

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



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## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

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".<sup>1</sup> 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,

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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.<sup>2</sup> 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 Twi (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

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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 sovereignty 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.<sup>3</sup> However, today, the entire

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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 indigenes 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.*<sup>4</sup> 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* cause 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*

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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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> The problem of refugees in

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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 homeland<sup>7</sup> 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

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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 the development of 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.<sup>8</sup> 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,<sup>9</sup> 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

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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.<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup> 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

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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,<sup>12</sup> 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,<sup>13</sup> as it (Roman script) is more suitable for pronunciation and has wider scope for the

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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".<sup>14</sup>

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

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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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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

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16. For Details See, "Punarbasan Prakaipaguli 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.<sup>17</sup> 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.*

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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.