CHAPTER VIII

THE JHUMIA SETTLEMENT SCHEME

6.1 Scheme in Operation

The foremost scheme for the welfare of the jhumias of Tripura has been to wean them away from practising shifting cultivation and settling them on land to do plough cultivation. In an earlier chapter, we have seen that the idea of settling jhumias is quite old. In fact, the Maharaja initiated such a scheme long back in 1888. The progress was slow initially, but by 1931, most of the Jhumia tribals and many among other jhumias tribes had adopted settled cultivation. In 1931 and then again in 1943, the Maharaja of Tripura had reserved vast tracts of land for the purpose of settling some of the jhumia tribes.

The period between 1940-50 has been very trying for Tripura. During the War years, there was a tribal rebellion in the Hills. Some people in Tripura believe that the root cause of the rebellion was the miserable plight of the Riangas. They were not treated equally with the 'Tripura' tribe; also they paid a higher rate of House Tax than others. There was near famine condition in the hill areas of Tripura. Bazars were looted and businessmen were robbed of their merchandise. In 1355 T.E. (1945-46 A.D.), the Maharaja appointed a Special Committee, with Thakur Jitendrachandra
Debbarma as the convener, to inquire into "the undesirable situation among the Khangs and to suggest means for the establishment of peace and discipline amongst them, which alone can bring moral, social and economic prosperity in a community". 1 Since 1946 - the time of the Great Noakhali Riot - the Hindu refugees had started pouring in Tripura. Also, after the Partition, all road communications to Tripura were lost to Pakistan. In 1949, Tripura was integrated with the Indian Union. Almost simultaneously, there erupted an active Communist movement in the hill areas of the State. The law and order was in jeopardy and the life and security of non-tribals was threatened. Under the circumstances, the Administration had to face a very difficult task of pacifying the tribals. In fact, the situation deteriorated so much that the Census of 1951 had to keep some of the troubled areas outside its consideration. However, the Movement was brought under control by 1951. It was well realised by everybody concerned that the hill people needed an immediate solution to their problems.

It was in this background that the new scheme for Jhumia settlement started in the year 1953-54. The Administration approached the Jhumias with the promise of giving cultivable land in the plains and also giving money-grant

1 The Tripura State Gazette, 31st Bhadra, 1355 T.S.
for the purchase of bullocks and other equipment for plough cultivation. All cultivable waste land under the ownership of the Government was earmarked for distribution mainly among the Jhumias and the Refugees. In the year 1956-57, it was further decided that instead of giving stray settlement to the jhumias here and there, wherever possible, a group of shifting cultivators could be settled together in a colony. The possibility of setting up a colony was therefore obviously limited by the availability of obtaining enough of plain land in one place. But there were advantages of making a colony in that the Jhumias could be provided with medical, educational and water facilities. A supervisor could also be posted to look into the practical day-to-day difficulties of the Jhumias. Table 8.1 shows the yearwise progress of Jhumia settlement in Tripura under the new Jhumia Settlement Scheme undertaken by the Government since 1953-54.

It will be seen from Table 8.1 that 5,613 out of 18,231 families settled upto the Third Plan period are settled in colonies. This means that 30.79 per cent of those settled are in the colonies and the rest 69.21 per cent of the Jhumias have been given stray allotments. Out of the persons given settlement in the Second Plan period, 2,850 are in the colonies and 8,037 are outside. But in the Third Plan period, the colonies have accommodated more of the jhumias - while 2,239 families are living outside,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of colonies established</th>
<th>No. of families settled in the colonies</th>
<th>No. of families settled otherwise</th>
<th>Total No. of families settled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>313</td>
<td></td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,982</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total First Plan</strong></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,342</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2,342</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2,160</td>
<td>2,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>2,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>1,892</td>
<td>2,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>1,696</td>
<td>1,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,415</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>1,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Second Plan</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,850</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,037</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,887</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>1,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>1,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>1,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Third Plan</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,763</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,239</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,002</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,613</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,618</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,231</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source*: Tribal Welfare Office, Agartala.
2,763 families are living within the colonies. According to the Government, at the end of Third Plan, more than 18,000 families out of 27,000 jhumias are settled, which means that only about 9,000 people still remain to be settled.\(^2\)

The figure of actual number of jhumia families paying House Tax is given in Table 8.2. It can be seen that at the end of 1963-64, there were more than 42,000 families in the House Tax Register. This means that in the year 1963-64, more than 42,000 families participated in jhum cultivation. Hence, it seems that the estimated figure of the Government, which puts the number of jhumia families at 27,000, needs to be revised.

Table 8.2: Number of Families Paying House Tax between 1959-60 and 1963-64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Families paying House Tax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>43,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>46,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>46,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>42,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>42,034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source*: Office of the A.D.M. (Revenue), Agartala.

One reason why the estimated figure of jhumia families may not tally with the number of payees of House Tax is that the definition of jhumia in the two cases is not the same. For the purposes of House Tax, any tribal doing shifting cultivation is liable to tax. But the mere act of shifting cultivation does not make a tribal eligible for land and grant. Another reason may be that many jhumias, who were allotted land by the Government, still practise shifting cultivation. Thus their names enter both the lists and it cannot be taken for granted that a person paying House Tax is not an allotted jhumia. Again, some of the jhumias settled by the Government have deserted their settlements and have reverted to shifting cultivation.

For the purposes of the administration of the scheme, the jhumia was defined in the year 1956 as one who depends entirely on jhuming and does not own any land whatsoever. Later the rigour of this definition was modified. In 1959 it was said that a tribal whose main source of livelihood is shifting cultivation may be regarded as a jhumia, provided he can produce the House Tax cheque. With the passing of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Allotment of Land) Rules in 1962, the definition of a jhumia is given as follows.

---


The Jhumia means a person (i) whose parents were at any time engaged in jhum cultivation, and (ii) who has been personally doing jhum cultivation for a period of not less than one year immediately before he applies for allotment of land, (iii) derives his livelihood mainly from jhum cultivation, and (iv) does not hold as raiyat land exceeding one standard acre in area. At present, the above definition is followed.

After the selection of the jhumia is done, he is offered land and money grants. There has been some changes from time to time in the quantum of land made available to the jhumia. Before 1962, each jhumia used to get three to five acres of land. But under the Provisions of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Allotment of Land) Rules, 1962 the total area held by any allottee should not exceed two standard acres i.e., either two acres of plain land or six acres of hill land.

The allotted land is generally of the culturable-waste type. The jhumia is expected to reclaim the land properly.

---


and start plough cultivation within a year of the receipt of money grant (see the Application Form for Settlement in the Appendix). Each jhumia gets an amount of five hundred rupees. In the initial years of operation of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme, Rs. 300/- was paid at the time of allotting land and the balance after partial reclamation was done. Over years the disbursements were tightened because it was found that many of the jhumias did not spend money on agricultural equipment and bullocks, but used the amount for consumption. In 1959, it was decided that the first installment of Rs. 300/- should be paid only when part of the land was reclaimed. The second installment was to be paid (i) after the full reclamation of all land was done, (ii) at least half of the area was put to cultivation and (iii) the jhumia owned himself a pair of bullocks or a buffalo for agricultural uses.

Until the year 1956, the Settlement Scheme was administered under the supervision of the District Magistrate. During those years, the work of allotment of land and the settlement of revenue went hand in hand. Individual Khatianas (record of right) were opened in the name of the allottees jhumias and they received occupancy right in the allotted

---


land at once. Rent was fixed at about Rs. 1.56 per acre per year and no nasarana was charged for land upto four acres. But this policy had some undesired effects. Many jhumias were prompt in applying for allotment, but no sooner they had obtained jote right in the allotted land, they sold it to others. The continuous stream of refugees from East Pakistan provided them with a good market for land. In 1958, a new condition was imposed to prevent the occurrence of such events. While settling land with the jhumias, a new clause in the contract was to be agreed upon to ensure that the land of the allottee was not sold without the prior permission of the Government. "This restriction is being imposed to ensure that people once settled do not claim settlement second time, and permanent cultivation in fact takes place." In another year, further improvements were made in the scheme. It was said that the allottees should receive jote right only after the complete area was reclaimed and the cultivation actually begun by the jhumia. "He may be charged no rent during the first year and a quit rent during the second year of his possession. From the third year onwards, he shall have to pay full rent." A specific


condition of settlement would be ineligibility of transfer within 10 years of possession. Penalty for transfer might be (a) the recovery of grant from the jhumia, and (b) the resumption of allotted land.

The problem of land transfer was assuming such a dimension that the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 made special provisions for the Scheduled Tribes. According to the Act, no transfer of land by a person who is a member of the Scheduled Tribes shall be valid unless:

(a) the transfer is to another member of the Scheduled Tribes; or

(b) where the transfer is to a person who is not a member of any such tribe, it is made with the previous permission, in writing, of the Collector; or

(c) the transfer is by way of mortgage to a Co-operative Society.  

In consonance with the above-mentioned Act and Rules, the Settlement Department decided not to give jote right to the allottee jhumia within ten years from the date of allotment. It started opening Departmental Khatian in the name of the Tribal Welfare Department itself instead of opening individual Khatians in the name of the allottee jhumia. In 1962, the payment of nesanana by a Jhumia was stopped.  

---


But even with all the above-mentioned steps to curb it the menace of land transfer has been haunting the Administration. In 1964, it was noted once again that the "non-tribals are making unauthorized entry into the Tribal Colonies and taking over possession of the vacant Government land as well as the land settled with the tribal families by the Government on the pretext of their hypothecation or sale," although, "every inch of land of a tribal colony is under the direct possession of the Government through the Tribal Welfare Wing of the Sub-Divisional Administration and as such any unauthorized entry into any part of the colony eventually amounts to nothing short of a criminal trespass and the intruder is liable to be criminally prosecuted u/s 447 I.P.C. The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act has also very clearly barred the transfer of any land through sale or hypothecation by a tribal to a non-tribal without the prior permission of the Collector."15

Against the above-mentioned odds, the Government is pursuing the Scheme for Jhumia Settlement. The extent of land allotment and expenditure incurred is shown in Table 8.3.

It can be seen from Table 8.3 that during the whole course of operation of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme (upto 1967-68), 20,842 families have been settled. On an average

---

15 Memo No. 10132-72/X-(2)/Tw/SDO/KLS/64 of 22nd December, 1964.
Table 6.3: Allotment of Land and Expenditure Incurred in the Jhumia Settlement Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>No. of families settled</th>
<th>Total land allotted (acres)</th>
<th>Expenditure involved (Rs.)</th>
<th>Average per family allotment of land (acres)</th>
<th>Average per family money expended (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Plan</td>
<td>2,342</td>
<td>8,356</td>
<td>9,45,000</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>403.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Plan</td>
<td>10,887</td>
<td>47,141</td>
<td>40,25,400</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>369.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Plan</td>
<td>5,002</td>
<td>16,751</td>
<td>26,73,100</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>534.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Plans</td>
<td>2,611</td>
<td>5,322</td>
<td>11,43,800</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>438.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1966-67 and 1967-68)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20,842</td>
<td>77,570</td>
<td>87,87,300</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>421.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tribal Welfare Office, Agartala.

Each family has received 3.72 acres including homestead land and the total money expended on an average is 421.62 rupees per family, including the administrative expenditure. The average per family land allotment has gone down over the years, but the money expenditure has been more in later years than what it used to be in the initial years of the scheme. In fact, each family is supposed to get a money grant of Rs. 500. But because many among the allottee jhumias did not reclaim the allotted land, neither did they adopt settled cultivation wholeheartedly, they were ineligible to get the second instalment of the grant.
8.2 Proposed Schemes

At the end of the Third Plan, 9,000 jhumia families (according to the Government estimate) remain to be settled. But, while formulating an approach to the jhumia problem for the purposes of the Fourth Plan, it has been observed that not much of plough-cultivable waste land is left in Tripura. Consequently, it will not be possible to settle the remaining jhumia families on plain land. It has, therefore, been decided to revise the pattern of jhumia settlement under the following two schemes.

(a) Jhumia Rehabilitation Colonies on Flat Hill-land: These colonies will be about 30 in number and each of them will consist of at least 200 families. Each family will be allotted 10 acres of flat hill land for cultivation and 0.10 acre for homestead. They are supposed to reclaim the allotted land within about three months. The reclamation work will include not only forest clearance, but also earth work such as ramming, dressing and bunding etc. During the period of reclamation work, each family will be paid a grant of Rs. 450.00 in instalments. This amount will enable the settlers not only to maintain themselves during the period but also to engage a few labourers for expediting the reclamation work. After reclamation work is completed, each family

will be given the following grants for starting the cultivation work:

1. Purchase of bullocks Rs. 250.00
2. Purchase of paddy/jute seeds Rs. 60.00
3. Purchase of agricultural implements Rs. 50.00
4. Purchase of fertilisers Rs. 30.00
5. Horticulture plants and grafts etc. Rs. 60.00

Total Rs. 450.00

It may happen that an allottee does not complete the reclamation work of the entire land before the first cultivation season starts. In that case, the grant for purchase of bullocks will be given only when he completes the reclamation work of at least half of the allotted land. The grant for seeds, fertilisers, grafts and plants will also be made on the basis of the land to be brought under cultivation. The whole idea is that the grant should be released keeping in view the progress made by the allottee. It is also proposed to pay a subsistence allowance of Rs. 50.00 per month to each family for six months before the first crop is harvested. Besides, each family will be given a grant of Rs. 200.00 for the construction of a dwelling house. The total expenditure per family will then be:
as is shown in the above, Rs. 1,400 per family.

(b) Controlled Jhum Colonies:— If 6,000 families are provided for under the above scheme, there will remain about 3,000 families to be settled. Most of these families live in the deep interior on steep hills where the degree of slope is about 45 and therefore the scope for permanent cultivation even by terracing and contour-bunding is very limited. Such tracts may be seen in areas south of Anandabazar in Kanchanpur Police Station, south of Chowmanu in Manu Police Station, the entire Ganganagar area in Teliassura Police Station, eastern sector of Gandacherra Police Station and many other parts of the territory. The hillocks available in such tracts are generally suitable for horticulture and such crops as Lichi, Jackfruit, Guava, Pineapple, Papaya, Banana, etc. As it takes a long time for horticulture to develop, Jhuming is likely to continue in these areas. It is, therefore, proposed to establish Controlled Jhum Colonies in these areas, where tribals will be allowed to do jhum on scientific lines so as to cause minimum soil
erosion, loss of soil fertility and destruction of forest wealth.

A Controlled Jhum Colony will consist of about 50 families and it is proposed to have about 20 such colonies to accommodate 1,000 jhumias in all. At present, the tribals in the aforesaid areas are living in small hamlets consisting of 10 to 12 houses. Three or four of such hamlets will be brought together to form a colony. An area of about 2,500 acres will be demarcated around the colony within which the tribals will be permitted to carry on Jhuming under strict supervision of a colony supervisor. The Supervisor will divide the area into about 250 Jhum plots measuring four acres each. Each inmate of the colony will be allotted one plot for Jhuming every year by the Supervisor in consultation with the Village Committee. The allotment of plots will be strictly in rotation so that each plot once put under jhuming will be left fallow for a period of five years. The individual family will clear the plots allotted to them in the months of February and March. While felling the forests, they will mark out the fire-lines, so that when it is set to fire, the neighbouring forest areas are not affected. Fire will be set to the forest clearings in the month of April. Then, after the first showers of rain, seeds of paddy, cotton, sesame, maize and vegetables will be sown as is done under usual shifting cultivation practices. Weeding operations will be carried once in every
month. Paddy will be harvested in August and September, and
cotton and sesamum in the months of November and December.

At the time of sowing paddy etc., the inmates will
also sow suitable leguminous crops such as Arhar, Cow-pea
or Black gram in the Jhum plots. These crops will soon
form a green cover over the soil and thereby prevent soil
erosion. It will also add to soil fertility and provide
additional food to the tribals. As stated above, a plot
once jhumed will not be put under jhuming for a period of
five years. During this period, however, the inmates will
be encouraged to sow ordinary species of roots and tubers
in these plots, which will be of use in the scarcity period.

Simultaneously, horticulture will be introduced in
the area according to a phased programme. Each family will
be allotted about six acres of land near their homestead to
be put under such crops as Lichi, Guava, Jackfruit, with
interculture of Pineapple, Papaya, Banana, Ginger and
Turmeric. Each family will be given grant of Rs. 62.50 per
acre for reclamation. Cash grant will also be provided for
purchase of fruit plant and grafts. In all, Rs. 700 will
be granted to each family for horticulture.

The Controlled Jhum Colonies, as described above, will
accommodate 1,000 families. The remaining 2,000 Jhumias will
be absorbed in industries etc., or in the Pig/Sheep rearing
farms and in other schemes.
To sum up, the Jhumia Settlement Scheme of Tripura originated with a view to stopping the practice of shifting cultivation among the tribals, and to convert them into settled agriculturists. Upto the end of the Third Plan, by and large, plain land was allotted to the Jhumia. But due to the excessive pressure on land brought about by the Refugee Rehabilitation and the Jhumia Settlement Schemes, the available plain land has all been allotted by the end of the Third Plan. So, now it is proposed to settle the Jhumias on flat hill land and encourage them to try plough cultivation there. The other scheme is to allow jhuming on a restricted scale for the time being and then trying to slowly convert the Jhumias into horticulturists. The rest among the Jhumias will be employed in different small-scale and household industries. By the end of the Fourth Plan period, the change-over from jhuming is expected to be completed.
APPENDIX VIII-A

TRIBAL WELFARE FORM NO. 1

To His Excellency the President of India

I. Written by Shri __________________________

Father __________________________ Village __________________________

Police Station __________________________ Sub-Division __________________________

Division __________________________ District __________________________

This bond is being furnished by me. I had been maintaining my family for a long time by doing jhum cultivation. But I cannot earn a decent livelihood by this. Over and above, I have to roam like a nomad from one place to another. At present, the Government is allotting land and distributing grants for the purchase of drought animals, plough, seeds, and other agricultural implements and also for the reclamation of land. Hearing of this, I prayed to the Government for land and money grants, and I have been given the same as per description below. I promise hereby that I shall cultivate the land myself, settle there permanently, and shall spend the amount granted to me to meet the exact needs within a year of the receipt of the same. I shall not sell or mortgage the allotted land to anybody, and shall not give up the possession of it for any reason whatsoever. If anything is ever done by me contrary to this, then it will be legally invalid and I shall be bound to return the amount of the
grant to the Government with 6 p.c. interest rate per year, and the land shall be seized by the Government.

2. The money grant will be realizable as Government dues under the provisions of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960. Shri ____________________

Father ______________ Address ____________________

will act as my surety for this. Accordingly, I make this bond on my own will and with full knowledge; dated ______

The Description of the land

Boundary -

North ________

South ________ The amount of cash grant paid

East ________

West ________

The signature of the surety Shri ____________________

The signature/Thumb impression of the person receiving the land allotment and the money grant -

Witness Shri ____________________