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Training Preferences of Tribal Farmers - A study of Buxas.

Santosh Baxi¹, N. Bhardwaj² and Dr. B. Kumar³ *

Tribals fall at the lowest rung on a continuum of modernisation and development among Indian population. Tribals comprising about eight per cent of the total population, are characterised in constitution on the basis of their tribal origin, primitive way of life, habitation in remote areas. Bari (1991) pointed out that the tribals are the farming community with agriculture as the main occupation largely based on traditional agricultural practices. They lack modern scientific knowledge and skills which hamper the full utilization of their available resources and traditional knowledge in agriculture. Training is considered as a major intervention in this regard, to make the tribals socially and economically stronger.

Training is a powerful tool to catalyse the pace of development as it provides capabilities for betterment of human life. In agriculture, Government of India launched various training programmes to bridge the gap between the recommended package of practices and existing farmers' knowledge and skill. Farmers' Training Centres were established which organised various training programmes for farmers. These are about 131 Farmers' Training Centres in the country, out of these twenty one are in the state of Uttar Pradesh (Mishra, 1990).

Farmers' Training Centres organise special training courses aimed at tribals Farmers' Training Centre situated at the Regional Institute for Rural Development, People's College, Haldwanni organises three trainings in a year specially for tribals of this region. These trainings which are meant specifically for tribal clients need to be tailored in view of their needs and preferences about the organisation of the training programmes. Thus, in order to design a strategy of Training for Tribals, the opinions and preferences

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of tribals regarding the content, venue, duration and months for arranging training and training methods etc. were being obtained.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Haldwani Block in Tarai region of Uttar Pradesh and respondents were selected out of the training programme organised for tribals in Nandpur village, Gadarpur Block of Nainital District. All the 81 tribal trainees, comprising of 41 males and 40 females were studied. The trainees preferences on various aspects of training close-ended questions were collected. The four point rating scale along with the scores was constructed. The categories were most preferred, moderately preferred, less preferred and not preferred.

1. PROFILE OF TRIBAL VILLAGE

Village Nandpur, where the study was conducted is seven kilometers North-West to Gadarpur Block. The residents of this village are from Buxa tribe. The literacy level of the village was 20%. Of them, 15.61 per cent were males and 3.91 per cent females

The local dialect of the village is Buxadi, which is a combination of Hindi, Kumaoni (spoken in the hill regions of Uttar Pradesh) and dialect of Rohelkhand area. Almost all the people can understand Hindi.

Agriculture is the major occupation of the village only some of them have small shops to sell tea or items of daily needs. The crops grown in the area are cash and cereals. People do not prefer to grow oilseed crops or pulses due to high level of ground water and heavy annual rainfall.

Of the total area of 907.84 acres in the village, the cultivated land of the area is 793.60 acres which includes 791.12 acres of irrigated land. About 14.06 acres of land is being used for non-agricultural purposes. 42.97 acres of land is not appropriate for cultivation. Whereas 9.02 acres of productive land has not been

used for cultivation. Majority of the farmers have land holding between one to six acres and belonged to the category of small and marginal farmers.

The village has a primary school, a hospital, post office and co-operative society etc. All the village activities are organised at the village primary school. Drinking water facilities are available. The village has four public taps and several hand pumps.

II. PREFERENCES OF BUXA FARMERS REGARDING TRAINING

Training for farmers is organised regularly by the nearby farmers' training centre right in the village. In past, a training programme had been organised for 81 participants (41 males and 40 females in the local primary school). The training had covered several topics of agriculture ranging from crop rotation, seeds and fertilizer, gardening, grain storage, agricultural implements to crop protection. Besides, general topics like family welfare scheme, women and child health care, bio-gas, life insurance, self employment schemes, etc. were also dealt. The participants of the course were interviewed to get their preferences about different components of training, viz content, venue, training method, size of training group, duration, follow-up and facilities, as elaborated below.

CONTENT AREAS PREFERRED

It is evident from Table that majority of female respondents (87.5%) preferred training in 'Latest agricultural practices' followed closely on heels by 'stitching' (82%), Animal husbandary (77.50%), weed and insect control (75%) and employment related opportunities (40.1%).

All the male respondents indicated liking for 'latest agricultural practices', followed by weed and Insect control (97.5%), Animal husbandary (85%) and employment related opportunities.

VENUE OF TRAINING

Table clearly indicates that majority of females preferred 'village (3.81) as training venue most followed by 'Block headquarters (2.52) Farmers' Training Centre (2.44) and KVK (1.81) Male members also preferred village (3.38) most but indicated FTC (2.92) KVK (2.75) and Block headquarters (2.1) as their second, third and fourth choice respectively. Overall village was most liked venue followed by FTC and KVK and Block was the least liked.

METHOD OF TRAINING

Female respondents liked 'visit to the field (3.5) most as training method followed by 'group discussion' (3.45), demonstration (3.35) and Practical (3.2) and Question-answer Lecture (2.82) was preferred least.

Male respondent also showed similar trend of liking.

DURATION OF TRAINING

Females preferred a week's training (3.68) most followed by three days (2.39) and two days (2.26) One day's training (1.71) was liked the least. Male respondent also showed similar liking.

DURATION OF TRAINING

Females preferred a week's duration most followed by three days and two days. One day was preferred least. Male respondents also indicated similar preference.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES :

Female indicated preference for listening to radio programmes regularly, most as follow-up activity after training followed by regular contact among trainees, meeting with trained farmers' and correspondence male respondents also revealed similar liking.

FACILITIES REQUIRED TO USE TRAINING :

Upon being asked to indicate preferences for facilities headed to make training more useful, female preferred Trainer's regular visit

(3.36) most followed by loan facility (3.07) and grant by FTC (2.71). Marketing facility (2.13) was the least preferred facility. Male respondents however, liked 'loan facility' (3.35) most followed by 'Trainers regular visit (3.17) and 'Marketing facility' (3.12). Grant by FTC was liked least by males (2.82a)

Overall, trainers regular visit and loan facility stood at first two places in terms of liking.

DISCUSSION :

The study indicated that Buxa of Nandpur were mainly small and marginal farmers. The locality, in general, has tradition of intensive use of scientific cultivation among non-tribals. However, tribals have lagged behind due to the various socio-cultural and political reasons.

In general, the respondents preferred village as site of training, because of convenience, followed by Farmers' Training Centre. The choice of training method rested of field visit and demonstration rather than lecture. Group size 25 trainees was preferred most. A week training was liked most. Listening to radio programmes regularly was suggested as follow-up activity. Regular visit of trainers was desired most as facility necessary to use training. Thus, it can be said that training courses in future should be organised after conducting a detailed need-assessment study only, in order to create interest of tribals.

It is thus suggested that training should be conducted in small groups of 25 so that it is easy to conduct practical activities, field visits and demonstrations. Keeping in view the preferences of farmers, care should be taken to involve farmers rather than lecturing. Training should be followed by networking among trained farmers for mutual support and discussion. Regular visit of trainers to the ex-trainees will also help in effective utilization of new learning. Training curriculum for females and males trainees should be

designed separately.

Table 1 : Preferences of Buxas regarding training content

Sl. No.	Subject matter areas	Choice of					
		Females		Male		Pooled	
		Freq uency	Per cent age	Freq uency	Per cent age	Freq uency	Per cent age
1.	Latest agri-culture technique	35	87.5	41	100	76	93.82
2.	Weed and ins-ect control	30	75	40	97.56	70	86.41
3.	Animal husba-ndary	31	77.50	35	85.36	66	81.48
4.	Employment related opportunities	16	40	30	75.16	46	39.50
5.	Stitching	32	82	00	00	32	39.50

Table 2 : Preferences of Buxa regarding organisation of training

	Preferences					
	Female N=40		Male N=40		Pooled Score	
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank
Venue						
Village	3.87	I	3.47	I	3.38	I
FTC	2.44	III	2.92	II	2.69	II
KVK	1.81	IV	2.75	III	2.37	III
Block	2.52	II	2.10	IV	2.30	II
Method of training						
Visit to the field	3.50	I	3.68	I	3.59	I

Demonstration	3.35	III	3.63	II	3.49	II
Practicals	3.20	IV	3.58	III	3.39	III
Group	3.45	II	3.19	IV	3.32	IV
Discussion						
Lecture	2.82	V	2.92	VI	2.87	V
Size of training group						
25	3.10	II	3.52	I	3.39	I
25-50	3.31	I	3.25	II	3.17	II
50-75	2.26	III	2.0	III	2.12	III
75-100	1.00	IV	1.00	IV	1.00	IV
Duration of training						
One day	1.71	IV	1.77	IV	1.73	IV
Two days	2.26	III	2.27	III	2.25	III
Three days	2.39	II	2.72	II	2.56	II
A week	3.68	I	3.65	I	3.66	I
Follow-up Activities						
- Regular	2.78	II	3.05	I	2.92	II
Contact						
among trainees						
- Meetinees with						
trained	2.55	III	2.82	III	2.69	III
farmers						
- Correspon-	1.52	IV	1.92	IV	1.73	IV
dence						
- Listening to	3.20	I	2.90	II	3.07	I
radio						
programme						
regularly						

Table 3 : Facilities desired to use training effectively

Sl. No.	Particulars	Females		Males		Pooled	
		Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank
1.	Grant by FTC	2.71	III	2.82	IV	2.76	III
2.	Loan facility	3.07	II	3.35	I	3.21	II
3.	Marketing facility	2.13	IV	3.12	III	2.64	IV
4.	Trainers' regular visit	3.36	I	3.17	II	3.26	I

TRIBAL UNEMPLOYMENT IN TRIPURA SOME WAY-OUT

Sanjoy Roy *

It is no denying fact that unemployment is the striking symptom of inadequate development. In India, the incidence of unemployment amongst the youths particularly the educated youths are much higher. Dimension of unemployment is not only for the lack of work opportunities and low productivity of those working for long hours but also for the growing divergence between inflated attitudes and job expectations. The growing indifference to manual and agriculture work fuelled by inept educational system do exert severe strains to the acceleration of national development. The effects of unemployment have not only been cornering the life of person concerned but it also have been plaguing the total social environment of people. Its ill-effects have surpassed many areas. Developed countries are also not free from its fall-outs. The age of productivity of profitability arising from the infrastructural development and technological upheaval have been throwing out large number of working people in the developed nations. The human-works are getting replaced by scientific innovations. The hi-tech world has made man as the cog of the machine. The craziness for super profit and the tendency of accumulating more resources with an inner desire to control the resource of others are making large number people unemployed in the developing nations. The nature of unemployment in the developing and developed countries are quite different. People in the under developed countries are waging an economic battle for survival. Their quest is for subsistence level bread, attire and shelter. Lack of knowledge, education and technological know-how mainly for lack of adequate capital are the fundamental constraints which contribute maximum to magnitude of unemployment problem in the developing countries and cause widening gap

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between these heterogenous countries. However, the gap is more and it shows high degree of disparities to Tripura Tribal economy which fails to make a sustainable headway because of many traceable and untraceable inherent bottlenecks. During the last few years, it has been iterated by some political uminaries and academiciahs that unemployment problem of tribal is highly responsible for the unabated insurgency problem in the who north-eastern states and Tripura is no exception to it.

In this paper an attempt is made to high light the growing unemployment problem of tribal people in Tripura encompassing role of Government, pitfalls, present state and some-wayouts. The emphasis has been thrust on the possible solution. Lack of sufficient data to support the quantum and degree and unemployment is a partial limitation that estricts the study to show its aggravation. Hypothetically it is assaumed that degree of enemployment in the unorganised sector of the tribal economy is not less skewed than that of the problem of other stocks of people.

ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT :-

The role of State Government in mitigating the unemployment problem of the tribals isimensely good State Government has taken a significant role in mitigating the problem of unemployment amongst the tribal people through increased governmental expenditure on public works and transfer payments. The State Government through Tirbal Welfare Department, Tripura State Co-Operative Scheduled Tribe Corporation, Large Sized Multipurpose Societies and through Other Departments are implementing different schemes to bring down the unemployment problem of tribal people in the unorganised sector. The various schemes, viz, IRDP, NREP, Jahar Rozgar Yogana etc. are extensively being put into operation to scale down the aggrvation of unemployment amongst the tribal people. The extablishment of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) has given a significant boost to the development activities in the tribal areas. TTAADC has been working stead-fastly for the economy upliftment of the tribal peo-

ple and is creating a number of jobs in the unorganised sector. Available information indicates that TTAADC generated 5.814 lakhs man days employment in 1992-93 for the tribal people and 5.907 lakhs mandays under state Rural Employment Programme apart from the numerous mandays work under the four District Magistrate agencies. In 1994-95 while TTAADC arranged work for 14.2 lakh mandays mostly for tribal people under Jawhar Rozgar Yojana Scheme and special Rural Employment Programme and other schemes, it got increased to 34.79 lakhs mandays work in 1995-96 and to 54.7 lakhs mandays work in 1996-97. Under the IRDP scheme TTAADC has been continuously helping the down-trodden people and creating jobs for their livelihood. In 1992-93, 3785 families were given benefit. The number of families benefitted by TTAADC had shot up to 21618, 14657 and 13726 in 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97. With a view to reducing the long-standing problems of wandering of tribals, settlement of Jhumia families was accorded top priority. Since first five year plan period to the annual plan period of 1990-91, 66482 jhumia families were given settlement. Information available from the Tripura Scheduled Tribe Corporation Ltd., indicates that the said Corporation till 1995 had disbursed an amount of Rs. 1.61 crore to 25,501 tribal people apart from other scheme in operation.

PITFALLS :

The effort of the State Government indicates that economic misery of tribals should not have been too acute. But the realities disclose otherwise. Though the educated tribal youths are getting employment more quickly because of lesser literacy rate coupled with reservation policy yet it is a fact that there are large number of tribal families which lead their life with unfulfilled basic needs. The author thinks that lacuna of exploitation which a section of tribal people experiences since long was not solely because of the immigration of Bengalee people from across the border. The author ascribes it as the ills of the system as a whole. The cropped up general sentiment that the Bengalees have exploited the tribals

ostensively is to a large extent a wrong hypothesis. It is true that the tribal people are exploited. But the question arises by whom and how? Had all the non-tribal people (Bengalee) done this? The answer is definitely not so. A section of the unscrupulous people could have cheated and exploited them and this people may belong to one community. But this does not necessarily justify to conclude that all the people of a particular community have done this wilfully for which that community should be held responsible. Oppression and exploitation are nothing new phenomena. Till data, wherever poverty and literacy are found predominant and go hand-in-hand, economically down trodden people are found oppressed ruthlessly. Practice of bonded labour even after 50 years of Indian independence is getting unfolded. The release of sizeable number of such labours from the brick industries of Punjab and other agricultural farms of Rajasthan are the capitalistic mode of production. Switching over to discussion, it should be mentioned that large section of Bengalee had not done that wilfully. Actually, it was the competition between the two financially weak communities. As the landscape of the princely state after annexion with Union of India in 1949 became smaller the economic lots of both the communities including those who took refuge on this land following a series of ethnic clashes in erst while East Pakistan could not get improved. But in the competition tribal people remained in the backwaters and the migrated people went ahead making the developmental equation between Bengalee and tribal people alike (+, 0) or (+, -), in most cases. Later on, short sighted politics and averse attitude of Government in implementing different tribal development schemes, Sombre literacy rate and growing population have cast maximum to the palpable unemployment scene of the tribals.

present situation According to 1991 census, population of Tripura was about 27.57 lakh of which % of scheduled tribe population (ST) and scheduled caste population (SC) were 31 and 16 respectively. Another important feature of 1991 census was the presence of a voluminous 69% non workers in the state. It implies that unemployment problem of the tribals is no less serious be-

cause of scarce employment opportunity in the rural areas. It should be mentioned that unemployment figures available from several sources show disagreement amongst themselves reflecting variety of factors because of heterogeneity in the concept of unemployment. Available information indicates that there are three main sources of data on unemployment; viz,

- i) The Decennial census
- ii) The National Sample Surveys
- iii) The Employment Exchange Registers.

The decennial census shows a dismal size of unemployment. While decennial census reveal total unemployment less, the figures of unemployment from National Sample Surveys show fluctuation over time with difference in the timings of its survey. Conversely, live register of employment exchange not only give information on the number of job-seekers but also it tends to exceed the unemployment figures available from other two sources. Apart from its easy availability, it considers the recognition aspect of income entailing dissatisfaction of one's current state of activity. Its limitation is that it covers only those who bother to register leaving aside the capability of employment exchange to help job-seekers or not.

The present paper is prepared on the basis of the information available from the job-seekers list waiting in the live register of the State Employment Exchange. It helps to deduce that number of unemployment among tribals is nothing less. Though the list is not an exhaustive proof as it has not covered substantial size of non-worker of the state, yet the growing tendency of unemployed youths can be gauged from table - 1 shown below:-

Table - 1 Unemployment Picture of Tripura.

Year	Total	S.T.	S.C.	Others
1993	211752	21613 (10)	18590 (09)	171549 (81)
1994	223757	22453 (10)	23286 (10)	178018 (80)
1995	240023	26630 (11)	33430 (14)	179963 (75)
1996	250729	32524 (13)	35707 (14)	182498 (73)
1997	283044	NA	NA	NA

(Figures in the bracket indicate the percentages)

Source : Directorate of Employment Service and manpower Planning, Govt.of Tripura.

A picture of unemployment prevailing in the state is depicted in Table-1. The table shows a gradual increases in the total unemployment registering an annual growth of 6% in 1994 and 1995. 4% in 1996 and 13% in 1997 over its immediate preceeding year. The unemployment of tribes which was 10% in 1993 has gone upto 13% in 1997. The same scene also prevails for SC. The table indi-

cates that both tribals and SC have registered an absolute and relative growth bringing to light that tribale unemployment is on the rise. If the pace of growth remains upward, a gloomy future is destined. On the other hand, it can be iterated that % of tribal literacy is not high but is improving by and by.

However, the impact of education on the unemployment scene of the tribals in the state by no means, is less trivial. Table - 2 reflects the same.

Table - 2 : Category - wise number of job- seekers waiting in the live register of employment exchanges of Tripura according to education level on 31.12.96.

Sl. No.	Education level	Total	ST	SC	Ratio of ST & SC
1.	Below class VIII	40700	7698 (19)	8107 (20)	0.9 to 1
2.	Class-VIII passed but below Madhyamik	81622	15492 (19)	14489 (18)	1.1 to 1
3.	Madhyamik passed but below graduate	86269	4035 (20)	5726 (07)	0.7 to 1
4.	Graduate	22181	493 (02)	2359 (11)	0.2 to 1
	B.A.	16765	358	1645	
	B.Sc.	2472	38	336	
	B.Com.	2944	97	378	
5.	Post-Graduate	3935	23 (0.6)	188 (05)	0.12 to 1

M.A.	3088	19	94	
M.Sc.	422	-	26	
M.Com.	425	04	68	
6. Technical in/c Engi- neering degree	3293	351	357	
Diploma, ITI etc.		(11)	(11)	1 to 1
7. Skilled/Semi skilled and others.	12729	4432	4481	
		(35)	(35)	1 to 1

(Figures in the bracket indicate percentage)

Source : Directorate of Employment Service and Man-Power Planning Government of Tripura.

Table-2 exhibits, the degree of unemployment and pin points those specific areas where employment opportunity in the coming days is bright. Table - 2 also presents the picture of unemployment amongst the tribal people vis-a-vis the scene of unemployment amongst the SC people in the state. Table - 2 indicates that 71% of the total tribal unemployment youths comprise such job-seekers who are below the standard of Madhyamik qualifications. Less than 2% of the Jobseekers are graduate of which number of unemployed graduates in Arts are higher than those of commerce and science. But worth mentioning fact which the study focuses is number of post-graduate unemployed persons. Table-2 portrays that employment opportunity is immense for post-graduate in Science followed by post-graduates in Arts and commerce totalling a slender unemployment of 0.6% . While number of unemployed with technical qualification is significant, number of skilled or semi-skilled workers constitutes only 14% of the total tribal unemployment. If number of unemployment figures shown in Sl.No.1 and Sl.No.2 are added to the number shown in skilled and semi-skilled

category it makes a bulk size of 85% which is definitely a baffling situation likely to go up at a faster rate because of their high population growth rate and gradually improving literacy rate. Contrary to it, Table indicates that number of tribal graduates is on the rise. With government sector getting closed for large scale appointment of ST people on special drive, availability of more eligible candidates for the spread of education and ominously for the liberalised economic policy of Government of India, Unemployment problem or the tribals is getting unbridled forgoing a new-era ahead. It is also true that 97% of the unemployment represented by SI No. 1,2,3 and 7 of the table-2 is one of the preponderant factors which cause derailment of tribal youths joining hands with on-going terrorism activities inside the state and fuel insurgency.

Hence, it leads to conclude that overall unemployment scene is gloomy except employment opportunity for highly educated tribal-youths. Employment opportunity, even to the educated tribals in the 21st century will get limited and absorption of tribals in Government job will not be smooth-sailing process, as of now. The present state of Tribal unemployment is caused from a literacy of 46% compared with 74% state literacy rate. If their literacy go up, both the number of educate unemployed will go up and job opportunities in Government sectors will get limited. It should be mentioned that Government sector is the largest employment/Job sector in the state having employees about 1.5 lakh out of a total population of 32 lakh (as projected). The present scene itself brings out that the days are not far-off when a government job to a tribal will be an worst suffered who will have no means to crack this hard-nut unless any radical change in the structure of the state economy takes places immediately.

SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVEMENT

Keeping in view of the present state of bottlenecks to poor industrialisation and slackened transformation of local economy and scene of unemployment amongst the tribal people, the author suggests some affordable measures, within the ambit of local

resources for palliation of unemployment prodded long-standing miseries of tribals.

1. Tribal people should join various trades. Rather than remaining in the hills, they should come forward, participate in every type of works and should become a competing force to people of other stocks and prove their merit. There are various areas like petty business, transportation and service sectors etc. Where their participation is token and meagre. If diversity is for the greater well being of socio eco-system, it implies that for any congenial atmosphere there should be sizeable representation from every section. In any environment whether physical, man-made or social environment, the precious entity, diversity calls for the maintenance of equilibrium at all levels. If the balance can be well-maintained, eventual disturbances can cause minimal interferences and the society getting developed with diverse representation can acquire itself a self-sustained-spread-effect neutralising capacity. However, in many occasions it does not happen spontaneously at the beginning without an introduction by third agency (Government, NGO's) or it requires proper protection to develop a level of resistance. However, protection policy should be pursued for a definite object to propel the resistance level only.

The importance of this trifling point should not be brushed aside given the present social environment of Tripura which is paradoxical in nature. Growing resentment amongst both the tribals and non-tribals regarding the employment opportunities do not articulate to recommend the propositions of either section bluntly but reconcile. Incultural diversity, the peaceful co-existence is the pre condition and an immaculate feature devoid of which effort on amity is a temerity. Hence, the peaceful co-existence of tribals and non-tribal is cultural diversity compulsion without which it leads to no-where. The present crises of tribal unemployment is largely for unplanned management of socio-economic system and partially for uncalled for tension created by a vested section to master their unhidden agenda. The need of the hour, if cancerous effect

of unemployment is to get stopped, is undoubtedly the better interaction between the tribals and non-tribals in all trades.

2. Utilisation of land is next point of emphasis. In Tripura man-land ratio of tribal people is low than that of non-tribals. Density of population in the tribal sub plan area (TSP) is about 124 compared with 557 in the non TSP area (as per 1991 census). There are vast plot of lands in the TSP area which can be utilised effectively but remains uncultivated, History records that proper use of land is the prime factor to the development of any economy. But local tribal economy exhibits something totally different. on slaught of massive deforestation converting closed forest into a blank area due to indiscriminate looting of timbers and persistent jhooming have kept effective land to minimum. On one hand, deforestation and jhooming have plagued the sandy shales and soft stone comprised lands unviable for the agricultural operations and on the other hand absence of effective governmental policy for proper scientific conservation of soil and better irrigation facilities to make the unused lands profitably productive have caused the man land ratio feckless resulting in an aggravated form of tribal unemployment in the unorganised sector, requiring in boost in the pristine agricultural operation. This warrants the necessity of (i) proper land reforms (ii) conservation of soil which have direct bearing on the utilisation of land. It is a fact that tribal unemployment arising from the agricultural sector is to a great extent is seasonal unemployment and related to jhooming where farmers hadve least work during the slack season. on the other hand, whether jhooming should be allowed to continue or not is debatable issue. Various surveys reveal that jhooming is longer a profitable cultivation as its yield/return is disproportionate to effort employed. However, it is one of the cultural pillars of tribal heritage and is like life blood to tribal traditions burgeoning various dances, folklorers and festivities. With a view to making the best use of vast land and lesson the unemployment problem of jhoomias, so many measures have taken already but proved unpalatable. Even promotion of

rubber plantation aimed at creating additional employment failed to pay expected dividend. Both direct employment and indirect employment originating from here are ill-remunerated and of socially inferior apart from its control at the hands of some influential profit-crazy traders resulting in lesser number of employment than that of expectation.

It is true that rubber plantation is spreading over the hilly areas and both tribals and non-tribals are getting jobs but economy benefits availed of by tribals are at a low-ebb. Most important environment threat, linked with proper utilisation of land is whether large-scale rubber plantation will lead to monoculture. If it happens, the objectives will go astray resulting in reduced size employment and income for the next tribal generation. Hence the author keeping in view the point of proper utilisation of land, gainful employment of tribal people, non-tribals and the local climate skin to all-round development suggests the policy of pursuing massive afforestation in addition to the continuation of other programmes. The semi-arid or barren lands will have to be brought under social forestry with the twin objectives of improving land and increasing the quantum of fire-wood. Simultaneously, the right of chopping the trees should be given to the planter when timbers get matured. Though the above measure may look as old wine in the new bottle yet this step in this environment fragile world is ecologically and economically viable.

Even emphasis on the minor forest produce like arjun flower and bamboo can improve the present land utilisation pattern and assuage unemployment problem. It can be mentioned that minor forest produces which are local and national market suited can fetch high returns. But collection of minor forest produce particularly these mentioned above are fast declining because of inexplicit Governmental policy and for their inept management right from plantation to marketing. Late at information indicates that the value of minor forest produces which was Rs. 1.46 crore in 1986-87 has gone down to Rs 42.25 lakhs in 1991-92 despite the increase in the selling prices. Bamboo, an important minor forest product which

constitutes 83% of the total minor forest produce outturn enables a number of tribal problems earn subsistence level earnings from various involvements, has not been given due emphasis. But lack of systematic policy and their implementation have marred the prospective market of bamboo products from occupying national position and in turn effected the employment scope of the tribals. So is the fact for arjun flower which is left for spontaneous natural growth.

The prolonged dilly-daily attitude of the government on the proper utilisation of land have brought the tribal to almost bay. Despite the vast scope of commercial viability of forest produces, large tract of hilly lands remain under utilised. Neither lands of the state are properly utilised to the fullest extent for forest products nor the lands are put into effective ploughing to raise the agricultural production to the expected level of local requirement. Rural lands which are yet not crowded have potential to accommodate an increased size of work-force (but not disguised unemployment).

Only scientific planning as to the proper utilisation of land, introduction of better technology with better irrigation are the imperative needs.

3. The elegant dexterity of tribal people came into limelight from the recently concluded North-Eastern Tribal Festival in 1997. In-vravit craft-works in present days technological flood world attract large number of plutocrats pliantly and particularly the tourists. An unique balance between augmentation of revenue, employment generation and preservation of delicate craft-work studied cultural heritage of tribals can be maintained through the promotion of large-scale tourism in the state.

The third world countries have already pressed on this button. In India, too, various parts of underdeveloped regions are getting flourished quickly with this smokeless industry. Ladak, a most difficult terrain is accommodating a large number of tour-

ists, mostly foreigner. Available information indicates that since 1975 more than 2.5 lakh foreign tourists out of a total of three lakh tourists have paid visits there. The folk-lore dances, crafts etc. which were in the brink of oblivion got livened up and started inflowing huge funds. The economy of Lakshadweep which was not better than that of the economy of Tripura, is marching ahead once the tourism is launched in that small island resulting in high income and better employment opportunities to the people. Wide scope employment generation, augmentation of governmental revenue etc. have led the State Government too, to pay a fresh look on tourism. To this end, various agencies are called on to join the State Government in the sector. The author also supports this view as a noble idea to the solution of soaring unemployment problem. But the question arises as to its nature and type of tourism to be stressed on. If conventional or mass tourism is repeated it will mean reversion. It is witnessed that mass tourism obscures the basic objective leading to environmental degradation, social distortions etc. Recent phenomena of tourism industry indicates that tourism or nature tourism where scenic beauty is preferable to other artificial exaggerated beauties. The esteemed dailies are focussing locus-standi attention on the large number new tourists spots where tourists are showing keen interest. It can be mentioned that Tripura possesses numerous natural splendours which can attract and pull large number of tourists from outside, even foreigner. Hence, responsible tourism (a kind of tourism, while safeguarding the experience of travel, would also further mutual understanding between people, prevent environmental and cultural degradation and most of all, exploitation and dehumanisation of local population) coupled with formation of some tourists villages in hill areas supported by exquisite handicraft works and highly skilled weaving products of local people may give a fillip to the doldrum of tourism in the state. The folk lore and tribal dances which already established its acceptability and supremacy will definitely appease the first-time viewer yielding more dividend to state tourism industry. It is a fact that tourism induces multiplier effect. It promotes direct,

indirect and induced employment. Direct employment are those arising from hotel, tour-related programme etc. Indirect employment is referred to those connected with handicrafts, agriculture and any other local activity or feature getting commercialised because of tourism. Induced employment are referred to those resulting from spending of money by local residents income. However, the author views that there should be some restriction over the behaviour of tourists and some control over the private traders. The whole tourism should not be bestowed at the mercy of private-businessmen. The views of local people should be taken into account while selecting the tourists villages and determining the carrying capacity of tourists places. The cost benefits analysis, possible fallouts likely to engross the future including the control measures should remain at hands to meet adverse situation promptly failing which it can turn suicidal leading to ethnic disturbances and cultural degradation.

On the other hand, promotion of tourism will give a significant boost to the tottering age-old weaving industry in the State and will serve loom using tribal weavers greatly by helping them to solve the prime-bottleneck of its product marketing which in turn, will induce more young people join the weaving sector, presently non-chalant due to unviable return. Not only this, but development of tourism will also enroll development of transport sector uprooting the preponderant cause of industrial backwardness in the State. It is being witnessed wherever tourism is flourished, it accompanied massive transportation development. Some of the inaccessible upper Himalayan tracts are the ready references. Thus it comes out that tourism can attain a break-through in the present stalemate of unemployment problem of the state and can discomfit the spiralling crisis.

4. Other potential areas where tribal man-power can be absorbed substantially include agri-allied sector like dairying, piggery, poultry farming etc. which are capable of employing a substantial size of tribal people but not adhered to properly.

It can be mentioned that several lorries (full body truck) of eggs are reaching Agartala city to meet the local demand. The high demand of pig-meat has rendered its prices to go up from Rs. 30-40/- per in 1993-94 to Rs. 70-80/- per kg in 1998 depending on its requirement in various areas. Paucity of milk in the urban areas purports the success of dairying. But no concerted effort is made by the tribals in these areas.

Though the state Government is leaving no stone unturned to make the tribal people successful entrepreneur, yet the number of such people has not risen steeply. Available information indicates that most of poor tribal people are by nature a bit spendthrift and their tendency of saving is comparatively low because of poverty, illiteracy and partially for primitive economic system. So, if the aggravated unemployment of tribals particularly those poor is to be brought down, tribal people are to be induced to save more and made them acquainted with the concept of formation of capital, ploughing back of profit and entrepreneurship skill. Development of entrepreneurship skill should lay equal emphasis of formation of capital. This will be easier if savings where the tribals generally lack can be improved. Hence steps are required to dissuade the poor tribals from making unnecessary expenditures rather motivate them to saving. With the onset of liberalisation and globalisation, the role of savings has gone up significantly. Saving which holds the key to the capital formation can also be the panacea for survival in this steep-completion age. Otherwise, primitive hibernation will prolong and will gult them.

Present practice of loans, subsidies and even governmental job are the short-term measures. Ultimately these will hinder both the working potential and volition of the poor tribals and make them lazy and repugnant to work. Conversely, the above practice should be ascribed as an income distributional policy which has least relevance to production aspect. In fact, tribals are to learn or to be taught market economy. Competition and cultural diversities will help them to adjust. These will mould them to the needs of the

hour. The policy of injecting assistances from outside will bear no fruit. Tribals should learn to coalesce and try to wield them. The synergy and goodwill of Government can steer them to achieve the unfulfilled needs. But they are to make the fullest use of the resources made available by various Government agencies. Tribals people should not forget that unemployment problem is such a daunting national crisis which is ubiquitous in every part of the country and they are no exception to it. Hence, tribals should shun their lack-a-daisical attitude, come forward with a superlative outlook to build a strong nation for the sake of mitigating unemployment, the farthest possible and prosper the glory of the country.

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COSTOMARY LAWS OF THE HILL STATES OF NORTH-EAST WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE STATE OF TRIPURA

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The people of the Hill States of North-Eastern region are exactly the same as any other people of the country with the same human needs, aspirations, loves and fears and the same faults and the same virtues. There is no difference. But where these people differ is in the kind of life where they are governed by their customary laws and practices. They have developed their own outlook and ways of doing things.

Here we should have a clear conception relating to the term 'customary laws'. As defined by Justice Lahiri :

"Customs are habits or conduct observed by classes or groups of people ; may they relate to etiquette, dress, rights surrounding important events of life, such as birth, marriage and death. Every society must have customs of their own. Some amongst them are well established. They fall within the group styled as social custom."

Customary rules, regulations and practices are the unwritten or uncoded codes of conduct hallowed by age-old observance in a particular sociocultural unit. These acquire public sanction in due course because of their uninterrupted continuity. The same are sanctified by unquestioned authority emanating from the ancestors of any given ethnocultural group. Customary practices are universal in character. They are observed in all societies- savage or civilized, illiterate or literate. At the same time customary rules and practices are to be understood in contrast to the written or codified rules of

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personal or public conduct or constitutional laws passed by certain legislative bodies or organisations.

With this background, the ethnic situation in the north east is unique. 70 per cent of the region is hilly and nearly 88 per cent live in villages. It is reported to have 209 scheduled tribes (Assam 23, Arunachal Pradesh 101, Nagaland 20, Manipur 28, Mizoram 5, Tripura 18 and Meghalaya 14). From the ethnic point of view the seven units of North-East may be conceived as comprising three distinct groups (A) Assam and Tripura having a majority of non-tribal population and minority scheduled tribe population, (B) Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal (C) Manipur, bulk of whose non-tribal population is concentrated in and around Imphal valley while the smaller proportion of concentrated in the hill areas

The simple societies of hill areas in North-East India do not yet possess any codified law for social control. But they have perennial customs supported by effective social sanctions. Under the provisions of the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India, Autonomous District Councils have been established in Mizoram, Meghalaya Tripura and Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hills of Assam. No district councils have been formed in Nagaland and Arunachal. These Regional Councils and the District Councils of the tribal areas are empowered to make laws with respect to land, forest, canal, water course shifting cultivation, establishment of village or town and its administration, appointment of, or succession to, chiefs or Headmen, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce and matters relating to any other social customs. Therefore the people of these tribal areas are governed by norms based on customary laws. These customary laws are different in different tribal areas according to the environment of the respective tribal societies. They often vary even among the same tribe of different regions. With the exception of the matrilineal societies in the land of Meghalaya, most societies in the region are patriarchal and patrilineal.

It appears that these customary laws are closely related to

the land of the people. Land is the live of the people, being the source of livelihood or productive resources. Moreover, land is associated with the laws of inheritance and succession and even with the matrimonial matters in the matriarchal societies. But the allotment, occupation or use of land is not of the same nature in all the tribal areas of this region. It differs from tribe to tribe and from locality to locality even in the same state.

The system of rights over land is closely connected with agricultural practices. The system where shifting cultivation prevails will not be the same as that where permanent cultivation is the rule.

CUSTOMARY LAWS IN TRIPURA :

Prior to Indian Independence, Tripura was a native princely State. At the time of Independence, it merged into the Indian Union, and after passing through several stages ultimately attained the full status of Statehood in 1972, when the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 was passed.

There are 18 recognised tribes namely, (1) Tripuri (2) Riang, (3) Jamatia, (4) Chakma, (5) Halam, (6) Mog, (7) Noatia etc.

The Tripurians and the Reangs are supposed to be the earliest settlers in Tripura, the rest having immigrated in subsequent periods.

Jhumming in Tripura is still an important phenomenon. Jhum cultivation is the main occupation of almost all the hill tribes. About 60% of the total tribal population of the State practise jhum cultivation solely or partly.

The period of jhum cycle in Tripura is 10 years, though in some localities it has now come down to 5/6 years. A jhumia, after one year of cultivation, leaves the field and goes to a second one. Next year he goes to a third, thus every year a new field is taken up till the eleventh year, when he comes back to the first plot or any other plot in the first locality. Meanwhile, all the 10 earlier plots remain fallow, and are not available for cultivation.

No jhumland Regulation : No individual land rights in jhum plots

The T.L.R. & L.R. Act, 1960 does not deal with jhum lands and land-rights in relation to them. Jhumland area comes to about 25% of the area under permanent cultivation in Tripura. It is, therefore, an important part of the land system. There is no Jhumland-Regulation in Tripura as is prevalent in Nagaland, Arunachal and Meghalaya. Some such regulation seems necessary.

In a jhum plot where shifting cultivation takes place without the plot being fixed for a particular person, no land-right can be acquired by the cultivator except the right to use the plot for the particular year. No right of transfer can be acquired for such plots. Right of inheritance is also limited to the year of use only.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE :

Administration of justice among the tribes and races of North-eastern region is significantly different from that in the rest of the country. It differed in the past, and it differs even at the present time. It also differs, in certain respects, from tribe to tribe.

In the past, before the advent of the British, while in the rest of India (barring of course the tribal areas) disputes were resolved generally according to the principles laid down in the Smritis and Dharmasutras, in the tribal areas these were settled on the basis of perennial customs. The customs varied from ruthless retribution to peaceful amicable settlement.

The authorities which dispensed justice were also different. After the Vedic period, either the king or the Judges appointed by the king dispensed justice among the people of India, though Panchayats in some areas continued to dispose of certain types of cases. But in the tribal areas of the Sub-Himalayan regions of the North-East, the village councils disposed of all cases including those relating to commission of heinous offences like murder, arson, rape robbery etc. Among only a few tribes (like the Mizos and the Kukis) the Chief was the absolute authority, though he used to take

the advice of his council of elders.

When the British Govt. extended its administration to these areas, they did not alter the basic structure of the authorities which dispensed justice nor in the general customs related to it. They prohibited trial of certain heinous offences by the traditional authorities. These offences were to be tried either by the political officer or his Assistants. Even in respect of other non-heinous offences the British administration attempted to regulate their trial by laying down certain procedural rules. They framed special rules for administration of civil and criminal justice among the tribes and races. These rules were known as the Administration of Justice Rules. Though different sets of rules were promulgated in different areas, the provisions were almost identical. Within the framework of these rules, customary practices in respect of trial of crimes and imposition of punishment continued and are still continuing to a considerable extent.

After Independence, the tribal areas of the then State of Assam, except the North East Frontier Tracts came under the purview of the Sixth schedule of the Constitution according to which certain categories of offences and civil disputes could be tried by the village councils or courts established by the Autonomous District Council. The District Councils framed new rules for administration of justice within their respective jurisdiction. The code of Civil Procedure and the Code of Criminal Procedure do not apply to the trial of any civil suit or criminal case in these districts.

In Tripura during the Ex-Ruler's time, the courts of Hill Tripura dispensed justice according to a primitive system of equity and good conscience and there was no regular judicial procedure. In 1979, a legislation called the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Councils Act has been enacted with a view to setting up autonomous district councils on the analogy of those, established in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution.

Thus it appears that, not only in the past but even at the

present time, administration of justice among the tribes and races of the North-Eastern Region is different from the rest of India.

With regard to administration of justice, with which alone we are concerned here, provisions were made in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Sixth Schedule. In paragraph 4 it has been mentioned that :

The District Council may constitute village councils or courts for trial of civil and criminal disputes between parties both of whom are tribals. The power of a council or a court to try criminal cases is limited to offences which are not punishable with death, transportation of imprisonment for five years or more.

District Council Court :

Above the level of the village council or court, the District Council, or any court constituted by the District Council shall exercise the powers of a court of appeal from the decisions of the village council or court.

High Court and Supreme Court :

No other court, except the High Court and the Supreme Court shall have any jurisdiction over the village council or court. In case of High Court, its jurisdiction shall be such as the Governor may from time to time specify.

The District Council shall have power to appoint suitable persons to be members of the village councils or the presiding officers of the village courts. It shall have also power to appoint such officers as may be necessary to administer laws made by the District Council.

Rule making powers

Constitution of the village councils or courts and the procedure to be followed by them shall be regulated by rules made by the District council with previous approval of governor. Similarly, the District Council may make rules for regulating the procedure for appeals, enforcement of decisions and other ancillary matters

connected with administration of justice.

Tripura hills have come under the purview of the sixth schedule of the Constitution as a result of the constitution Forty-Ninth Amendment Act, 1984. But even before this Amendment, the Tripura Legislature had already enacted a legislation called "The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Councils Act, 1979", which was based on the principles underlying the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

According to the provisions of Section 3 of this Act, the state Government formed an Autonomous District comprising the tribal areas specified in the First Schedule appended to the Act. The Autonomous District comprises 463 villages.

The Government may constitute Village Councils under the Tripura Act, whereas under paragraph 4 of the Sixth schedule it is the District Council which constitutes Village Councils. The Village council has power to impose fine only and that, too not exceeding Rs. 300/-, In civil cases, the village council has power to try suits of value not exceeding Rs. 1000/-.

In criminal cases, appeal from the decision of a Village Council lies to the Sessions Judge and in civil cases to the District Judge (Section 38).

THE BRITISH RELATIONS WITH MAHARAJA BIRCHANDRA MANIKYA AND THE KING'S CHOOSING OF BABOŌ NĪLMĀNĪ DAS AS DEWAN : BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS

Dr. KRIPAN SINHA

I. INTRODUCTION : MAHARAJA BIRCHANDRA AND HIS TIME :

Bir Chandra Manikya, the king of Tripura who ruled from 1862 A.D. -1896 A.D. has been considered by all independent authorities as a man of outstanding qualities rarely expected of a tribal prince of the pre-modern era. Colonel Mahimchandra¹ praised him as a Rajarshi while S.N. Sen², as Vikramaditya of Bengal, but Birchandra was, in fact, Tripura's Samudragupta minus the military qualities of the Gupta Emperor which, however, even if he had possess, would not have found any occasion to display in the changed circumstances of the nineteenth century India. Birchandra knew European sciences quite intimately and acquired high proficiency in art (oil painting) and photography³. A literary critic with considerable poetic abilities⁴ which permitted him to commune with Tagore⁵ as an equal, Birchandra was skilled in vocational music also⁶ revelling joyously in the company of a band of renowned musicians and singers like Kashem Ali Khan⁷ ((Robab) from Lucknow, Nissar Hussain (Lute), Haider Khan (Esraj) from Gwalior, Nabin Chand Goswami (Sister), Haridas (Violin), Rajmohan Mitra (Tabla) and Panchanan Mitra from Calcutta, "Natyacharya" Kulandar Bux from Kashmir, Ram Kunar Basak, Bholanath Chakraborty and above all, the famous singer, Jadu Bhatta from Vishnupur who earned a kind of legendary fame during his very life time. A zealous patron of the Bengali language

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and, no mean connoisseur of the Bengali literature of his day who rejoiced in the company of his court poet-cum-friend Madanmohan Mitra⁸, Birchandra played a constructive role in the development of 'official Bengali' in Rajgi Tripura⁹ by declaring it to be the State-Language in 1874¹⁰. His comment¹¹ in the introduction to Regulation 1 which codified the to-be-ever-written laws of the kingdom with age - conforming modifications readily reminds a careful reader of "Code Napoleon" and the French Emperor's painstaking labour to modify and put on record the pre-revolutionary laws of the country in a bid to save them from being lost in the prevailing jungle of confusion. Evidently, the king conversant with European sciences knew European history too and was seemingly impressed by Napoleon. Thus, while the nature and composition of his court-- with hardly any to rival it in quality and standard in contemporary India since the fall of Nawab Wazid Ali of Avadh¹²-- reflected his inherited oriental tastes, his yearning for knowledge as offered by Europe certainly put him in the category of an 'Occidental' in reference to his 'earned aptitudes'.

Born on 25 Sep., 1839(or 1837), the versatile king passing his youth in mid-nineteenth century India and acquiring profound proficiency in many a language¹³ like Bengali, Urdu, Manipuri other than the a mother tongue was likely to have heard about Newton and Gibbon, Bacon and Hume and, above all, about Voltaire and Tom Paine and known their basic ideas for, his family, since the days of his father had contact with the Tagores¹⁴ of Calcutta (Jorasanko) which, by the beginning of the century had begun to import books from Europe paving partly the way for the advent of the new Age in the country. The period just before Birchandra witnessed the 'Young Bengals' also who, as students of Hindu College (1817) and members of Derozio's Academic Association (1828) had roused a social commotion in Calcutta by their nihilistic attitude under the spirit of "Reason" - if not that of a Renaissance-- carried by the works of the European writers. The demand for the books was so great that it astonished the famous educationist cum

missionary, Dr. Alexander Duff as he arrived in India in 1830 to see how people rushed to buy Tom Paine's "Age of Reason" after the first consignment of 1000 copies of the book landed at Kidderpore by ship¹⁵. Soon, the book valued Re 1 began to be sold as a hot cake at Rs. 5 per copy. There was, as yet no college, no university in the land barring the lone privately managed Hindu College to provide higher education in a systematic fashion. Consequently, even if all the graduates of Calcutta whose number was by no means large at all at the moment, had read the book there must have been a good number of other readers too who having no formal academic degrees showed similar craze for the book to know the epoch making content contained therein. This shows clearly that in nineteenth century Bengal anyone intent upon acquisition of better knowledge cared to taste new ideas with the zeal of a convert to the spirit of the new Age. Otherwise, the book valued at Re.1 could not have been sold at Rs. 5 when the purchase capacity of rupee was extremely high, equivalent to few hundreds, in today's valuation in terms of price of rice. As civilization has a natural tendency to propagate itself, any enthusiast in the vicinity of Bengal was also in a position to earn the new knowledge through sheer private intellectualistic conversations with the sojourners and friends coming up from the advanced centres of learning. In the circumstances, it will be imprudent to suppose that an aristocrat-cum-intellectual like Maharaja Birchandra who had a workable knowledge of English¹⁶ and whose genius was so striking as to foresee the potentials of young Rabindranath Tagore¹⁷ at a time when the would-be 'world-poet' was little known in the country, would miss to inhale in the freshening atmosphere caused by the European cultural impact in and around Bengal. The point that should not miss one's attention is that the process of collecting books that later found expression in the appearance of the royal private library replete with a mass of invaluable books had its beginning in the hands of Maharaja Birchandra who built up a commendable academic atmosphere in the palace for the schooling of the royal children so that they did not suffer like him for want of formal educational wound in memory

he could never heal up.¹⁸

II. BIRCHANDRA : DE FACTO RULER :

It was seemingly a Machiavellian game by which Birchandra was able to seize the throne for himself in 1862 A.D. after the demise of his elder brother, Isanchandra. Crooked^{19a} and a rude despot^{19b}, he was appointed, as he claimed, Yuvaraj by Isanchandra on 31 August 1862 the day before the latter's death but that did not legalize his position of her apparent as, traditionally, the eldest son of the deceased king was to be coronated as the next ruler. However, the absence of a rigorous legal provision in the matter^{19c} threw into confusion the Hindu practice of recognizing the eldest son as the next king as Isanchandra's both sons were as yet too young to contest the mighty aspirant who appeared in the person of their uncle, Birchandr. Moreover, the ROBKARI (royal Yuvaraj) was alleged to be a fabricated document by the other contenders²⁰. Birchandra had staked his claim in the face of opposition from his brother, Nilkrishna²¹ and later, Nabadwip Chandra²², the surviving son of Isanchandra and therefrom began the trouble as the aspirants demanded the revenues of the zamindari it deprived of the crown. The king of Tripura had two revenue zones under his jurisdiction viz., (a) Hill Tripura (the kingdom proper or Hill Tipperah as the British called it and (B) Plain Tripura also known as the zamindari of Chakia-Roshnabad (C-R) or "Moglan Tripura" -- a term that had come into use since the days when the Mughals had returned after snatching away the territory from the Tripuri kings²³ seemingly held by the latter from the ruins of the old kingdom of Paundrabhukti²⁴ or Harikel²⁵ which is believed to have stretched in its good days from Sylhet in the north to Chittagong in the south including the outlying plains of Hill Tipperah. As the English East India company began to replenish gradually the Mughal withdrawal in the region after the latter's debacle at Plassey and Buzur, king Rajdhar Manikya of Tripura recovered back after some reverses but, only the revenue rights over the area in 1793 A.D. under Lord Cornwallis' Permanent Settlement Scheme. The transference of the C-R zamindari was overtly made in return

for an annual revenue²⁶ but in reality it was done by the E.I. Co. in a conscious diplomatic manoeuvre to build up friendship with the outlying independent States surrounding the Bengal Suba. The post-Buxur political scenario dangling before the British eyes the prospect of an Indian empire was none the less dangerously complicated for them but the British exhibited the best of their diplomatic genius in the situation and gave back (1765) the kingdom of Avadh to its defeated ruler Nawab Suja-ud-daulah - one of the Buxur trio- to make his house a permanent friend and ally of theirs to guard the N.W. frontier of the British dominion. Such skilful constructive policies to turn foe into friend which the British initiated by their relations with the Nawab of Avadh was not, however, for giving up but to be cultivated strenuously for further application in one form or the other elsewhere also to make more friends on the boundaries in the formative stage of the empire. It is no wonder, therefore, that the British decided to give the C-R zamindari to Rajdhar Manikya although the relations between them was far from normal²⁷ and the tribal king was, in no sense, fit to be treated by them a natural claimant for the zamindari-- unless his kingdom had been conceptually a part of "BRIHAT VANGA"²⁸ -- as his kingdom proper was outside the pale of the Suba of Mughal Bengal (later empire) whose rule they came to supplant.

In granting the zamindari the British also made a reversal of their earlier policy followed by the E.I. Co. on behalf of the Bengal Nawab (1761). Both Vansittart (Governor of Bengal) and his chief of Chittagong, Verelst had grieved to snatch away whatever of plain-Tripura the Tripuri kings had been able to retain from the Mugaals in an unending struggle with them with constantly changing, fluid boundaries²⁹. What else could effect this change in policy in 1793 betraying a reformist posture save that it had been accentuated by a desire to enhance the strength of the empire's "core" area (i.e., Bengal) that in turn required the cultivation of friendship with one of Bengal's immediate eastern neighbours³⁰. All quiet on the eastern front was as much important for the empire and its stability

as was with as was with respect to the other fronts. Revenues would have been paid by other zamindars too as nicely as the Tripuri king and there was no dearth of zamindari houses in Bengal proper among whom the zamindari could have been proper among whom the zamindari could have been parcelled or given out as a single piece of the British had so desired. Curiously enough, however, the grant yielded paradoxical results for the Tripuri king for, while the zamindari more or less stabilized his financial position by generating more than three-fourths of the State's annual revenues it cut across the king's sovereign status by relegating his position to that of a feudatory of the British with respect to the zamindari. The grant also forced the kings to remain an abiding ally of the British and made it obligatory for all successive kings to seek recognition from them (on payment of a onetime 'Nazrana' ^{31a}) when they ascended the throne. It was in this background that Birchandra Manikya, seizing the de facto rulership of the kingdom, had applied to the British government to recognize his de jure status for which, however, he had to wait eight long years before the case was finally settled in his favour by the Privy Council in March 1869 in defiance of Nilkrishna's claim^{31b}.

III. DE JURE RECONGNITION AND APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW DEWAN :

The recognition of Birchandra as the new Maharaja was accompanied by two novel things. Within a year, the royal court of Agargala saw a British political Agent, Mr. A.W. B. Power, keeping foot on the soil of the kingdom³² (9 March 1871) more or less in the fashion of the British Residents sent to States tied with the Empire with the iron chain of 'Subsidiary Alliance'. The following year saw the appointment of Baboo Nilmani Das, till then a British-Bengal Govt. officer, as the new Dewan of the kingdom. The questions are that was there any relationship between the three viz., (i) bestowal of the de jure recognition on the king; (ii) the positing of the ever-

first political Agent for the kingdom and (iii) the appointment of a British-trained Bengali Dewan ?

The answer to all these three questions seems to be related with the appointment of Baboo Nilmani Das as the Dewan which, however, by itself could not have been meaningful without that of the Political Agent. What did make Maharaja Birchandra anxious on the bestowal of the de jure recognition to resolve to appoint a British-Bengal official to the key administrative post of kingdom ? Did the idea originate with him or with the British government of India (Bengal) ? If the latter, did it emanate from the Political Agent and imposed on the king by himself to facilitate better understanding of the king and the kingdom (the new Dewan helped the Political Agent in knowing the early history of the Tripuri dynasty) as also to modernize the medieval kingdom ?³³ Or, was it a decision of the British India Government itself ? Even if it were a decision of the political Agent himself, as is believed generally ,³⁴ he could not have forced it upon the king without his government's consent. In any case, such an appointment would nicely fit in the British contemplation of taming a native prince to its will by a two pronged policy -- politically, through the political agent and culturally-cum-administratively, through a 'modern Dewan'. That the proposal to appoint a political agent had been initiated by Lord Mayo³⁵ as far back as Oct., 1869 just after the Privy Council's communication, of its decision in favour of Birchandra and accepted by the government after necessary considerations within months of the bestowal of de jure recognition on the king is suggestive of a link among all the three points referred to above. It seems from the circumstantial evidences that the interval between the Privy Council's judgement and the bestowal of de jure recognition was the very period when all the off-scene important decisions were taken in the matter. As such, the decision to appoint the modern Dewan was likely to be less of the carrying out of an impromptu suggestion of the political Agent than part of the grand British policy contemplated in advance to be exerted upon the king as a

pre-condition, no matter, if not in writing to accord the de jure recognition, This could only explain why the Maharaja was to be so anxious as to appoint the new Dewan immediately after coronation. The Privy Council gave its judgement its in March, 1869; the government of India followed it up by initiating its proposal shortly after in Oct, 1869; the Maharaja on receiving de jure recognition executed his coronation in 1871 and the king appointed the Dewan the arrived in March 1871 and the king appointed the Dewan the same year. Does n't the sequence of these important events occurring in quick succession one after the other constitute an answer in itself that all these things had been the outcome of a well-thought coherent British policy emanating from a single grand source to be identified with the British headquarters (capital) in Calcutta rather than Chittagong³⁶-- the empire's frontier outpost in 1870 fit for transmitting decisions only.

The British endeavour to penetrate into the neighbouring princely states was not caused only by the political compulsion of a power geographically isolated from its base in Europe; it had a cultural objective too. Besides the activities of the missionaries, hundred years' rule in Bengal and elsewhere in India proved good enough for the British to understand India and the Indians, at least, moderately. The same spirit which worked through the missionaries activated William Jones also, although in a different way, in founding the Asiatic Society in Calcutta (1784) which has to be regarded as the intellectual starting point in understanding the East, specially India. Within fifty years, Lord Bentick could dare to lay hand on a community's socio-religious faith by repealing "Sati" (1829) and shortly afterwards, T. B. Macaulay, without knowing any of the languages or literature of India, "Could pronounce judgement on the Indians by sheer thoroughness and diligence"³⁷. The Indian penal code which he brought into being forms the bedrock of India's legal system even today, after hundred and sixty years. The adventurist Europeans, no doubt showed enough of their sincerity in understanding the people they ruled but they did not

want to keep it a one-sided game and , therefore, sought in the formulation Macaulay's new Education policy(1833) the reciprocation of the same sincerity from the Indians as well in understanding their master race and even more³⁸. Indeed, their vision has come to a reality - as the Indians constitute the only race in the world today whose educated class is, for all practical purposes , truly bilingual. Be that as it may ,hundred years' interaction at the administrative level from the late eighteenth century between the progressive European community and the intellectually almost sterile Indians made both the British and the Bengalis-- the first race to come close to the British--mutually accessible to each other and consequently, it would have been quite logical for the British if they had demanded -- and that of course they did -- the appointment of a British -trained Bengali Dewan for the tribal kingdom to ensure an easy access to the king and the court supposedly used to a tongue unintelligible to them.

The posting of the political Agent, undoubtedly constituted an infringement on the independent, sovereign status of the king not only in theory but in practice too although, however, the British rarely allowed their difference to come out on the surface and were competent enough to camouflage their intention in regulating the internal administration of the kingdom. They overlooked the Maharaja although, they steadfastly refused to recognize it until 1877³⁹ when it was granted on a totally different ground without adding anything in favour of the king's pretension of sovereignty-- and the term.

"Swadhin(Independent) Tripura "⁴⁰. Obviously , the Maharaja and a " Semiother difficult to be co-existent. The title, Maharaja was therefore , a misnomer for the Tripuri king as the constitutional vocabulary cannot accommodate such a contradicting monarchical position balancing "Sovereign"- cum-"inbetween" political status . Yet , however , Tripura 's legal position could not have been any better described than by such constitutional terminology construct, "Semi--independent" Even though, the

kingdom was theoretically independent as it was not bound by any treaty. The king was allowed to keep the vestige of a symbolic sovereignty as the British govt., like its predecessor, the Mughals, were not interested in taking over the kingdom because of its unremunerative revenues and unhygienic climate. They had nothing to worry about, as they had already firmly enmeshed the tribal state in their political web by the grant of the C_R zamindari and, now, through the political Agent.

The question, however, is that could Bichandra whose kingdom was not bound by any treaty with the British defy such encroachment on his "independent" status at least with respect to his kingdom proper of which he was not a zamindar of the British government? The answer is an emphatic "no". The Mutiny of 1857 had changed the political scenario in the sub-continent and the new government which replaced the E.I.Co. was yet more determined than its predecessor to maintain hegemony over the native princely States and on State even beyond the natural frontier as its aggressive forward policy vis-a-vis Afghanistan would shortly reveal⁴¹. Consequently, a petty kingdom like Tripura whose very survival depended on British mercy had hardly any scope to vent displeasure although its ruler disliked the British at the core of his heart. The C-R zamindari was the mainstay of the kingdom's economy which the king could not have renounced simply for the sake of regaining political autonomy as the something like 'head without the body' rendering the use of the title of Maharaja yet more meaningless and making it impossible for the king to meet the expenditure of his administration. The king had, therefore, to be practical and Bichandra showed he was when, notwithstanding the protest⁴² he had lodged in the beginning, he accepted the Political Agent subsequently knowing well that the latter's scope to report over him combined with the superior position of the British government as the giver of the C-R zamindari would soon excite him to behave as the de facto ruler of the kingdom⁴³. What was interesting is that the crafty king seeing that his protest had gone unheeded quickly changed his stand and swung to the other extreme so far so that he

invoked modernity in the kingdom in the form of a municipality for Agartala (1871) -- an experiment which even the British had not tried in India until quite recently -- to pacify the man from the West. This shows the predicament in which the king had to deal with the British.

So much so as for the Political Agent who, as seen above, might or might not have played a role in the appointment of Baboo Nilmani Das to the office of the Dewan. Court writers⁴⁴, however, judged the appointment as an act of the king himself by which he hoped to ward off the threat of a financial disarray in the kingdom during the period. However, the opinion does not seem to hold good on cross examination unless the king's choosing of man out of the British 'Civil Service' is perceived as born of the British desire imposed in 1869 or 1870 itself. The Maharaja's time was being eaten up so intensely by his engagement in cultural activities like art, photography, astronomy and so many things that he had hardly any time left to look after the affairs of the kingdom. In the circumstances, the British pressure to appoint a chosen (modern) man to the vital post of the Dewan must have been viewed by the king as coming up as a scope to get out of the monotonous job of ruling and make use of the time so found more meaningfully in the field of his active interest. As he was unwilling to move out of his "STUDIO", rule by proxy,⁴⁵ must have been a nice opportunity for him to shield his person from the public and their grievance as also from the avoidable interactions with the Political Agent prone to impose will on the king as is perceivable in the difference of opinion between the British and the king over the question of the abolition of 'Sati' and slavery.

Thus, although the court historians did not make any clear reference either to the role of the Political Agent or of the British government in the choosing of Baboo Nilmani Das -- in fact, they were not supposed to do that -- and, the British, to the financial disorder in the kingdom, the appointment of the British-trained Dewan

seems to have been caused in the ultimate analysis by the British interest itself as noted above. Birchandra had to comply with as no native prince in the post-1857 period was in a position to ignore the implication of the failure of the great Revolt Sounding the death-knell of feudalism when confrontation with the British would have meant one's own ruin only. It was in time, therefore, that the Maharaja streamlined his relations with the British through an ex-British officer, non-tribal Bengali Dewan - an experimental arrangement with man from a community with which the Tripuri kings had already made themselves conversant in the zamindari⁴⁶ and, to a certain extent, in the kingdom proper also.⁴⁷

IV. IMPLICATION OF THE APPOINTMENT :

Being in a position to translate things to and for the king and the British, Baboo Nilmani Das being assisted by others played the role of an intermediary between the two. For the British govt. of India, the "Collaboration" could not have been more meaningful and encouraging than rendered by the new Dewan's presence in the government who unwittingly threw himself into the position of an honest broker for the British by insisting on the induction of dynamic modernism of the West in the kingdom as exemplified in the building of metalled road and the opening of schools, courts and dispensaries run by the state on western lines⁴⁸. Thus, while without a signed treaty between them, Maharaja Birchandra had to become an unwilling partner in the collaboration, his English trained Dewan fastened the kingdom more tightly with the paramount power by his efforts of modernization so much so that within a few years the king was unable to remove a minister from office appointed by himself as long as the British did not intervene on behalf of the latter⁴⁹ to guard his interest. It was an indication of how weak the king's position had become under the British pressure.

The appointment of Baboo Nilmani Das, however, marked the beginning of a new era for the kingdom in other respects. The same conflict which is seen to trouble a society during a transition

period was witnessed in the gradually emerging town society of Agartala also. The obsession with medieval notions was so great with the king that he would not allow the British Assistant Political Agent, Mr. Umakanta Das (later minister) to approach him with shoes at foot and so, in a sort of adamant reply, a humiliated English-educated Mr. Das refused to face him bare-footed.⁵⁰ The Maharaja was an orthodox, Hindu of the late nineteenth century whose long silence over the question of the repeal of "Sati"⁵¹ was indicative of his strong prejudice for his religion. Like Raja Radhakanto Deb of Shonba Bazar (Calcutta) about half a century back, he was also opposed to anything that could have interfered in the socio-religious practices of the Hindus. As a leading native prince in contemporary India⁵², the Tripuri Maharaja was not indifferent to the cause of the people as the appointment of a diligent Dewan suggests, but the king's main drawback was that, as an old-fashioned despot, he chose to remain unconcerned of the force of the historical changes taking place elsewhere in the sub-continent. The king's desire for English education and the appointment of English-educated people in the administration were indications of the practical sense of a conservative⁵³ but,, like the conservatives of early nineteenth century Bengal it put the Tripuri king in a dilemma. Birchandra and his successor⁵⁴ would introduce English in schools but not in administration lest it changed the elites' taste affecting the social status quo. The love for Bengali must have been a legacy of the occupation of the plains of eastern Bengal when sheer administrative necessities had forced the tribal kings to learn the new language to give an effective governance to the Bengali-populated areas forming the richest revenue part in a "segmented" kingdom. By the second Half of the nineteenth century, however, there developed from the continuation of that compulsory learning a sort of nostalgia for the 'second mother tongue' -- by now rapidly developing under the impact of Europe -- in the face of threat from English language and its culture. The Mahagajas who patronized and transacted official business in Bengali since long back naturally feared their acquired cultural identity

-- now completely aligned with Bengali owing to the absence of a developed tribal language -- at stake and took care to frustrate the penetration of the alien language into the vital arteries of administration. Such conservativeness on the part of the rulers of the kingdom was not, however, strong enough to combat the intellectual storm emanating from the neighbourhood in Bengal and, what was worse for them, was, that it was bound to lose effectiveness once men like Nilmani Das, Umakanto Das and the like had been placed in the higher steps of the administrative ladder. In fact, it may be justifiably said that but for such Dewan of ministers in the government at the post-Mutiny threshold-phase-run for modernity in the country, Tripura's take off in the journey for the same would have been delayed further. The appointment of these men proved impediments indeed, to a conservative stay on.

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7. Kashem Ali Khan, a descendant of Tansen had earned India wide fame in his discipline (Robab).

8. Desiya Rejya, P.66 ; Panchamanikya, P. 71

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17. Rajgi Triura, p.27 ; jPanchamanikya, pp. 82-84.

18. Panchamanikya, p.72 ; Debbarma, N.C. , ABARJANAR JHURI (Unpublished monologue by an uncrowned prince).

19a. Singha, K.C., op. cit., pp 162-3

19b. Hunter, W.W. op. cit. , PP. 470-71 ; Panchamanikya, P. 63
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19 c. Rajdhar Manikya had himself broken the tradition in nominating his successor, though following a different style. Singha, K.C., op.cit. , P. 139.

20. Singha, K.C., op. cit. , PP. 162-63.
21. Sen, K.P., Rajmala, ed. by Chakraborty, P., 1997, P.95; The claim of the other brother, Chakradwaj was turned down by the High Court on the ground that he was but an illegitimate son of Krishna Manikya.
22. Panchamanikya, PP. 65-66; Singha, K.C., op.cit. , PP. 174-5; Birchandra was no exception to the maxium " Klngship knows no kinship ".
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24. As the Mehar inscription of 1234 A.. suggests : Ray, N.R., Bangalir Itihas, Adiparva (in Beng.), 1993, PP. 108-9.
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28. TheVaishnavite religious cult preached by the Goswamis fastened the entire land from Manipur to Midnapore (including Tripura) into one single land from the socio-cultural point of view also : See Sen, D.C., op. cit. , PP. 1080-81 ; Also, Desiya Rajya, P.81, to see how the author boasted to claim that Tripura was a part of Vangadesha.
29. Sandys, E.F., op.cit., PP. 24-25.

30. This was true even at a later date : Singha, K.C., op.cit., PP. 171-73.

31a. Singha, K.C. op.cit., PP.167-68.

31b. Panchamanikya, PP.61-62.

32. Chowdhury, D., (ed), Admn. Report of the Pol. Agency, Hill Tipperah (1872-78) : 1872 Report, Sec. 12 & 17. There was a precedent, however, of the Political Agent in the British Resident but the latter had been appointed only in respect of the C-R Zamindari, not kingdom proper. One Leeke was the first such Resident : Machenzie, A., Hist. of the Relations of the Govt. with the Hill Tribes of the N.E. Frontier of Bengal. 1884, P.273.33. Chowdhury, D., (ed), op.cit. , 1872 Report ; Sec. 17.

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46. Rajoi Tripura., PP.5-6
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