Chapter - VII

Conclusion
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It can be inferred from the earlier chapters that Tripura not only stood firmly in favour of Bangladesh Liberation Movement in 1971 but it had also during Princely days at least up to the partition of India (August, 1947) strong geographical bond as well as cordial relations with the Bengalis in the field of culture, economy, administration, communication, education and, above all, in maintenance of zamindari possession at Chakla-Roshnabad (previously called Tipperah). Once Tripura possessed sovereignty over a large plain tract east of the River Meghna, north of Chittagong and south of Sylhet which was first lost to the Mughals and then to the British East India Company but gained the zamindari right over that land and its headquarters was at Comilla. Bengalis with their advanced culture found avenues to the key posts of the administration in Tripura during the princely days and Bengali was adopted as court language of Tripura which was unprecedented in the Indian sub-continent. Plough cultivation was initiated here by the cultivators coming over from Bengal and that at the invitation of the Rajas of Tripura. Viswakobi Rabindranath Tagore stood to be the ambassador between Bengal and Tripura culture. So, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya opened the door of Tripura to the riot-stricken Bengali refugees of East Pakistan for permanent settlement in Tripura. But after partition, the immigration of refugees began to pour in Tripura on a torrential scale and it was on record that up to march, 1971, 6, 09, 998 refugees were rehabilitated in this hilly state at the cost of the tribal people which was violently resented by some groups of the tribal. This unprecedented movement of the refugees in Tripura entirely changed the demographic profile of the state and the Bengali refugees who were originated from East Bengal (East Pakistan) became dominant in all aspects of lives. Tripura mainly before the partition of Indian sub-continent in 1947 was solely dependent on Bengal for its communication, economic development, upliftment of education system, medical care etc. Thus was established an unbreakable bond between Tripura and Bengal specially East Bengal.

But the partition of the Indian sub-continent on the basis of 'Two-Nation Theory' in 1947 entirely changed the scenario. Indo-Pak relations were not at all cordial; the native states specially Jammu & Kashmir became the bone of contention between the two along with other problems. Two wars were already waged on this issue but in vain. Communal relations between Hindus and Muslims in both the countries turned to be worst. So, immigration of Hindus from Pakistan and migration of Muslims from India created enormous tensions in both the countries. Border issues could not be solved. Muhuri Char problem can not be solved till to date. Notwithstanding the
above facts, Tripura got stirred while any kind of untoward situation happened in Pakistan especially in East Pakistan. So, the Chief Minister Sachindra Lal Singh cordially received Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Awami League while in 1963 he came over to Agartala in disguise. The Pakistan Govt. contemplated to nip the Autonomy movement started by the Awami League in 1966 on the 6-point demands in the bud and enlisted the name of Sheikh Mujib in the so-called Agartala Conspiracy Case in 1968 as a number one accused. And that was the turning point. The said case turned to be the blessing in disguise in respect of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and ultimately ignited the liberation movement of Bangladesh. In protest, the students rose in a historic movement which was turned to be a great upsurge and compelled the Military Junta under Ayub Khan to hand over the charge of the state to another Military Man, Yahya Khan, who announced the General Election in Pakistan in 1970-71 which was swept over by the Awami League. On the other hand, the conspiracy case elevated Sheikh Mujib as Bangabandhu and as an undisputed leader of Bengali nationhood. But the Pak Military Junta in collaboration with Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the leader of the PPP (Pakistan Peoples' Party) denied the handing over the charge of Pakistan to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the majority party; instead, it unleashed in East Pakistan a reign of terror under Operation Searchlight on 25 March, 1971 and, thus, paved the way for the liberation movement.

The geographical position of Tripura and its cultural affinity with Bengal opened the way for the devastated and fear-stricken evacuees of East Pakistan to pour into Tripura like that in West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya. The Government of Tripura under its Chief Minister Sachindra Lal Singh did not hesitate to hail the liberation movement and come forward to arrange shelters, foodstuffs, healthcare etc. though Tripura was economically backward and geographically landlocked. The striking feature is that at one point of time the evacuees almost outnumbered the total population (around 15 lakhs 56 thousand people in 1971) of the state. The embryo of the Bangladesh Government in exile was formed at Agartala and was declared later on in 'Mujibnagar' under Kusthia district in liberated zone in East Pakistan on 17 April, 1971. The land of Tripura like that of West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya was utilized for the training of the Muktyoddhas and for the preparation of all out war with Pakistan. Tripura had to suffer a lot in the field of economy, education, development works etc. but nothing wrong was noticed Tripura against the Liberation Movement of Bangladesh.

The refugee problem became unbearable on the part of India because the number was huge (near about 10 million at one point of time). So, it sought international assistance while the Pak Govt. tried to establish that the issue was totally an internal affair of Pakistan and India was trying
to intervene in the internal affairs of its neighbour. The representatives of the Govt. of India including its Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, started visiting the refugee affected states to have an on-spot view of the touchy issue; then they began to visit the capitals of the leading countries of the world but could not convince the USA, China and the Arabian countries though it could convince the Soviet Union and some of its allies and it was Soviet Union which stood firmly in favour of Bangladesh movement and the stand-point taken by India in respect of liberation movement. A friendship treaty between India and Soviet Union was signed in August, 1971. The international organizations like the UNO was moved and the international press exposed the real incident that happened in Pakistan and that was a 'genocide.' Many notable international personalities visited Tripura and other affected states. Mr. Samar Sen, the permanent representative of India in the UNO countered the propaganda machinery of the Pak Govt. on the issue of Bangladesh liberation movement. Tripura for its strategic location became international focal point specially for national and international media persons and it turned to be the dateline for national and international news agencies.

The people of Tripura, as it is seen in the earlier chapters, had responded very much positively to the liberation movement of Bangladesh. All sections of people from the students to the politicians, from the Government to the Opposition, from the workers to the entrepreneurs, from the nurses to the doctors, from the house wives to the Lady Governors, from the prisoners to the employees, NGOs etc. marched forward with all-out efforts to assist the refugees, and, above all, the liberation movement. The tribal organizations even the TUJS (the Tripura Upjati Juba Samiti) which was established with its declared policy to serve only the interest of the tribal people and Kirit Bikram Manikya, the 'Maharaja of Tripura' did not hesitate to come forward to share the sorrows of the evacuees and to help the liberation movement. The press, the journalists, the photo journalists of Tripura like other newspapers as well as journalists of India and abroad did a lot to uphold the main motto of the liberation movement relentlessly justifying the cause of the liberation movement and severely criticizing the Military Junta for its 'misdeeds' in East Pakistan.

It is, thus, clearly discernible from the above brief note that Tripura, a tiny and economically backward Indian territory during the period of liberation movement of Bangladesh stood firmly in favour of that Movement. Without any pre-plan or preparation, it had to shoulder the responsibility of the refugees almost equal to its population and that was unprecedented and certainly a Herculean task; it had to share its soil not only for the shelters of the evacuees but for the organization of Mukti Bahini and preparation for all-out war. For that, Tripura had to face enormous difficulties in the form of disruption in the field of economy, education, security of the state, development works
etc. The speech of Mr. Dasarath Deb, MP (Member of Parliament) from Tripura, in the Lok Sabha, (referred to earlier) indicated the vulnerable condition of Tripura in the economic sector and it was mainly due to the influx of devastated refugees in the state.

The same issue was elaborately discussed in the state Assembly while it was in important budget session. The Hon'ble Members at the first instance unanimously resolved to request the Govt. of India to stand forth as a powerful neighbour and support wholeheartedly the liberation movement and ultimately resolved to request the Govt. of India to deport some refugees to other states of India as the number of refugees in Tripura reached to unbearable position.

Strategically and from the security point of view, Agartala was under grave threat. Lieutenant General J.R.F. Jacob opines. "On the side of Bangladesh, Agartala was vulnerable, with just one garrison of one infantry battalion to project it because of tenuous communications in this region; it would require considerable time to reinforce." Practically, Tripura experienced bitterly the continuous Pak attacks specially in the bordering regions including its capital town, Agartala. The same capital town turned to be a deserted one because a large number of people fled away to save their lives. All these led to the loss of lives, agricultural produce, proper education, health care, welfare activities etc.

The tribal people who resented the entry of Bengali refugees before and after the Bangladesh movement did not hesitate to sympathize with the movement for democracy, secularism etc. So, question arises: why did Tripura take the risk of its very existence in supporting Bangladesh Movement? The statement of the then Chief Minister of Tripura, Sri Sachindralal Singh, in the State Assembly which is mentioned earlier may again be mentioned here for searching the answer of the question raised above. He categorically stated in the State Legislative Assembly: "I may reiterate that we stand for democracy and socialism and we shall condemn any forces that stand in the way of these noble ideals in any part of the World."

But the simple answer can't satisfy all the critics and naturally, raises many questions. So, the answer is to be searched under broad based phenomenon. Another pertinent question arises: why did India support Bangladesh Movement and participate in a dangerous war in the face of stiff resistance from the USA, China and the Arabian countries? The Pak view in this regard, as searched by Shahriar Kabir, a famous columnist, is that India simply utilized the internal problems of Pakistan for dismembering Pakistan. The right-wing communal forces in Bangladesh held India responsible for the domination of 'Hindu India' over Bangladesh and vigorously campaigned that
India was responsible for all the miseries the Bangladesh people are suffering from, opines Maudud Ahmed, a Bangladesh political scholar.\textsuperscript{2}

In the circumstances, Sucheta Ghosh explains both the view points of Pakistan & India and comes to the conclusion that what emerges from the diametrically opposite views and explanations, “is a clear picture of deliberate design on the part of the Indian policy makers to an initial development which was not wholly expected.” In other words, India did not engineer the developments leading to the military crackdown, though India's role was perceived in this light by the Pakistani ruling party.\textsuperscript{3}

So, the role of Tripura in the Liberation Movement of Bangladesh may be seen under the above perspectives.

The other side of the coin is that the people of Tripura expected something more which may be summarised as under: Like the people of Israel, the people of Bangladesh should stand in the world as an independent nation; If democracy and secularism stood successful in Bangladesh, the people irrespective of their religious belief could leave peacefully and movements through Bangladesh would be easier for the people of North-East, specially, for the people of Tripura and vice versa which were prevalent for many years even after the partition of India in 1947. The success of the liberation movement would lead to the improvement in the Indo-Bangladesh Border trade which will enrich the economy of the North East and that of Bangladesh and same will help in reducing the unemployment problem of both the countries. The people of the region hoped for the transit and transshipment through Bangladesh which might have save time and money boosting the small scale or large scale industries in North East India as well as in Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{4}

But it is known to everyone that all expectations would not be or could not be fulfilled in a single stroke; nevertheless, the remark of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman- “I am indebted to Tripura and its Chief Minster, Mr. Singh” or Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina's maiden official visit only in Tripura amongst the Indian States in January, 2012 after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 lead any observer to believe that the development of Indo-Bangladesh relationship vis-a-vis North East states of India will tremendously help Tripura to be a corridor of the business zone of South-East Asia.\textsuperscript{5}

In short, the role of Tripura is witnessed in terms of ‘great sympathizer’; ‘great humanist’ and ‘a great friend to offer its land for military operation’, in the liberation movement of Bangladesh.
The role of Tripura is unique in the liberation movement in comparison to other stakeholders of Bangladesh and other states of India and its neighbouring countries. Firstly, without caring for self-loss, the people of Tripura at large showed great generosity towards the fighters of the liberation movement and its affected masses. Secondly, without any opposition, the people of Tripura, seating in the assembly and the common people on the roads, unitedly supported the liberation movement vis-a-vis democratic movement against Military Junta. This has established a tradition of 'love for democracy and humanity' in the present history of Tripura. Thirdly, Tripura's involvement in the liberation movement and its socio-economic impact was so serious that it paved the ground of indigenous movements in Tripura on the question of demographic debacle and land alienation. It also led to the birth of 'identity question' to some extent in the tribal society of Tripura. Fourthly, Tripura in the liberation movement of Bangladesh establishes the fact that ethnic ties influence the foreign relations and that is true for India and Bangladesh. Tripura became an example of moral supporter due to ethnic relations, in the liberation movement of Bangladesh. Fifthly, unlike the role of neighbouring states, such as West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Bihar, Tripura suffered much more in terms of 'refugee-population'. Lastly, it can be said that the role of Tripura vis-a-vis India in the liberation movement of Bangladesh was complementary and supplementary to each other. In terms of 'humanitarian aid', Tripura proved herself only such tiny state in the
liberation movements of the world and Bangladesh too.

References


