such Offices must be checked and culprits be penalised in order to prevent the illegal immigration into the State. Also it has been revealed through the discussions with experienced people that many Bangladeshi women while delivering or giving birth to their children in the Tripura bordering hospitals procured the birth certificates from those State hospitals. This practice must be strictly checked and stopped by the authorities. For place and birth certificate is one of the most important documents for issuing of citizenship certificate.

More importantly, it is not only preventing the further or fresh influx but also steps may be initiated to repatriate the major portion of immigrants either back into Bangladesh or rehabilitated to somewhere else. As per the TNV memorandum

submitted to the Chief Minister of Tripura on May 9, 1995, it has been pressurised upon the Government of Tripura to detect and deport all identified foreign nationals from Tripura, without any exception with the 1971 as the cut off year. But in fact, some underground Organisations demand the date of Tripura's merger with India - October 15, 1949 to be the cut off year for the deportation of immigrants from the State. It may appear difficult to concede to this demand of the cut off year in the present demographic structure, where the indigenous people constitute only thirty per cent of the total population in the State. Nonetheless, the population structure had undoubtedly become quite unproportionate thereby putting the indigenous population at disadvantaged positions. Therefore, looking at the real situation in the State population, with regard to the indigenous people, some steps should be initiated to safeguard and promote their interests. The Autonomous District Council, under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, 'currently functioning has thus far proved to be inadequate to protect and promote the interest of the indigenous people for which various organisations of the Borok people are demanding for the introduction of the Inner Line Permit System particularly in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). The introduction of Inner Line Permit System in the TTAADC may prevent the infiltration of outsiders into the District Council areas other than the indigenous people. To prevent from infiltration the Inner Line Permit System is required even for the entire State.

Tripura State is undergoing a social, communal and ethnic tensions resulting from the indigenous people's feeling of being cornered and the insecurity in the land of their own, due to the over-whelming presence of the immigrants and the attitudes of the immigrants to maintain the status-quo of dominance. There is a great economic disparity between the indigenous people and the immigrants, the later being having the monopoly control of market economy. The indigenous people not having an access to participation in developmental plans, policies, programmes and processes to the extent of ensuring their economic security, has aggravated their grievances. The alienation of tribal lands since the 1950s had made the matter worse which had led to the complex problem of inequality between the two contrasting social groups, the indigenous people and the Bengali immigrants. Under the circumstances, the Bengali merchants, traders and businessmen have been able to exploit the rural tribal people to establish themselves economically and even otherwise. Further, the harassment of the indigenous people by the immigrants in offices, market and business sectors, etc., accompanied by favouritism, red-tapism and delay in official matters, have created more tensions and divisive feeling which is one of the main factors of the growing and increasing activities of the different insurgent groups belonging to the indigenous people in the State. Moreover, it is not easy for the aboriginal or indigenous people to have an access to the high administrative officers and particularly the ministers to ventilate their grievances as most of these

Government departments are controlled by the immigrants. Today, due to all these developments taking place, every bit of incident in the State is turning communal leading to a feeling of insecurity and social disharmony. Under such situation and scenario the immigrants being now a majority consisting about 70 per cent of the total population in the State, are always found in the advantageous position. Therefore, unless the further immigration process is prevented completely and the majority of the existing immigrants are deported or repatriated or rehabilitated elsewhere, such problem in Tripura would continue for all times to come. The steps towards the solution of such problem being political in nature, can only be initiated from the higher political and administrative echelon both at State and Central levels. Since Tripura is already over populated beyond the capacity of State's resources to sustain the entire population, the sooner the initiative to solve the problem of immigration and immigrants, the better it is for all. The solution of various insurgent problems in the State, cannot be sought through arms or counter-insurgency operation which leads to harassment and torture of the innocent tribal villagers only in the name of curbing insurgency but the solution has to be that of political a settlement.

It is surprising to notice that many Jhumias, the indigenous people, are becoming uprooted from their own land with the forces of alienation of tribal lands and the process of insurgencies and counter - insurgencies in the interior areas of the State. This has prompted the State Government to launch in May-June 1995, a Special Scheme to rehabilitate in specially created "Cluster Villages" which is aimed at providing security and for an integrated development of the remote and backward tribal areas. In the two already created cluster villages namely at Chamaparai Para and Ulemchara in Dhalai District of Tripura, over six hundred and six hundred fifty tribal people respectively were already rehabilitated.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the scheme to bring about and ensure all round development of the landless and uprooted tribal people in Tripura remains to be seen. Unless long term economic sustainable developmental schemes and policies are initiated by the Government, the plight of the indigenous people will not be removed and the all round development of the backward areas of the tribal people cannot be conceived. At the same time, as the uninterrupted influx of people from across the international border leading to rapid and high population growth is the major roots of various socio-economic and political problems and impediment to all round

16. For Details See, "Punarbhasan Prakalpaguli Dekhle Upojati Pritir Namuna Bhese Uthe", The Tripura Darpan, (Agartala), June 28, 1995, p.1; Also see, "Tripura Scheme to rehabilitate Tribals", The Times of India, (New Delhi), July 4, 1995, p.5; and "Special Scheme for Rehabilitation", The Sentinel, (Guwahati), July 4, 1995, p.3.

progress in the State, all out efforts of all sections, political parties, irrespective of whatever their political differences, and the Government, must be directed towards solving the immigration problem and population growth. Efforts should also be directed towards bringing about a permanent solution to such problem of immigration because as it appears today, if the problem of immigration into the State is not permanently tackled and resolved before long, it will lead to a further serious problem for all to survive, irrespective of the indigenous people and the immigrants alike, as there is already an imbalance between the increasing size of population and the depleting natural resources.

In addition, education is vital and indispensable for the all round development of the backward tribal people in Tripura who constitute the State's 30 per cent of the total 28 lakh population. They are mostly illiterate and only 52.88 per cent and 27.34 per cent males and females respectively are said to be literate among the tribal people in the State. The most notable in this connection is the high rate of drop-out in the schools among the tribal people mainly due to their poor economic conditions. According to a report of the Union Human Resource Development Ministry, Tripura is on the top of the list of dropout of tribal students, whose drop-out rate is 73.91 per cent in the primary stage, 86.64 per cent in the middle stage and 91.56 per cent in the secondary stage as against the national

percentage of 63.81 per cent, 76.35 per cent and 86.28 per cent respectively.¹⁷ It is in this context that the Government of Tripura in mid-1995 has chalked out a plan to reduce the drop-out of the tribal students in the State by distributing text books to the tribal students upto class ten belonging to the category of the families below an annual income of Rs. 36,000. For this purpose, as per the report, the Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tripura, would provide an average of Rs. 76.38 lakh annually and the Education Department would implement the scheme.

Notwithstanding the scheme to check the school drop-out and increase literacy rate among the tribal students, unless the Government initiates and implements an all out effort to eradicate poverty and improve the economic conditions of the poor and backward tribal people, no other plans could be effective so as to bring about an all round development required for the indigenous people in the State. Ensuring and improving the economic foundation and infrastructure is vital for the development of the backward indigenous people. Schemes and policies of the Government, providing avenues for the indigenous people to venture into the fields of trade, business and commercial are essential for ensuring the economic infrastructure and development. As the indigenous people are very poor economically, grant of "Special capital" to the selected groups may greatly help and attract the indigenous people to build the economic foundation.

17. "Plan to Check School Drop Out in Tripura", The Shillong Times, (Shillong), May 26, 1995, p. 3.

Going by the trend of immigration affecting the demographic structure and the problem relating to the indigenous people, the situation of the indigenous people in particular and the State in general, seems to be marching from bad to worse. The existing Governmental Plans and Policies relating to the welfare of the tribal people and the administrative structure including the functioning of the TTAADC, do not seem to be much effective and adequate to protect and promote the interests of the down trodden people. The demographic structure and growth rate of population in the State show that while the percentage of the non-tribal population has always been on the increase, the percentage of tribal or indigenous population has always been on the decline. In this scenario, the existing democratic principles do not seem to be adequate to protect and improve the condition of the Boroks, indigenous people. Therefore, an extra constitutional and legislative protection and privileges are required to safeguard and promote the interests of the Borok people. It is in this situational context that many socio-economic and political organisations of the Borok people are conceiving the idea for an "Autonomous State". An all out efforts may be made from all directions, Government, Organisations, Agencies and all Sections of the Society, to preserve and promote the rights of the Boroks, indigenous people, who have become the victims of uninterrupted influx of non-tribal people, particularly erstwhile East Pakistanis and now Bengladeshis, from across the international border and become minority in the land, State and territory of their own.

APPENDIX

As far as possible, important people, political leaders, social workers, students leaders, Government Officials, educated and knowledgeable indigenous people of all sections particularly of the tribal society have been either formally or informally interviewed on various points and at different periods of time. Many valuable discussions and debates were also held with tribal villagers, leaders, educated people, religious leaders, etc. The interviews, discussions and debates were mainly confined to the field or area of the research work or study such as the historical background of the indigenous or aboriginal people of Tripura, a political history of the State, process and problem of uninterrupted influx of refugees from across the international border, impact of immigration on tribal society, religion, politics, economy, etc. As far as it could be recorded, the persons listed were interviewed and discussed within the areas of the study. Besides the listed persons, discussions, formal and informal interviews with many other knowledgeable persons including Government Officials, leaders of many Governmental and non-governmental organisations in Tripura were also carried out, who were real sources of many valuable informations for the study.

List of Persons Interviewed and Discussed in the Study Area Year-wise.

Name	Occupation	Age	Date and Year
1. Binode Behari Debbarma	Government Servant and Local Tribal Leader	55 Yrs.	February 10-15, 1983
2. Suresh Ch. Debbarma	Retired School Head Master	65 Yrs.	January 15, 1985
3. Ramesh Debbarma	Tribal Leader	55 Yrs.	September 5-7, 1985
4. Bimal Debbarma	School Head Master	58 Yrs.	September 3-8, 1987
5. Rev. Chandradhan Debbarma	Pastor (Church Leader)	55 Yrs.	September 25-29, 1987
6. Subodh Debbarma	Local Tribal Leader	40 Yrs.	September 25-30, 1987
7. Har Kumar Debbarma	Local Tribal Leader	55 Yrs.	January 2-9, 1991
8. Rabindra Debbarma	Minister for Power and Education, Government of Tripura	40 Yrs.	September 2, 1991
9. B. C. Debbarma	Retired Advocate	70 Yrs.	January 17, 1992
10. Rabindra Debbarma	Minister for Power and Education, Government of Tripura	40 Yrs.	December 27, 1992
11. Amiya Kr. Debbarma	TUJS Leader	42 Yrs.	January 2, 1993
12. Sridam Debbarma	TUJS Leader	38 Yrs.	January 2, 1993
13. Shyama Charan Tripura	Then Party President of TUJS	47 Yrs.	January 5, 1993
14. B. K. Devi	Member of Parliament from Tripura State	45 Yrs.	January 25, 1993
15. Harinath Debbarma	The Then President of TUJS	58 Yrs.	December 27-28, 1993
16. Suresh Ch. Jamatia	TSF General Secretary	29 Yrs.	January 2-3, 1994
17. Mantu Lal Koloj	TSF Leader	28 Yrs.	January 2-3, 1994
18. Subodh Debbarma	TUJS Leader	45 Yrs.	January 4-5, 1994
19. Dasarath Deb	Chief Minister	70 Yrs.	February 10, 1994
20. Rev. K. K. Debbarma	Church Leader	45 Yrs.	February 7-15, 1994
21. Ratan Mani Jamatia	Businessman	45 Yrs.	May 30-31, 1994
22. Surendra Debbarma	Businessman	35 Yrs.	May 30-31, 1994
23. Jatindra Jamatia	Businessman	40 Yrs.	May 30-31, 1994
24. Narendra Debbarma	Businessman	38 Yrs.	July 3, 1994
25. B. K. Devi	Member of Parliament from Tripura State	45 Yrs.	July 15, 1994
26. B. K. Hrangkhawl	TNV President	42 Yrs.	April 6, 1995
27. Ratan Mani Jamatia	Businessman	45 Yrs.	June 15, 1995
28. Sukhendu Debbarma	Lecturer in History, Tripura University	28 Yrs.	June 15, 1995
29. Ratan Mani Jamatia	Businessman	35 Yrs.	June 15, 1995
30. Sushil Debbarma	School Teacher	26 Yrs.	June 15, 1995
31. Sridam Debbarma	TTNC Leader	38 Yrs.	July 8, 1995
32. Aghore Debbarma	Veteran Political Leader, CPI	70 Yrs.	July 10, 1995
33. N. C. Debbarma	Educated tribal leader	54 Yrs.	July 12, 1995
34. C.R. Debbarma	Educated tribal leader	36 Yrs.	July 8-15, 1995
35. B. Debbarma	Educated tribal leader	43 Yrs.	July 12, 1995
36. Rev. R. Kaipeng	Religious leader	42 Yrs.	July 14, 1995
37. Rev. J.B. Debbarma	Religious leader	45 Yrs.	July 10-14, 1995
38. Chandan Tripura	Educated tribal leader	30 Yrs.	August 6, 1995
39. Bimal Reang	Educated tribal leader	32 Yrs.	August 6, 1995
40. Hebal Abel Koloj	Educated Borok	26 Yrs.	August 6, 1995

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