



ROLE AND NATURE OF TIPRA MOTHA PARTY—A REGIONAL PARTY OF TRIPURA

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

In India, regional parties impact government formation and strive to attain power at state and regional tiers. Regional parties focus their efforts on particular regional concerns and function within a confined geographical scope. Regional parties address the needs of their constituents, satisfy their demands, and advance national interests. Tripura has experienced a notable transition in its regional political scene. The Tipra Motha is a social organisation established to advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples, which subsequently evolved into a political party in Tripura. The paper focuses on the role and nature of the TIPRA Motha party as a regional party of Tripura. For the study, the descriptive method has been used. The aim of the study is to examine the emergence of Tipra Motha as a regional party in Tripura. The study presents the electoral performance of the Tipra Motha Party since its inception. The study is to find out the function of the Tripura Motha Party in state politics with reference to the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council Election, 2021, and the Tripura Legislative Election, 2023.

Keywords: *Regional Party, Tipra Motha Party, TTAADC Election 2021, Tripura Legislative Election 2023*

Introduction

In the realm of Indian politics, regional parties wield significant power. People have a variety of needs and beliefs that may not be fully addressed by one political party. This is the moment when society's leaders acknowledge the necessity of forming a new party that embodies the interests of the state's populace and genuinely represents the diversity within society. The Tipra Motha Party is an organization dedicated to the empowerment and emancipation of the Tiprasa community. The Tipra Motha Party stands out as a formidable and emerging regional political entity in Tripura. The organization perceives its initiatives as a grassroots movement instead of a political endeavor. The Tipra Motha Party significantly influences the political landscape of Tripura, focusing on safeguarding the interests of the Tiprasa community. The organization expresses apprehension regarding the indigenous communities of Tripura. The Tipra Motha Party effectively articulated the social, economic, and political challenges faced by the rural population of Tripura. The Tipra (Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance) Motha Party operates as a regional political entity in Tripura. Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma leads the TIPRA party. The party ranks as the second largest in Tripura after the 13th Tripura Legislative Assembly convened on 13 March 2023.

Historical Background

Tripura is located in Northeast India. Tripura attained complete statehood on January 21, 1947. As per the 2011 Census, Scheduled Tribe (ST) individuals comprise 32 percent of Tripura's total population (A. Debbarma, 2024). The state is home to nineteen indigenous groups: Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Lushai, Magh, Chaimal, Uchoi, Halam, Khasi, Bhutia, Munda, Orang, Lepcha, Santhal, Bhil, Kuki, Noatia, and Garo (A. Debbarma, 2024). The emergence of indigenous politics in the state of Tripura can be attributed to the political and historical struggles of the indigenous tribes in the region. During the initial period of struggle, the indigenous tribes of Tripura recognized the necessity for an indigenous political party to effectively represent their concerns to the Government of India. Amidst a succession of democratic uprisings led by the Indigenous population of Tripura, the Indian Parliament enacted the TTAADC Act in 1979, which was subsequently established on January 15, 1982 (Administrator, 2021). The 49th Amendment Act of the Constitution incorporated Tripura into the Sixth Schedule in 1985 (Administrator, 2021). The council's primary objective is to enable Indigenous peoples to self-govern and safeguard their culture, customs, and traditions. The overall area of TTAADC encompasses 7132.56 km². A council of 30 members governs the TTAADC. The TTAADC administers its operations and subordinate offices from its headquarters, located in Khumulwng, West Tripura. Eight Zonal Development Offices and 44 Sub-Zonal Development Offices are responsible for the development of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council regions. A Zonal Advisory

Committee, consisting of a chairperson and eight members, governs each zone. The chairman leads the district council's department, convening council meetings periodically to approve the budget, discuss bills, rules, and regulations presented by the treasury bench, and enact them accordingly.

Afterwards the establishment of TTAADC, the indigenous population of Tripura anticipated the resolution of their issues; however, there was a lack of earnest efforts to address concerns related to land, language, and governance, resulting in their persistence due to TTAADC's insufficient authority to rectify the challenges faced by indigenous people. A significant portion of the Tipra population in Tripura believes that the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous Council (TTAADC) has not adequately addressed their issues or met the expectations of the indigenous Tipra community (M. Debbarma, 2024). The current TTAADC, constrained by its restricted powers, is incapable of protecting the political, economic, and cultural interests of the indigenous Tipra peoples (M. Debbarma, 2024). The Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) raised the demand for a distinct state of Tipraland, encompassing the regions of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), in 2009 (M. Debbarma, 2024). The tribal politics in Tripura have experienced a reemergence of the longstanding and contentious demand for Tipraland, which entails separate statehood for the indigenous population (A. Debbarma & Haokip, 2023). After coming to power IPFT lost its ideological demand due to this basic question of survival and existence Tipra Motha arose. On 5th February 2021, Maharaja Prodyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma, the Royal Scion and grandson of the last Maharaja of Tripura, proclaimed the establishment of his political party, TIPRA MOTH, advocating for a separate state termed 'Greater Tipraland,' encompassing the current TTAADC regions and areas populated by the Tipra community within Tripura (M. Debbarma, 2024). The TIPRA, ruling in TTAADC and opposition in Tripura State Legislative Assembly, represents Tripuri nationalism and champions Tipraland demand, varying between Tipraland and Greater Tipraland (A. Debbarma & Haokip, 2023). The TIPRA Motha possesses the capacity to influence contemporary indigenous politics in Tripura, contingent upon its unwavering commitment to its fundamental ideology, persistent political advocacy for the rights of Tripura's indigenous population, and earnest pursuit of a permanent constitutional resolution for its constituents (Tripura, n.d.).

Objectives of the Study

1. To explain the emergence of Tipra Motha as a regional party in Tripura.
2. To explain the electoral performance of TIPRA Motha.
3. To examine the function of the Tripura Motha Party in state politics.

Methodology: The study is descriptive in nature. It is based on the secondary data. The paper has been assumed to have subordinate sources of data. Subordinate sources of data include academic articles, websites, research papers, journals, etc.

Literature Review

1. A study on "The Bodo's and Their Ethnic Movement with special movement to Assam" was carried out by Basumatary (2017). The origins, history, and reasons for ethnic assertion of the Bodo's in Assam are examined in this research. The article also attempts to examine the efforts of the state administration and the function of civil society in resolving the Bodo ethnic group's ethnic assertion. This study is entirely theoretical and descriptive. Its foundation is secondary data gathered from books, journals, research papers, magazines, government publications, and other sources. According to a study on indigenous tribal groups of Bodo people in Assam, who are originally from Tibet-China, they speak the Bodo language and follow the Bathou faith. They fight for their socioeconomic, cultural, and political rights against the state and the federal government. The BAC and BTAD have given them some autonomy, but the Bodo movement—which emphasizes socioeconomic, cultural, and political rights—remains active. Most Bodo people are still unfulfilled in spite of the 1993 and 2003 BAC Accords.
2. Mohapatra (2017) conducted a paper titled "Decentralized Governance and Tribal Development in Scheduled Areas of North East India: A Case Study of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council." This article provides an overview of tribal development and decentralized governance in the Sixth Schedule regions of northeastern India, with a specific focus on Tripura. It addresses the operational and organizational aspects of TTAADC. The acts, rules, regulations, and revisions of the TTAADC are discussed in the article. Furthermore, it analyses the indigenous development of Tripura, finds challenges, and proposes requisite modifications.
3. Research entitled "Role of Bodoland Peoples Front in Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) & Assam" was conducted by Talukdar (2020). This study primarily focusses on the role of the Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) in Assam and the Bodoland Territorial Council. The study employed both primary and secondary data. Descriptive and analytical approaches have been utilized for data interpretation analysis. The study results indicate that the BPF has consistently maintained its leadership in the BTC since its inception. The election results indicate the BPF's great success as a movement organization and the exceptional programs and developmental initiatives executed by its leaders for the BTC.
4. Malakar and Mahato (2021) performed a study titled "Status of Governance in the Local Institutions of Sixth-Schedule Areas in India's North East: A Case Study on Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council." The objectives of the studies are to examine the quality of governance in local institutions pertaining to development programs, emphasising accountability, transparency, and legal frameworks; to assess the contributions of TTAADC local institutions to good governance in decentralised planning; and to formulate policy recommendations for the effective implementation of good governance strategies. The article has been written using primary and secondary data. A three-stage stratified random

sampling procedure was employed to get primary data from a representative sample for the study. The study's entire sample comprised 200 participants. The initial objectives reveal satisfaction with the personal accountability of elected officials; nonetheless, there are grievances over service delivery, unprofessional conduct, and inadequate performance. The performance of local bodies in disseminating information is weak, and their compliance with regulations and norms is insufficient. This study assesses the function of local institutions in the governance of TTAADC concerning decentralised planning, as per the second goal. It indicates a lack of clarity regarding Village Sansad and Sabhas, as well as passive engagement resulting from one-sided information dissemination. Thirdly, the absence of follow-up on decisions jeopardises the efficacy of Village Sansad and Village Sabhas.

5. Debbarma and Haokip (2023) performed a study titled "The Resurgent Demand for Tipraland in Tripura: Context and Implications." The background and contributing elements of this demand's resurrection, as well as any possible long-term effects on the state's peace and stability, are critically examined in this essay. The research derives its results from data obtained through interviews and secondary sources. The research concludes the resurgence of the Tipraland demand threatens long-term peace and security in the state, perhaps inciting wars, and organised insurgencies. The resurgence of demand indicates unresolved tribal issues over land, identity, and marginalisation, which were central to the peace agreements established by tribal insurgent factions. The Indian state must reassess and fulfil these obligations with compassion.
6. Debbarma (2024) completed research titled "An Examination of the Causes for the Demand for a Separate State in Tripura." The study aims to identify the causes of the demand for a separate state, assess the current status of this demand, and examine the role of leadership in the movement for a separate state. This research paper utilises both primary and secondary sources to collect information and deliver a thorough analysis of the topic. The research employs scientific observation, expert interviews, and various empirical approaches, alongside qualitative data, and critical analysis, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the subject and reach a balanced and informed conclusion. The report advises the Indian government to incorporate refugee integration, indigenous rights, and regional autonomy to guarantee the sociopolitical and economic welfare of indigenous communities, highlighting the necessity for inclusive policies.

Discussions and Findings

Emergence of Tipra Motha Party

On 25 February 2019, Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barma became President of the Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee following his resignation from the Congress. He then resigned, claiming that Congress pressured him to concede to "corrupt individuals." Following a three-month interval, he declared the establishment of the Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA), a social organization dedicated to promoting indigenous rights. The Tipra Motha Party (TMP) is the result of the merger of the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Twipra (INPT), the Tipraland State Party (TSP), and the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT-Ha). The party triumphed with a majority, overcoming the BJP-IPFT coalition, the Left Front, and the Congress Party. The victory of the Tipra Motha concluded 15 years of left-front governance in TTAADC. Currently, Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl serves as the president of the party. The party's headquarters is located at Manikya Dynasty Heritage Residential House, Ujjayanta Palace, Agartala, Tripura. The party has fragmented into various factions to serve distinct segments of society. The student organisation is designated as the Tipra Indigenous Students Federation (TISF), the youth organisation is referred to as the Youth Tipra Federation (YTF), and the women's organisation is known as the Tipra Women Federation (TWF). The electoral symbol of the party is a pineapple.

Nature of Tipra Motha

One of the key ideologies of the party is regionalism in character. An analysis of the Tipra Motha's Election Manifesto of Tripura Tribal Area of Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) Election 2021 and Tripura Legislative Election 2023 reveals the nature of the party. The major objectives of the TIPRA include the construction of a new state dubbed 'Greater Tipraland' under articles 2 and 3 of the constitution (Wikipedia contributors, 2025). The party promotes Tipra nationalism, employing the motto "Puila Jati, Ulo Party," which means community first, party afterward. The purpose of the party is the well-being of the tiprasa people and to empower and emancipate the tiprasa before anything else. The party reflects its importance on local issues on demanded a Greater Tipraland, more power for the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

Performance of Tipra Motha in Elections

The Tipra Motha Party has participated in two elections so far, namely the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) election in 2021 and the Tripura Legislative Election in 2023. The party currently has 17 members of the district council (MDC) in the TTAADC government and two ministers in the Tripura government.

1. TTAADC Election, 2021

The Tripura Tribal Area of the Autonomous District Council encompasses two-thirds of the state's area and houses one-third of its population. The Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) had its election on April 6, 2021. The TTAADC election was conducted for 30 members. The governor appointed the remaining seats based on advice from the state governor, and only 28 seats were subject to polling. The state governor allocated 25 of the 28 seats for the Scheduled Tribes. The counting of the election, On April 10, 2021, the TIPRA-INPT alliance achieved victory in the election, where Tipra Motha

won 16 seats and INPT won 2 seats. The TIPRA party-led coalition secured 18 seats in the election, but the BJP-led coalition managed to obtain only 9 seats. Since the establishment of the TTAADC under the 7th Schedule of the Constitution in 1980 and later under the 6th Schedule in 1984, there has been, for the first time, no representative from the CIP(M) party in the TTAADC election. The CPI(M) has engaged in a protracted, resolute, and commendable struggle against all vested interests, culminating in the establishment of the tribal council.

2. Tripura Legislative Election, 2023

The Tripura Legislative Assembly 2023 is the thirteenth election of Tripura. The Tripura election took place on February 16, 2023, and the results were declared on March 2, 2023. The voter turnout rate was 89.95%. The BJP-IPFT coalition achieved a simple majority and was re-elected in Tripura for a second term, surpassing its rival parties. In the election, the BJP secured 32 seats, while the IPFT obtained 1 seat. The BJP-IPFT combo obtained 33 seats in the 60-member assembly. In the Tripura Legislative Election, 2023, the Tipra Motha Party won 13 seats, becoming the main opposition party in Tripura with 13 MLA seats. The Tipra Motha Party, like other political organizations, has its own manifesto or vision plan for the 2023 Assembly election. The party head, Pradyot Kishore Manikya, presented its vision document and a pledge, "Mission 15 in 150 days," encompassing at least 15 substantial pledges to be fulfilled during the first 150 days of rule. The primary concerns addressed by the Tipra Motha Party are to a range of issues. The concerns are as follows: 1. The issues involve promoting Greater Tripaland and seeking a constitutional resolution for the rights of Indigenous Tribal populations in Tripura. 2. Establishing a police force for the tribal council by recruiting 20,000 new personnel. 3. Increasing the budget of TTAADC. 4. A resolution denouncing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). 5. The development of a Tribal University, a sports University, and a Buddhist University, alongside the rights of the LGBTQ community, is a priority. 6. Expedient public grievance resolution method for citizens and 7. The Maharani Kanchanprabha Devi Women Empowerment Scheme aims to empower women in small-scale micro enterprises by boosting rignai and risa production, as well as raising awareness of packaged food through state-run initiatives.

Present Role of Tipra Motha in State Politics

The Tipra Motha Party, having secured authority in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, escalated their campaign for 'Greater Tripaland,' notwithstanding resistance from the ruling BJP, Left Front, Congress, and Trinamool Congress. Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah summoned TIPRA leadership to deliberate on the matter of Greater Tripaland on 25th January 2023. The discussion, however, yielded no announcements, as the participants failed to reach a consensus. On March 2, 2024, the central government executed a tripartite agreement with the Tripura government and the Tipra Motha, in the presence of Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, the Government of Tripura, the Tipra Motha Party, and other stakeholders in Delhi (Deka, 2024). The deal, signed on March 2, precedes the Lok Sabha elections, and terminates the prolonged hunger strike initiated by TIPRA Motha founder and royal heir Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on February 27 (Deb, 2024). Per the agreement, a joint working group or committee will be established to address and execute mutually consented matters promptly, ensuring an "honorable" resolution for the tribes. The resolution of issues concerning the indigenous population of Tripura would fulfil the enduring aspirations of the state's tribal community, encompassing economic, political, land, linguistic, and cultural rights (Dey, 2024b). The TIPRA Motha has joined the BJP in the state administration, with two of its members, Animesh Debbarma and Brishaketu Debbarma, sworn in as ministers.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, TIPRA Motha has arisen as a mechanism to protect the rights of indigenous tribes in Tripura. Initially, TIPRA Motha began as a social organisation but was then transformed into a political party with the objective of preserving, protecting, and promoting the rights of the indigenous tribes of Tripura. Since the inception of TIPRA Motha in Tripura, it has significantly transformed indigenous politics in the state by establishing the government in the TTAADC in 2021, becoming the largest regional political party (Tripura, n.d.). TIPRA Motha enhances Tripura's indigenous tribes' rights, negotiating capacity, and protection of land, culture, identity, and livelihood, potentially influencing Tripura's indigenous politics with its core ideology. Indigenous tribes in Tripura could shape future politics if given political opportunities. However, if they fail to remain committed, they could become like the current IPFT, leading to their rejection. They must also demand that the governments of Tripura and India reach a constitutional resolution to the contentious issue of the indigenous tribes of Tripura while safeguarding the rights of other non-indigenous populations (Tripura, n.d.). We should pursue this through a spirit of collective reconciliation, mutual dialogue, and respectful co-existence, in my opinion (Tripura, n.d.).

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