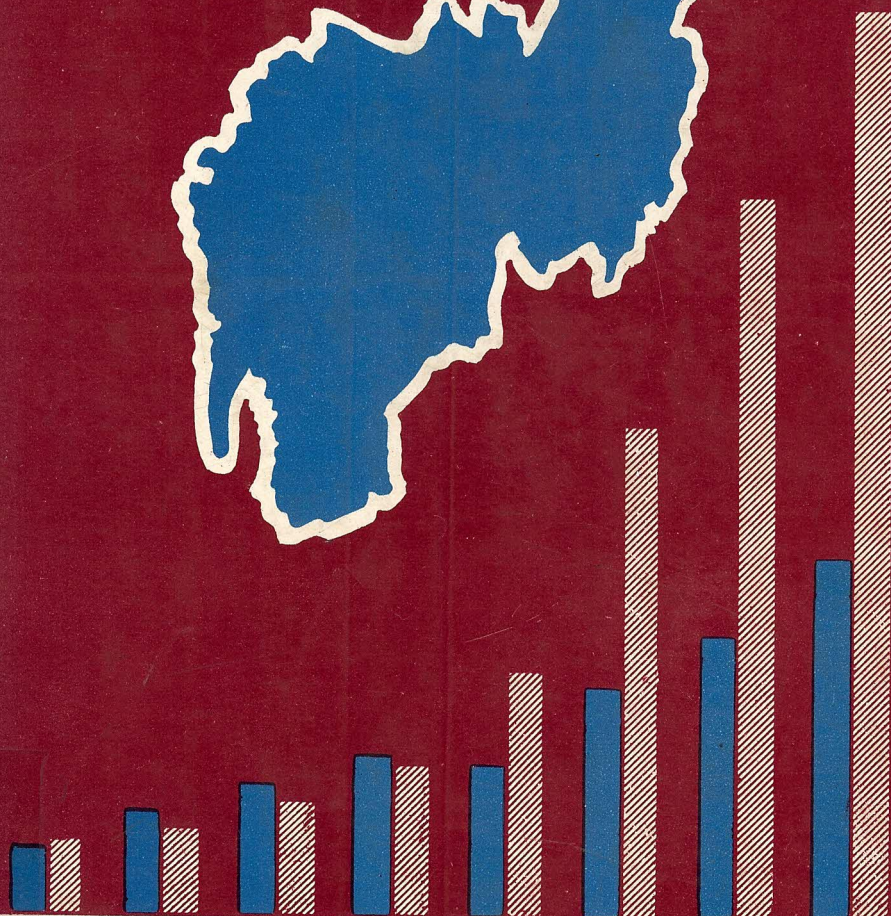


TRIBAL INSURGENCY IN TRIPURA



S.R. BHATTACHARJEE

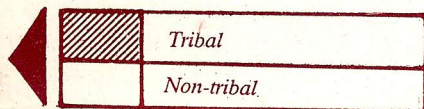
Tripura, a land of beauty, is a tiny and hilly State in the North-East Region of India. It has a population of over twenty lacs comprising of both the tribesmen (28.44%) and non-tribesmen. Both the communities lived here peacefully from the remote past and practised mutual tolerance and acceptance. Unfortunately since June 1980 there had been a flow of violent activities causing untold sufferings to the people of the State. In course of time the situation turned towards a distinctive shape peculiar to an insurgency.

The present book provides an informed glimpse on the causes of tribal unrest in Tripura. The author who is closely associated with the tribal life in Tripura gives a methodical look into the society of Tripura through the prism of Sociology to find out the factors and forces - both indigenous and alien - that contributed to such unrest in the context of inbuilt inequalities in the distribution of society's wealth in the societal condition of Tripura from the remote past. He discusses in detail the features of the insurgency in the State in the light of his experiences and also suggests some remedial measures to eliminate its causes. According to the author, the peace accord with TNV and the formation of Congress(I)-TUJS Ministry in Tripura affords an ideal opportunity to win over the hearts and minds of people if co-ordinated efforts are made.

A valuable book for scholars and researchers of Sociology, planners and administrators in tribal affairs and general readers alike.

Rs. 150

Proportions of tribal & non-tribal population over the decades 1911-1981



Sambhuti Ranjan Bhattacharjee born in 1944, is a social worker. He had graduated in Science from Calcutta University in 1965 and obtained Master's degree in Sociology from Rajasthan University in 1984. As a member of a Security Oriented People's Organisation in which he spent a span of 16 years of his life, he was closely associated with the tribal life in Tripura and could assess the process of transition of Tripura society particularly during the past decade. He has the feel of the problems of the hillsman in the State. As a student of discipline of Sociology, he has been taking keen interest in the socio-cultural life of Tripura.

At present, he is engaged in research work on Tribal problems in Tripura.

ISBN 81-210-0234-6

TRIBAL INSURGENCY IN TRIPURA :

A Study in Exploration of Causes

S.R. BHATTACHARJEE



INTER-INDIA PUBLICATIONS

D-17 RAJA GARDEN EXTN. NEW DELHI-110015 (INDIA)

Gen.

Cataloging in Publication Data—DK

Bhattacharjee, S. R. (Sambhuti Ranjan), 1944-

Tribal insurgency in Tripura.

(Tribal studies of India series ; T 136)

Includes index.

1. Tribes—India—Tripura. 2. Tripura (India)—Scheduled tribes. 3. Insurgency—India—Tripura. I. Title. II. Series: Tribal studies of India series ; T 136.

F232
156

NEHU Library

Acc. No. 162171

Acc. by

Date 2/11/89

Class by

Sub heading by

ISBN 81-210-0234-6

First Published in India in 1989

© S.R. Bhattacharjee, 1988
Sambhuti Ranjan Bhattacharjee (b. 1944-)

Transcribed by D.N. Mangrum
12/12/89

NE
301.451095415
BHA;1

DEDICATION

*To my parents and son Ramu
who are no more in this world*

Published in India by:

M.C. Mittal

INTER-INDIA PUBLICATIONS

D-17, RAJA GARDEN EXTN.,

NEW DELHI-110015 (INDIA)

PHONE : 5413145

Printed in India by :

DEVENDRA PRINTERS

New Delhi-110064

Foreword

TRIBAL insurgency has taken a new turn in several parts of the country in general and in Tripura in particular. Sri S.R. Bhattacharjee, B.Sc., M.A. has studied in depth all aspects of tribal insurgency for several years under my supervision and I am happy to note that Shri Bhattacharjee has been successful in writing in lucid style. The present work, I hope will enlighten the general public about the origin of the problem and of the tribal customs and aspirations. His work also includes methodological look into the tribal society with particular reference to psycho-sociological angles. This has helped in elucidating the factors and forces which contribute to the tribal unrest in Tripura.

It is my considered opinion that this book will be of immense value to planners, administrators and researchers alike.

22-11-1988

DHARMA NATH GUPTA
M.A. Ph.D. (Pat.)
Asstt. Professor
Deptt. of Psychology
M.B.B. College
Agartala, TRIPURA

Acknowledgment

I feel happy in making the acknowledgments, but at the same time fear that somebody in the list might be missed. The work was undertaken some four years back when by virtue of my duties I had the access to the simple people of the interior places and could see their immobility in greater society. I discussed their problems with Dr. D.N. Gupta, Dr. Ajoy Chakraborty, Dr. J. Gan Choudhury and Dr. J.B. Ganguli who contributed in developing my theme and formulating the outline of the present project. I take this opportunity to convey my sincere gratitude to them. My idea in the matter further crystallized on going through the sociological works "Sociology : A critical approach to power, conflict and change", by J. Victor Baldrige, published by John Wiley and Sons, New York. I owe a great deal to the book in planning my project.

In the conduct of year-round field study, I was immensely assisted by Sharvashri S.K. Chatterjee Debaprasad Das, Subir Sinha Roy, Nani Gopal Saha, Matilal Bhowmik, Mintu Deb Roy, Benode Lodh, Benode Paul, Subhas Dey, Ashok Deb Barma, Rati Ranjan Jamatia and Smt. Beauty Das. I am indebted to them for extending their sincere cooperation in the collection of various informations.

In the process of compilation of data and to put the things together I was helped by Dr. Mahadev Chakraborty, Sri Jadu Prasanna Bhattacharjee, Sri D.K. Choudhury (Census Operation), Sri B.B.K. Deb Barman, Shri Nani Gopal Chakraborty, Sri Dipak Chatterjee, Sri Tarit Mohon Das Gupta and Smt. Sipra Bhattacharjee. I am grateful to them.

To Dr. K. Singh, Cartographer, Directorate of Census Operation, Tripura, Agartala, my indebtedness is incalculable for his sincere help for drawing maps and other graphical representations presented in this book.

I would also offer my thanks to Sharvashri Bhupendra Dutta Bhowmik, Samiran Roy, Satyabrata Chakraborty, Debapriya Deb Barma, Ram Gopal Singh, Amrandra Deb Barma, Priyanshu Bikash Bhattacharjee, Dipak Kr. Choudhury, Mohitlal Choudhury, Manik Chandra Taran, Dipak Sen Gupta, Satya Ranjan Dey, Dulal Chakraborty, Shyama Charan Tripura, Radhika Ranjan Gupta, Rama Prasad Dutta, Dasharath Deb, Sushil Paul, M.C. Mittal, Jibesh Chakraborty and Smt. Chandana Chakraborty for their inspiration and encouragements. I am also grateful to those who responded to my questionnaires during the field study.

I shall consider my labour rewarded if the book is helpful in any way to the planners, researchers, administrators in eliminating the causes of unrest from the soil of Tripura.

The author also craves the indulgence of the readers of any act of omission and commission in this book.

Agartala,
2nd October, 1988

S.R. BHATTACHARJEE

Preface

AFTER the World War II the capacity to destroy which has been enormously expanded by the nuclear weapons and missiles, has given the greatest threat to the whole of the mankind, on one hand. On the other, the threat of insurgency has given new significance to the low level of protracted violence in anti-colonial struggles, communist subversive wars and other types of internal conflicts arising out of ethnic revolts, secessionistic movement etc.

In the context of principles of modern revolutionary welfare, the insurgency may be defined as a protracted armed struggle conducted methodically, step by step in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to overthrow the existing order. Based on its dimensions, insurgency may more appropriately be defined as an action process in which one or more organisations pursue strategy of violence to bring change in the society in accordance with some ideologies.

Insurgency which is unconventional, cellular in growth and fluidity in nature, has in general two phases, viz. subversive or resocialization and armed struggle. Subversive phase is the covert preparatory stage of insurgency in which the loyalty of the people to the existing order is detached psychologically. The armed struggle is the show of strength of insurgents to bring the people under their control for attaining the goal. The beginning of the subversive phase is so vague that at times it is difficult to distinguish it from democratic rights. Whatever the starting point of an unrest may be, every insurgency will owe to a cause or a coalition of causes. These causes as prevailing in a society are exploited to resocialize the people according to an ideology. Some motivational factors such as attraction of becoming well-known figures, adventurism, intention of taking revenge and the like may also play role behind the joining an insurgency.

Tripura, a tiny State in the North-east region of India has a mixed population numbering over twenty lacs of tribesmen (28.44%) and non-tribesmen. There had been a flow of violent activities since 1980 in her soil causing untold sufferings to both the communities. Looking at these violent incidents, one may become perplexed to call them as insurgent activities. The initial confusion as to the nature of violences will be removed on analysis of their characteristics. Some observed peculiarities are: protracted nature of violence, tactical mobility, use of base, use of sanctuary in alien land, selective terrorism, support of a section of populace, infrastructural organisation, use of sophisticated arms and political aim. The presence of all these justified a state of insurgency in Tripura. The geographical location, topography, inaccessibility of remote areas and natural vegetation of the State are also helpful in the growth of insurgency. Needless to mention that every insurgency may not reach its ultimate goal. It may fail also or negotiation in between the insurgents and the counter-insurgents (the government in power) may result some settlement—temporary or permanent.

The tribal insurgency in Tripura entered the violent phase in the bloody year 1980 after passing through the covert resocialization period. It is an irony that the government had failed to study the indicators of insurgency in their right perspectives and to nip the trouble in the bud. It is worth mentioning here that insurgency movement particularly in the underdeveloped world is a complex phenomenon. To deal with it, the government may be required to fight the insurgents in several fronts like social, economical, political apart from application of limited force. In such a situation the government may be required to enforce the laws of the land strictly and must try to win over the hearts and minds of the people. It should also identify the root causes of insurgency and try to neutralise them.

Tripura, a land of beauty, has an unique feature of cultural heritages. There has been harmonious blending of two cultural heritages, viz. the cultural heritage of the hillsmen and that of the plainsmen mainly Bengalees. The two cultural groups from the remote past had learnt to feel and practise the mutual

tolerance and acceptance. The population of the State swelled particularly after the partition of this sub-continent mainly due to influx of immigrants resulting in demographic imbalance. In spite of this, there was much tolerance and the State was aheading to progress though at a slower rate. At such a juncture the communal massacre occurred in June 1980 causing immense loss to the lives and properties of main ethnic groups in Tripura. This rocked the State and the rest of the nation. The frequencies of violent incidents had been coming down gradually as a result of various measures; but unfortunately the situation subsequently turned towards a distinctive shape peculiar to an insurgency.

The question here naturally arises—what are the wrongs? What are the roots of tribal unrest in Tripura? Some people say that it is communist subversive war. Some say it is conspiracy of western imperialism. Some also profess that it is narrow tribalism. Whatever may be the saying the fact remains that it is broadly a social problem since it involves the whole of the society in Tripura.

As a student of discipline of sociology which is the tool for understanding social problem and conflicts one should go deep into the problem to know the causes of its birth and help to improve the situation.

A methodical look into the society of Tripura may reveal the factors that contributed to the tribal insurgency in Tripura. We should study how the tribal unrest got momentum in the societal condition in Tripura or in other words its historical and political development in the sociological eyes is to be seen. It should also be carefully observed whether or not some inequalities and corruption which create so many problems around us to-day, work here also. With our background knowledge about the environment and socio-ecocultural structure of the State and keeping in view the chronology of the development of tribal unrest, we may proceed to explore the causes of tribal insurgency in Tripura. The methodology followed in the proposed project included collection of information from various sources, field survey, cross verification of data, administration of questionnaires, study of the old and present record

and documents, and the like. The data gathered were carefully analysed. Their relationship and variability were found out. The objective findings were integrated to give rational explanation about causes.

In the conclusion we should discuss why such research work is necessary. Someone may comment that happenings of society are obvious and there is no necessity of spending time, money and energy for finding out such facts. The answer is that complex problems facing our society have no obvious answers and it takes painstaking research to make out reasonable scientific answer.

Tribal insurrection in Tripura is a complex and burning problem for Tripura. There may not be a simple answer to it. A scientific study is, therefore, necessary to know the underlying inter-connected causes. Such a study is a desideratum to solve the root causes of the problem.

2nd October, 1988

S.R. BHATTACHARJEE



	<i>Page</i>
FOREWORD	7
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	9
PREFACE	11
LIST OF FIGURES	17
LIST OF TABLES	19
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	22
1. The Land and Physical Backgrounds	23
2. The People and the Changing Demography	29
3. Social and Cultural Life	49
4. Economic Life	89
5. Political and Administrative Organisations and Chronology of Development of Tribal Movement	123
✓ 6. Features of the Insurgency and Concluding Remarks	142
APPENDICES	183
INDEX	209

List of Figures

	<i>Page</i>
1.1 Map showing the position of Tripura in Indian Union	24
2.1 Rise in tribal and non-tribal population in Tripura over the decades	40
3.1 Rate of literacy of tribal and non-tribal population over the decades 1961-81	67
3.2 Availability of medical facilities as in April 1987	76
3.3 Growth of urbanisation (1961-81)	78
3.4 Cultural ethnocentrism at work	83
4.1 Change in economic activities	93
4.2 Distribution of workers in various categories and rates of employment (1982-86) of tribals and non-tribals	95
4.3 Proportion of scheduled tribes in government services	97
4.4 Tripura people below poverty line	102
6.1 Opinion about insurgency in Tripura	146
6.2 Opinion regarding birth of TNV	159

List of Tables

	<i>Page</i>
2.1 Scheduled Tribe Communities and their Frequencies	33
2.2 Decadal Variation in Population and the Percentage of Tribal Population	35
2.3 Comparison of Decadal Growth Rates of Tripura with India	36
2.4 Immigration from Different Provinces/States	37
2.5 Growth of Tribal and Non-Tribal Population in Tripura	39
2.6 Density of Population Since 1901	42
2.7 Density of Population in Selected States in 1981	43
2.8 Sex Ratio	44
2.9 Growth Rate of Urban Population in Tripura	46
2.10 Tribal Population in Urban Areas	47
3.1 Social Attitude/Opinions—The Change (Based on Responses of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-tribal People)	58
3.2 Choice of Life Styles and Cultural Items (Based on Responses of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-Tribal People)	59
3.3 Preference in Regard to Age of Marriage, Number of Children and Divorce (Based on Responses of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-tribals)	60
3.4 Attitude on Sex (Based on Micro Study of 100 Tribals and 155 Non-tribals)	62
3.5 Statistical Profile of the Tribesmen as compared to the Non-tribesmen in Tripura	64
3.6 Tribal Literacy as compared to Non-tribal Literacy in Tripura	65
3.7 Rural Literacy in Tripura	66

	<i>Page</i>
3.8 Restricted Mobility of Tribal Women in Respect of Labour, Cultivation, Literacy etc., as in 1981	69
3.9 Enrolment in Elementary Education	71
3.10 Enrolment in Higher Education as on 1-1-87	72
3.11 Drop-outs in between Classes I-V (1975, 1977)	72
3.12 Availability of Elementary School Facilities	74
3.13 Distribution of Medical Facilities as in April 1987.	75
3.14 Urbanisation in Tripura	77
3.15 Cultural Tolerance in Tripura Society (Based on Opinions of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-tribal People)	80
3.16 Cultural Ethnocentrism at Work in Group of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-tribal People	81
3.17 Trend of Religious Affiliation in Tripura (1951-81)	82
3.18 How People Think on Religion	86
4.1 Change in Economical Activities of Working People in Tripura over Decades (1971-81)	92
4.2 Rate of Employment (Tribal <i>Versus</i> Non-Tribal)	96
4.3 Representation of ST in Government Service as compared to others in Tripura as in December 1982	96
4.4 Type of House to Live in (Based on Housing Condition of 101 Tribal and 155 Non-tribal People)	99
4.5 Per Capita Income (in Rs. at current price)	101
4.6 Percentage of People below Poverty line in Tripura	101
4.7 Debt Position of Survey Household in Sadar Sub-Division	104
4.8 Loan from Credit Institution (Based on Responses of 100 Tribal and 149 Non-tribal)	106
4.9 What do the People have their own? (Based on Responses of 100 tribal and 155 Non-tribes)	107
4.10 Land Utilization (Percentage)	108
4.11 Distribution of Operational Holding (1970-71 and 1980-81)	110

	<i>Page</i>
4.12 Percentage of Estimated Value of Crops Sold to Different Types of Buyers (Based on 95 Numbers of Sample Households)	113
4.13 Restoration of Alienated Land as on 31-8-1986	116
5.1 Degree Effective Participation in Election in Tripura	136
6.1 Attitude towards Inequal Urbanisation in Tripura (Based on Responses of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-tribal)	142
6.2 Attitude towards Inter-cultural Contacts (Based on Responses of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-tribal)	143
6.3 What do People think of Insurgents? (Based on Responses of 100 Tribals and 155 Non-tribals)	144
6.4 Attitude of People towards Police (Based on Responses of 100 Tribesmen and 155 Non-tribesmen)	147
6.5 Communication Gap (Based on Frequency of Visits in the Localities of Rural Respondents)	150
6.6 Corruption in Government Machineries	155
6.7 Opinion Regarding Birth of TNV (Based on Responses of 100 Tribal and 155 Non-tribal People)	158

List of Illustrations

Typical tribal dance of Reang Community in Tripura

Tagore's dance

Radha Krishna dance

Musical instrument of the Tripuri community

Peculiar ornamentation of Tribal women

Very popular Manipuri dance.

'BACK HOME (The TNV hardcores are coming back to homes and laying down their arms to the authorities).

The Governor of Tripura with TNV chief B.K. Hrangkhawl and others at Ganganagar

Courtsey

The Directorate of Public Relations and Tourism, Government of Tripura, Agartala and Directorate of Research, Department of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Government of Tripura, Agartala.

SOME OF OUR TRIBAL STUDIES OF INDIA (A SERIES)

- T 116 : Tribes of Southern Region (A Selected Bibliography)/P.K. Misra, B.A. Bhanu, K.N. Reddy, M. Sethuraman and T.S. Natrajan (eds.).
ISBN 81-210-0042-4
- T-117 : Development Problems and Prospect of Mizoram/K.K. Upadhyaya.
ISBN 81-210-0043-2
- T-118 : Tribal Culture and Economy : The Malpaharias of Santal Parganas/Alok Kumar.
ISBN 81-210-0044-0
- T-119 : Dimensions of Development in Tribal Bihar/Sachindra Narayan.
ISBN 81-210-0060-2
- T-120 : Tribal Health - Socio-Cultural Dimensions/Buddhadhe Chaudhuri.
ISBN 81-210-0049-1
- T-121 : Changing Occupational Structure of Scheduled Tribes/Rama Shankar Singh.
ISBN 81-210-0175-7
- T-122 : Tribal Economy in Transition : A Study of Meghalaya.
ISBN 81-210-0180-3
- T-123 : Lakshadweep : Economy and Society/Abraham George.
ISBN 81-210-0182-X
- T-124 : The Korkus of the Vindhya Hills/Stephen Fuchs.
ISBN 81-210-0203-6
- T-125 : Marketing in Tribal Economy/I. Murli Krishna Rao.
ISBN 81-210-0204-4
- T-126 : Institutional Framework for Tribal Development/P.V. Rao.
ISBN 81-210-0207-9
- T-127 : Tribal Movement and Political History in India/D.M. Praharaj.
ISBN 81-210-0208-7
- T-128 : Comparative History of the Nagas : From Ancient Period till 1826/Y.L.R. Shimmi.
ISBN 81-210-0210-9
- T-129 : Tribal Social Structure : A Study of the Maring Society of Manipur/R.K. Das.
ISBN 81-210-0213-3
- T-130 : Movements Development, Police and Judiciary in Tribal World/S. Narayan.
ISBN 81-210-0214-1
- T-131 : Tribe in Transition/Sachindra Narayan.
ISBN 81-210-0215-X
- T-132 : Underdevelopment and Destitution : Essays on Orissan Society/J. Pathy.
ISBN 81-210-0216-8
- T-133 : Ecology, Culture and Change : Tribals of Sikkim Himalayas/V. Bhasin.
ISBN 81-210-0217-6
- T-134 : Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in N.E. India/N.K. Das.
ISBN 81-210-0218-4
- T-135 : Dimensions of Tribal Movement in India : A Study of Udyachal/M.C. Paul.
ISBN 81-210-0219-2



INTER-INDIA PUBLICATIONS

D-17, RAJA GARDEN EXTN. NEW DELHI-110 015 (INDIA)

PHONE: 5413145