Preface

The Liberation Movement of Bangladesh occupies an important episode in the history of the twentieth century world. The study of Tripura in the context of liberation movement is significant due to its location as a neighbouring foreign state and secondly, it's socio-political and economic relations during pre and post princely days. Before 1947, the policy adopted by the Kings of Tripura facilitated the influx of immigrants from the areas of Bengal. The impact of immigrant settlers can be witnessed in the palacial culture of Tripura and in the administration of State. The recognition of Bengali language and its later development by the Rajas of Tripura and introduction of plough cultivation instead of Jhum cultivation and many more cultural changes in the society created scope for vanishing the barrier of ethnic differences in the state. Baring some occasional 'local revolts', the absence of ethnic tension and cordial inter-regional relations was marked throughout the princely days except some occasions. The dual status of the King of Tripura as the Zamindar of Chakla Roshnabad and the sovereign ruler of Hill Tipperah during British rule made help in the cultivation of economic inter-dependence of the State. The partition of India in 1947 followed by accession of Tripura to the Indian Union on 15 October, 1949, proved a major shift in the growth of inter-regional relations. The emergence of Tripura as a democratic state and its policy to deal with the problems of demographic debacle and other socio-political issues related to East Pakistan, later on, facilitated the convenient situation, for the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971. This is one of the logics behind the selection of the year '1947-1971' A.D. as the thrust period of this research work.

The birth of Pakistan in 1947 on the basis of 'Two Nation Theory' proved to be futile to the people of the eastern wing of Pakistan. The Bengali people of the eastern wing soon realized that their counterpart was not ready to admit their legitimate rights. For the recognition of Bengali as one of the State languages, the people of the eastern wing had to shed blood in front of the Dhaka University on 21 February, 1952. The western wing from the very beginning treated its eastern part as a colony and started to exploit all of the resources. The Headquarters of all the main offices including military as well as financial resources were established in the western wing. The high posts of all governmental sectors were filled up specially by the people from western wing. In the military and in the civil services, Bengalis had little way to sit on the higher levels. Moreover, the people of eastern wing could understand that the military administration of Pakistan would not
allow them the share of administration. As a result, it was seen that almost all the political parties of eastern wing except the Muslim League formed alliance and in the election of 1954 this alliance became majority party defeating the Muslim League which was in alliance with the ruling Military Junta of the western wing. While Ayub Khan assumed the power of Pakistan, he started a reign of terror in Pakistan against which the Awami League started agitation for provincial autonomy on the basis of Six Point Demand in 1966. To curb the popular movement, the leaders specially Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were arrested and detained in the Agartala Conspiracy case in 1968. But it became a boomerang on the part of the Ayub Govt. and he had to surrender his power to another Military man, Mr. Yahya Khan who decided to hold general election in 1970. In the election that followed the Awami League came to be the largest party in all over Pakistan and its President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was supposed to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan. But the Pakistan Govt. under the influence of Z. A. Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party, denied to allow Mujib to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. On the other hand, they unleashed brutal force to suppress the popular movement in East Pakistan on 25 March, 1971. This led to the influx of the refugees into Tripura and other neighbouring states of India like West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya on one hand and on the other, the Liberation Movement in East Pakistan.

Tripura, a tiny state in the north-eastern part of India, situated within 56 miles (roughly 80 kms.) of Dhaka, the Capital of East Pakistan, was moved by the developments in the eastern wing of Pakistan. It received lakhs of Bengali refugees not only from the Partition in 1947 but from the 1930s while communal tension surfaced in the last part of that decade. These refugees (officially 6,09,998 from 1947 to 1971 while the population of Tripura was around 15 lakhs 56 thousand as per 1971 census) were given rehabilitation in the tiny state which made a silent revolution in the demographic profile of Tripura. The Bengalis became superior in all aspects of life which led them to be dominant in politics, socio-economic and cultural life. But they had indirect link with their mother land i.e. East Pakistan. As a result of which we find that the incidents that took place in East Pakistan specially since the Language movement in 1952 stirred the minds of the people of Tripura. Sheikh Mujib, the leader of the Awami League, came to Tripura in 1963 in disguise to judge the possibility of Indian help to the cause of the people of East Pakistan. The leader of the so called 'Sepoy Mutiny' in Pakistan, Commander Muazzam sent his two aides to Agartala in 1967 with the help of a senior officer of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka. This move along with the Movements for Autonomy already started by the Awami League under its popular leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1966 led to the Pak. Govt. to lodge Agartala Conspiracy Case in 1968. We come to know that the intelligentsia of Tripura was not sitting idle on the happenings of their bordering country. They took some move to help their brethren in East Pakistan and finally
with the brutal killings of the Bengalis in East Pakistan on one hand and the commencement of
Liberation Movement on the other, the people of Tripura with the people of India specially of West
Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya supported the movement wholeheartedly and sheltered at least 16
lakhs of refugees on its soil while its own population was around 15 lakhs and 56 thousands only
in 1971.

Long before the inception of Bangladesh in December, 1971, Tripura with its simple economic
infrastructure and with both Bengali & Non-Bengali-speaking people was instrumental in extending
its helping hand towards the people of erstwhile East Pakistan fighting against their West Pakistani
counter-part. Most of the leader of Bangladesh Movement passed to other parts of India and the
world through Tripura. The embryo of the Bangladesh Government in exile was formed at Agartala.
As a result, the economy of Tripura got shattered, price of the commodities had been hiked
tremendously. The education system of the State got disrupted. But no anti-liberation movement is
traced in Tripura. The cultural activists, the political leaders and workers, teachers and students,
the press, the intelligentsia, the doctors & nurses, advocates, NGOs and above all, the women
folks came together to shoulder the pains of the sufferers of East Pakistan. The Tribal people,
obviously their mother tongue was not Bengali, did not hesitate to come forward for the cause of
the Bengalis of the plain land. The Hindus came out for the Muslims and vice-versa which created
a silent social revolution in Tripura.

The study of Tripura in the liberation movement of Bangladesh is very significant in framing
the historical background of the origin of the new nation. The birth of Bangladesh as a nation
affected the socio- cultural and economic health of Tripura and one of the sensitive issues like
extremist problem of the region is sometimes linked with it and that implies the role of scholar to
analyse the facts in the light of archival records and living testimonies, available in and around us,
in a fresh manner. This will also help in building the confidence among the people of the region
whose cultural and economic bond are more historical than the geo-Political changes that have
separated them in the form of nation-state. While appreciating the role of India in the birth of
Bangladesh, the role of tiny state like Tripura, does not get proper space and this work will usher
a scope for filling up such gap and in this way, the history of the region will be written on the basis
of information so far unexplored and unheeded.

These historic activities of Tripura, as mentioned above, have not been evaluated at length at
anywhere - neither in Bangladesh nor in India. The Government of the Peoples Republic of
Bangladesh published Documents for Liberation Movements in XVI Volumes in 1984 and out of
these Volumes, Vol. No. XII is marked for Indian reaction. While in this Volume, West Bengal has been given utmost importance, the contribution of Tripura has been utterly neglected. Some books both from Bangladesh and from India were published which try to uphold the contribution of Tripura towards the cause of Bangladesh but these do not present the complete historical facts.

The birth of Bangladesh, being a nascent event of the region, contains innumerable literature in the form of human experience which is manifested in the diaries, memoirs, letters, articles, pamphlets, poems and several oral records etc., besides government records which is found in the archives of India and Bangladesh. While emphasizing the contribution of India in the liberation movement of Bangladesh, the Tripura Chapter finds no proper place in the writings of the scholars of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The monumental documents entitled "History of Bangladesh War of Independence" in XVI Volumes of Hassan Hafizur Rahman(ed.), published from the Ministry of Information, Government Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka (1984), justifies India's contribution in the freedom struggle of Bangladesh. The State of West Bengal has been duly acknowledged but the State of Tripura, located in the eastern fringe of the territory, gets meager reference in the entire documents. Similarly, "Bangaladesher Aithhasik Sangram O Muktiuddha: Prasangik Dalil Patra" of Rabindranath Trivedi (published from Jatiya Grantha Prakashani, Dhaka, 1998); "Dusho Chheshatti Dine Swadinata" of Mohammad Nurul Kader; "Bangladesh Itihas" (1947-70) of Dr. Mahabubur Rahman and "Bangaladesher Mukti Yuddha" of Asad Choudhury(published from Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 2000) are very important sources of literature on this topic but the contribution of Tripura has been ignored by them in the assessment of their liberation story.

There are some valuable works done by the scholars of Bangladesh, which vividly touches the significance of the tiny state like Tripura in their freedom struggle in a partial way. Mention may be made of "Muktiyuddha Kush" (in V volumes) of Muntsir Mamoon (ed.), being published from Samay Prakashani, Dhaka (February, 2005), enlists around 41 lines on Tripura. The article of Anil Bhattacharya (famous press reporter of Tripura), entitled "Banglanesher Muktiyuddha", finds space in the edited volume of Sohrav Hasan, "Bangladesh Muktiyuddhey Bideshider Bhumika", Maula Brothers, Dhaka (2000). "Bangladesh Liberation War: Mujibnagar Government: Documents, 1971", Maula Brothers, Dhaka (2005) of Sukumar Biswas (ed.) shows that Agartala situated 56 miles east of Dhaka played a crucial role in some of the important events of Bangladesh war of independence. The book of Haroon Habib, "Muktiyuddha: Dateline Agartala" (published from Jatiya Sahitya Prakashani, Dhaka, 1992) is a living account of information about what Agartala
and its people did for the success of the Liberation Movement of Bangladesh. He admits that Agartala became Military Capital of Liberation Movement as well as dateline of all News Agencies of India and that of the world also. "Muktiyuddhey Tripurar Sambadar Patrer Bhumika" written by Dr. Abul Azad (published from Writers' Foundation, Dhaka, 2004) depicts the role of newspapers published from Tripura in arousing the mental strength of the freedom fighters of Bangladesh. The book entitled "Bangladesher Swadhinata Yuddhe Bampanthider Bhumika" of Mezbah Kamal (ed.) narrates the role of CPM party of Tripura led by Sri Nripen Chakraborty.


The significance of other countries like China, Soviet Union, USA and India in the freedom struggle of Bangladesh has been manifested in the writings of Prof. Salahuddin Ahemed and others (ed.), "Bangladesh Mukti Sangramer Itihas (1947-1970)", being published from Aagami Prakashan, Dhaka, 2002. Mazharul Islam accepts the contribution of Indian political activities and that of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the book entitled "Bangabandhu Muktiyuddha O Onnanya" (published from Aagami Prakashni, Dhaka). The narration of refugee life at Sabroom, Radio system of the refugees (Swadin Bangla Betar at Agartala) is found in the book entitled "Aamar Akattar", written by Anisuzzaman (published from Sahtiya Prakash, Dhaka, 1997). Similarly Rokeya Choudhury explains the refugee life as well as medical arrangements at Agartala in her book "Akattarer Ghurnabortey Chaar Konnya" (published from Samragni Prakashani, 2001). All the above scholars of Bangladesh hardly construct any hypothesis where the contribution of Tripura in the liberation movement of Tripura can be viewed in its entirety.

Siddik Salik in his book "Witness to Surrender" Published by Oxford University press gave
Pakistani view on the liberation movement of Bangladesh.


The main objective of this research work is to highlight the various events which occurred in Tripura and which were directly or indirectly related to the liberation movement of Bangladesh. In this regard, the record of the various steps of the Government of Tripura as well as the people of Tripura (both Tribal & Non Tribal) in sheltering about 16 lacs of refugees has been dealt comprehensively. How was the soil of Tripura used for the training of Mukti Fouz, Muktiyoddhas and the base of Military operations in the vast canvas of Indo- Pak Relations has been taken as a major thrust in this work? Sincere effort is made to find the answer of the following pertinent questions. Why did the leaders of the Bangladesh movement regard Agartala as their Military Capital; why did Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the leader of Awami League, come to Agartala in 1963 and what was the result? The contribution of Tripura has been dealt in the light of the role of Press, political parties, social activists; tribal people are also taken into account. Lastly, the impact of liberation movement in the society, polity, economy and cultural contour of the State is studied thoroughly. This study shows the Indo-Pak relations vis-a-vis Tripura.

The present study is empirical in nature and descriptive in analysis. Data for the said purpose are collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include survey of all contemporary private narratives in the form of letters, memoirs, books, poems, photographs, pamphlets, etc which relates to the freedom movement of Bangladesh. All available archival materials in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, Bangladesh National Archives, Dhaka; West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, State Archives, Govt. of Tripura, Agartala have been consulted for the data relating to the policies and programmes of the Government. Besides, interview methods is applied to capture the ground reality of the issue. Tools like questionnaires and Schedule
are used. Respondents of around 100 have been selected on a random basis from cross sectional population of Tripura and Bangladesh. Secondary sources consist of relevant literature. For the consultation of secondary sources in the form of books, rare documents, periodicals and journals, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, National Library, Kolkata, Dhaka University Library, Dhaka, NEHU library, Shillong, Tripura University Library, Birchandra state Central Libray, Agartala, Library of Tripura Lesislative Asembly, Agartala, vanious College Libraries at Agartala etc. have been consulted.

For the convenience of study, the research plan has been divided into following chapters.

Chapter I : In this Chapter the historical background of the emergence of Bangladesh in relation to Tripura has been discussed. The land and people of Tripura and East Pakistan have been thoroughly studied and the importance of the period has been highlighted.

Chapter II : The second Chapter deals with the study of chorological events that occurred in the neighbouring territories. Here, the arrival of Mujibur Rahman at Agartala as well as Conspiracy case have been discussed in detailed manner.

Chapter III : The third Chapter deals with the following aspects: Military Crackdown on 25th March ’71 in East Pakistan; Influx of refugees into Tripura: Arrangement of Shelters, food, health care etc. Formation of Bangladesh Govt. in exile at Agartala; Organization of Mukti Fauz: Operation from Tripura. Organization of Muktiyuddha: Operation from Tripura; Tripura as a base of Military Operation.

Chapter IV : This Chapter covers the reaction of India towards the refugees; the political and the other leaders' visit to Tripura; reaction of International Organizations and other nations (like Russia, America, China ), Senator Kennedy’s is visit to Tripura, Sadruddin Agha Khan’s visit to Tripura. The fourth Chapter is designed to show Tripura as an International focal point while on the repeated request of the Govt. and opposition of Tripura, the leaders of Govt. of India, International organization like UNO visited Tripura; Bangladesh became an international issue while big power began to intervene in the crisis. Agartala became dateline for whole World News Agencies.

Chapter V : This Chapter emphasizes Refugee Rehabilitation in Tripura, Response of MPs and MLAs of Tripura, Role of press, NGOs and freelance photography, Response from students, teachers and cultural activists, Response from the Tribal people of Tripura, The women of Tripura
in action. The fifth chapter centers around the response of the people of Tripura such as students, teachers, employees, cultural activists, doctors, nurses, advocates, press and reporters, press photographers, Tribal People and women of Tripura.

Chapter VI: Efforts have been made in chapter six to evaluate the impact of Liberation Movement on transport and communication, sufferings in the border regions (Agartala, Sonamura, Khowai, Kailasahar, Kamalpur, Dharmanagar), education of Tripura, economy of the State, change in polity- growth of extremist movement, culture and literature, Indo- Bangladesh relations with special reference to Tripura.

Chapter VII: All the Chapters have been briefed in the form of conclusion which forms chapter VII and it narrates the contribution of Tripura in the Liberation Movement of Bangladesh.