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M. Amarjeet Singh

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CONFLICTS IN TRIPURA



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

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BACKGROUNDERS ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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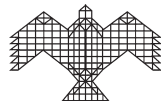
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Backgrounders on Conflict

CONFLICTS IN TRIPURA

M. Amarjeet Singh



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
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NIAS Backgrounder

Photo Credit: Soldiers of the International Frontier Border Security Force – Border Security Force of India (BSFI) strict vigil on Indo-Bangladesh International Border in Lankamura village of Indian State, Tripura on 25th February, 2009. Pic- Mr Shib Shankar Chatterjee

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EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

Partition of India in 1947 into India and Pakistan had brought a massive displacement of people, as Muslims in India fled to Pakistan and Hindus in Pakistan fled to India. Thus, within a short span of time they became refugees in their own country. Refugees arrived in large number to Tripura over a short time which had also become catalyst for conflict between natives and newcomers. Three decades later a riot took place in Tripura. To protect and promote the interests of the natives, an autonomous region (also known as the Sixth Schedule area) occupying about two-thirds of Tripura was constituted. This region which enjoys limited autonomy is governed by an elected council the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council. It was, however, viewed as against the interests of the majority group. The conflict started several decades ago hasn't been fully resolved. Underlying this continuous upheaval is a number of issues.

ISSUES

Issues of swift demographic change

The natives of Tripura, known as the Boroks, have already been outnumbered by the combined population of refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and native Bengalis of Tripura. This abrupt demographic change had become a root cause of conflict between minority and majority groups. Being the majority group, the Bengalis are today elected from about 40 out of 60 territorial constituencies of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, and hence the State Government is 'controlled' by them. The minority, the Boroks, cannot hope to muster the political power needed to influence the functioning of the Government. They alleged that the Government did little to protect their interests. On the other hand, several people had also argued that those who fled from Chakla Roshanabad (now in Bangladesh) should be treated as 'internally displaced persons' since it

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- The author is Assistant Professor in the Conflict Resolution Programme at National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore.
 - The paper has benefited from the comments by K Debbarma, T K Singh, Biswanath Debbarma, K Kokho and Anamika Debroy. None of them are, of course, responsible for the errors that remain.

was once belonged to the Kingdom of Tripura.

Fear of losing land

Like many other conflicts around the world, land is central to the conflict in Tripura. The traditional jhum cultivation was widely practiced by the Boroks and a small proportion of the land was under settled agriculture carried out by the Bengalis. A significant number of families still continue to practice jhum cultivation and they are known as *Jhumias*. In order to discourage jhum cultivation, the Government undertook several measures, but without much success. The last king of Tripura Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya set aside a huge tract of land in Khowai, called Kalyanpur Reserve for the settlement of *Jhumias*. Non-*Jhumias* were debarred from using this land. However, this restriction became less significant after Partition since the reserved land was acquired by the Indian Government to settle the refugees. As a result the poor Boroks were adversely affected. With the passage of time, the newcomers became moneylenders as well as entrepreneurs. The Boroks started mortgaging land to obtain loan. Failure to paid interests in time enabled the moneylenders to acquire the mortgaged land. Gradually, the Boroks were deprived of their ancestral land. They wanted to

retain control of their ancestral land and insisted that the land once belonged to them be return back to them. The task, however, has not been easy.

Linguistic politics

Besides demographic and land issues, the questions of language has played a significant role in ethnic mobilisation and conflict. Conflict in Tripura has also been the reflective of the power struggle between two 'unequal' linguistic identities, namely Bengalis and Kokborok. The former is spoken by about two-thirds of its population while the latter is spoken by less one-third of its population. As a result, since 1964 the Tripura Official Language Act, 1964 had recognised Bengali (and English) as the official language of the State. Fifteen years later, in 1979, Kokborok was adopted as an additional official language after the Boroks launched a 'long struggle'. The Boroks blamed the Government of Tripura for 'deliberately' ignoring Kokborok and for imposing Bengali on them. Although they wanted to promote Kokborok it has been difficult since it does not have a script of its own, and hence its speakers write it in both Bengali and Roman script.

CONFLICT AND INSTITUTIONS

Conflict in Tripura can be seen as a

result of the inability to enforce a set of abstract rules leading to the emergence of new institutional practices. These could include insurgent groups, state, political parties, and social and literary organisations. All have played different roles in the course of this conflict. Therefore an overview of the institutions that cause conflict, ease conflict, and institutions that emerge from conflict are important.

OPTIONS

The Government has adopted a three-way strategy to combat insurgency. One has been the deployment of security forces to directly fight the insurgents and insurgent groups. Second has been negotiation with some of the insurgent groups and their factions and the signing of ‘unpopular’ peace agreements. Third is the allocation of more funds for development.

However, serious human rights violations and abuses have been alleged as a result of the deployment of security forces and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. The Government had committed mistakes, deliberate or otherwise, when negotiating with the insurgent groups and their factions. Nonetheless, these mistakes have worsened the situation of conflict. Some lessons have been learnt from these mistakes. First, peace agreements should be concluded only with popular and powerful insurgent groups, not with the wrong groups and leaders. Second, rushing for peace agreements without proper ground-work was counterproductive and hence should be avoided. Third, the implementation of peace agreements should be closely monitored and evaluated by an advisory group comprising of independent experts and policymakers.

CONFLICTS IN TRIPURA

FLASHPOINTS

Partition of India, 1947

As a result of the Partition of India in 1947 into India and Pakistan, an estimated 14 million people were displaced, as Muslims in India fled to Pakistan and Hindus in Pakistan fled to India (See, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2000). They did so to escape political, religious and ethnic persecution and violence of the tense period. Tripura had also received several lakh refugees from Pakistan. Very soon, Tripura became a site of conflict between people who identify themselves as ‘natives’ (also known as Boroks) and ‘newcomer population’.

Violent ethnic conflict of 1980

Inter-ethnic relationship in Tripura has deteriorated when a violent conflict took place between natives and newcomer population in June 1980 killing about 1,800 people. Official sources had maintained that the violence was instigated by Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) was followed by retaliatory

attacks by Amra Bengali (Government of Tripura 2007, 106).

Minister killed in ambush

A minister of the Government of Tripura, Mr Bimal Sinha and his younger brother were killed in an attack by unidentified insurgents at Abhanga in Dhalai district in 1998. The National Liberation Front of Twipra/Tripura (NLFT) was the prime suspect.

Formation of an Autonomous Region

An Autonomous Region, with an area of about 7,132 sq km or 68 per cent of Tripura’s land, was constituted after the passing of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Act, 1979. The region is governed by the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council. The council in turn is answerable to the Government of Tripura. The first election of the council was held in 1982. The region enjoys limited autonomy offer by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Peace agreement with TNV

The first peace agreement was concluded between Indian state¹ and TNV in 1987 in which the former promised to take stringent measures to prevent further immigration of Bangladeshi nationals, reserve 20 territorial constituencies for Scheduled Tribes in the Tripura Legislative Assembly, restore land once belonged to the natives and redraw the boundary of Autonomous Region. In return, the TNV offered to call off their 'independent' movement for a country of Tripura and surrender firearms. Consequently, TNV made unsuccessful foray into electoral politics. But, the purpose of the agreement has not yet been achieved.

Peace agreement with ATTF

It was signed between Government of Tripura and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) in 1993 in which the latter agreed to surrender arms and support policies undertaken by Government. On the other hand, the Government agreed, among others, to take action to prevent 'illegal' immigration from across the border, restore land once belonged to the natives, introduce inner-line permit² and promote local languages such as

Kokborok. It too did not produce significant impact.

Government declares Tripura 'Disturbed Area'

A large parts of Tripura (40 of the 70 police station limits) which were affected by armed violence were declared 'Disturbed Area' in 1997 and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 was promulgated in order to grant armed forces personnel as much freedom as possible to carry out anti-insurgency operations. As per this law, the armed forces are given 'special powers' in the locality officially declared as 'Disturbed Area'. It shall remain in force not more than six months from the date of its application unless it is extended. However, in June 2013, the Government of Tripura had decided to revoke the 'Disturbed Area' from eight police stations limits.

20 soldiers kill in an ambush

In one of the deadliest incidents of violence, unidentified insurgents shot dead altogether 20 policemen and wounded several others in an ambush at Hirapur in West Tripura district in August 2002.

¹ By 'Indian state' I imply the Government of India and Tripura.

² Indian citizens from other States who want to enter Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland (except Dimapur area) require inner-line permit.

'Unpopular' peace agreements of 2004

A breakaway group of NLFT signed an agreement with Government of Tripura in April 2004, in which they agreed to surrender arms and cooperate with the Government. In return, the Government promised to provide them with adequate employment and land. In the same year, another peace agreement was signed between Government of Tripura and another NLFT faction. Accordingly, the insurgents offered to surrender arms and adjure political violence while the Government promised to rehabilitate former insurgents and undertake development works in Borok-concentrated areas. But, neither of these agreements had positive results.

16 soldiers kill in ambush

Heavily-armed insurgents killed at least 16 Territorial Army personnel and wound three others in an ambush at Agumabari in South Tripura district in December 2004. The incident occurred when they were escorting labourers

engaged in road construction in two vehicles. They had also reportedly looted 15 AK-series rifles and one light machine gun.

86 insurgents surrender

On 2 September 2005, at least 86 insurgents surrendered before the police at Agartala, the Tripura's capital, and deposited several firearms.

Engineer abducted

An engineer was abducted by insurgents in April 2008 while he was supervising a construction work in West Tripura district. As a result the workers had temporarily suspended work to press for more security. Police rescued the engineer a month after his abduction.

Kokborok became second official language

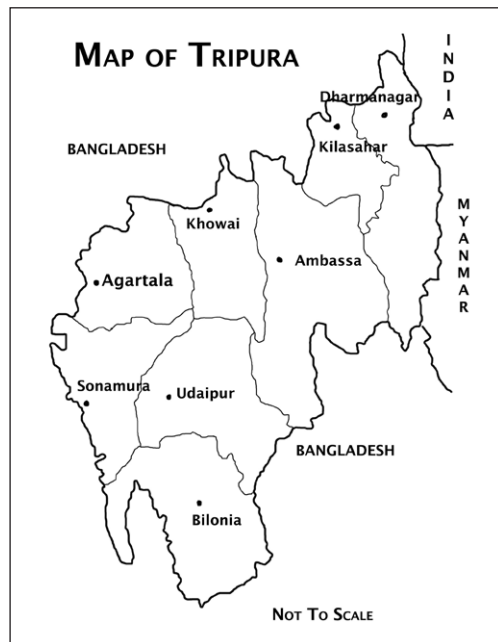
The Government of Tripura recognised Kokborok as the second official language of the State in 1979 while it has been the official language of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council since April 1999.

TERRAIN

The former Princely State of Tripura became a territory of India in October 1949, and after passing through several stages it became a State of India in 1972 when the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 was passed. It is one of India's smallest States covering a land area of 10,492 sq km. The State is surrounded on three sides by Bangladesh covering 856 km-long international border, while it shares only 53 km-long land border with Assam and another 109 km with Mizoram. The State is connected to the rest of India by road which runs through the hills. Agartala, the main city of Tripura, is located 2 km from Bangladesh. A large number of Bangladeshi migrants come to this city for work in the morning and returning back to their homes in the evening.

The terrain is hilly and landlocked. The topography is both hill and plain (valley). The plain region covers about 40 per cent of the total land and the remaining 60 per cent is hill region.

The Partition of India was a defining event for Tripura because it witnessed a sudden influx of a large number of refugees from East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh). Since then it has been geographically isolated from the rest of India affecting connectivity since the entire rail network had fallen



within the national border of Pakistan. As a result the distance between Agartala and Kolkata, West Bengal's capital, by road has increased from 350 km to 1,700 km.

Since then, Tripura has been connected to the rest of India by a twisting hilly highway (National Highway No. 44) and more recently a railway line has been constructed. The State has poor infrastructure facilities including poor connectivity, low capital formation, industrial backwardness, poverty and unemployment. Compared with the hill region, the plain region is much more developed.

There are eight districts (North, South, West, Dhalai, Unakoti, Sepahijala, Gomati and Khowai³) in which the autonomous region (also known as the Sixth Schedule Area) covers about two-thirds of the total area of the State. All the districts are covered partly or wholly by the autonomous region, but only one-third population live there. The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council was constituted in 1982 to govern the autonomous region.

About 83 per cent of the population lives in the rural areas. Over 60 per cent of

the total geographical area is classified as the forest area (Government of Tripura 2009).

Tripura has a total population of 36.74 lakh (Census 2011) in which the Bengalis constitutes about two-thirds of the total population while the indigenous peoples known as the Boroks (Debbarma 2013, 83) constitute the rest of the population. The latter comprises of many sub-clans namely Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Halam, Mog, Kuki, Noatia, Garo, Munda, Lushai, Oraon, Santhal, Uchai, Khasi, Bhil, Chaimal, Lepcha and Bhutia (Debbarma 2013, 83). Bengali is the main language of communication and education.

Among the Boroks, the Tripuri are the single largest, constituting of about 55 per cent. They are officially recognised as Scheduled Tribes owing to their social and economic backwardness, and hence enjoy the benefits of reservations in jobs, education and welfare programmes. In the 60-member legislative assembly, 20 constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

The people follow different religions in which Hindus constitute about 86 per cent, and Muslims, Christians and Buddhists constituted 8 per cent, 3.2 per cent and 3.1 per cent, respectively (Census 2011).

³ The last four districts were carved out of the first four districts in 2011.

Table 1: Religions communities of Tripura, 2001

Religious groups	Population	Proportion	Literacy rate	Female literacy	Proportion of child population
Hindus	27,39,310	85.60	75.30	67.30	13.00
Muslims	2,54,442	8.00	60.90	51.40	18.60
Christians	1,02,489	3.20	67.90	57.30	15.70
Buddhists	98,922	3.10	49.20	37.40	17.90
Sikhs	1,182	0.04	98.40	89.50	4.50
Jains	477	0.01	82.90	78.40	11.90
Others	1,277	0.04	75.40	65.30	12.10
Religion not stated	1,104	0.03	73.10	65.90	14.00

Source: Government of Tripura, 2009, 25-26.

HISTORY

Tripura was one of the oldest kingdoms. Between 1400 and 1949, the kingdom was ruled by 35 Maharajas of Manikya dynasty. The kingdom was one of the Princely States during the colonial rule that remained so until its merger with India in 1949 through an agreement (**Appendix I**). Maharani Kanchan Prava Maha Devi signed the agreement in New Delhi on behalf of her son Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya in accordance with consent of her late husband Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur.⁴ The present-day Tripura is geographically much smaller than Tripura of the past. Due to the Partition, Chakla Roshanabad, an area of about 589 sq miles, was ceded to Pakistan. It covers portions of Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong (now in Bangladesh). It was a Zamindari and the Maharajas of Tripura were the Zamindars. The Partition has caused large number of displacement of people, Hindus living in Pakistan fled to India

and Muslims living in India fled to Pakistan. A large number of refugees entered Tripura in a short period of time which caused insecurities and fear of the future amongst the natives.

In July 1948, the Tripura Rajya Mukti Parishad (TRMP) was established to promote and protect the interests of the native peoples (the Boroks). It was renamed Tripura Upajati Gana Mukti Parishad (JUGMP) in 1967. Again in 1967, the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) was formed by a group of intellectuals to strengthen the native peoples' struggle. These groups were concerned about the high rates of population growth and the plight of the native peoples, and hence demanded the deportation of the refugees who had come to Tripura, the formation of an Autonomous Region (Ganguly 1988, 62-74), the introduction of the Kokborok written in Roman script as the medium

⁴ "Short history of pre-historical and historical of Tripura." Undated. Agartala: Tripura Assembly.

of education for Borok students and the restoration of land once belonged to Boroks but taken away by the 'Bengali immigrants'.

TUJS reported raised a group of armed volunteers known as the Tripura Sena. It was soon succeeded by Sengkrak (Clenched Fish). Finally, the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) was formed by former members of TUJS and Sengkrak in 1978.

After the passing of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Act, 1979, an autonomous region was established in the State. It was opposed by large sections of the Bengali population leading to the formation of a militant organisation called Amra Bengali. A bloody ethnic riot broke in 1980 killing many people. Two years later the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council

(TTAADC) was launched under Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. The first Council was elected based on universal adult franchise in January 1982. In 1985, it was brought under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Political violence intensified during 1980s. First phase of the armed conflict came to an end after the peace agreement between Government and TNV in 1988 (**Appendix II**). However, some former insurgents restarted the armed conflict in 1990 and formed All Tripura Tribal Force (later renamed All Tripura Tiger Force). Finally, the State was declared 'Disturbed Area' in 1997 and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 was promulgated. In due course of time, separate peace agreements have been concluded, but have been less successful. The political situation in the State has slightly improved since the insurgent groups have weakened.

ISSUES AND CONTENDERS

Issues of swift demographic change

In the aftermath of the Partition the fate of Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistan became a central theme in the ‘propaganda campaigns’ of both in India and Pakistan (See, Schendel 2005). The post-Partition communal riots caused the displacement of an estimated 14 million people, as Muslims fled to Pakistan and Hindus fled to India (See, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2000) of which a large number of them ousted from East Pakistan entered Tripura. This became a concern among the native peoples.

Between August 1947 and March 1971, an estimated 6.09 lakh refugees had been officially recognised and settled in Tripura (Debbarma 2006, 406; Bhaumik 2002). The year-wise break-up was 8,124 in 1947, 9,554 (1948), 10,575 (1949), 67,151 (up to February 1950), 184,000 (1951), 233,000 (1952), 80,000 (1953), 3,200 (1954), 4,700 (1955), 17,500 (1956), 57,700 (1957), 3,600 (1958), no registration of refugees between 1959 and 1963), 1,00,340 (1964-65), 13,073

(1965-66), 1,654 (1966-67), 12,299 (1967-68), 3,120 (1968-69), 4,334 (1969-70), and 5,774 (1970-71 (up to 24 March) (Bhaumik 2002). The numbers excluded refugees who did not get any official assistance. An estimated 1.8 lakh ‘unofficial’ refugees came in 1951-1961 (Debbarma 2006, 406).

Recollecting events that took place immediately after Partition, Ramunny (1988) described,

“In many cases half the family would be refugees and the other half still in East Pakistan. Young men and women came over while the old remained on the other side of the border.”

Refugee camps were set up by the Indian Government on land belonging to the natives against their wishes. The refugees were also allotted land and cash, and later granted Indian citizenship (Debbarma 1996, 19). Interestingly, cooperative organisations were set up among the refugees to enable them to purchase more land (Bhaumik 2005, 225).

Population of Tripura grew sharply by about 76.86 per cent from 1951 to 1961. The growth slowed down markedly during 1961-1991, but higher than all India rate. Population growth during this period was also affected by a huge influx of new refugees during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. However, there was a striking decline during 1991-2001 (16.03%).

In this context, the Government of Tripura (2009, 22) made the following observations,

“The Partition of India in 1947 was a defining event in the history of Tripura, and had an enduring effect on the process of social and economic development in the State. The Partition was perhaps the largest movement of evicted people in modern history. It witness a heavy influx of refugees into Tripura from erstwhile East Pakistan, who arrived with little wealth in hand ... The large scale immigration has not only placed a tremendous burden on resources of the State, but also upheaval in the social composition of its population. Tripura was a Borok-

majority State before partition. Today Borok people constitute only 31 per cent of the total population.”

Sudden influx of such large number of needy refugees had brought a sudden demographic change leading to conflicts between natives and newcomers (see, Bhattacharya 2009, 35) and also between natives and Indian Government. Therefore the Boroks-majority Tripura became the Bengali-majority Tripura during the 1960s. The former lost not only access or control of their land but also access to education and local government services (see, Fernandes 1999; Minahan 2002), and thus the Partition was a ‘historical blunder’ (Debbarma 2007). Tripura is the only State of India “whose population has been transformed from being predominantly tribal to being predominantly non-tribal in the post-independence period” (Government of Tripura 2007, 104). Immigrants became important vote-bank who also began to control local politics (Schendel 2005, 195). However, several people argued that people from Chakla Roshanabad should not be treated as refugees but internally displaced persons (IDPs) since it was once belonged to Tripura.

Table 2: Decadal Growth of Population in Tripura

Census Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011 Prov.
Decadal Variations	NA	32.48	32.59	25.63	34.14	25.87	76.86	36.28	31.92	34.30	16.03	14.75

Source: Government of Tripura 2012, 33.

Table 3: Decrease in Tribal Population (%)

Year	Total population	Tribal population	% age of tribal to total population
1901	1,73,325	91,679	52.89
1911	2,29,613	1,11,303	48.47
1921	3,04,437	1,71,610	56.36
1931	3,82,450	2,03,327	52.26
1941	5,13,010	2,56,991	50.09
1951	6,45,707	2,37,953	36.85
1961	11,42,005	3,60,070	31.52
1971	15,33,342	4,50,544	28.94
1981	20,53,058	5,83,920	28.44
1991	27,57,205	8,53,345	30.94
2001	31,99,203	9,93,426	31.05

Source: Calculated from Government of Tripura 2012, 33.

The Boroks alleged that India had failed to protect their rights as an indigenous people of Tripura (see also, Debbarma 2006, 406). Their anger spilled over into conflicts including an armed conflict in which the Boroks are fighting against India's control in Tripura.

It is however pertinent to note that immigration from East Bengal to Tripura took place during in the past. Hindus usually fled to Tripura whenever communal riots occurred in East Bengal. Immigrants were even welcomed in the kingdom since the ruling class believed that they would augment the kingdom's financial resources as they bought land, enlightened native peoples, promote settled cultivation and manned the

administration (see, Bhaumik 2005; Ganguly 1969).

Fear of losing land

Rapid population growth will also increase the demand for land. Land is always found to be one of root causes of conflict in India and elsewhere in the world. It is a valuable asset and a source of identity. Due to its economic, social and emotional importance, access to land is an important source of power. Perceived threat to security, livelihoods and identity can mobilize people to engage in conflict (United Nations 2012). Likewise, access to and control over land play an important role in driving and sustaining conflict in Tripura. One journalist made the following pertinent observations,

“The roots of the present unrest [in Tripura] would be found in the alienation of the land from the hands of the tribals during 50s and 60s [1950s and 1960s]. There is no doubt that the people who occupied the land are victim of misfortune and were displaced at the time of the Partition. But it cannot be a justification for the alienation of the others. The tussle began from there and flourished in many different ways. The failures of the successive governments to restore the land only contributed in

the accumulation of more frustration and anger. Attempts by certain political parties to exploit these frustrations have multiplied the crisis” (Deb 2004, 159).

When Tripura became a part of India, large tracts of land were used for jhum (shifting) cultivation while settled cultivation was limited only to a very small proportion of land. The Boroks practiced mostly jhum cultivation while the Bengalis were engaged in settled cultivation. Significant number of households continue to depend on jhum cultivation and they are known as Jhumias. Until 2007, about 27,278 households were dependent on jhum cultivation (Government of Tripura 2007). Productivity was lower in jhum cultivation than in settled cultivation and hence the Borok farmers produced less than the Bengali farmers (Government of Tripura 2012, 268). In order to discourage jhum cultivation the Government has undertaken various steps. In 1983, initiatives were taken through the Tripura Forests Department to rehabilitate the Jhumias. In 1985, the Directorate of Tribal Rehabilitation in Plantation and Primitive Group Programme was set up for better coordination and implementations of different agencies. However, by its own admission, the Tripura Government had noted that the

progress was ‘very slow’ and incapable of curbing jhum cultivation (Government of Tripura 2007, 9).

Jhum cultivation was not a problem in the past because there was plenty of land and not many people. It gradually became unsuitable due to the increase in population. Way back in 1930-31, the last king Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya kept aside a total area of 28,490 hectares in Khowai, called ‘Kalyanpur Reserve Land’ for the settlement of jhumias. In 1943, it was increased to 505,053 hectares. Although the king encouraged jhumias to take up settled cultivation the response was unsatisfactory (see, Chakravarty 1994).

The reason for reserving land was to create an enclave where land of jhumias was protected (see, Bhaumik 2005, 223). No part of this land was to be allocated to non-Jhumias without the consent of the authorities. But the restriction was lifted after the merger. The reserved land was taken over by the Government to settle refugees (Bhattacharya 2009; Debbarma 2007). For example, in 1948, as much as 330 sq miles of Kalyanpur Reserved Land was de-reserved (Ganguly 1988, 63).

Initially the newcomers had difficulties in getting suitable land

for cultivation and settlement. They started cultivating in low-lying areas and gradually made inroads into fertile land mostly owned by the natives. The authorities had also provided assistance to the newcomers in getting land. With the passage of time, some of the newcomers started lending money to the needy charging a high rate of interest. The natives mortgaged land to obtain loan. When they failed to pay interests within the stipulated timeframe the moneylenders acquired the mortgaged land (Gupta 1991).

When the Government tightened restriction on large scale jhum cultivation the conditions of the Jhumias were also affected and restricted their customary rights (Chakravarty 1994, 121). In 1953, the Government launched some steps to boost the productive capacity of the land under jhum cultivation. The short-term steps were aimed to improve yield and relief measures pending their resettlement, while the long-term measures were designed to wean away the Jhumias from jhum cultivation and resettle them through alternate occupations in different settlement colonies. These schemes were fairly successful in the beginning since suitable land was available, later due to non-availability of suitable land the Jhumias

were given unproductive and unsuitable land, and consequently they deserted settlement colonies. Wetland allotted were 'too small' while high land suffered from 'lack of water supply' (Das 1990, 179). In due course of time, their conditions were badly affected (Gupta 2000). A survey conducted in Mohunpur Block in 1974 found that 36.5 per cent of the Boroks had sold land to the immigrants while 80 per cent of them had been heavily indebted to moneylenders (Government of Tripura 1974) since they could not meet their loan obligations. Their conditions had further deteriorated due to droughts of 1965 and 1972 forcing many of them to sell land. Thus the settlement of large numbers of refugees and restriction on jhum cultivation had led to the displacement of Boroks, non-availability of land for their rehabilitation and for distributing among landless people (Debbarma 2013, 84).

The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, enacted in 1960, had no provision for the protection of land belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. Since then it has been amended several times. The amendment of 1975 said the member of Scheduled Tribes,

“shall have preference to purchase such land [specified in the Second Schedule]

and in case where there are more than one such co-sharer or member of the Scheduled Tribe, the co-sharer or the member of the Scheduled Tribe, as the case may be, having the lowest holding shall have preference to purchase.”⁵

Another amendment of 1994 has a ‘special provision regarding Scheduled Tribes.’ It stated,

“No transfer of land by a person who is a member of the scheduled tribes shall be valid unless—(a) the transfer is to another member of the Scheduled Tribes; or (b) where the transfer is to a person who is not a member of the Scheduled Tribes, it is made with the previous permission of the collector in writing in the manner to be prescribed by rule, or (c) the transfer is by way of mortgage to a Co-operative Society or to a Bank or to the Tripura Housing Board, or to the Central or the State Government or any other financial institutions or Corporations as may be notified by the Government in the Official Gazette from time to time for the purpose” (Government of Tripura 1996).

The amendment carried out in 1994 had another section on ‘Restoration of land’ which stated,

“On or after the 1st January, 1969—
(a) if a transfer of land belonging to a person who is a member of the Scheduled Tribes is made in contravention of the provisions of sub-section (1) of section 187 to a person other than a member of the Scheduled Tribes, a Revenue Officer specially appointed for this purpose by a notification in the Official Gazette, and having local jurisdiction may, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, on its own motion or on an application made in that behalf, and after giving the transferee and the transferer an opportunity of being heard, by an order in writing evict such or any person claiming under him from such land or part thereof and shall restore the possession of the land to the transferer, or his successor in interest and for this purpose the Revenue Officer may use or cause to be used such force as may be considered necessary. (b) if any land owned by person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes is occupied by any person who is not a member of the Scheduled Tribes without lawful authority, then the Revenue Officer in the same manner as provided in Clause (a) may

⁵ See, The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Third Amendment) Act, 1975.

restore the possession of such land to the person or successor in interest so dispossessed. (c) if a person belonging to the scheduled Tribes is in occupation of Government land and eligible for allotment of such land under Section 14 of this Act, parts with possession or is dispossessed there from by a person not belonging to the Scheduled Tribes, then the Revenue Officer in the same manner as provided in clause (a) may restore the possession of such land to that person. Or his successor-in-interest as the case may be and refer to the competent authority under Section 14 of this Act for allotment of the land to such person” (Government of Tripura 1996).

Despite these amendments, the Boroks were losing control over their land. They had sold their land at higher prices and also in fictitious names (Debbarma 1994; Chaube 1999). By excluding the land transferred before 1 January 1969, legal recognition was given to the transfer of land made before that date. In this regard, the report prepared by Dinesh Singh Committee (constituted by the Central Government in the aftermath of the ethnic riot of 1980) in 1980 made the following observations:

“Two features if 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, the Act virtually legalized the transfer of Boroks’ lands that had taken place before January 1969. Secondly, the progress of restoration has been lamentably tardy. It received some impetus in 1978 part and has again languished thereafter” (quoted in Debbarma 2013).

Earlier in 1968, the Study Team on Tribal Development Programmes which was appointed by the Administrative Reforms Commission also made the similar observations:

“In the course of disposition with us, several non-officials, including legislators, brought to our notice the sad plight of the tribals. They alleged that the tribals were being deprived of their land through unfair means. This was in spite of a legal ban on transfer of land by tribals to non-tribals. It was also alleged that the refugees were encroaching on government land which would have ultimately gone to the tribals. We were informed that this problem has assumed a poetical complexion and may lead to an agitation.”

The predictive observation turned out to be true. The land question became the centre-stage of political identity

narratives in the State which further spilled over into an armed conflict. This conflict cannot be fully understood without revisiting the role of the state as it was shaped by its action and inaction. Thus the combatants are not born over-night. Many armed groups have their origins in broader social movement, and they often began as a smaller subset of individuals within a mainstream social movement who are willing to pursue more radical strategies for political and social change by opting for violent means. Radicalization results from a number of factors including inaction by the Government to meet popular demands, repressive reactions by the Government to social protest, an ideology of change that accepts the use of violence as legitimate, competition for scarce resources from other social movement organisations and perception that other social movements organisations are weak in their effort to achieve change (Hazen 2010, 81). Thus armed group is a particular type of social movement organisation (Hazen 2010, 82) that possesses organizational means to carry out sustained attacked against the Government.

Peace agreements that have been concluded between Government and insurgent groups have also focused on the 'restoration' of land formerly held

by the native peoples. For instance, the Government-TNV agreement said,

“Restoration of alienated lands of tribals: It was agreed that following measures will be taken (a) review of rejected applications for restoration of tribal land under the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960; (b) effective implementation of the law for restoration; (c) stringent measures to prevent fresh alienation; and (d) provision of soil conservation measures and irrigation facilities in tribal areas; and (e) strengthening of the agricultural credit system so as to provide for an appropriate agency with adequate tribal representation to ensure easy facilities for both consumption and operational credit to tribals.”

By its own admission the State Government had restored 7,318 acres of land to the original owners up to March 2011. Special courts have also been set up for the speedy trial of land-related cases. The Government had also reportedly offered compensation of Rs. 8,000 per acre to the non-Boroks who had acquired the land from the Boroks. Interestingly, the Government had admitted that one of the biggest problems was the difficulties in identification of Borok families from whom land has been alienated (Government of Tripura 2012, 175-176).

Table 5: Details of Restoration of Alienated Land (till March, 2011) (Area in acres)

District	Petition received from inception		Total petitions disposed		Total restoration orders passed		Total physical restoration		Total cases for physical restoration	
	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area
West	17,336	11,633	17,336	11633	4511	2866	4478	2857	33	8.8
North	1,956	2,936	1,956	2,936	917	1195	916	1194	1	0.84
South	6,670	8,021	6,670	8,021	2,756	2,383	2,699	2,344	57	39.31
Dhalai	3,190	2,887	3,190	2,887	904	923	910	922	3	1.38
Tripura	29,152	25,477	29,152	25,477	9,088	7,368	8,994	7,318	94	50.38

Source: Government of Tripura 2012, 176.

Linguistic politics

Language unites people, at the same time it also divides people. It is so because language plays an important role in ethnic group mobilization and is an important factor in modern nationalism. Language is a powerful instrument for promoting internal cohesion and providing an ethnic or national identity. It contributes to values, identity and a sense of peoplehood. It is an important variable in power relation between dominant and subordinate groups (Schmid 2001, 9). In this context, Noam Chomsky has said “questions of language, are basically questions of power” (1979, 191).

The Bengalis is today the single largest ethnic group of Tripura and the Bengali is the mother tongue of over 60 per cent of the total population. Almost all the ethnic groups of the

State understand and speak Bengali. The Bengalis control the State Government since they represent up to 40 out of 60 territorial constituencies of the State Assembly. In such situation, the Boroks have very little political power to influence the Government, however, different ethnic groups in India have viewed the State Governments as the instrument by which to extend, consolidate and transform their position in the economy and social system (Weiner 1983, 284).

This is true for Tripura. There has been a concerted effort to promote and expand the use and learning of Bengali language. In doing so, the Tripura Legislative Assembly passed a law, the Tripura Official Language Act, 1964 (received the assent of the President of India on 23 January 1965) designating Bengali (and English⁶) in 1964 as the

⁶ The Act states “the English language may continue to be used, in addition to the Bengali language, for those official purposes within the State of Tripura.”

official language of the State. In addition, Bengali is also one of the 22 languages listed in the Eight Schedule of the constitution and hence it enjoys a special status which ought to be promoted.

Fifteen years later, in 1979, Kokborok, the language of the Boroks, was designated as an additional official language, though not till after a 'long struggle' (Debbarma 2004). It is the first language of six tribes of Tripuri community and has about 761,964 speakers in the State (Census 2001).⁷ It is also the official language of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council since 1999. The official website of the Council made the following declarations,

“The Kokborok is a language of Borok people who are geographically known as Tripuris. It is one of the state languages of Tripura notified on January 19, 1979. The TTAADC has declared the Kokborok as official language of TTAADC on April 20, 1999 ... The Boroks or Tripuris are inhabited not only in Tripura state but also in North-Eastern states, Pithoragarh of Uttaranchal and neighboring countries

like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan comprising about 1.5 million in numbers. The Boroks or Tripuris are the branch of Boro people of Assam belonging to the Sino-Tibetan linguistic group and racially Mongoloids.”⁸

Official ‘recognition alone was not enough’ since appropriate measures have not been taken to promote its development (Debbarma 2004). The Boroks wanted the Government to adopt measures in the same manner that measures were being taken to promote Bengali.

After being recognised as an additional official language, the teaching of Kokborok was introduced at the primary level. It was not exactly smooth sailing as the controversy over the script started. The speaker of this language use both Bengali and Roman script fluently. Amidst this, the Bengali script, instead of the Roman script, has been used for school books written in Kokborok.

The Government had decided in favour of ‘modified’ Bengali script instead of Roman script. After it was devised, Kokborok was introduced as a medium

7 Of the 854,023 Tripuri speakers the Kokborok included 761,964, Reang (76,450), Tripuri (15,002) and others (607) (http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/Statement1.htm Accessed on 29 July 2013).

8 TTAADC, “Brief about the Kokborok,” <http://ttaadc.nic.in/LearnKokborok.pdf> (Accessed on 28 November 2013).

of instruction for Borok students up to Class III in 1973. It was, however, replaced by Roman script in 1990 when the Congress-TUJS came to rule the State, but the Roman script was replaced by the ‘modified’ Bengali script in 1995. The issue of script has been used as a vote bank. There was a debate over the question whether a majority of Boroks favored the adoption of ‘modified Bengali script’ or Roman script.

A commission appointed by the State Government in 2004 had recommended the use of Roman script in place of ‘modified’ Bengali script.⁹ The commission recommended, among others, the study of Kokborok up to Class XII by Boroks students, the use of Kokborok in official work and the introduction of awards for Kokborok literature.

The Boroks were in favour of introduction of Kokborok at the school level including its adaptation as the medium of instruction for Borok

students up to Class XII. In June 2009, the Tripura University had reportedly decided to introduce it at the college level and informed the Government about the decision. But nothing has happened. At present, the Borok students can study in Kokborok up to primary level thereafter they have to switch over to Bengali for higher classes. Hence they were ‘losing interest in studying their own language’ (Shekhar 2010). This is not so for students whose mother language is Bengali. This has been one of the major reasons for high dropout rate among the Borok students (Debbarma 2004).¹⁰ According to media reports only in one school, the Ratanpur Higher Secondary School in Khowai subdivision, Kokborok was the medium of instruction up to class XII but in other schools located in the Borok-concentrated areas it was studied up to Class V. Further, there has been a movement demanding the inclusion of Kokborok in the Eighth Schedule¹¹ to secure official patronage and more funds for development.

9 The “modified” Bengali script was devised in the 1970s by two linguists, Kumud Kundu Chowdhury and Suhas Chatterjee. They studied Kokborok in 1967 and devised a grammar and modified script.

10 For more details, see, “Slump in study of Kokborok language,” *The Telegraph*, 24 August 2011.

11 The Eighth Schedule provides formal and constitutional recognition to dominant regional languages in the spheres of administration, education, economy and social status.

INSTITUTIONS

Conflict has adverse effects on the social, economic, legal and political organisation of the society, i.e. its institutions. Institution stands for either a norm or for an organisation. It may be a rule that directs behaviour by means of sanctions, i.e. it is a norm that has been institutionalized. Or it may be a system of behaviour that is directed by means of a set of rules, i.e. it is organised activity (Ersson and Lane 2000, 23). Institution, according to Jack Knight (1992), is a set of rules that structure social interaction in particular ways. And for a set of rules to be an institution, knowledge of these rules must be shared by the members of the relevant society. For the purposes of this backgrounder, an institution is taken to be a public system of rules which defines offices and positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities and the like. These rules specify certain forms of action as permissible, others as forbidden; and they provide for certain penalties and defenses, and so on, when violation occur. Thus an institution may

be thought of in two ways: first as an abstract object, that is, as a possible form of conduct expressed by a system of rules; and second, as the realisation in the thought and conduct of certain persons at a certain time and place of the actions specified by these rules (Rawls 1999).

Conflict in Tripura has place for institutions in both the senses that John Rawls has suggested. This conflict can be seen as the result of the inability to enforce a set of abstract rules leading to the emergence of new institutional practices. These could include insurgent groups, civil society organisations and state. All have played in their different capacities in the course of the conflict.

Sudden increase in population and pressure on land became the rallying point of political mobilization among the Boroks. This became a catalyst for armed conflict between the state and the non-state insurgent groups, and for constant tension between the advantaged

and the disadvantaged groups. Both the state and the non-state institutions have played, and continue to play, different kinds of roles. Therefore an overview of the institutions that cause conflict, ease conflict, and institutions that emerge from conflict are important.

Insurgent groups: Different insurgent groups espousing various causes have come and gone while some are still active. The TNV was one of the oldest groups which were active to some extent in the 1980s. It wanted to set up an independent country of Tripura with full sovereignty known as “Swadhin Tripura.” It was, however, disbanded after its leaders concluded an agreement with the Government in 1988. They participated in electoral politics, but the initiative was not a success. As a result, the old conflict was revived.

The TNV was succeeded by the ATTF, founded in 1990 by a group of former insurgents. The two have common aspirations and objectives. Among other things, it wanted the deportation of immigrants and refugees who entered Tripura after 1956; the restoration of land once belonged to the Borok people, and those who came after 1956 should be struck off the electoral register. In 1994, a large number

of them had laid down arms after the Government had offered an amnesty and rehabilitation. The remaining group was disbanded by the Government in 1997 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. In 2004, it laid down three conditions to facilitate a direct talk between their leaders and the Government. First, those came to Tripura after 1949 and whose names did not figure in the electoral roll of 1952 should be declared “foreigners”. Second, discuss the issue of sovereignty of Tripura and its independence. Third, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) should be present at the time of the dialogue.

In addition, the NLFT was founded in 1989 by a group of ex-insurgents. It also has similar objectives and aspirations and hence they helped each other. It had made the following observations,

“Twipra state was ruled by as many as hundred and eighty-four kings of the indigenous Borok people of the state since time immemorial. It means that Twipra was a princely, independent and peaceful state which had a self-rule, reliance, and possessed a glorious history prior to its occupation forcefully by the subjugation policy of imperialist Hindustani (India) on

October 15, 1949. From that period with down of India's independence the sun set has begun on the glorious independent state of Twipra. The indigenous people known as Boroks have been completely marginalised by the continuing influx of immigration of foreign nationals ... There is a threat to our language, customs and religious initiating culture genocide through the process of religions, language and culture conversion to minimize us and swallow up wholly. Violation of the basic human rights occurs with regular frequency through state agency, Indian security force and the like ... In this juncture the Boroks, the aboriginal ethnic group of Twipra has strongly determined and binded by solemn promised with self blood to liberate the Borok land Twipra with arm struggle for distinct and independent identity of Borok civilization and to free from socio politico and economic exploitation, oppression, suppression and neo-colonization ...”

On the other side, Amra Bengali, another insurgent group, was set up in 1979 by certain section of the population having a migration background in order

to counter the anti-immigrant and the anti-refugee propaganda, but it never became a powerful force. It had also propagated the idea of a “unified” and “independent” Bengal.

Some of these groups could lay down their own set of rules and regulations since they have the means and the resources to enforce their rules and orders pushing the state apparatus into irrelevance. Some of them have administered social welfare services in remote hilly areas to gain public support from their distribution of public goods. They also collect “taxes” from the local people including politicians, state officials and contractors.

Political parties: Political parties had played and, have been playing, crucial role and indulging in vote-bank politics. Parties like the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Twipra (INPT)¹¹ have claimed to champion the cause of the Borok people. It was founded by former insurgent leader Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl in February 2002. It was the ruling party of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council from May 2000 to July 2003. It has been an ally of the Indian

¹¹ It was earlier known as the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity. In the 2008 Assembly elections, the INPT managed to secure only one of the 11 territorial constituencies allotted to it by the Congress. But in the 2013 elections, it lost in all the 11 constituencies.

National Congress and came to rule the State from February 1988 to February 1993. Thereafter, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) had gained a strong foothold in the State precisely due to the backing of the Bengali ethnic group

Another aspect has been the proliferation of a large number of socio-political

institutions - the human rights organisations and the community-based organisations (CBOs). The former works to uphold human rights while the latter works to protect specific ethnic groups' interests. Some of them have been at the forefront of promoting localised peacebuilding efforts and initiating reconciliation processes.

OPTIONS

This conflict cannot be fully understood without revisiting the role of the state, as the course of the conflict has been shaped by its actions and inaction. The state relied on a three-pronged approach: security, divisive and law and order, while at the same time expanding avenues for political dialogue and generously funding allocations to “tame” the rebellion.

First, the conflict has been seen by the state as a law and order problem and hence justifying the use of force by the security forces. Large parts of Tripura continue to be “disturbed area” under which the security forces enjoy extensive discretionary powers in their dealings with the insurgents. It has been justified as the national security needs.

However, the use of force has negative effects on democracy and human rights. Human rights groups have alleged the use of force have been creating a perpetual vicious cycle of

violence and hence counterproductive. They are opposing the use of harsh laws like AFSPA whereas the counter-insurgency authorities consider necessary. The overall counterinsurgency operation is being coordinated by a powerful committee consisting of the top officials of the national and the local security agencies.

Second, the Government has adopted accommodative strategies for the welfare of the disadvantaged groups. One of the important steps in this regard was the formation of an autonomous region covering about two-thirds of Tripura’s land. It is governed by a council. The council has limited legislative, executive and financial powers towards land allotment, occupation and use of land, regulation of shifting cultivation, establishment and administration of village and towns committees, inheritance of property, marriage and social customs and the like. The council has a general council comprising of elected and nominated

members. An executive council is elected from among the members of the general council to carry out the executive functions of the council. However, the very purpose the autonomous region has not yet been fulfilled. First, it does not have administrative and financial autonomy. Second, it remains at the mercy of the Government. Third, the local leaders became pawns in the political game being played out from Agartala, Tripura's capital.

Thirdly, the two sides, Government and insurgent groups, have signed several peace agreements in the past. Among other things, the agreements stipulated that the Government would take appropriate measures to curb unauthorised immigration from across the national border, increase representation for the Scheduled Tribes in the legislature, to develop "indigenous" languages and restoration of the land once belonged to the Boroks. In turn, the insurgents gave up their independence movement demand in exchange for economic and social development. However, the situation did not improve.

Lessons learnt

It is very clear that insurgency could be brought under control, but cannot be defeated so easily. When the two sides engaged in high-level talks,

the Government was able to impose its terms and conditions. Thus, the peace agreements uphold the unity and the sovereignty of the country and promise redress of grievances. Peace agreements are the instruments through which the state imposes its will on the body politic (Rupensinghe 1996, 180). In such peace processes, the Government engaged into talks with the insurgents only, and hence the conflict was reduced merely to their competing interests. Peace was, therefore, narrowly defined as some form of balance of power between them. Therefore, the emphasis was laid on finding solutions at the macro-level on the assumption that these would automatically lead to micro-level resolution of conflict (Das 2007, 1-3).

In a peace agreement both parties focus on the contentious issues involved. On the one hand, the insurgents gave up the independence movement and surrender arms, and on the other hand, the Government directed the security forces to stop operations against them and promised attractive rehabilitation scheme and development of "indigenous" languages to the development of the backward areas. Central Government had always played the leading role because it gave most of the concessions.

The Government usually picked the important insurgent groups for engaging in talks and used divide and conquer strategy. It has the policy of rewarding “loyal” insurgent leaders and their supporters. They were always given undue importance during the talks and in the post-agreement implementation period.

Leadership is important for two reasons: Firstly, they solve the problem of how to organise collective effort; consequently, it is the key to organizational effectiveness. With the good leadership, organisations thrive and prosper. And secondly, more important from a moral perspective, bad leaders perpetrate terrible misery on those subject to their domain (Hogan and Kaiser 2005, 169-180). If popular insurgent leaders signed peace agreements the people took the developments seriously. Popular leaders will be powerful enough to prevent factional division. If they are weak their detractors can create more problems and more importantly they won't get more concessions from the Government.

Interestingly, the Government has committed major mistake when choosing a particular group and their leader, and therefore the situation worsened further. This could have been

due to the ignorance or arrogance of the officials.

Some lessons have been learnt from the past experiences. Successful peace agreement depends on the availability of popular and strong insurgent leaders. If they are weak their detractors can become spoilers. Weak and unpopular leaders can't get more concessions from the Government.

Since the insurgent groups are generally faction-ridden, the peace agreement signed by a particular faction cannot be acceptable to the others. If all the factions are united the task is easier. Thus, in an inclusive peace agreement main stakeholders shall take part and outcome also is more likely to be productive. If not the Government must insist on opening the talks only with the most important group, otherwise the outcome will be counterproductive.

Rushing for peace agreement without proper ground-work is counterproductive and must be avoided. In the rushed agreements the contentious issues are not properly discussed. Past experiences have shown that the Government had patronized the irrelevant groups and their leaders. That gave the impression that it was only interested in signing peace

agreements without assessing their long-term implications. Any peace agreement shall be monitored periodically.

To conclude, the civil society must come forward to enhance cordial relations between the dominant and the subordinate ethnic groups. The

leaderships of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council must also strive to work for the welfare of the people. But, there is a general impression that it has been continuously failing to fulfill its duties. Perhaps, additional powers and functions should be given to this council.

Tripura Merger Agreement, 1949

Agreement made this the ninth day of September 1949, between the Governor-General of India and His Highness the Maharaja of Tripura.

Whereas in the best interest of the State of Tripura as well as of the Dominion of India it is desirable to provide for the administration of the said State by or under the authority of the Dominion Government, IT is hereby agreed as follows:

Article I

The Maharaja of Tripura hereby cedes to the Dominion Government full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of the State and agrees to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government on the fifteenth day of October, 1949 (hereafter referred to as 'the said day') As from the said day the Dominion Government will be competent to exercise the said powers, authority and jurisdiction in such manner and through such agency as it may think fit.

Article II

The Maharaja shall with effect from the said day be entitled to receive from revenues of the State annually for his privy-purse the sum of Rupees Three lakhs and thirty thousand only free of taxes. This amount is intended to cover all the expenses of the Ruler and his family, including expenses on account of his personal staff, maintenance of his residences, marriages and other ceremonies, etc. and will neither be increased nor reduced for any reason whatsoever. The said sum be drawn by the Maharaja in four equal installments in advance at the beginning of each quarter from the State Treasury or at such other treasury as may be specified by the Government of India.

Article III

The Maharaja shall be entitled to the full ownership, use and enjoyment of all private properties (as distinct from State properties) belonging to him on the date of this agreement. The Maharaja will furnish to the Dominion Government before the 10th October, 1949, an

inventory of all the immovable property, securities and cash balances held by him as such private property. If any dispute arises as to whether any item of property is the private property of the Maharaja or State property it shall be referred to a judicial officer qualified to be appointed as His Court judge, and the decision of that officer shall be final and binding on both parties.

Article IV

The Maharaja shall be entitled to all the personal rights, privileges, immunities and dignities enjoyed by him as the Ruler of Tripura, whether within or without the state, immediately before the 15th August, 1947.

Article V

All the members of the Maharaja's family including Her Highness the Rajmata shall be entitled to all the personal privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by them, whether within or outside the territories of the State, immediately before the 15th day of August, 1947.

Article VI

The Dominion Government guarantees the succession according to law and custom, to the gaddi of the State and to the Maharaja's personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles.

Article VII

No inquiry shall be made by or under the authority of the Government of India, and no proceedings shall lie in any Court of Tripura, against His Highness the Maharaja or Her Highness the Regent whether in a personal capacity or otherwise, in respect of anything done or committed to be done by them under their authority during the period of the Regency administration of the state.

Article VIII

- (1) The Government of India hereby guarantees either the continuance in service of the permanent members of the public services of Tripura on conditions which will be no less advantageous than those on which they were serving before the date on which the administration of Tripura is made over to the Government of India or the payment of reasonable compensation.
- (2) The Government of India further guarantees the continuance of pensions and leave salaries sanctioned by the Government of His Highness the Maharaja to members of the public services of the State who have retired or proceeded on leave preparatory to retirement, before the date on which the Administration of Tripura is

made over to the Government of India.

Article IX

Except with the previous sanction of the Government of India, no proceedings, civil or criminal, shall be instituted against any person in respect of any act done or purporting to be done in the execution of his duties as a servant of the State before the day on which the administration is made over to the

Government of India. In confirmation whereof Mr. Vapal Pangunni Menon, adviser to the Government of India in the Ministry of States, appended his signature on behalf and with the authority of the Governor-General of India and His Highness Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi, Maharani Regent of Tripura, has appended her signature on behalf of His Highness Maharaja Manikya Kirit Bikram Kishore Dev Barma Bahadur, the minor Ruler of Tripura, his heirs and successors.

Dated, New Delhi,

The 9th September, 1949.

KANCHAN PRABHA DEVI
Maharani Regent Tripura State

V.P. MENON
Adviser to the Government of India
Ministry of States

Memorandum of Understanding with Tripura National Volunteers, 1988

Preamble

Government of India has been making efforts to bring about a satisfactory settlement of the problems of tribals in Tripura by restoring peace and harmony in areas where disturbed conditions prevailed.

The Tripura National Volunteers (TNV), through their letter dated 4 May, 1988, addressed to the Governor of Tripura and signed by Shri Bijoy Kumar Hrankhawl, stated that keeping in view the Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi's policy of solution of problems through negotiations, TNV have decided to abjure violence, give up secessionist demand and to hold negotiations for a peaceful solution of all the problems of Tripura within the Constitution of India. The TNV also furnished its by-laws which conform to the laws in force. On this basis, a series of discussions were held with representatives of TNV. The following were the outcome of the discussions:

Deposit of arms and ammunition and stopping of underground activities by TNV

The TNV undertakes to take all necessary steps to end underground

activities and to bring out all undergrounds of the TNV with their arms, ammunition and equipment within one month of signing of this memorandum. Details for given effect to this part of settlement will be worked out and implemented under the supervision of the Central Government. The TNV further undertakes to ensure that it does not resort to violence and to help in restoration of amity between different sections of the population. The TNV undertakes not to extend any support to any other extremist group by way of training, supply of arms or providing protection or in any other manner.

Rehabilitation of undergrounds

Suitable steps will be taken for the resettlement and rehabilitation of TNV undergrounds coming overground in the light of the schemes drawn up for the purpose.

Measures to prevent infiltration

Stringent measures will be taken to prevent infiltration from across the border by strengthening arrangements on the border and construction of roads along vulnerable sections of the Indo-

Bangladesh border in Tripura section for better patrolling and vigil. Vigorous action against such infiltrators would also be taken under the law.

Reservation of seats in the Tripura Legislative Assembly for tribals

With a view to satisfying the aspirations of tribals of Tripura for a greater share in the governance of the State, legislative measures will be taken including those for the enactment of the Bill for the amendment of the Constitution.

The Constitutional amendments shall provide that notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of Tripura reserved for scheduled tribes shall be such number of seats as bears to the total number of seats, a proportion not less than the number, as on the date of coming into force of the constitutional amendment, of members belonging to the scheduled tribes in the existing Assembly bears to the total number of seats in the existing Assembly.

The Representation of the People's Act, 1950, shall be amended to provide for reservation of 20 seats for the

scheduled tribes in the Assembly of Tripura. However, the amendments shall not effect any representation in the existing Assembly of Tripura until its dissolution.

Restoration of alienated lands of tribals

It was agreed that following measures will be taken: Review of rejected applications for restoration of tribal land under the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960; and Effective implementation of the law for restoration;

Stringent measures to prevent fresh alienation

Provision of soil conservation measures and irrigation facilities in tribal areas; and Strengthening of the agricultural credit system so as to provide for an appropriate agency with adequate tribal representation to ensure easy facilities for both consumption and operational credit to tribals.

Redrawing of the boundaries of Autonomous District Council Area

Tribal majority villages which now fall outside the autonomous district council area and are contiguous to such areas will be included in the autonomous district and similarly placed nontribal

majority villages presently in the autonomous district and on the periphery may be excluded.

Measures for long-run economic development of Tripura

Maximum emphasis will be placed on extensive and intensive skill-formation of the tribal youths of Tripura so as to improve their prospects of employment including self-employment in various trades such as motor workshops, pharmacies, electronic goods, carpentry, tailoring, stationary, weaving, rice and oil mills, general stores, fishery, poultry, piggery, horticulture, handloom and handicrafts.

Special intensive recruitment drives will be organised for police and paramilitary forces in Tripura with a view to enlisting as many tribal youths as possible.

All-India Radio will increase the duration and content of their programmers in tribal languages or dialects of Tripura. Additional transmitting stations will be provided for coverage even of the remote areas of the State.

The demands relating to self-employment of tribals, issue of permits for vehicles to tribals for commercial purposes, visits of tribalmen and women to such places in the country as may be of value for the viewpoint of inspiration, training and experience in relevant fields will be considered sympathetically by the government.

At least 2,500 Jhumia families will be rehabilitated in five centres or more in accordance with model schemes based on agriculture, horticulture including vegetable growing, animal husbandry, fisheries and plantations, with a view to weaning them away from Jhum cultivation. The scheme would also provide for housing assistance.

In the autonomous district council area of Tripura, rice, salt and kerosene oil will be given at subsidized rates during lean months for a period of three years. Conscious effort will be made for effective implementation of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in so far as it relates to Tripura.

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