CHAPTER - IX
NON TINAS PROBLEM

The British govt. formed the line system in Assam. The main intension of the line system was to protect the indigenous Assamese and prevent conflict between the mymensingias and the poor indigenous people like the Kacharis and the Lalungs.¹

But the Bordoloi govt. could not decide on this matters for a period of 20 months, the govt. dissolved on 4th November '1939 and accepted the line system. The next sadulla govt. was not satisfied and opened up the line system. From that time the mymensingias Muslim became to live and occupy the tribal belts and blocks. It was a great treat to the indigenous tribal people of Assam. Not only the muslims but also the Assamese caste Hindus began to live in the tribal areas. Gradually the caste Hindu began to exploit the tribals in all aspects of life. The caste Hindus began to guide the illeterate and innocent tribals. They were the guiding class of Tribal society. They dominated the tribal society and compelled them to learn the Assamese language. This non-tribal Assamese class participated in politics and they became the policy makers of the state. Thus the caste Hindu Assamese class began to exploit the tribals politically. They gradually purchased their land at cheaper price.

¹ (A century of Govt. of politics - by Rao V.V. page - 154)
The tribal areas in Assam remained pockets of greater backwardness. By the pressure of non-tribal population, the population of the tribal areas began to increase and poverty compelled the tribesmen to give up their original home and land and move elsewhere, the tribal concentrations became dispersed and they perceived a threat to their 'identity'. Through the Assam land Revenue Regulations provided for setting up tribal belts and blocks in the tribal majority areas where non tribals would not be entitled to possess or acquire land, actually the alienation of tribes from their lands went on, uncontrolled.

The Assamese society in tribal areas is facing a serious political situation by many tribal groups. It is very interesting to note that these tribal groups, who earlier used to view themselves as integral parts of Assamese society, are now following a familiar pattern of cultural revivalism manifesting itself in demand for political autonomy, protection of linguistic and cultural rights. Almost invariably the struggles launched by these tribal groups are being led by some educated elites.

The powerful movement launched by some tribal groups for the protection of their ethnic identities and the creation of a congenial atmosphere for their
development created a serious problem for the central as well as state govt. to take a positive step.

From our historical experiences it is reasonable to argue that while cultural or ethnic affinity may often lead to political unity the opposite process is rather now in operation. In the present juncture the cultural factors facilitating emergence of national feeling of oneness have assumed greater importance.

The Assamese middle class started pressing for recognition of Assamese as the official and the regional language and forced the govt. impose the Assamese script over all communities in Assam. As a result all ethnic groups protested against such an undemocratic role of the Assamese middle class. The Bodo, Karbi, Mishing and Tiwa resists the Assamese hegemony for protection of their cultural heritage.

The primary cause of deteriorating economic condition of the tribal people is land alienation, the common problem of all tribals of Assam. The Tiwa of Morigaon and Naviyaon also are facing this problem. I surveyed several villages of Gova, tetelia, Ghoqua and some villages of Sonapur Mauza. In these Mauzas, the non-tribal people occupied the land by purchasing at lower prices.
by lending money and under mortgage deal. These non-tribals are the employees of Railways, ASER Assam Spun Silk Mill, H.P.C. and Assam politex limited. Most of these people belong to the Assamese high caste and Hindu Bengali. On the other hand some Marawary businessmen, and Bengali Businessmen besides original Rich and other caste Hindus have also usurped tribal lands. The tribal belts and blocks have failed to protect the rights of the tribals. The tribal people under acute financial hardship used to approach the Marawari or the Hindu Bengali businessmen for money. The businessmen lent money to them to be repaid in kind i.e. paddy the value of which far exceeded the borrowed money. Sometimes the non-tribal village Mahajans offer loan to the poor tribals who mortgaged their land for it. The Mahajans occupied and cultivate the land and reap the entire benefit. By this process the tribal land alienated from the tribals to the nontribals. In the Sonapur area, most of the non-tribals of Guwahati, occupied the tribal land through deception. The tribal people of Sonapur alleged the misdeeds of the land burger non-tribals of Guwahati city. These people wanted only land. G.C. Sarmah Thakur has also mentioned that the lalungs living in Morigaon ITDP areas were economically depressed. They were the most vulnerable section of the people to day in so far as possession of agricultural land
was concerned. This state of affairs happened after
independence when large scale immigrants entered in to the
district of undivided Nawgaon. These immigrants at first
occupied the most in accessible areas and the local
inhabitants had not much to grumble. But as time passed the
flow of outsiders increased. The simple tribal folks became
victims of multifarious strategies of these immigrants. As
a result the indigenous tribals lost most of their
valuable agricultural lands.  

Thus lands in the Tiwa tribal inhabited areas
of Morigaon, Nawgaon and Sonapur area of Kamrup district,
the tribal belts and blocks have been occupied by the non-
tribals. Though the special privision has been made for the
protection of the belts and the blocks. But no special laws
have been enacted to protect the tribal belts and blocks.
This has encouraged the non-tribals to grab the tribal land. The awareness of fraudulent occupation of tribal lands has caused conflicts between the tribals and non-tribals. The tribals have now demanded to restrict the transfer of land of tribal area to outsiders. It has been a very forceful demand of tribal people of NEP against exploitation by more advanced people from the plains. This demand may serve to protect the tribals from economic exploitation by the non-tribal people.

2* (Alienation of tribal land and indebtedness - edited by
Bordoloi - page 103.)
However, the persistent movement of the lalungs from 1967 ultimately resulted in the signing of the lalung accord on April 13, 1995. The accord has given them the lalung autonomous council from 27th July 1995. The non-tribals did not participate in the mass movement demanding autonomy. Now, those non-tiwas who have occupied immovable property like land have became worried by the fear of losing their property.

Of course the Accord does not have provisions that would cause concern in the minds of the non-tribals. The accord has clearly mentioned that the govt. and the council shall ensure that the rights and interests of the non-tribals and the non-tiwas living in the council areas shall be protected in matters of land, Industry, trade and commerce. The future would of course determine the true relationship between the Tiwas and the non-Tiwas. From the date of effect of the accord, any kinds of transfer of land to the non-tribals within the council area will be stopped. The existing law may be considered by the council after amendment of the clause X of the land Revenue Act.

On the other hand, out of total 30 seats in the council, 15 seats shall be reserved for lalungs, community and other 15 seats for the other non-lalungs including other tribals. So, all the non-lalungs will have also equal representation to the lalung Autonomous council. Similarly, every village autonomous council shall consist of...
of 10 members of which 5 shall be reserved only for Lalung community and other 5 shall be for non-lalungs.

Mr. Nadi Ram Deuri, the member of the Lalung autonomous council and one of the signatories of the accord told me that the land Record Authority of Assam already scrutinised and identified the villages of Lalung autonomous council areas for the inclusion in autonomous council, in Morigaon, Navgaon and Sonapur of Couroup district.

I had put questions to Mr. Rimal Arne, the leader of the ATSU, regarding non-Tiwas problems. He clearly expressed his view. He told me that they emphasized on peace, unity and prosperity amongst all Tiwas and non-Tiwas from the very beginning. They demanded round development and progress of both the non-Tiwas and non-tribals along with the Tiwas within the jurisdiction of the proposed autonomous areas. They were finding out the proper and effective solution on the sphere of some economic and political problems of the Tiwas along with the non-Tiwas and non-tribal people. So, at the very inception of their struggle, they clearly declared their principle on the status and rights of the people of both the Tiwas and non-Tiwas also will be preserved and protected. Nobody can obstruct the non-Tiwas and
tribals from enjoying the justiciable political right. They demanded equally the fulfilment of the aspirations of other communities also.

The ATSU clearly expressed their principle that though it would be the name of Tiwa autonomous council but in practice it would be the autonomy of the tribals and the downtrodden people. They should not be deprived of their rights and status. Their autonomy would be for the downtrodden and the exploited irrespective of caste and religion. They emphasised on secularism under the Indian constitution. They alleged that according to the provisions of the Indian constitution, they have not been granted autonomy. They have been demanding to the govt. to discuss the entire problems of the autonomous area for proper solution and for protection of civil and all constitutional rights of all the communities. They have been demanding progress and prosperity to all tribals and non-tribals till now. The ATSU have been demanding not to keep provision for reservation, there should be equal representation of the Tiwas and the non-Tiwas within the autonomous council.

The ATSU leaders believe that the government has been playing a political game with all exploited eves. 
So they argued very cautiously and suggested to the government and autonomy committee to enact the necessary law before granting the tiwa autonomy. They suggested that there should be preserved all the rights of the non-tiwas and non-tribals and should have provisions for equal representation in the autonomous council.

So, as far as the non-tiwa's problem is concerned, ATSU's stand is quite right. Because if there is provision of equal representation of both the Tiwas and non-tiwas no one will be deprived of any right and there will be no clash between the Tiwas and the non-Tiwas. But in the "so called Tiwa autonomy" there are possibilities of clashes between the Tiwas and the non-Tiwas. The "so called Tiwa autonomy" has been granted on the basis of percentage of population. The autonomy which has been granted on the basis of population will never bring the permanent solution. The problem will remain permanently. Because the Tiwa people being less than 50% or very few may desire to remain with the autonomous council, but the non-tiwas may not desire to remain with the council. Then the Tiwa people though they are less than non-Tiwas will try to evict the non-Tiwas, from their tribal belts and blocks, then there must be clashes between the tiwas and non-tiwas. There is nothing to be surprised, because all these are happening in the areas of Bodo land council.
These are the causes of clashes between the Bodo and the non-Bodos in that area.

On the other hand, the non-Tiwas also have not organised up till now. But they are in confusion for their fate. Under the Bodo land autonomous council, the non-Bodos, in the Karbi Anglong the non-Karbis, are organised for protection of their rights. In the Bodo land, all the Bodo inhabited areas have not been under the Bodo autonomous council. That was the only cause of clashes between the Bodo and the non-Bodos. The Bodo people demanded the inclusion of all the Bodo populated areas. The Bodo people which were less than the non-Bodo villages desired to remain within the Bodo autonomous council. But the govt. have not given any importance. On that reason the Bodo people have attacked the non-Bodos and killed many non-Bodos. Ultimately, they have demanded independent Bodo land. They have gradually got insecurity to the non-Bodo in the BAC area. They have written on the walls "non Bodos go back", "Bodo land is only for Bodos". The ATSU thinks that the same undesirable happenings will be repeated in the so-called Tiwa autonomous region also.

Therefore, it is not wise to consider autonomous on the percentage basis alone while granting it to the
Tiwas. To avoid the unfortunate conflicts between the Tiwas and non-Tiwas it is very much essential to include all the tribal belts and blocks, and all the villages of T.S.P. area within the Lalung autonomous council. The tribal belts and blocks have been created for the protection and preservation of the tribal land and people. It is the duty and responsibility of the government to protect and preserve the same. The tribal people are not responsible for that. The tribal people are not obstructing the non-tribals in the tribal belts and blocks, rather they are living and maintaining fraternity. In the type of real autonomy, the non-Tiwas will have little cause for concern because they will have the equal representation without any reservation, and will be preserved with socio-economic and political rights and status. In the process, it can be hoped that prosperity and progress will come to all communities within the jurisdiction of the autonomous council.

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