



Research Paper

Evolution of Agrarian Economy, - The Tripura Experiences With Historical Concern

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Tripura, the land of tradition, culture and heritage, is a small State among the North East states of India, better known as the seven sisters of India. Once an imperial or monarchial State, Tripura Geographically, is located between the parallels of 22° 56" and 24°32" north latitudes; and between 91° 10" and 92° 21" East longitudes. It covers an area of 10477 sq Kms.

At one time, the state of Tripura was a prosperous state under the native rulers in the North Eastern part of India. This was due to certain factors like its size, its natural and human resources etc¹. While there were abundant natural resources under the control of this state it also had a vast plain land stretching from the Brahmapurta to the river Padma². The vast fertile land of Sylhet, Comilla and Noakhali etc. of present Bangladesh were included with this land. It also had a number of big and small ports including Chittagong port under its contro³. All types of artisans like cobblers, potters, washer men, barbers, goldsmiths, carpenters lived in Tripura during the period under discussion⁴. The excellence of weaving industry spread the reputation of this state in the outer world⁵. The glitter of the gold work starting from the main gate of the palace to the throne bore the evidence of prosperity of the state⁶. In short, the economic condition of the state of Tripura was good before 19th century.

The glory of the state of Tripura began to slide downward from the beginning of the 17th century for the aggression of the Mogh and the Mughals, which completely weakened the state economically. During the reign of Dharma Manickya-II (1714-29), a vast plain land of Tripura has taken over by the Mughals. Since then the financial crisis of Tripura deteriorated rapidly because this area was the grain bowl of Tripura. However, the economic condition of Tripura in the nineteenth century was miserable. At that time, Tripura turned into a poor state devoid of agricultural resources. The economic condition of the state was so much deteriorate that even after defeating maharaja Krishna Kishor Manikya (1769-83) in 1761 the British did not occupy the state⁷.

There was almost nothing as agriculture. The human resources were illiterate and ignorant. It was difficult to make the state financially strong with these resources⁸. A chain of event, wrong political decisions and failure of the rulers, their worthlessness coupled with lack of sound administration, absence of well thought out economic planning were the factors mainly responsible for the economic distress of the state. This economic downturn continued up to the end of nineteenth century.

The economic situation of Tripura further got worst and more on 1st February 1850 the overall debt of the state of Tripura was Rupees 11 lakhs. The burden of the debt dragged the state towards an extreme state of anarchy. Ultimately, the state debt reached such a position that it has feared that Chakla, zamindaries would go out of control of the king of Tripura⁹.

At that stage, some measures had adopted to increase the income of the state with a silent review. It has seen from the review that, there was no definite principle for collection of revenue. Land has given on lease to Zamindars or Talukdars or any other intermediary. But instead of fixing the revenue based on fertility of the soil it was based on the social position of the middleman. Bir Chandra Manikya leased land to his favorite persons and the descendents of the royal families at very low revenue. Revenue did not come from them regularly also. Consequently, revenue income got enormously reduced¹⁰. On the other hand, the king had neither a dependable system nor the power to collect revenue from these people. As a result they sub-leased the land to others. Those who obtained the land on sub-lease were not the inhabitant of this state. They were the citizens of British Bengal. As a result, they grabbed the remains of the revenue after paying the dues to the Talukdars. The king

has thus deprived of a large part of the revenue that was due to him¹¹. Although an important source of the income of the king was land revenue, yet the kings continued this system without the development of an oriental terminal system¹². Besides, prior to 1880 there was no systematic rule for revenue collection¹³.

Under such circumstances, the British Political Agent stationed at Agartala and the high officials advised the king to bring about reforms in the land settlement system. Their suggestion was that there was a lot of cultivable land in the valleys of the hills and in the plains of the state. These could be converting in to cultivable land through plough- cultivation¹⁴. They also suggest that, it was never possible to increase land revenue income from the Jhumias of the hill Tripura. The tribes of the hills were never ready to leave their jhum and come down to the plains for start permanent agriculture under this traditional way of life¹⁵. The best way in this background was to bring the non-tribal Bengalis of the neighboring British Bengal and increase revenue income by widening the school of permanent agriculture standing in such a position¹⁶.

After all, the king of Tripura had taken some historical amendment for the development his land revenue system as well as the economic condition of the state.

i) Earlier to that period, it was compulsory for those who took lease of land to donate free labour to the king. For this, non-tribes did not like to come to this state. Therefore, a law has enacted in 1877 banning the donation of free labours. This has aimed at encouraging the landless labours from, the neighboring British Bengal¹⁷.

ii) In 1880 an act known as “Rajaswa Sambandhiya Niyamabali” has passed. Under this act, extensive areas of land have settled as anami taluks. The miyadi or Taskhichi Taluks has also made permanent but their revenue was to increase at the rate of two annas per rupee of the jama on the expiry of a period of twenty years.

iii) In 1880, an act known as Landlord and Tenant Act, or Praja Bhumyadhikari Ain in the model of Bengali Tenancy Act was passed¹⁸.

The sections 57, 58, 59 and 60 of Praja Bhumyadhikari Act were especially mentionable. In the sections provision has made for reclaiming the jungle covered hilly land, the swampy on convenient and attractive terms. This act has known as janglabadi system of settlement¹⁹. It has said in this act that complete tax exemption would be given for three years. A farmer could claim ownership of the land if he could make the uncultivable land cultivable within these three years. After three years, land revenue would be successively increased²⁰.

Praja Bhumyadhikari Act ushered in a historical era in Tripura. It is in this Act that a declaration was made regarding containing of ownership right to a farmer to a land. Not only this had the Act given the farmer the right to use jote land and rayati land from generation to generation²¹. The reformers in land revenue system greatly encouraged the landless farmers of British Bengal to come to this state in the later part of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the immigration of people began since then²². Although the rate of this immigration was low in the beginning, it began to rise gradually afterwards.

Table: 1
Growth of total population along Immigrant,
Emigrant and natural population in Tripura 1901-1931

Years	1901	1911	1921	1931
Total Population	1,73,325.	2,29,613.	3,04,437.	3,82,450.
Immigrant Population	43,894.	81,663.	96,386.	1,14,383.
Emigrant Population	152.	1,372.	358.	6,543.
Natural Population	1,29,583.	1,49,322.	2,08,409.	2,74,610.

Source: Debbarma, S., *Census Bibarani* 1931, p. 34.

“Jangalabadi” system had introduced in Tripura. In this way, much revenue has not earned for 20 years from such land. Thus, it has seen that though reform has brought almost in the land revenue system yet the income from land revenue did not increase substantially²³. However, good result began to be seen from the last part of the century. The total revenue income, which was Rupees 2.4 Lakh in 1881-82, rose to Rupees 4.6 Lakh in 1892-93²⁴. Needles to say that it was only for the development of land revenue, as because the land revenue, which was Rs. 38650 in the year 1873-74²⁵, gradually increased to Rs. 154338 in the year 1899-1900²⁶.

The increase in population and collection of land revenue in the last part of the 18th century and beginning of the 20th century bears evidence to this fact.

Table: 2

Sl. No.	Year	Population	Increase	land revenue Rs.	% of total revenue
1.	1880-81	95637	60375	34717	14.92
2.	1890-91	137442	41805	57788	16.64
3.	1900-01	173325	35883	154338	24.31
4.	1910-11	229613	56288	320707	29.32
5.	1920-21	304437	74824	446293	33.80

6.	1930-31	382450	78013	440180	31.60
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Source:

1. Chaudhuri, D.K., (ed.), *Administration Report of The Political Agency, Hill Tipperah, (1878-79,--1889-90.)*, Vol.-II, Agartala, 1996, pp. 76,157,261.
2. D.N., Goswami, Debbarma, A., (ed.), *The Administration Of Tripura State, (1894-95, 1914-15, 1918-19)*, Agartala, 2004, pp. 30, 38
3. Chakraborty, M., *Administrative Report of Tripura, Vol.-I*, pp.143, 263, Vol.-II, p.826, Vol.-III, pp.1050, 1416, Vol.-IV, pp.1772, 2047

It has seen from the table, 2 that in 1880-81 only 14.92% of the overall revenue collection came from land revenue. The population of the state at that time was 95.637. In 1920-21, 33.80% of the revenue income has contributed by land revenue. In 1881, the population of the state was 304437 in 1920-21, total land revenue collection was Rupees 34,717 and population was 95637.

In this phase along with increase in revenue, collection in the state the area of cultivated land has also increased substantially. The non-tribal people coming into this state from British Bengal took vast areas of uncultivated jungles and marshy land on lease under Jangalabdi system and converted them into very useful land. They built houses and carried on agricultural operations on these lands. It was said in a report of government of Bengal in 1884-85 that the total area of the Hill Tripura state was about 4086 sq miles out of which 2400sq. miles was Hill and marsh. This has not considered as cultivable. Out of the rest 1600 sq. miles cultivation has performed only in 100 sq miles of land²⁷. We can see how the king of Tripura was able to increase cultivable land by converting the wasteland of the state, into cultivable and useful land through the Jangalabadi system. Because of this, the land Revenue of the state increased enormously.

Statement of Increase on land revenue from 1880 to 1940

Year	Land Revenue (in Rs.)	% of Land Revenue with Comparison of Total Revenue
1879-1880	35153	17.47
1884-1885	35295	14.78
1889-1890	53973	17.27
1894-1895	88752	17.57
1899-1900	154338	24.31
1904-1905	228370	29.72
1909-1910	293584	29.72
1914-1915	342192	33.04
1919-1920	436892	33.57
1924-1925	518227	33.59
1929-1930	643315	34.24
1934-1935	644452	40.79
1939-1940	627569	30.52

1. Chaudhuri, D.K., (ed.), *Administration Report of The Political Agency, Hill Tipperah, (1878-79,--1889-90.)*, Vol.-II, Agartala, 1996, pp. 76,157,261.
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Conclusion:

It can be concluded that, the land reformation whatever had implemented by the Royal court of Tripura had opened the door of non-tribe migration in the state of Tripura. Among impacts of immigration in Tripura prior to 1940, in other words, in the period between the last phase of nineteenth century and 1940 its economic impact was most important. The economic progress of the state and the people was clearly noticeable. In the field of agriculture in Hill Tripura during this period, we notice a gradual disappearance of ancient mode and emergence of pre-modern mode of agriculture. The effect of this change was perceptible in every sphere of economic life. Landless farmers came to this state in huge number, began to take lease of uncultivated land, and converted them to cultivable land through Jangalabadi system. This resulted in increase in the volume of land revenue of the state. This wide increase in the Land Revenue brought economic prosperity of Tripura.

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