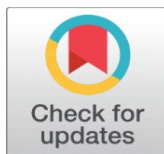
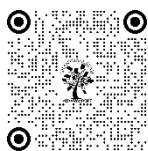


GREATER TIPRALAND: A MOVEMENT FOR SEPARATE STATEHOOD IN TRIPURA

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ABSTRACT

India, prior to and following gaining independence, has experienced a sequence of popular movements concerning the issue of creating harmony in eco-political and cultural aspects. This is also true for the North East region of India. Following India's independence, Tripura experienced a significant influx of immigrants who established permanent residency. This has engendered feelings of disorientation and dread among diverse ethnic communities inhabiting the area, leading to unsettling occurrences of ethnic turmoil, strife, aggression, and even political separation in various regions of Tripura. Since gaining independence, Tripura has experienced several political and non-political activities aimed at restoring the patriachal and ethnic identity of its tribes. The Tiprasa people are the indigenous inhabitants of Tripura and the northeastern area of India. The presence of their affluent cultural and ethnic components has facilitated the development of a distinct political identity. The party named IPFT created an upstart campaign for Tipraland for the tribal people of Tripura. In 2019, once again, tribes from Tripura initiated a significant campaign advocating for the establishment of an independent territory called "Greater Tipraland". The TIPRA Motha Party has expressed this demand. The primary aim of the article is to examine the historical context of the "Greater Tipraland" movement in Tripura and assess the effectiveness of the Sixth Schedule in the TTAADC region. This paper aims to conduct a thorough investigation into the multiple facets of the "Greater Tipraland" Movement. Hence, it may be inferred that the Greater Tipraland movement is a distinct movement seeking statehood, wherein Tipra Motha advocates for a constitutional resolution within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. An intensive discourse and a solid constitutional foundation can effectively address the concerns voiced by the Tiprasa community.

Keywords: Tripura, Sixth Schedule, TTAADC, Tipraland, Greater Tipraland



1. INTRODUCTION

India is a diverse nation. It has a root cause of conflict due to its internal matters. In India, the demand for territorial sovereignty has strong roots that can be traced back to the nation's diversified socio-cultural and political terrain. In the current political climate in India, the demand for smaller states continues to thrive (T. Sreenivas, 2018). A "statehood demand" in India denotes a movement by individuals from a particular region inside an existing state advocating for the establishment of a distinct, new state, frequently motivated by considerations such as language, culture, economic inequalities, or perceived neglect by the incumbent state administration. Since a long time ago, India has been sensitive to the emergence of new states based on regional feelings. This phenomenon necessitates careful consideration and an awareness of a variety of issues. Such a demand recently arises in the state of Tripura.

As per Dhar (2021), the land of Tripura was under monarchy for approximately 682 years (1267 A.D.-1949 A.D.). The Tiprasa are the sons of the soil of Tripura. Tripura's tribal politics have revived the longstanding and contentious demand for Tipraland, which gave people of indigenous descent autonomous dominion (Debbarma & Haokip, 2023). The TIPRA Motha Party considers Greater Tipraland an imperative politically motivated goal in Tripura. The party seeks an

Indian Constitution-compliant constitutional resolution that safeguards Tripura's indigenous inhabitants (Bhattacharya, 2023). The Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT) initially put forward a plan for the formation of Tipraland in 2009, and Greater Tipraland is an enlargement of that concept. The aspiration for Tipraland was most distinctly articulated at the height of ethnic tribal insurrection in the state from the decade of the 1980s to the end of the 1990s (Debbarma & Haokip, 2023). It encompasses the Tiprasa community, which is native to the state of Tripura and is also found in a number of other Indian states, such as Assam and Mizoram (Deb, 2021). People from neighboring Bangladesh, including Bandarban, Chittagong, Khagrachari, and other nearby areas, are also considered part of this demand (Deb, 2021). Therefore, the growing demand for validation of minor identities, and the requests for distinct states, and the strategies employed by the movements are predominantly influenced by the characteristics of their particular communities (Gogoi, 2018). In this article, the author attempts to understand the background of the "Greater Tipraland" movement in Tripura and assess the effectiveness of the Sixth Schedule in the TTAADC region. This paper aims to conduct a thorough investigation into the multiple facets of the "Greater Tipraland" movement.

2. BACKGROUND

Tripura is an enticing hill state situated in India's northeastern region. According to the 2011 census, it has 3.671 million inhabitants and spans 10,491 km² (4,051 sq mi). Tripura is a land of tribal and non-tribal people but the aborigines of the state were tribes. The 2011 census shows that the total tribal population in Tripura is 1,166,813, which accounts for 31.78% of the overall population (TRIBAL POPULATION OF TRIPURA | Trci, n.d.). Nineteen diverse tribes, each with its own unique aesthetic and social variation, make up Tripura's inhabitants. Reangs are indigenous ethnic communities. Nevertheless, the Tripuri and the Reang tribes have been the most populous indigenous groups residing in the region for a significant period of time. The majority of tribal communities reside in mountainous regions and have been coexisting harmoniously and peacefully. Each of them communicated in their respective language. Nevertheless, Kokborok is the language that is most frequently utilized.

Historically, Tripura was a princely state. After independence, Tripura merged with India, becoming the "Part C" category of state in the original Indian constitution, along with other states such as Manipur, Ajmer, Bhopal, Delhi, etc., on October 15, 1949 (Akhup & Tripura, 2022a). On September 9, 1949, Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi endorsed the state-India ties merger agreement (Akhup & Tripura, 2022a), with her counterpart Mr. V. P. Menon, who was then advisor to the Government of India representing the Ministry of States (Dhar, 2021). The first day of July 1963 marked the beginning of Tripura's existence as a Union Territory, and It gained its formal recognition of a full-blown state on January 21, 1972. At various points in its history, Tripura has played host to a number of significant geopolitical events. These events range from the rule of the regal crown to the reign of a fully-fledged state. Hindu Settlement the partition of India in 1947 and the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 significantly influenced both the internal and external characteristics of Tripura, leading to an increased number of immigrants from Bangladesh crossing the present international border (Dhar, 2021). In 1874, 64% of the population were people of indigenous descent. Following succeeding censuses, their representation decreased, decreasing to 52% in 1931, 37% in 1951, 28.44% in 1981, 29.59% in 1991, and 26.74% in 2001 (Choudhuri, 2019). In actuality, 6,09,998 Bengalis relocated to Tripura from East Pakistan between 1947 and 1971. Considering that the state's population was 6,45,707 in 1951, it is swift to understand the enormity of the crisis (Choudhuri, 2019). This illustrates the significant strain Tripura experienced due to the abrupt increase in population (Dhar, 2021).

The disparity among the population size of tribal and non-tribal people created a panic among the indigenous people of Tripura. A sudden feeling of insecurity of losing homeland because of the extraordinary growth of the non-tribal population changed the whole socio-economic and political condition of the state. It gave birth to a formidable Tribal Movements within the state of Tripura experienced political as well non-political, extremist activities for a long period. Some of the political and non - political activist are- Gana Mukti Parishad (GMP), Tripura National Volunteers (TNV), All Tripura People's Liberation Organisation (ATPLO), National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), Tripura Resurrection Army (TRA), Borok National Council of Tripura (BNCT), Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), Indigenous Nationalist Party of Twipra (INPT), National Socialist Party of Tripura (NSPT), National Conference of Tripura (NCT) (Dhar, 2021). For the first time in the history of Tripura due to insecurities and unrest situation the start demanding for a separate state called 'Tipraland.' The IPFT party under the leadership of N C Debbarma. Then in 2021 Greater Tipraland demand came up. The desire is mostly influenced by apprehensions

regarding the state's swift demographic changes, which have transformed indigenous people from the dominant group to a minority.

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- The demand of Greater Tipraland become a serious and sensitive political issue. For the article following objectives are formulated here-
- To seek out the Sixth Schedule's functioning in the TTAADC area under the Indian Constitution and its provisions.
- To discuss about the Autonomous District Council for Tripura Tribal Areas.
- To study about emergence of Greater Tipraland.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper is qualitative in nature. The qualitative examination of the collected data is descriptive in nature. The present study draws data from secondary sources. The study collected secondary data from various sources such as journals, published research papers, government websites, news, and articles.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. SIXTH SCHEDULE OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION

Considering the intricate context of Indian state formation, many unique constitutional frameworks have been established for numerous states inside the nation (Singh, 2022). The Government of India consented to accountability for fostering the growth of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas, putting emphasis on developing policies and programmes for their swift and equitable growth through partnership with the State Government (Akhup & Tripura, 2022a). The Sixth Schedule regulates the government of indigenous territories in the four states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura, according to the provisions of Articles 244(2) and 275(1) of the Indian Constitution (Kumar, 2020). The creation of Autonomous District Councils (ADC) in the northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram seeks to safeguard and maintain tribal culture. Assam, Mizoram, and Meghalaya each possess three autonomous district councils (Akhup & Tripura, 2022; Gassah, 1997; Lalfakzuala, 2017), Tripura holds a singular entity (Akhup & Tripura, 2022b).

TTAADC confers comprehensive legislative, administrative, and judicial authority. No legislation from the national or state government may be implemented without the consent of the District Council. The Governor possesses the authority to establish a new Autonomous District and to modify the geographical authority or identity of any existing Autonomous District or Autonomous Region as a whole (Kakati, 2014). The Autonomous District must form a District Council including a maximum of than thirty members, with two posts filled out by the Governor of the state and the remaining members elected by general election (Mohapatra, 2017). While nominated officials are chosen at the governor's confidentiality, those who are appointed are in office for a period of five years. Paragraph 20 of the Schedule delineates a list of tribal regions encompassed by the Sixth Schedule in three sections (Harsha & Ranglong, 2016), these are as follows:

Table 1: Autonomous District Council under Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution

A. Part 1 (Assam)
1. North Cachar Hill District
2. The Karabi Anglong District
B. Part II (Meghalaya)
1. Khasi Hills District
2. Jaintia Hills District
3. The Garo Hills District
C. Part II (A) Tripura Tribal Areas Districts
D. Part III
1. The Chakma District
2. The Mara District

Source: Mohapatra (2017) & Hansaria (2016).

5. TRIPURA TRIBAL AREAS AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL (TTAADC)

The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council operates as a separate governing body tasked with the management of areas in Tripura where the Tiprasa people is the predominant demographic. Enabling tribal people to rule themselves, promoting holistic development, and preserving their beliefs, habits and rituals are the main goals of the TTAADC (Mohapatra, 2017). The autonomous district council has its headquarters at Khumulwng. With an aggregate portion of 7,132.56 km², the TTAADC makes up around 68% of the state's 10,491 km² total territory (Mohapatra, 2017). In compliance with the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Act of 1979 was endorsed by the Indian Parliament after a series of constitutional moves by the indigenous people of Tripura (Mohapatra, 2017). It took root on 15 January 1982 (Mohapatra, 2017). The change in the composition was executed pursuant to the sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution by the 49th Constitution (Amendment) Act, promulgated on August 23, 1984, and came into force on April 1, 1985 (Akhup & Tripura, 2022a). The purpose of establishing the District Council is to eliminate the gaps between the progressive and underdeveloped segments of rural communities and to enhance the harmony between tribe and non-tribal populations (Mohapatra, 2017).

The TTAADC has been bestowed on executive, legislative, and judicial authority (Mohapatra, 2017). In accordance with the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, the governor of the state possesses authority over the autonomous district council. The governor of Tripura, in relation to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, has the constitutional power. According to paragraph 2 (1) of the Sixth Schedule, the total number of MDCs is thirty, including 28 members elected by adult suffrage and 2 members appointed by the Governor of Tripura (Akhup & Tripura, 2022a). The TTAADC consists of thirty members, including two nominated individuals; three seats are designated for non-tribals (unreserved seats): Machamara, Dasda-Kanchanpur, and Manu-Chailengta; the remaining twenty-five seats are allocated for members of scheduled tribes. The TTAADC areas consist of five zones: 1. The West Zone, headquartered at Khumulwng, West Tripura. 2. The South Zone is headquartered at Birchandra Manu, South Tripura. 3. Gandacharra Zone, Gandacharra, Dhalai, Tripura. 4. The North Zone's headquarters is situated in Machmara, North Tripura. 5. The Dhalai Zone headquarters are situated at Manughat, Dhalai, Tripura (The Official Website of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, n.d.). TTAADC five zones are further subdivided into thirty-seven sub-zones, with the boundaries of these zones coinciding with the Sixth Schedule areas of revenue districts (Mohapatra, 2017). Currently, following the outcome of the 2021 ADC election conducted on April 6, TIPRA Motha is governing the TTAADC. Pradyot Bikram Manikya, the Chairman of TIPRA, is set to assume the role of Chief Executive Member of the newly elected Council. Purna Chandra Jamatia has been appointed as the Chief Executive Member of the council for the inaugural time. Presently the Hon'ble Chairman of TTAADC is Sri Jagadish Debbarma.

6. TIPRALAND TO GREATER TIPRALAND

Tiprailand is a hypothetical state in India, advocated by the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT). IPFT was formed in the year 1997 under the leadership of Harinath Debbarma and N C Debbarma (Dhar, 2021). At that point in time, Harinath Debbarma was named as the chief of IPFT. Under the Tripura Tribal districts Autonomous District Council and certain adjacent districts, the party is calling for the creation of a split state. One of the electoral purposes of the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), a political entity, is to create "Tiprailand," a state inside the Tripura Tribal Areas, in accordance with Articles two and three of the Indian Constitution (TRIPURAINFOWAY: Tripura's Latest News, Views & IT Portal, n.d.). In the year 2000 elections for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), the IPFT won Seventeen of the twenty-eight seats, giving them the edge over the opposition.

IPFT and TUJS merged with a new tribal-based political party named INPT in 2001. Before 2009 General Elections IPFT revived under the leadership of NC Debbarma. Recently in 2018 assembly elections IPFT tied up with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and won 8 seats in total. The BJP-IPFT coalition formed the new state government in the year 2018 by winning 44 out of 60 assembly seats in the state assembly. Initially, the IPFT, a regional party, incited sentiments among the tribal population of Tripura concerning the political aspiration for Tiprailand. Subsequently, following the establishment of a coalition with the BJP in the 2018 election, the party begun to compromise its ideological principles (Ali, 2021). In these circumstances, the chief of the Tipra Motha initiated the demand for Greater Tiprailand, committed

to advocating for the tribal populations of Tripura, and aims to consolidate various tribal groups under his political organization. The Tipra Motha Party (TMP), officially recognised as the Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance, is a newly-formed political party in Tripura. A person named Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barma heads up the TIPRA. He is the son of the last King of Tripura Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya Debbarma. He currently holds as the Tripuri royal family's head. He is referred to as 'Bubagra' by his community and serves as a prominent advocate for the rights of the Indigenous Tripuri people of Tripura. The empowerment and liberation of the Tiprasa people is TIPRA's first and foremost objective. The organization contested the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council elections after officially becoming a political entity on February 5, 2021. In 2023, TIPRA Motha obtained thirteen seats in the state's legislative house, making it the second largest political party in Tripura as now.

7. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is indicated that the Greater Tipraland is a core ideological demand of The Indigenous People's Regional Alliance (TIPRA). It is the fruit of different political and non-political movement under different leadership Royal Scion Pradyut Bikram Manikya Debbarma. The movement's political inception was marked by the demand for "Tipraland," spearheaded by N. C. Debbarma and later switched to "Greater Tipraland" a movement. Looking at Tripura's history, it appears that the movement is the product of long-simmering discontent rather than an unexpected turn of events. It is a campaign of the indigenous Tribal People of Tripura for more independence and general progress. Many Tiprasa leaders think that the creation of Greater Tipraland will help to achieve their certain goals towards welfare of Tiprasa people. It is observed that TIPRA Motha party is ready to discuss with Government of India for Constitutional Solution instead of separate state. The main reason behind the rise of this movement is the growing feeling among the Tribal people that their identity was threatened due to several reasons.

It cannot be wrong to say that till today Greater Tipraland movement was not fully successful but, in some extent, it was successful in ensuring the identities of the Tiprasas. But the movement has not contributed towards the development of the community as a whole. The community is still lack in terms of education and economy in comparison to other parts of the state of Tripura. This movement also has drove to a split within the community and emergence of a Tipraland Movement. But the old movement is not too strong and popular as the newer one. Government has to look at how issues has changed and evolved over time and has to interact with these and should include in policy settings, policy parameters and considering policy areas. Apart from these, we need a strong constitutional base and good solution of the problems raised by the sons of the soils.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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