Chapter - I
General Information

Location and physical features:

The territory of Tripura formerly a princely state is essentially a frontier region. It extends between North Latitude 22°-56' and 24°-32' and between East Longitude 91°-10' and 92°-21'. According to the survey record of Tripura, the geographical area of this territory is 4116 Sq.miles. Tripura is surrounded on three sides by East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) having an international boundary of about 528 miles. This peculiar geographical situation of the state has cut it from the rest of India and made it an isolated pocket, after the Partition of the country, in 1947. This territory is connected with the main land by only an access road through the hilly lands of Tripura to Cachar District of Assam. This Assam-Agartala road having a length of 183.5 kms. serves as the life line. The small communication which existed before partition of the country in 1947 was integrated with the area of the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Agartala, the capital of this territory is situated to the east of Calcutta at a distance of 197 miles by air and 1,050 miles by route through Assam Rail link.

The topography of this territory is quite uneven and hilly comprising rich valleys lying in between long ridges of hills - stretching to the north and east to the west. The height

1. Material is collected from the Office of the Director of Survey and Settlement, Government of Tripura, Agartala.
The climatic conditions of the territory of Tripura are generally dry and humid with sufficient rainfall, the normal annual rate being 225.6 cms. The winter season usually begins from the early part of November. January is regarded as the coldest month of the year. The mean inside the house and outside the house temperature as recorded in 1966 were 27.0°C and 24.8°C respectively. The main humidity at Agartala was 76.95 percent during the same time.

Transport & communication:

Before Independence communication in Tripura was entirely dependent on the railway lines running close to the borders and connecting almost all the sub-divisional towns of the


territory of Tripura. The territory was also connected with Calcutta by water ways through East Bengal (now Bangladesh). After Partition, the limited transport facilities that was available in Tripura fell within Pakistan. The Partition has virtually cut off Tripura from the rest of India being surrounded on three sides by the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). It is now an isolated pocket of India connected with the mainland by only one access road (Assam-Agartala road) 125 miles in length from Agartala to the border of Cachar District in Assam.

The system of internal communication was equally depressing during the pre-independence period. With an area of 10451 Sq.Kms. Tripura had only 67 miles of Katcha road i.e. 0.016 miles of road per Sq. mile before First Five Year Plan. However, in the programme of the First Five Year Plan, road construction was undertaken and actions started to connect all the subdivisional towns with Agartala and the capital town of Agartala with Assam border. At the end of the First Five Year Plan Tripura had 280 miles of road. At the end of the Third Five Year Plan Tripura has got 1573 miles of road i.e. 0.382 miles of roads per Sq. mile. Fourth Five Year Plan has taken in hand the work of improvement of the existing roads and construction of some new roads. It is interesting to note that as per 20 years road plan, it was proposed to construct 2202 miles of roads in Tripura by 1981. If this target is reached, this will go a long way to solve the communication problem of the state to some extent. But inspite of all these efforts, major

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parts of the territory particularly the interior region and hilly parts still remain inaccessible. The outlying hilly areas are not yet properly linked up with one another as well as with existing nearest major roads and market places. It means that there is still to be done much for the improvement of road communication.

Expansion of transport and communication brings the different parts of a country or state nearer and closure. It helps us to make any contact with the people belonging to the different culture, custom, beliefs and religion, and this makes us active to try to break up the restriction of caste and creed, false custom, tradition and superstition. From the point of security also system of good communication - internal or external is of much importance.

To make economic development possible and to disperse the population now concentrated into the agricultural flat lands in and around the subdivisional towns and to establish effective administration, and also to ensure order and control in the presently inaccessible areas, and to extend educational facilities particularly for the tribal people, it is necessary to develop as quickly as possible, one effective network of roads throughout the state.

Population:

Educational development and the population growth are interrelated. Therefore, for proper planning of education of a
country or any region of it, it is necessary to get information about the population statistics. Population statistics will help the educational planner to know if the schools are properly distributed in the different areas or any particular habitation still remains unserved by education or any habitation in view of large number of population requires further attention or so on. In view of the above facts we should have a picture of population statistics of the territory of Tripura, if we are to search for the development of education in the state.

The population of Tripura rose from about 5,13,000 in 1941 to 6,39,000 in 1951 and to 11,42,005 (males-5,91,237, females-5,50,768)\(^6\) in 1961. According to the census of 1971 the population in this territory was 15,56,822. The figures indicate an increase of about 4 lakhs persons during the decade (1961-71) growth rate being 36.32 percent. During the same period all India growth rate of population was 24.57. This rapid growth rate of population is definitely unnatural and has been attributed to the heavy influx of immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

However, the population of the territory of Tripura with an area of 10,453 Sq.Km. further rose to 20,47,351 in 1981 of which 10,51,240 are males and 9,96,111 are females; sex ratio being 948 females per 1000 males. Density of population is 395 per Sq.Km. The percentage of literacy upto 1.3.1981 is

recorded 41.78 (male 51.27 and female 31.77). The literacy rate in Tripura according to the census of 1971 was 30.86 percent (male 40.55, female 20.55 percent), against 20.25 percent in 1961. It is encouraging to note that within the decade (1971-81) the rate of literacy has been increased to about 10 percent. Subdivision wise increase in the rate of literacy runs as follows:- Out of 10 Subdivisions of the territory highest literacy rate (36.73) was recorded in Sadar Subdivision (Agartala) and the lowest rate of literacy (14.49) was found in Amarpur Subdivision. Dharmanagar Subdivision comes in the second rank in the literacy rate (36.64 percent). In other subdivisions rate of literacy varies from 25 - 30 percent. Percentages of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes as recorded in the census of 1961 were 10.48 and 31.53 respectively.

Tribal communities of Tripura belongs to the various racial communities. Prominent tribal communities are - The Tripuri, Chakma, Reang, Halam, Jamatia, Mog, Noatia, Garo, Lusai and others.

The customs and language of the tribes vary from one another. The Tripuries, Reang, Noatia and Halams by and large follow Hindu religion though some of them have accepted Christianity. Chakmas and Mogs are generally Buddhists. Vast majority of the Lushais, Kuki and Garos are Christians.
STATE LANGUAGE.

The tribals of the territory speak different dialects having none of the (total) 17 tribes any well developed language. Under the circumstances, Bengali was introduced as a state language about four hundred years back by the native rulers. Since then Bengali has been serving as the more or less lingua franca amongst the different tribes and cultures, having in addition, established a healthy and corporate living with non-tribal Bengali population within the territory.¹¹

AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

Tripura is predominantly a territory of rural villages. About 90% of the total population live in the villages most of which are scattered in hills and forests. There is a marked concentration of habitation in and around the subdivisional headquarters, teshilcentres, and growing markets. Surrounding areas including the forests and hill-tops are mostly inhabited by the tribals.

Tripura mainly depends on cultivation for her rural economy. Generally two types of cultivation are prevalent in the state. Plough cultivation is generally practised in the plains, and 'Jhum' or shifting cultivation is practised by the tribals on the slopes and the elevations of the hills cleaning the forests. 'Jhum' cultivation, besides its adverse effect on soil conservation, encourages nomadic way of life. Therefore, it is harmful for the social progress of this section of the tribes.

engaged in Jhum or shifting cultivation. Due to this reason Government is trying to stop this bad practice of Jhum cultivation in the territory. Different projects are taken up to settle the shifting cultivators having no lands. Rs.65 10/- is being given by the Department of Tribal Welfare for the settlement of each Jhumia family (The tribal family engaged in Jhum cultivation). In this connection we may classify the population of Tripura on the basis of the participation in the different sectors of economy. In order to make education more systematic and related to life, knowledge of economic classification of the population of a region is of great importance. The table given below will give us an idea about the economic classification of the people in the territory of Tripura.

Table: Showing the economic classification of population - 1961 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Category of workers</th>
<th>Number of workers</th>
<th>Percentage to total number of workers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>As cultivators</td>
<td>2,80,881</td>
<td>64.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>As agricultural labour</td>
<td>32,912</td>
<td>7.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>In mining, Quarrying, Fishing, Livestock, Forestry and hunting etc.</td>
<td>12,193</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>At Household industry</td>
<td>25,153</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>In manufacturing other than industry.</td>
<td>10,839</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>In construction</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>In trade and commerce</td>
<td>18,521</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>In transport, storage and communication.</td>
<td>4,779</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>In other services.</td>
<td>47,851</td>
<td>10.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data contained in the above table highlight the place of agriculture in the economic life of the population of Tripura. 64.24 percent people directly depends on agriculture and 7.53 percent of the people are engaged as agricultural labourer. It also reveals the most depressing fact that the state is very backward in industry. Due to its peculiar geographical position and lack of natural resources the territory has little scope for the development of heavy and medium industries. Small scale industries such as Handloom, jhumka-cane and wood craft have possibility for future development. Pineapples and orange are plenty in Tripura. A fruit canning centre has been established at Agartala to preserve and promote the sale of these fruits and their products both in and outside the state. Tea plantation industry in Tripura has a very bright prospects if it receives government's patronage duly. During 1966 the 55 Tea Gardens of the state with a total area of 5,500 hectares employed daily on average about 7,000 labourers. Some gardens have the arrangement of processing the tea-leaves. Almost the entire quantity of tea produced in Tripura is exported outside the state and thus the territory earn a good amount of money. The prospect of rubber industry in Tripura is very bright. The soil of the territory is most suitable for rubber cultivation. The work of rubber plantation in the different parts of Tripura has already been started under the care of the Forest Corporation of India.
Historical background:

Tripura, a state of great antiquity is situated in the eastern region of the country. It is a beautiful land covered by picturesque hills and dales, dense forests and green field. The territory of Tripura was originally a princely state. It claims to be the most ancient of all the former princely states in India. The present state of Tripura has had a very long history dating far back from the days of the 'Mahabharata'. Detailed information about its past history is not available. However, we get reference of the territory of Tripura in the Mahabharata, in the Purans, and the Ashoka Pillars where Tripura has been referred to as a 'Frontier Kingdom'. It had been under the rule of the Maharajas, the hereditary monarchs for a period of about thirteen hundred years till it acceded to the Indian Union on the 15th October, 1949.

The rulers of Tripura claim to be descendants of King Dryhya of Lunar race. Druhya was succeeded by his son Bavru. It is said that the title of 'King' was conferred on Bavru by the sage Kapila with due ceremony and since then the proud title has been assumed by the successive rulers of the line.  

It is also said that King Prusun, the fifteenth ruler in the line from Bavru attended the "Horse Sacrifice" of Emperor Dasaratha of Ajodhya. King Daitya was the descendant of Bavru who is said to have learnt archery from Aswathwama, son of the renowned archer Drone of the Mahabharata. It is also

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14. Materials are collected from 'This is Tripura' P.P.5-6, by Bhattacharjee S.C., Public Relations Officer, Government of Tripura, Agartala.
believed that King Daitya revived the lost glory of Tripura by recovering territories which some of his forefathers lost in different battles with rival kings. Tripur was the successor of Daitya. Tripur gave the territory the name it still bears. Prior to that the territory was known as 'Kratadesha', the land of the Kiratas. It may be mentioned here that there are also some other opinions about the origin of the word Tripura. Commonly it is believed that the name Tripura was originated from the name of the 'Tripura Sundari', the deity of the land. There is another opinion which believes that 'Tripura' has been carried from two 'Tripuri' words - 'tri' and 'pra'. In Tripuri 'tri' means water and 'pra' means near. In that sense the land was known as 'tripra' meaning a land adjoining the water. That word tripra has subsequently been converted into 'tipra' and from tipra to 'Tripura'. This opinion seems to be appropriate as the hill people, even today pronounce the word as 'tipra' but not 'Tripura'.

Leaving aside the controversy about the origin of the word Tripura let us complete our discussion about the King Tripura. Tripura was a contemporary of Emperor Juddhisthira and from the reference of the Mahabharata we know that Tripur's son Trilochana attended the "Rajasuya Yagna" performed by the Emperor, and it was during his reign that the Chaturdas Devata Mandir (the temple of the fourteen Gods) was set up at old Agartala.

15. Ibid - P-6.
about 8 kms. away from the present capital town (Agartala).

During the period under review the state of Tripura used to comprise a varying area won by the conquest in the plains and in the hill tracts. At times its armies expanded its dominions from the Sundarbans in the west to Burma in the east and south. The military power of the Rajas (monarchs) reached to its optimum level during the 16th century and it was not until the beginning of the 17th century that the Mughals obtained some sort of footing in the territory. The Kings of Tripura had to be involved in battles with the Mohammedan Sultans of the neighbouring state Bengal or with the Mughal rulers with varying success. With the advent of the British rule in India attempts were made by some British officials to annex the territory of Tripura and to make it a part of the British dominion. Those attempts were failed and Tripura continued to maintain its entity as a princely state. 18

The history of Tripura may be divided into two periods; one traditional period as described in the 'Rajamala' and another since 14th century. Among the ancient kings the names of Dharma Manikya and Dhanya Manikya deserve special mentions. The reign of Dharma Manikya (1431-1462) constitutes an important landmark in the history of Tripura. It was he who engaged the historian and royal priest Durlabhendra and two Brahmins named Sukreswara

17. This is Tripura, P-8 - Bhattacharjee S.C., Public Relations Officer, Government of Tripura, Agartala.

and Baneswara to compile the Rajmala as a verse chronicle of Tripura. He was a great builder and excavated the famous Dharmam Sagar tank at Comilla. He was equally great in the arts of War. 19

Dhanya Manikya (1463-1515) : Universally acclaimed as the greatest of all the Tripuri kings. He was not only a conqueror but also a builder, organiser and social reformer. In his works he had always the cooperation and assistance of Her Majesty Queen Kamaladevi who was one of the remarkable women of Tripuri-history. His troops overrun many places such as Meherkul, Patikera, Ganga-mandal, Langla, Bardakhat etc. But nothing compares with his war with King Hussain Shah of Bengal. In that war many Muslim soldiers went with watery graves in the river Gumati and the victorious Tripuri soldiers seized their cannon and banner as trophies of war. These are still preserved at Agartala. Dhanya Manikya was also a great patron of art and literature. He built the famous Tripureswari temple at Udaipur which is known as one of the 51 'Pithasthans' of the Hindus in India. He excavated a huge tank at Kasba (Kamalasagar) to be named after his beloved queen. 20

Ratna Manikya (1685-1712) was the first king of Tripura to exchange diplomatic relation with the king of Assam. Raja Swargodeva Rudra Singh of Assam (famous Ahom king) sent two envoys Ratna Kundali Sarma and Arjundas Bairagi to the court of

19. Tripura, the Enchanting land - P-6, Directorate of Public Relations and Tourism, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Nov'76.
Ratna Manikya II of Tripura with a mission to get the support and co-operation of the king of Tripura in forming a confederacy of the Hindu rulers against the Mughals. The envoys left a most significant account of Tripura entitled "Tripura Desharkathak Lakha" in 1734 A.D. There is an interesting observation made by these envoys. It runs thus:

"Purve ihatar raja nam naikichil, amuka pha
 tamuk pha one nam achilf" 21

(Originally they did not assume the title of king, their names ended with the word 'pha'). This is revealing enough to require further comments.

The account of Ratna Kundali and Arjuna Dasa is a valuable document of great historical significance. It gives us much light about the social customs, economic and political conditions along with information about the Raja and his Durbar at the beginning of the 18th century. Raja was assisted by Dewan, Ujir, Najir and Kotwal etc. in all matters, though the supreme power always rested on him. It would perhaps be relevant to mention here that the title of Maharaja as a hereditary distinction was conferred upon Maharaja Manikya Birendra Kishore Deb Barman Bahadur, on January 19, 1949. The Maharaja enjoyed a permanent salute of 13 guns which was granted in 1867. The state paid no tribute to the British Government. The administration of the state was carried on by a minister assisted by three Naib

Dewans incharge of their own departments. On the 1st December, 1936, Tripura was included in the Eastern State Agency and came in direct political relations with the Resident for Eastern States. 22

Actually, the modern era in the history of Tripura may be said to have started from the time of Bir Chandra Manikya. He paid active attention to the administrative reforms of the state and remodelled the set up of administration in the European pattern. Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya who has been acclaimed as a modern Vikramaditya 23 by Dr. Suren Sen, an eminent historian, was a king of versatile genius. Besides administrative reforms, he extended his patronage to such eminent persons as Dr. Dinesh Sen and Pandit Ram Narayan Vidyaratna of Murshidabad. The credit of discovering the future world poet in young Rabindranath then the author of only a juvenile work - 'Bhagna Hriday' - goes to him. Following the footsteps of father, his son Radha Kishore Manikya extended his patronage to the blind Bengali Poet Hem Chandra Bannerjee and Shri J.C. Bose.

Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur was the last ruling king of the princely state of Tripura. He ascended the throne in 1923, at the age of 14 only. He was a popular ruler and devoted himself for the well being of his subjects. His plans of the Agartala town and of some important schemes such as the

22. 'This is Tripura', P-9, - by S.C. Bhattacharjee - Public Relations Officer, Government of Tripura, Agartala.
'Vidya Patton', a scheme for rural university at a suburb of Agartala have been appreciated by many enlightened circles. This benevolent king left for his heavenly abode on May 17, 1947. Even before his death he settled the merger of Trinura with the Indian Union. However, after his death, the territory of Trinura was integrated with the Indian Union, on 15th October, 1949. His son, His Highness Maharaja Manikya Kirit Bikram Kishore Dev Barman Bahadur, a minor still then and the 179th Ruler in direct descent of the line from Dhruhuyya ceded his rights to the Union Government. The Tripura merger agreement was signed on September 9, 1949 in New Delhi. Rajmata Maharani Kanchan Prava Debi, Regent of Tripura State, signed the agreement on behalf of her minor son. Tripura merger agreement was given effect from 15th October, 1949.

Thus Tripura acceded to the Indian Union (on Oct 15, 1949) and became part 'C' state and began to be administered by the Central Government through a Chief Commissioner till the first General Election after which 3 Advisers were appointed to advise and help him in the discharge of his functions. After the second General Election, The Tripura Territorial Council was formed under the Territorial Council Act of 1956 (No. 103 of 1956). The Council consisted of 30 members elected on the basis of adult franchise and two members were nominated by the Government. The Congress held a majority of seats in the Tripura Territorial Council and the leader of the Congress Party, Shri Sachindra Lal Singh, became the Chairman.

24. Op cit - P.14
During the period there were some sort of diarchial Government in Tripura. Some of the wings of the administration such as Education, P.W.D., Medical and Agriculture Departments of the Tripura Administration were transferred to the Tripura Territorial Council to be administered by it under Section 25 of the Territorial Council Act. This dual character of administration came to an end when a Legislative Assembly was formed in Tripura in 1963 in place of Territorial Council, according to the provision of the Union Territories Act (under Article 239 of Union Territories Act, 1963). The first popular ministry comprising four ministers - The Chief Minister Sri Sachindra Lal Singh and other three Deputy Ministers assumed office on 1st July, 1963.

After the 4th General Election the members of the Legislative Assembly increased to 33 including three members nominated by the Government, and the size of the Council of Ministers also increased to 5 including Chief Minister. However, Tripura became a full fledged state on January 21, 1972, according to the provision of the North Eastern Areas Reorganisation Act of 1971.

Present Administrative set up:

With the introduction of this Act (Act of 1971) Tripura would have a machinery of administration - consisting of a Governor as the Constitutional head, a Legislative Assembly with 33 seats, and a Council of Ministers including the Chief Minister which would be collectively responsible to the Legislative Asse-
embly and would aid and advise the Governor of Tripura in the exercise of his functions. The Governor's Secretariat at Agartala is headed by one Special Secretary to the Governor. The Council of Ministers is assisted by the well organised Secretariat. After Tripura has become a fullfledged state the erstwhile Court of the Judicial Commission has ceased to exist and instead a Circuit Bench consisting of one Judge of the Common High Court for the states of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura has been set up. Besides, there are two more Courts - one each for District and Session Judge and Additional District and Sessions Judge.

For the smooth functioning of the internal administration of the territory, originally the one district territory of Tripura has been reorganised into three districts (Since 1st September, 1970) viz - North Tripura, West Tripura and South Tripura districts. According to this reorganisation sub-divisions of Dharmanagar, Kailashahar and Kamalpur came under North district, Khowai, Sadar and Sonamara sub-division under the West Tripura district. The rest four sub-divisions - Udaipur, Amarpur, Belonia and Subroom are accommodated in the South Tripura district. Simultaneously the Government of Tripura increased the number of Tashils from 46 to 177 by recasting the territorial jurisdiction of the existing Tashils. This however, did not affect the jurisdiction of the existing sub-divisions.

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To strengthen the administration in the district level, the charge of each district is entrusted upon a district Magistrate and Collector. His duty is to look after the smooth running of administration in the district put under his care. In his works he is assisted by the sub-divisional officers of all the sub-divisiona within the district. In addition, he is aided and advised by the heads of the different departments in the district level. The administrative responsibility of a sub-division directly lies on the sub-divisional officer. He is responsible to the District Magistrate for his works. S.D.O. (Sub Divisional Officers) is assisted by different officers in the sub-divisional level and also by the requisite number of office staff.