

The demand for a Greater Tipraland by the TIPRA Motha

How is the core ideological demand of the Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance Motha affecting the larger politics of Tripura? Is it creating tensions?

Saptarshi Bhattacharya

The story so far:

The newest political party in Tripura, the Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) Motha, floated in 2019 by Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma, the son of Tripura's last king, has created a flutter with its demand for a Greater Tipraland. With this core demand, the party has brought other indigenous political parties under its fold. Its first foray into electoral politics in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections in 2021 was marked by a sharp victory where it secured 18 of the 28 seats.

What is Greater Tipraland?

Greater Tipraland is the core ideological demand of the TIPRA Motha. The party released what it called a Vision Document

last week, where it said that it was committed to seeking a permanent solution upholding the rights of the indigenous people of Tripura as per the Constitution of India. The objective is to carve out a new State for the 19 indigenous tribes of Tripura under Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution. In its current form, the contours of the new State would go beyond the TTAADC areas to include several other villages where the Tiprasa (indigenous people of Tripura) reside in large numbers. In addition, the Motha would set up task forces to connect with the Tiprasa living in other regions of the country and the world to help them with their linguistic, cultural, social, and economic development, according to Jagadish Debbarma, a TIPRA Motha leader and the Chairperson of the TTAADC. While the core ideology of the new party brinks on ethnic nationalism,

the leadership of the Motha has been careful not to project itself as an "of the tribals, by the tribals and for the tribals only" party. Pradyot Manikya, has stated clearly in his media interactions that his party was inclusive and would also take the non-tribal population along.

What is the genesis of this demand?

On the face of it, the demand for Greater Tipraland appears to be a rehash of the demand for Tipraland put forth by the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) in 2009 after it broke away from the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT). But Motha leader Jagadish Debbarma disagrees. The earlier Tipraland demand was to carve out a separate State for the tribal population of Tripura from the TTAADC areas, he explains. The present demand goes beyond the TTAADC areas and includes at

least 36 more villages where the tribal population is in the range of 20 to 36%. This, in no way, would exclude the nine per cent Muslim population and the majority Hindu population coming within these limits, he hastens to add. According to the 1941 Census, the ratio of population of tribals and non-tribals in Tripura was almost 50:50. However, by the next Census, the tribal population was reduced to a little over 37% due to the huge influx of refugees from East Pakistan. Between 1950 and 1952, nearly 1.5 lakh refugees had entered Tripura for shelter. The flood of refugees led to bitter differences and, eventually, conflict between the tribals and the non-tribals escalated in 1980 and took the shape of armed insurgency. The demand for autonomous regions or separate statehood during this time metamorphosed to sovereignty and independence. However, after a political truce was reached between the State and the rebel groups, the demand for statehood was revived.

How has this affected Tripura?

It seems to have considerably polarised an already uneasy relationship between the tribals and the non-tribals since the State emerged from the days of armed insurgency. The TIPRA Motha put up a massive roadshow in November which is being hailed as one of the largest political mobilisation of tribals in the State.

THE GIST

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