

TRIPURA OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WITH SAMSER GAZI AGAINST FEUDALISM

(A Historical Study)

Bibhas Kanti Kiliḡdar

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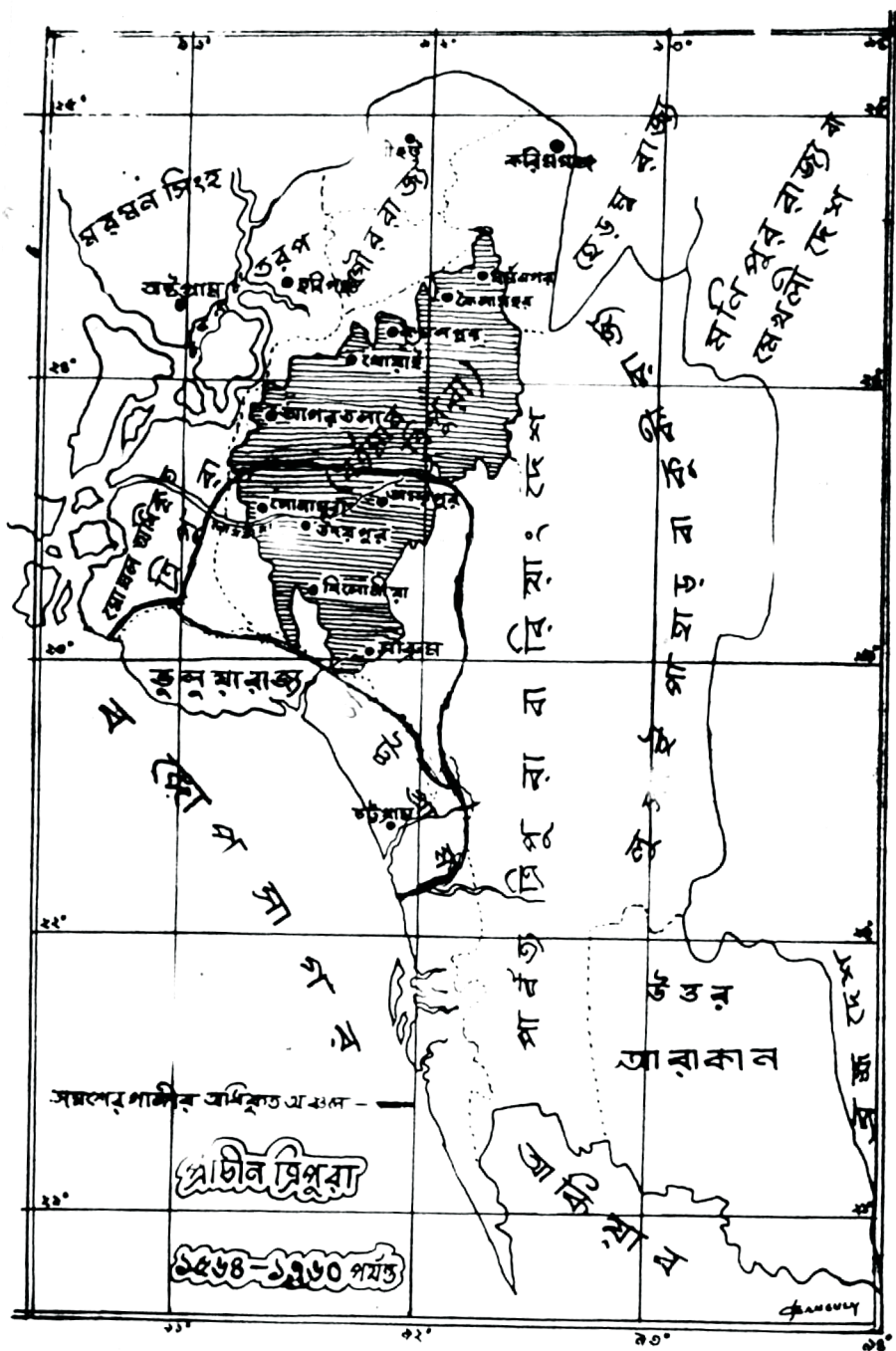
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FOREWORD

The rise of Samsheer Gazi, into power in Tripura administration in the eighteenth century is considered very significant in the history of Tripura. Many scholars have narrated the character of Samsheer Gazi from different angles. Some scholars have considered him as "dacoit, intruder of the royal power", some described him as a benevolent ruler, representative of common people. In fact, Samsheer Gazi came of an ordinary family from the Zamindari Estate of Tripura king known as Chakla-Roshnabad. Shri B. K. Kilikdar in his book, "Tripura of eighteenth century with Samsheer Gazi against Feudalism", has highlighted the activities of Samsheer Gazi and his revolt against the feudal system of Tripura in the eighteenth century. I hope this book will be much help to the students and the researchers in knowing the past history of Tripura particularly the period when Samsheer Gazi came into power.

Dated, Agartala,
the 21st March, 1995.

(S. Sailo)
Director,
Tribal Research Institute,
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P R E L U D E

Several articles on some historical events that took place in Tripura during Eighteenth Century made me interested in the study of the history of Tripura particularly of the Eighteenth Century, the middle of which was adorned with the struggle of Samsher Gazi against Feudalism. That rebellion can obviously claim to be the first organised struggle against feudalistic exploitations and the very basis of Feudalism in Tripura was undulated by that struggle. My interest was more intensely attracted towards the history of Tripura of Eighteenth Century with Samsher Gazi against Feudalism, particularly when I found that historical truth about Samsher Gazi and his struggle against Feudalism was for long shrouded in distortion. And due to vortex of two opposite trends of the writers in assessing Samsher Gazi and his contribution towards the struggle as a whole, Samsher Gazi's name was left in to a contrveorsial typhoon.

This dissertation is an humble attempt at faithfully presenting the history of Tripura of Eighteenth Century with Samsher Gazi against Feudalism as systematically as has been possible. Despite all possible care, it is not unlikely for mistakes and errors to creep in. In such cases, the Author offers apology in advance and any suggestion or advice in this respect will be highly appreciated.

While preparing this dissertation the main problems among many others, faced by me, were the absence of a written history of the relevant period and that of a State Archive with systematised stock of old records. I had to trace the political history of the period according to the need of the analysis, as there was no written history of the greater part of the period

covered in this study. Sri Ramaprasad Dutta, who is famous for his collection of old publications in Tripura rendered immense help in my search for the old facts. For this study, I am indebted to a large number of persons and institutions. Without their sincere assistance, I would not have been able to find out the rare materials necessary for my work.

Many of my friends, colleagues and well-wishers encouraged and urged me to finish the work as early as possible. Some of them particularly to be mentioned are Dr. Pardip Nath Bhattacharjee, Research Officer, Tribal welfare Department, Govt. of Tripura, Agartala, Sri Gurudas Choudhury, Asstt. Professor in History, Ramkrishna Mahavidyalaya, Kailashahar, Sri Sakti Prasad Dutta Purkayastha, Advocate, Kailashahar and Sri Guruprasad Chakraborty, Asstt. Librarian, Tripura University, Agartala who helped me in many ways in this respect. After a long period it is not possible to remember the names of all, who had helped me in this work. Still, I express my gratitude to all with whom I have come in contact in this regard. I am grateful to my wife, Smt. Krishna Kilikdar for her ungrudging assistance and constant encouragement.

I pay my deep reverence and sincere gratitude, in the last, to my teacher, Dr. Mahadev Chakraborty, Professor, Department of History, Tripura University, Agartala. Without his scholarly guidance and leading counsel, it would not have been possible on my part to finish this strenuous work.

Final copies have been typed by my affectionate student Sri Shyama! Kanti Chowdhury with utmost care and sincerity.

Bibhas Kanti Kilikdar

C O N T E N T S

	Page
CHAPTER : I	1
Introduction : Historical Background	
1. Geographical Introduction of Tripura.	2
2. Chakla Roshanabad Zamindari.	4
3. Mythical History of Tripura.	5
CHAPTER : II	11
Socio-Economic Condition of Tripurar During Eighteenth Century	
1. The Characteristics of the Ancient Tripura State.	11
2. The Socio-Economic Conditions of Tripura before and after the Struggle of Samsher Gazi.	12
3. Family Tax - - - - Discrimination in the Rate of Taxation - - - - Mode of Collection of Family Tax.	14
4. Kaziana - - - - Rent Exacting from the Muslim Subjects.	19
5. The Administrative Picture of Tripura During Eighteenth Century.	21
CHAPTERS : III	27
Social Problems and Predicaments Prevailing During Eighteenth Century and Afterwards	
1. Slavery System - - - - Nature of the problem - - - - Abolition of Slavery - - - Immediate Consequences of the Abolition of Slavery.	27

2.	Joyels System - - - A Threat to Royalty - - - Abolition of the Institution of Joyels.	33
3.	'Syttee' System — — 'Suttee' in Hill Tipperah — — Maharajah's Policy of Non-Interference — — Policy of Non- Interference : A Distinction — — The prohibition of 'Suttee' British Influence.	37
4.	Tything System — - A Feudal Type of Exaction.	47
5.	Significanee of Social change.	48

CHAPTER : IV 53

Political Conditions of Tripura During Eighteenth Century.

1,	The Political Sceneriy of Tripura preceeding the Struggle of Samsher Gazi.	53
2.	Exploitation of the British in Tripura.	64

CHAPTER : V 63

Samsher Gazi : His Emergence 69

1.	Preparation for Struggle.	70
2.	The Armed Struggle Launched by Samsher Gazi.	72
3.	Establishment of Samsher Gazi's power.	74
4.	Discipline in Administration.	76

CHAPTER : VI 81

Conclusion

1.	The Decline of Samsher's Regime.	81
2.	Evaluation of Samsher Gazi and His Struggle.	82

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Samsher Gazi appears to be a controversial figure in the history of Tripura. The book wherein Samsher Gazi's name and his achievements found place are "Gaziname" by Sheikh Monohar Ali, 'Addrishta Chakra' by Joy Kumar Bardhan, another book named as "Gazi nama" by Goltoks, "Krishnamala" by Pandit Ramganga Sharma, "Rajmala" by Kailash Singha, "Pancha Manikya" and Sree Rajmala" by Kaliprashanna Sengupta, "Itihash Mishrita Bangla Kabita" by Suprashanna Banerjee, "Banga Sahitya Parichaya," by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen", "Prachin Bangla Sahityar Itihash" by Dr. Tamonash Chandra Dasgupta and "Bharater Krishak Bidraha O Ganatantrik Sangram" written by Suprakash Ray. All these books contain documents and detailed discussion on Samsher Gazi but unfortunately his name was not mentioned in any of the historical books of Bengal¹. But what ever was found and written about Samsher Gazi is purely historical apart from the fact that in different periods so many authors tried to portray his character from various different angles. Consequently, historical truth about this prominent character was for long shrouded in distortion. Some of the writers left no stone unturned for depicting the character of the then Maharaja as the most benevolent as well as noblest King of Tripura, while the others evidently tried to find out the noble

traits in the character of Samsher Gazi. He was portrayed as a decoit in "Rajmala", "Sree Rajmala" and in "Krishnamala" while Sheikh Monohar Ali, his biographer, unhesitatingly described him a noble personality in his book entitled as "Gazinama". Samsher Gazi was proclaimed as one of the powerful leaders of the peasants in Suprakash Ray's "Bharater Krishak Bidroha O Ganatantrik Sangram" and the peasant's movement marshalled and piloted by him has come into recognition being "the peasants struggle," in Tripura. One thing is, however, pretty clear difference of opinion as regards this man does still remain but for understanding of the nature of the struggle launched by Samsher Gazi, the whole picture of the contemporary Tripura needs an elaborate pictorial discussion.

1.1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION OF TRIPURA :

The middle part between Kamrup and Rakshiang was named as "Sumba" by the Aryans in ancient time. The other name of this same region was "Kirat-Desh". It runs in Bishnupuran, "Purbadike Kirater bas" (i. e., the Kirat resides in the eastern region). It is hence conspicuous that all these people who were understood to have belonged to "Louhitya Clan" were treated as "Kirats by the Aryan Sages. Thenceforth, "Kirat-Desh" came to be known as "তুপুৰা" which was, under the withering process of time, modernized and was termed as "ত্ৰীপুৰা". The word

“ত্রিপুরা” has originated from “ত্রীপুরা”². But it is very difficult to trace out the origin of the word “তৃপুরা”. It can, however, be assumed from the ancient books that the word “Tripura” might have sprung from “Tripurasur” or it might have been originated from the three puries (Three castles) which the powerful Tripurasur had erected. Another assumption is that either the word could have emerged out of Bhagabati Tripura Sundari or it could have been termed as such after the founder’s name of Tripura Dynasty³.

The Tripura State was described as “Patikara” in Maharajoang, an ancient historical book of Bramhadesh. Tripura was named an “Khuratan” in Rajoang” an ancient historical book of Arakan. Tripura was called as “Takleng” by the Mitai (the Manipuri people), Minhaj. Albaruni and some other Muslim historians termed “Tripura” as “Jajnagar” or “Jajinagar”. Thus in the historical books of different regions, Tripura happened to be known by different names⁴.

Before Tripura was occupied by the British, the plain region of Tripura, conquered by the Muslims was known as “Roshonabad”, but at the same time it was more intimately known as “Mughlan Tripura” by the common people. During the reigning time of the East India Company, a British district, at first called as “Roshonabad Tripura” and thereafter “Tripura” was mapped and framed, and this region was turned into Commilla district while being included into the territory of East Pakistan after the partition of India. The name of Commilla district still remains unchanged although it is now included in Bangladesh which

emerged out of Pakistan as an independent State. After the partition, the territory as ruled by the King of Tripura was came to be known as "Swadhin Tripura", "Kohe Tripura". "Prabat Tripura" or "Parbatya Tripura" or "Hill Tepara" and perhaps all these names were attributed to Tripura for maintaining the absolute independence of the territory and its name. More than a Century ago, the word "Kohe" was seen to be used on the rubber stamps of the courts of Tripura meaning "Parbatya" (Hilly). Although, during the reign of Maharaja Birendra Kishore the official name of Tripura was declared as Tripura and nevertheless the state was named in the official documents as "Rajgi" in the later part of the last Century, as has been ascertained from the book "Rajgi Tripura Sarkari Bangla". The word "Rajgi", originated from the Sanskrit word "Rajan" and the derivation of "Rajgi" is due to the assimilation between the word "Raja" and the Persian "Gi" OR "GEE". The word as a whole means "Monarch" and relates to "Kingdom". And so, that the use of this well known word "Rajgi", after it was separated from the British occupied Tripura district, was more appropriate and acceptable, is unequivocally true⁶.

1.2 CHAKLA ROSHNABAD ZAMINDARI :

The word 'Chakla' indicates the juxtaposition of three or four districts. Mussid Quli Khan divided Bengal into many Chaklas. Roshonabad at that time covered almost the whole of Tripura district. The Chakla Roshonabad Zamindari under the kings of Tripura was geographically detached from the present Tripura State of India. It

comprised approximately six hundred square miles near the surrounding border areas of Tripura State and the two regions were considered inseparable. In ancient time the entire land of this Zamindary was under the rule of the State. As time passed by, the plain lands of such type of the then bigger state at first came into the grips of the Mughals and thereafter it went under the rule of the East India Company. Finally, the Second Rajdhar Manikya, the then king of Tripura, owned it since 1793 as per the Act of permanent settlement. The and, however, was included in East Pakistan after the partition of India. As soon as the Tripura kings ascended the thrones, they would lord over this zamindary by inheritance. Although the Chakla Roshnabad was outside the boundary of the State, its administrative functions were run and performed by the administration of the State which controlled the Chakla Roshnabad in every sphere⁶.

1.3 Mythical history of Tripura :

The kings of Tipperah or Tripura were in their day conquerors and rulers of some consequence. Glories of the kings of Tripura have been depicted in epic verse by the Brahmin bards of their court. Sprung from the Lunar race of Indian princess, Kirat (The hunter), exiled by his father Yajati, founded the city of Tribeg on the banks of Brahmaputra. To him succeeded Tripura from whom the raj took name. King Tripura was execrated by the Brahmin historians as the opponent of Siva worship which was then alluring the imaginations and exciting the passions of the people. All efforts of the king

Tripura to suppress the rites of Siva were ineffectual. Rather to reward the devotion of the people, the deity of the Lingam vouchsafed to Tripura's widow a son, named after himself, Trilochan, devoted to the worship of the Fourteen Gods, who increased in wisdom and stature and presented the unmistakeable royal marks. Blessed with such heavenly favour Trilochan grew great and neighbouring kings offered him their homage. In due time Trilochan chose for himself a wife and married with much pomp and prolonged ceremonies the daughter of the Hindu Monarch of Kamrup, which at that time included Hiramba or Cachar. By her he begot twelve sons. Thereafter he lived many days and died in the odour of sanctity. 57 kings, whose names alone are chronicled succeeded in due course. The only fact to note of the tradition is that from the beginning the Kookies were in close connection with the reigning Raja, some serving and some opposing him, just as we find till the end of Manikya rule. On the occasion of a visit paid by one of the kings to the abode of Siva, it would seem that the kookies brought trouble even into the celestial mansions.

Jajarpur, the 74th rajh, invaded Rungamati (Udaipur) and in spite of the valour of Nikka, its king, made conquest of the country and fixed there his capital. From this he attacked Bengal and extended his dominion as far as Amarapura in Burma. Ratnafa, the hundred and first Rajah, was a younger brother who obtained the throne by the aid of 4000 Mahomedan troops lent him from Gaur. This was probably about 1279 A.D. Ratnafa received from the king of Gour the title of 'Manikya' by which all succeeding Rajahs have been known.

In 1512 A.D. Dhanya Manikya conquered Chittagang^s &

the history becomes full of the contest that raged between the Tripuras and the Mahomedans of Gaur and Dacca. Rajah Vijoy Manikya II⁹ who ex-acted fealty from both the khasi & Sylhet Rajahs, against the former from whom he despatched an army of 1200 haris or scavengers, armed with hoes (Kodalis), but in this instance of undoubted moral effect, for rather than be defiled by conflict with such base opponents, the khasi chief made humble submission. Vijoy Manikya II employed 1000 Pathan horse-men, & his successor led an army of 26,000 infantry and 5000 horse against Bengal. Such was the war-like consequence of the state as recorded in its ancient annals.

In 1586 A.D. Tripura come into collision with the Mogs of Arracan & their Portuguese mercenaries. This was the beginning of troubles. Udaipur was taken & the Rajah¹⁰ died by poison self-administered. Then came up again the Mahomedans under Futteh Jung Nawab, by order of the emperor Jahangir, who wanted horses & elephants for his court & camps. Disaster befell the arms of Tripura, and Jashadur Manikya was sent captive to Delhi. There he was offered his kingdom if he would pay tribute like many greater princess & do homage to the Peacock Throne. But the chronicle tells us that Jashadur Manikya did not submit to the condition declaring that his country had been so harrassed by their ravages that no fresh burden could be borne by it. Sashadhar died on exile at Brindaban, "meditating on the excellancy of Vishnu". The imperial troops were mean-time plundering and impoverishing the Tripura's till pestilence compelled them to decist

In 1626¹¹ A.D. Kalyan Manikya obtained the throne, propitiated Siva and the Brahmins, and defied the

emperor of Delhi. Against him came Sultan Shuja, the Mughal Subader of Bengal who came to Dacca and sent his Prime Minister Jani Beg against Tripura¹² only to be ingloriously defeated and turned back. Kalyan's successors, however, became subject to the Nowab, and though they ever and again made fierce attempts to shake off the yoke, they never succeeded. The mahomedans were able to regulate the succession and exact tribute and converted the Raj into a simple Zamindari. The very name of Tripura was turned to Roushanabad. One of the puppet kings set up by them, Vijoy Manikya II was allowed indeed only a annual salary of Rs. 12 000/-¹³, the whole remaining revenues of the country being sent to Dacca. For twelve years after him a Mahomedan Sumsher Khan, was the vertual ruler, but his oppresions became so great, and his remittances so uncertained, that the Nowab of Dacca acting with strict impartiality, had him blown from the mouth of a Gun¹⁴.

Chapter-1

Notes & References :

1. 'Samsher Gazi Akti Smarania Nam', Dutta, Ramaprasad, Swagatam, 2nd year, 2nd edition, 1969.
2. 'Rajmala Barnita Amader Tripura' (Tripura Rajya and Tripura Jela), Amader Tripura, Baishak, 1377 B. S , p/17.
3. Calcutta Review, Vol. xxxv, p/325 ; Smart's Report on the District or Tipperah, p/1 (Rajmala foot note, p/2).

4. 'Rajmala Barnita Amader Tripura', Op. cit , p/18.
5. Rajgi Tripurar Sarkari Bangla, Dutta, Dwijendra ch. and Band opadhyay, Suprasanna. P/5.
6. Ibid, P/3.
7. The numismatic evidence shows that Ratna Manikya minted first coin of Tripura in the year 1386 Saka (1464 A.D.) and hence he is contemporary of Ruk Unuddin Barbak Shah of Bengal (Ref : Majumder R. C., Bangla Desher Itihas, Madhya Yuga, Calcutta 1380 BS, p/510) The coin also bears the epithet of 'Manikya'. The British writer used the term 'Manik', a corrupt form of 'Manikya'. But every Indian writer used 'Manikya'.
8. In 1512-13 A D. Dhanya Manikya conquered Chittagong as it is evident from his coin dated 1435 Saka (Majumder R. C. Op cit P/490).
9. Vijoy Manikya II (1532-1563 A D), Rajmala, Singha, K. C, Varnamala edition, P/48. His march to Jayantia is confirmed by Kachar Buranjee and other records. He was also mentioned in Ain-E-Akbari.
10. The King was Amar Manikya (1577-1586 A.D.), Majumder, R.C, Op Cit P/495 and Singha, K. C. Op Cit P/48.
11. The date of accession of Kalyan Manikya is 1626

A.D. and it is evident by numismatic evidence (Majumder R.C, Op Cit P/496).

- 12. East Bengal in 1728-29, Bengal past and present, Vol. 69, SL 132, P/1. Sarkar, J. N.**
- 13 It is stated in Sri Rajmala that Vijoy Manikya II was granted an annual salary of Rs. 12000/- (Sri Rajmala Vol IV, P/43.**
- 14. The North East frontier of Bengal, Makenjie, A. P/273.**



CHAPTER TWO

Socio Economic Conditions Of Tripura During Eighteenth Century.

2.1 The Characteristics Of The Ancient Tripura State:

The book "Rajmala" bears the testimony of the Tripura State having Gold mines. The Foreign Travellers too were aware of Tripura having Gold mines. Tevarniar, in his travelling report, elaborately discussed so many things of the Tripura State and mentioned about the Gold mines.¹ The following is an extract from the travelling Report of Tevarniar; "There is nothing in Tipra which is fit for strangers (strangers). There is a Mine of Gold, but the gold is very coarse (coarse). And there is a fort (sort) of very coarse (coarse) Silk, which is all the Revenue the king has. He extracts no subsidies (subsidies) from his subjects; but only that they, who are not of the prime nobility, should (should) work six (six) days in a year in his Mine, or in his silk-works. He sends (sends) his Gold and his silk into China, for which they bring him back Silver, which he coins into piece to the value of ten Sous. He also (also) makes thin pieces of Gold, like the Alpers (Aspers) or Turkey; of which he has two forts (sorts),

four of the one fort (sort) making a crown, and twelve of the other".²

It is understandable from the above cited extract that the Gold of Tripura was exported to China and in lieu of that gold, Silver was imported from China to Tripura and Coins were made with the help of that Silver. Besides having Gold mines, Tripura is also reported to have been resourceful of iron, coal, kerosine oil, salt and keolin (one kind of earth that is used in the making of utensils and puppets etc.)³

There were horses in the hilly regions Tripura. Sometimes the kookies used to present the king horses along with other gifts. Moreover, the wild elephants of Tripura are highly valuable. These elephants were very beautiful having prolonged life duration. In every Wintery Season, traps were laid to catch the wild elephants. While describing the "Filkhana" of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, Abul Fazel, in his book "Aine-Ee Akbari" remarked : "The best elephants are those of Tipperah".⁴

2.2 The Socio-Economic Conditions Of Tripura Prevailing Before The Struggle

There was hardly any habitation in the vast, wide forest areas of the then Tripura state and only those people accustomed to tilling lands with their ploughs did actually live in some valleys and in a few narrow river-side-

regions. The Tripurians were the persons who chiefly lived in the hilly places of Tripura. These Tripurians were divided into many communities, such as—

- 1) Tripuri, 2) Reang, 3) Jamatia, 4) Noyatia, 5) Halam, 6) Ochai, 7) Mog, 8) Chakma, 9) Garo, 10) Lushai and Kuki etc. People belonging to all these communities are known to be Tripurians. But these communities did not spring from the same clan. They started living in Tripura in different periods and for different various reasons. Difference also lies in their languages, cultures and ways of living. But despite all such differences, most of the Tripurians lived in the dense hilly parts and they were dependent on the cultivation of 'Jhum' for their livelihood. The plain areas of Tripura were mainly Bengalee Hindu and Muslim populated. The official documents of the last three centuries show that there was peace and mutual trust between the Tripurians living in the hilly regions and the other subjects living in the plain lands of Tripura.

Here we must necessarily dwell more precisely on the nature of the dominant social problems and predicament and the manner in which the forces of change brought about some degree of solution to them. The problems largely included... i) the Slavery system, ii) the 'Suttee', iii) the Jowels system, iv) the Tything system etc., while in the economic sphere... i) Kaziana, ii) Family tax etc.against each of which a counterforce was in its primary stage of developing. The Social history of

the period, thus, may be viewed as one in which a force and counter force in embryo are set against one another. As a matter of fact, the indirect impact of new ideas and beliefs that took shape in rest India bore its imprint in the Socio.Economic plane prevalent in Hill Tipperah.

In this Chapter we shall confine to the economic predicaments that were prevalent in Tripura during Eighteenth Century and continued till early Nineteenth Century. The dominant social problems and predicaments will be dealt with in detail in the next Chapter.

2.6 **Family Tax :**

The financial management of the hill state encompasses the policy of taxation. In the present sphere it is not possible to refer to all the taxes imposed on the people during the period of our study. With a view to enabling us to know the nature of taxes a few of them will be enumerated here. Family tax deserves our notice past. Was it justified to call it family tax in view of the fact that the tax was levied upon each house under the personal occupation of the people living in the hills ? Only the houses of the poor and the widows were exempted. Evidence indicates that the tax was assessed upon each house in a village and not upon each family⁵. So to designate it family tax would be a incorrect interpretation of the cess. The fact would be more clearly justified

when we find that 2 or 3 families accommodated themselves in a single house were allowed to pay only one tax, commonly known as 'Ghar Chukti Kar'⁶ (Act IV of 1329 T.E.). At the outset, the motive behind the imposition of the 'Ghar Chukti Kar' was to obtain the allegiance of the hill people practising 'Jhum' and that stage no discrimination in assessing the same was made. Loyalty to the king was the supreme factor which moulded the ruling authority to realise the said tax.

Discrimination In The Rate of Taxation.

It is evident from the above discussion that in the beginning 'Ghar Chukti Kar' was collected from Jhumias whichever tribes they belonged to. In course of time, all the tribes could not retain the habit of practising Jhum. Some of them opted to adopt settle cultivation as result of which a tendency towards non-payment of 'Ghar Chukti Kar' developed. The ruling authority too had to change their mind towards collection of the said tax which was no longer regarded as a mark of loyalty to the ruling king. So, with passage of time the principle of assessing family tax irrespective of caste & creed ceased to continue. At the end of nineteenth century there was remarkable diversity in the rates of the family tax payable by different tribes. Thus the policy of taxation lost

its uniformity and almost every tribe had a rate of its own⁷. The Tipparah Tribe proper. 'The Puran Tipprah' and the Jamatyas were allowed to pay at the rate of Rs. 3-8 annas, while the Noyatyas Riangs were looked upon unequally. They had to pay it at a considerably high rate of Rs. 8/-. The Halams were treated leniently. They were allowed to pay at a lower rate than the Tipprah tribe. More suprising was that the "Kukies do not pay the tax at all"⁸. Moreover, the rate was not uniformly applied in different parts of the state⁹.

Many of the hill tribes e.g., the Kukis, Halams & Jamatyas were required to pay less in cash. The monetary loss in this head was compensated by utilising their military service which was readily provided by the Kukis when required. Some among the tribes were allowed to pay in kind, supply of elephants being one kind of benefit for the state exchequer. How were some tribes almost wholly exempted from payment of taxes while others were required to pay at higher rate? Firstly, poverty might have been one of the factors for lowering the rate of the tax for some people. But it was questionable how some particular tribes were adversely affected by poverty. The family tax for the Reangs and the Noyas was very high. These people, most of them lived by the side of Gumti and Muhuri reivers were already overburden with their taxes, e.g., export duty. Moreover, the rate was somewhat high in consideration of the little convenience & comfort offered to them by the state. Secondly, the Puran Tipprah or pure

Tipperah were allowed to pay at a lower rate than the other in lieu of their rendering various duties in the palace. But a particular tribe should not be given tax remission for rendering personal service to the Royal family. Unless sufficient reasons are assigned for remaining tax free, not a single tribe should not have been exempted for paying taxes and the same principle ought have been applied in case of Kuki tribe a portion of whom remained tax free for rendering military service to the state. All the hill people belonging to different class or tribes had equal rights in the hill state. It was unjustified to allow gross discrimination in the taxation policy. If any tribe offered their service to the ruling family, they should have been favoured otherwise. Over and above, the method of assessing the 'Ghar Chukti Kar' should have been rationalised by narrowing the difference in rate.

Mode Of Collection Of Ghar Chukti Kar.

It must be made clear that the revenue was collected on account of number of houses or families in which it was divided and not on account of so much land the people held. Record shows that the tax was assessed and realised through the Head man. During the Durga Puja festival the Heads of the hill villages were invited to Agartala for the purpose of fixing the amount of family tax to be paid by each village

during the year. A good deal of statistical information was collected by the revenue officers. The number of population in each-village, families who were capable of conducting Jhum etc., all enquired into¹⁰. Exemption from taxes had been recommended on the ground of being poverty stricken. The amount then collected fluctuated from year to year¹¹. A number of grounds were put forward for variation in collection of taxes. Firstly, temporary decrease might occur due to the prevalence of economic hardship in some areas. Secondly, frequent migration of hill people between hill Tipprah and the Chittagang Hill Tracts took place. This factor was responsible for affecting the collection annually "causing an increase or decrease according to the direction in which the migration sets"¹². Thirdly, the unusual high increase in the rates of duty on cotton adversely affected the collection of family tax. Besides, the collection under the head began to diminish due to the steps taken by the Maharajah during the latter half of the nineteenth century. A farm, named 'Julai Mahal' was granted by the Maharajah to the Jubaraj. It had occupied particular portion of the hills, but was broadly spread to the south of the Gumti. The hill people who migrated there from Chittagang Hill Tracts were allowed to live there as new settlers. With a view to enabling the new settlers to pay less revenue and to get relief, the Jubaraj was exempted from payment of revenue to the state for some years to come¹³. This arrangement had brought into surface some problems. It tempted many of the old

settlers of the state who were regular tax payers to cross the border and spent few months in the hill tracts, then after returning to their ancestral homes, they took settled into the Julai Mahal as new settlers in order to be exempted from the heavy payment of Family tax. The new-settlers or Julaies paid only the nominal tax to be assessed by the Yubaraj. Some hill people had not over taken the path of leaving their homes for some times but merely declared themselves to be within the 'Julai Mahal' and refused to pay the tax demanded by the officers of the state. It also gave rise to confusion and discrimination. The officers of the state found it difficult to adopt stern measures for collection of revenue lest it might provoke remonstrances which might be deemed hostile to the interest of the Yubaraj. We cannot justify the advantage granted to the Julais who were supposed to pay family tax at the rate valid for their tribe.

2.4 **Kaziana :**

The introduction of such rent as to cause inequality from community to community during the Muslim Rule in India is historically true. Although no such rent as "Zizia" was to be seen in Tripura, the introduction of rent and its exacting from the Muslim subjects alone in Tripura ruled by the king is pregnant with meaning to every intellectual and inquisitive readers of history. Within the boundary of the Tripura State, every Muslim bridegroom, before he

got married, had to submit rent called as "Kaziana" and had to receive a certificate after his name was registered with the official record. Violation to this law was punishable¹⁴.

It is learnt from a Review published by Rajgi Tripura Govt. that rent (Kaziana) was exacted through observance of Lesseesystem. To the Muslim subjects belonging to lower-income group, this rent was considered to be a heavy burden. But the interesting point is this that from this rent, the amount of annual state income was very meagre not exceeding Rs. 350.00 per annum¹⁵. The system of collecting "Kaziana" through lease system prevailed upto 1880¹⁶.

In the earlier part of the Eighteenth Century, the Tripurians, specially the tribes of the hilly regions were faced with an impasse caused by a frightful economic crisis. Before this particular danger cropped up, the tribes spent their livelihood by hunting beasts, collecting fruits and roots of trees and by cultivating "Jum". There was plenty of lands for them to cultivate "Jum". But since the relation between Tripura and neighbouring states of Bengal, Manipur and Assam was on the tide, the erstwhile situation was changed

The relation between Bengal and Tripurah was first established in the fourteenth century during the reign of First Ratna Manikya. Maharaj Ratnamanikya invited people of thirty six communities from Bengal

and arranged for their rehabilitation in Tripura¹⁷. It is listed in Sri Rajmala that Ratna Manikya actually brought 10 thousand Bengalee families. They were all included in the Nabasena¹⁸.

In the year 1728, Tripura was attacked by Nawab of Murshidabad and as a result of that a good number of people belonging to the Muslim community entered into Tripura and settled here for ever. Moreover, in 1755 Manipur was beset by Burma and consequently many Manipuries were compelled to desert their own land and ultimately they took refuge in Tripura, Cachar and in Shylet. All these people of different races began to live their lives by cultivation (plough cultivation). And the jumia tribes, in order to fight shy of the new-comers, gradually stepped backward into the depth of forest. Thus these tribal people lost the chance of cultivating "Jum" and faced a situation that was worsened by misery and economic crisis¹⁹.

2.5 The Administrative Picture Of Tripura.

As the Tripura State was feudalistic, the pattern of its administration was also the same. The triangular set up of the administration that was framed by the numerical strength of the bureaucrats including Ugir, Nazir, Suba, Nemuzir, Karkone, Kotowal, Barcoah, Hazari etc. was headed by the King himself. Each of the officials enjoyed prescribed power and respon-

sibility and nevertheless decision about all important matters was made and taken by the king himself²⁰. Those upon whom the administrative power of distant or newly conquered regions was conferred, earned the title "Laskar". Khandal and Chambalnagar (Kailashahar) were ruled and supervised by the Laskar Community. At that time, honour was heaped upon those entitled as Laskar and all of them were the Heads in their respective spheres. This title was awarded following the hierarchical system of the Muslim administration²¹.

In order to preserve Justice and to give verdict the administrators at that time acted on the basis of integrity and logical arguments as sanctioned by religion and also according to their conscience. The guilty used to confess his guilt in presence of the Judge and hence there was no question of making an innocent person convicted by submitting false evidence. The persons seeking justice regarded the Judge as their Father or God, and neither the accused, nor the plaintiff hesitated to speak freely and honestly before the Judge. So the way of maintaining Justice was obviously simple and truth would easily come out²².

For the commission of serious type of crime, the criminals were beheaded or were made to die by being lifted on a lance. Sometimes the convicted person was destined to be devoured by dogs. Besides these punishments, the system of throwing the convicted persons under the elephant's feet and of

cutting nose, ears and other parts of the body of the convict was also prevalent. It was made a law that all these punishments be inflicted on the guilty in an open, wide field before the eyes of the common people²³.

A vivid description of the tribal administration is there in "Tripura Buranji". Rangroong was a hamlet with habitation of the Kukis. About three hundred people lived here and there was one representative of the king. The man was called as "Halamcha" and he was deemed the highest dignitary. Under him served a "Gatim", a "Gabur", a "Chapia", and a "Dalai" who were generally supposed to represent on behalf of the Rangroong village. Amongst them, "Halamcha" was entrusted with the task of collecting revenues from the villagers. He would have to send the revenue to the King²⁴.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, the administration of Tripura was tinged with Jespotism. As Hunter asserts in his "Statistical Account of Bengal". "The courts dispensed justice according to a primitive system of equity and good conscience and there was no regular judicial procedure"²⁵.

Whatever the King vocally expressed was the Law. He could have declared any verdict of the court as null and void or could have cancelled the verdict if he desired so²⁶. The King, however, controlled and piloted all kinds of political and administrative affairs through the leaders of the tribesman of various different communities. These leaders were

actually the linkman between the king and the tribes. If necessary whatever the king had to say to his subjects, were relayed to them by these leaders of multi-different tribal people²⁷. The ordinary subjects had to abide by all kinds of social, economic and political regulations and restrictions as made and imposed by the leaders of their respective communities. Even the slightest ignorance of any decision made by the leaders would call for grave punishment. Thus the whole of this despotic administration of the King was pivoted on the leaders who were dictators within their own jurisdiction.

Chapter Two

Notes And References :

1. The report of Tavernier regarding the existence of gold mine in Tripura is not based on facts. Tavernier never came to Tripura. He collected this story from two traders. He met those traders at Patna and entertained them with good drinks. The traders of Tripura took a lot of those delicious drinks and narrated the 'golden' story. Mr. Tavernier without any hesitation included the story in his travelogue (Ball. V Travel in India Jean Baptist Tavernier, Reprint, New Delhi 1,977, PP/215-216)

2. **Tavernier's Travell. J. Phillips Book-III, Part II, Chap. XVI of the Kingdom of Tipprah (Source : Sri Rajmala).**
3. **Sen Gupta, Kaliprasanna, Sri Rajmala, P/155.**
4. **Gledwin's Ain-E-Akbari, Vol I, P/94 (Source : Sri Rajmala).**
5. **Judicial Proceedings, Nov 1879, Nos 6-7. P/210**
6. **Ibid P/210.**
7. **Annual Administration Report, PA 1886-87, P/19.**
8. **Loc Cit.**
9. **Judicial Proceedings, October, 1878, Nos. 40-43, p/246.**
10. **Judicial Proceedings, September, 1883. Nos. 16-19, P/72.**
11. **Op Cit, October, 1878, P/246.**
12. **Loc Cit.**
13. **Loc Cit.**
14. **Tripura State Gazettee, Twelveth Part, 2nd edition 1323 T.E. (1913 A.D.)...An extract from the Tripura State Gazettee, P/38.**
15. **Govt. Review, Dated 29th Shrabon 1291 T.E. of the then Asstt. Minister Sambhu Ch. Mukherjee.**
16. **Dutta, J.C, 'Rajgi Tripurar Sampradayik Kar... Kaziana', Gomoti. December, 1975, P/17.**
17. **Bhuiya, S.K, Ratnakandala and Arjun Das :**

Tripura Buranji (in Assamese(ed), Yanhati 1962, P/35.

18. It is stated in Sri Rajmala (Vol I, P/68) that Ratna Manikya brought ten thousand families of Bengalees. They were all included in the Nabasena.
19. Majumder, B: tribe and politics in Tripura, Past and Present, Socilist Perspective. Vol V, No. I, June. 1977. P/24.
20. Dutta, Dwijendra Ch and Bondopadhyay, Suprasanna, Op Cit, P/32.
21. Sen Gupta, Kali-Prasanna. Op Cit. P/157.
22. Ibid, P/158.
23. Loc Cit.
24. Ratnakandali and Arjun Das, Op Cit, PP/21-22
25. Hunter, W.W.A. Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol VI, Delhi 1973 (reprinted). P/462.
26. Ibid, P/461.
27. Ganguli, J.B.: Economic Problems of the Jhumias of Tripura, Calcutta 1969. P/61.



CHAPTER THREE

Social Problems And Predicaments Prevailing During Eighteenth Century And Afterwards.

3.1 Slavery System :

It was not unlikely that slavery would be in practice in such a state where the level of consciousness of the people was not so high. The Foudal kings of hill Tripperah had no headche to do away with the practice till 1878 despite the abolition of slavery Act having been passed in British India in 1843 (Act-V). The system was in vogue in hill Tipperah from ancient time. Often slaves were collected from adjoining areas under the British Government. "Most of the eunuches of the palace were selected from the slaves"¹.

Nature Of The problem :

In hill Tipperah it was not an uncommon thing for a hill man to sell himself for an unlimited period under abysmal pressure of debt being incurred by him on

various occasions. Generally speaking, such self traffic was done in the hope that the debt would be liquidated. The custom is undoubtedly hateful. But what is worse, the self traffic remained no longer restricted to those who 'voluntarily incurred bondage'². For themselves, but fell invariably on the children made slaves if it so happened that their parents died or ran away while in slavery. And what is worst, if the descendants of the slaves died or fled, happened to be girls in the full bloom of their youth, they were reduced to the status of double slaves. For one thing, they had to serve their masters in the usual manners of the daily round. For another, they had to satisfy, willingly or unwillingly, the carnal desires of their masters³.

Similar type of feudal exactions can be found in the prevalence of keeping girls as slaves in the houses of the land-lords in the Telengana Region of Andhrapradesh even during the first half of the twentieth century. While going to their father-in-law's houses the newly married daughters of the land-lords were accompanied by slave girls who were readily available to serve in their new master's house. These slave girls were often compelled by their land lords to serve as their concubines⁴.

Abolition Of Slavery :

We have no historical evidence that anything like antislavery movement or what we may call any

change causing radical forces came to take shape. In fact there was none of an antislavery awareness as such.

The prevailing socio-economic condition of the then hill Tipperah with its communication bottle-necks were the Principal factors for the absence of such awareness in the society. Even in British India no move to abolish slavery came from the below. Surprisingly "there were many millions of slaves in India" even in 1843 when it was legally abolished by Act-V of 1843. How then was the curse withdrawn in the hilly state? The Maharaja's action move against slavery is most apparent⁵. No less important was the moral and liberal English tradition infused through inter-course with the British India. The presumption is buttressed up by the fact that a far greater pressure on the Maharaja's Durbar had to be built up by the British in the "Suttee" affairs. Evidence bring home the fact that the Maharaja although was not opposed to put an end to the custom, took no practical step for its abolition till 1876-77. What might be responsible for the Maharaja lying low in responding to British call was the influence of the Thakurs which prevailed upon the Maharaja to postpone reform. The Thakurs were naturally averse to give up a custom which supplied them with domestic servants at a very low cost. Even some cases of torcible detention of a wife or of children on the plea of their servitude occured and reported to the political Agent for his

interference⁶. Two special cases were reported to the British Government also. The urgent necessity of speedily abolishing the bondage in the hill state was communicated to the Maharaja who readily expressed his willingness to comply with. He only took time to consult Thakur as to the measures to be adopted for its abolition. However, a proclamation was issued in 1878. The inhuman traffic was legally forbidden. Domestic slavery trade in slaves i.e. sell, purchase, receiving in pledge or forcible detention and like.....all these brought to an end⁷. Indeed contracts of service for a period not exceeding three years could be made. Any violation of the order deserved punishment by the criminal courts⁸. So was the legal injunction.

Those already condemned to have been slaves were offered choice either of leaving their masters or staying with them, not certainly as slaves but as contract labourers. In case of violation of the contract, either party could seek justice in the court.

It would be a long way to compare the Maharajah's anti-slavery move in hill Tipperah to the much bolder one set on foot by Abraham Lincoln in the troubled history preceding the American Civil War. The Tipperah Maharajah had none of the anti or pre-slavery forces to encounter. None of such thing as that of the 350 petitions presented to the House on a single day (Feb. 14, 1838)⁹ had been faced by the Maharajah. There was no danger of a civil war

either, like the one that shook the North and the South of America. In fact no potential tension made itself felt in hill Tipperah. In British India also very little sensation was created by the abolition of slavery (1843)¹⁰. But something of what may be called a pre-slavery force became most apparent as soon as the anti-slavery proclamation came out. The Thakurs who is the main patronage of the institution of slavery got disappointed¹¹. But the reaction of the Thakurs was most powerless when compared to the massive resistance offered by the conservative South of America to the Northern enlightened move. No tension could be built up by the displeasure being incurred of the Thakurs. However, enlightened the Maharajah's step in this case might be, it can not be equated with that of Lincoln's. He was a much poorer move which, however, benefited the poor and the depressed on the one hand and on the other, satisfied in a way, the neighbouring British counterpart, not to speak of the countable few..... the Thakurs in the mainwho dealt in human lives and were allowed no more to do so. Still, when all is said, it must be admitted that the trade in slaves, thanks to the Maharajah, was stopped in hill Tipperah. The results were manifold; the persons who solely depended upon their slaves were not much inconvenienced because they could have the like of the former advantage by making new contract of service. So something like compensation was given to them¹². The formerly condemned slaves, on the other hand, achieved a new kind of advantage, that

of selling their services instead of selling themselves, thus getting themselves food and clothing (after a fashion though) without being fettered with the manacle of slavery that often plagued them for more than a generation.

Immediate Consequences Of the Abolition Of Slavery :

Domestic slavery had effectively put an end to. There was an institution among the Thakurs. Since the issue of the proclamation by the Maharajah a few persons mostly females who used to serve nearly as slaves in the houses of some of the Thakurs, came out. They were allowed the liberty they deserved of going to live with their friends. At first this caused some irritation among the Thakurs. But the Maharajah at the suggestion of the Political Agent, personally explained to some of the leading members of the Thakurs the instansess of his proclamation, and expressed his determination of giving full effect to it. The matter was then again by beat of drums made known to the general public. Soon after this a few more slaves came out most from the houses of Thakurs, and seperately settled themselves according to their choices. Two women who used to attend a daughter of the Maharajah came out as well, and were allowed to live out-side without any objection¹³. The Lieutenant Governor had learnt with much satisfaction of the recent abolition of slavery¹⁴.

Broadly speaking, the abolition of the inhuman custom had given universal satisfaction to that community which had supplied slaves of themselves. They had a sign of relief being thrown out of the clutches of the system which had long before seized to operate in adjoining British India. Finally, we wonder if the abolition of the system brought about any other substantial change in the social status of the people who still continued to render service to their masters as house servants. What could be described a departure from the earlier tradition, was the making of a contract of service which ultimately reduced the bondage period from a life-long term to a brief span of three years¹⁵. Nevertheless, the newly born three years bondage, we apprehend, could be multiplied either by mutual agreement or by some other means which history seldom records.

3. 2 JOYLES SYSTEM—ITS NATURE :

Another age-old institution inimical for society was the classification of a kind of subjects called "Joyles". The Maharajh's wives and sons had been entitled to make Joyles i. e. to engage servants from the hill people. This feudal privilege was also enjoyed by the near relations of the Maharajh causing vital damage to social relations and uph-

ftments. Under this feudal system, they Joyles were supposed to be liable to their master, and not to the state. They paid family tax to their masters, and not to the state exchequer¹⁶. Surprisingly enough, the rate of the said tax as paid by them was much lower than the amount being paid by other subjects of the same social rank and status to the Royal Government. Besides, the very nature of the job of rendering personal service to their master and exemption from payment of taxes acted a strong inducement to their fellow brethren who some times opted to become joyles on-masse¹⁷.

A THREAT TO ROYALTY :

The king was afraid of a threat to reyalty. The threat was not apparent. It could be sensed in the way loyalty to the Maharajh changed overnight by becoming Joyles, or the hill people turned themselves into Jeyles immediately as the occasion arose, no matter how the king would take to such acts of theirs. The quick and abrupt shift of allegiance clearly presupposes that the bend, if any between commoners and the king had become weak and ineffective by the time. Not only this, the act of becoming Joyles on-masse further reveals the fact that the command of the royal authority over the subjects had been immensely slackned the commnd on which the security

and stability of the Royal Govt. so much depended. By the time, the Maharajh became virtually sensitive to this apprehension. The number of Joyles in the state became too great to be easily determined. So the Royal Government felt the necessity of enlisting their number, caste, current where-about and to whom the Joyles were rendering personal service¹⁸. In addition, collecting dates of 'creation if any' of special Joyles was equally felt necessary for some special purpose. Secondly, the collectors were also to identify the other subjects of their rank and to learn about the rate of tax being paid by them. So most of the surviving facts discussed so far show that the common subjects had by the time developed a sense of economic inequality among themselves. The fact that they easily shifted their loyalty to the king is enough evidence that the common people had nothing to do with the feudal kind of ban naturally existed between the king and his subjects. As a result, the Royal Government had suffered a considerable loss, both of its former control and of revenue¹⁹. On the other hand, the Joyels system resulted in another kind of social inequality - - among the so called upper class: those of Royal blood who could enjoy the prerogative of employing Joyels and those who could not, were two sections, distinct from each other, the one getting the better of the other.

ABOLITION OF THE INSTITUTION OF JOYELS ;

Thus the Joyles system was something more than a mere source of income and aggrandisement²⁰, to the near relations and members of the Maharajh's family. Perceptively, the slackening of state control and authority over the joyels which posed a oblique threat to the royalty must have been the most potent factor involved in the immediate need to abolish the system. Secondly, the member of the royal family had taken advantage of the privilege of employing Joyels to such an extent that it threatened to do serious harm to the state.²¹ Then the Political Agent had done the spadework by giving suggestion to the Maharajh who caused the system to be ceased. At last the abolition was called for with the suggestion that all the Joyels should pay their tax to the state at the full rate and they should also be exempted from the liability of rendering service to the members of Maharajh's family. The Maharajh had since accepted the advice and the abolition of the system had been proclaimed.²² It is evident that efforts were made to introduce some measures for the permanent cure of the age-old system even after its proclamation. During the early years of Radhaikshore Manikya's reign the Joyels subjects were still living in the Government

land. So steps were taken to collect revenue and taxes from them during 1309 T. E. (1899 A. D.).²³

To make our discussion worthy and interesting too we may refer to, if not compare with, 'the Vetti' system prevalent in the Talengana region of present Andra-Pradesh even in the first half of the twentieth century. The system was mainly confined to tribal areas or some extent to the most backward social communities in other areas. The 'Vetti' system which effected all classes of people in varying degrees made it compulsory for every Harijan family to send one man from the family to do 'Vetti'.²⁴ In any small village in Telangana region, the system was in vogue. Under the system, the people sent to do 'Vetti' had to do household work in the houses of the Patels, Patwari, Deshmukh etc. . They were also to carry reports to police station and Taluk offices (Tehasil's). They were also asked to do extra work whenever an officer visited the village.

Thus like the Joyels system the 'Vetti' system made the life of Talengana people one of the utter serfdom and abysmal degradation. It dwindled man's self respect. So the movement of its abolition began to gather momentum.

3.3 'SUTTEE' SYSTEM

'Suttee' another ghastly system, which had been

in British India till the first quarter of the nineteenth century, was in vogue in hill Tipperah from ancient time²⁵. It was most inhuman that on the death of a husband his widow had to burn herself in the funeral pyre of her husband. This system called 'Suttee' i.e., self-immolation by the widow of the deceased was more prevalent among the Hindus in British India although there were some instances of Muslim widows performing the rite of 'Suttee'.²⁶ The 'Suttee' custom in course of time assumed an inhuman, ghastly character, for widows unwilling to become Suttee i. e. immolate herself in the funeral pyre of the deceased husbands were forcibly thrown into the burning pyre. Enlightened Indian opinion ran high against this inhuman rite. The authorities of the East India Company were in favour of prohibiting 'Suttee' from the time of Lord Cornwallis when directive were issued to look into the matter. Finally it was Lord William Bentinck who ordered the abolition of the rite of 'Suttee' by the famous Regulation-XVII of 1829 passed on the 4th of December 1829.

'SUTTEE IN HILL TIPPERAH :

In hill Tipperah, as we find, the cruel system of 'Suttee' continued to be practised for a long period of time even after its abolition in British India in 1829. As is experienced in abolishing - - - trade

in slave, no agitation was set on foot to force the authorities at home to adopt measures for abolition of 'Suttee'. No record threw light if any public opinion from the below gained in strength to prepare the ground for its abolition. Rather the Bengal Government was prompt enough to draw the attention of the Maharajah's Government to the practice of 'Suttee'. It was made known to the Maharajah's Government through the Assistant Political Agent Umakanta Das that the British Government would not allow any further delay to occur in sending the opinion of the Royal Government regarding the abolition of 'Suttee'.²⁷ The Maharajah was prompt enough to make it public that his Government had no inclination to go against suppressing the Custom of 'Suttee' which at that time existed only among the hill people in the interior of the state²⁸. But no immediate positive step was taken by the Maharajah's Durbur to do away with the obnoxious system. On the contrary, stray cases of 'Suttee' were used to be committed in the Maharajah's territory²⁹. So, the British Government gave serious thought to it and was very anxious to know whether there had occurred any more cases of 'Suttee' in the hill territory in the course of the last four or five years and what steps, if any, the hill Tipperah Authority took to prevent them. Among the tribes, Jamatyas were orthodox religious people and their windows were accustomed to the practice of 'Suttee' during the last

quarter of the 19th century. During his official tour in the Sonamura Division in March, 1887, the Assistant Political Agent Babu Umakant came to know that three cases of the kind took place amongst the Jamatyas in the course of the last two or three years ⁸⁰. So the evidences push us to believe that constant British pressures through its Political Agents could not be set aside in formulating Maharajah's policy towards abolition of 'Sutte'.

MAHARAJAH'S POLICY OF NON- INTERFERENCE :

To cope with the vexed question, a moderate policy was adopted by the Maharajah. This is evident from the fact below. Though the Maharajah's Durbur felt it very urgent to put an end to this system which, by all means, was against all civilised norms and practices, the sudden interruption of the custom by passing an Act from the above might result in a reaction and incur the displeasure of those uncivilised and illiterate people living in distant hilly lands. The Durbur also argued that the conservative and orthodox religious susceptibilities of the people who regarded it as sacred rite might be adversely affected by the sudden abolition of the system. It was also revealed from the correspondent that the real victims of the hateful custom were living in wretched poverty

and undeveloped condition. This unusual pattern of living of the hill people was one of the potent causes of their sticking to the ageold system. It was not unlikely that any interference from the Durbur with their traditional custom might causes sense of dis-satisfaction and disquiet among them. The Durbur again put forward a new proposal to the British Govt. in India. It was proposed that every 'Sutte' should declare before the Maharajh or an officer appointed for the special Task that she was sacrificing herself by performing 'Suttee' without being compelled or intimidated by any person. The Durber would not allow a single case of 'Suttee' to be performed unless the declaration made by any 'Suttee' was proved valid and convincing without any shadow of doubt before the eyes of the officer appointed for the special purpose. Any violation of the arrangement would be treated as a serious offence under sentence of death. By adopting these preventive measures the Durbur was in the hope of doing away with the custom hitherto in practice in farflung areas ³¹. However, the practice of 'Suttee' was in a state of decline, this remarkable change for the better having been made discernable during the last ten or twelve years, the latter added. We can not deny the fact that the recurrence of 'Suttee' was at a low ebb during the close of the 19th century. Having studied the circumstances thoroughly the Durbur had come to the conclusion that no prohibitory order or law ought to be passed for the immediate abolition of the custom.

Rather it should be allowed to die out automatically³².

It remains to be observed here that the policy, the Durbur adopted was diplomatically forkheaded. On the one hand, it refrained from interfering with the so called sanctity of the 'Suttee' rite (in which the widow must sacrifice herself willingly), thus ceasing to get across the orthodoxy ; and on the other hand, it ceased to dishonour the British will outright and for a policy moderation only to be approved by the British. That the Durbur cared a great deal about the British reaction can be deduced from the fact that under mounting Political pressure to abolish 'Suttee' the Maharajah could only respond by sending a new proposal for tackling 'Suttee' in his state only to be seconded by the British. Thus it reveals that the Maharajah did not dare antagonise the British. Beneath the facade, one can discover a policy of appeasement.

POLICY OF NON- INTERFERENCE ;

A DISTINCTION :

We should not miss another aspect of the policy, adopted by the Maharajh, which made it distinct from its counter part in British India. In British India the

relations and the neighbours of the victim of 'Suttee' perpetrated the inhuman crime by taking resort to different deceitful means in a dirty way, often forcibly. This coercive measure, according to the Durbur, - - - precipitated the Govt. to make regulation for the abolition of the rite of 'Suttee' in British India. But the Durbur wrote to the Govt. with a feeling of satisfaction that this diabolical aspect of the rite was anything but frequent in hill Tipprah. On the other hand, the Maharajah's Durbur defended that most of the cases of 'Suttee' being performed in hill Tipprah were emanating from a pure religious motives³³. After making an appraisal of 'Suttee' affairs being experienced in hill Tipprah the Durbur very confidently declared that the current policy of the state in connection with 'Suttee' might be deemed best for all time to come. This was what might be called non-interference with the root cause of the horrid custom of 'Suttee'. In order to keep the system immune from coercion and intimidation having been perpetrated in British India regular vigilance should be exercised in the matter. If any person found indulging in practising 'Suttee', he should be at once severely punished³⁴. Thus the policy of non-interference made it distinct from its counter part in British India where a direct interference with the monstrous crime of practising 'Suttee' was given effect to by the famous Regulation XVII of December, 1829 which declared 'Suttee' illegal and punishable by law.

those who were associated in any way with the cruel act of 'Suttee' were to be regarded as criminals. Another aspect what made it distinct from British India was that in its zeal for reform the British Govt. received active co-operation of the educated Hindu leaders of thought as also the Judges of the 'Sadar Nizamat Adalat'. Among the leaders of the enlightened Bengali opinion, the names of prince Dwarakanath Tagore and Ram Mohan Roy deserve special mention. But ironically signs of this progressive spirit were lacking in hill Tipparah. No enlightened public opinion asserted itself to exert pressure on the Maharajah's Durbur. Another noticeable feature was that the suppression of the horrid custom of 'Suttee' evoked loud protest in India. A largely signed petition of remonstrance was presented to the Governor General, and an appeal was made to the authority in England. But no signs of protest of any kind were experienced in hill Tipparah when the living cremation of 'Suttee' was prohibited by the durbur in 1889. However, the ploy of Durbur put forward to evolve policy of compromise not to stike the root cause of 'Suttee' could not be carried on for a long time. The exigencies of time called for an immediate and complete prohibition of the savage custom of 'Suttee'.

THE PROHIBITION OF 'SUTTEE' :

From the facts furnished above we may very

justifiably deduce that the forces of chance was not powerful enough to make any headway in the social inertia prevalent in the then Tipprah. Any way the practice by itself was in decline because it was believed to be prohibited, only one case of 'Suttee' being detected in February, 1888 at koylashar (kailashahar). But the submission of the Durbur to the Govt. of India led us to believe that committing 'Suttee' had not been forbidden. The half hearted policy of the Maharajah made conditions easy for the revival of the custom as it was quite clear that "what is not forbidden, is allowed, or in other words, tacitly encouraged" ³⁵.

The British Govt. was much anxious to bring about an outright change in Maharajah's policy towards 'Suttee'. The worry of the British was further enhanced when it failed to impress upon the Maharajah the most diabolical aspect of the custom. The passivity of the Maharajah to take a bold step was tantamount to a "direct encouragement" to a barbarian act which was seldom in vogue in civilised world. Even in British India the horrifying custom was legally prohibited nearly six years back. The British, therefore, never ceased to sustain constant pressure on the Durbur to pass a law against the custom and to enforce it in conformity with the Regulation XVII of 1829. The pressure thus mounted, the Maharajah's Durbur no longer held aloof and it was Assistant political Agent Umakanta as who took

the need when after the death of a person named Charan Senapati, his wife Nichhandabati's turn came to immolate herself in funeral pyre of her deceased husband. Remarkably, the efforts of Umakanta Das coupled with the sincere cooperation and assistance of a Minister to the Maharajh's Durbur Mr. Mohini Bardhan produced positive results. Thus the pressure brought upon the Maharajh's Durbur both from within and without, paved the way for an open declaration by which the practice of 'Suttee' was prohibited by the Durbur in 1889³⁶. A thorny problem is thus solved.

BRITISH INFLUENCE :

It is true that the British Govt. in India was not in a position to exercise authority over the hill Tipprah territory and it had nothing to do with the internal affairs of hill Tipprah save giving advices in important matters. In India, the British Govt. had to play double roles "one is destructive and the other is regenerative"³¹. The regenerative aspect of the British role may be said to have brought about the political unity of India which was cemented by the introduction of Electricity, railway etc.. What is more, the second half of the nineteenth century was characterised by remarkable wave of reforming activities in religion and society. The regenerative wave of

reforming activities had been reflected in the domestic affairs of the adjoining tiny state in the late nineteenth century. In Suttée affairs, the Maharajh's Durbur was under constant pressure from the British authorities to pass the order for its prohibition. So, it can not be denied that the outside British influence was mainly instrumental in abolishing 'Suttée' which the Maharajh's Durbur did not dare forbid till 1889.

3.4 TYTHUNG SYSTEM

Tythung was a feudal type of exaction in kind. We have stated above that maintaining communication with the interior villages in the hills was a chronic problem for the administration. On demand every village in the hills had to supply to the state a portion of labour required by the Authority. When troops of officers sent by the ruling king marched through the hills, the villagers had to supply them with luggage bearers, who were locally called Ththung³⁸. In every village lying on the line of their narrow path alternate persons took the charge of carrying the luggage giving a relief to the former. Even females were not exempted from serving as Tythungs while the Tythungs were compelled to offer their labour, no question of payment could be raised by them. In 1901 a provision was made that 4 annas would be paid to those who would carry loads

of Govt. officers ³⁹. Similar type of feudal exploitation of labour was prevalent in Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh in the first half on the twentieth century ⁴⁰.

3.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL CHANGE :

On the basis of Limited source materials, it is difficult for us to trace out the main force operative in bringing about transformation, if any, in the social structure prevalent in the hill state during the period of our discussion. Most remarkably, the forces of change or what we may call a counter force, however, superficial against the social prediaments, viz. , slavery, Joyels system, 'Suttee' etc. was set in motion. We will propose here a different analysis - - - - - somewhat distinct from conventional one. Far from being generated from the below, the counter force against those social evils operated form above ; that is to say, the Maharajh's Durbur was directly or indirectly involved in bringing about a change of the conventions. Not that the ruled were completely unaware of what was going on in the Roval Palace. For, in the case of slavery or 'Suttee' there is little evidence of the masses being involved actively on either side- - - - -for and against. So the initiative came from the above. The state of passivity maintained by the masses was largely due to their

being geographically confined to a limit enclosed by him, thus being condition by an absence of active reciprocation with the wave of change which have swept over the mind, say, of Bengal. There were vast areas in the life and consciousness of the mass people which were not enlightened, rather, rendered virtually ineffective for lack of education and awareness. There was no Ram Mohan either. Since it was virtually impossible, in hill Tipprah to evolve a historical force from below, the head of the state provided the only possible access on the outside world. Ironically enough, the wave of nascent forces of change made way through the British machinery and subsequently through the machinery of the state.

Chapter-3

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CHAPTER FOUR.

Political conditions of Tripura during eighteenth century.

4.1 THE POLITICAL SCENERY OF TRIPURA PRECEDING THE STRUGGLE OF SAMSHER GAZI :

The period, when the struggle led by Samsher Gazi was aflame, can verily be called as the Middle Age of the History of Tripura. The history of this particular period is those of shame ,grief, general tribulation of disintegrity and greed for power and of possible baseize of Tripura by enemies from inside and outside as well. This was a period when an attempt was made to bring about choas and dishonour to the Royal family through contact with the Nawab of Bengal. During this tenure, about twenty Kings resigned Tripura by legal or illegal ways. By this time the Muslim kings of Bengal consolidated their power and took initiative for the expansion of the boundary of their lands. And quite naturally the neighbour state Tripura arrested their minds with

its resources of forest and minerals. In the middle age, the Tripurā State was time and again attacked, vanquished, plundered and ruled by the Muslims. Josodhar Manikya, King of Tripura was brought as captives to Delhi. And there he finally breathed his last. At this time Tripura had no fixed boundary line and it was snatched and taken possession into by force and the whole situation appeared to be like that of the tug of war exhibited into a field with the help of a rope ¹ .

In the year 1714, the prince Durjayadeb adopted the name "Dharma Manikya" (Second) and ascended the throne ² . Shortly afterwards, the Nawab of Bengal subdued Dharma Manikya and took possession of the even land of the valley of the hilly region. And a zamindar of the Mughal dynasty was appointed by the Nawab to reign over this beset land. But the Mughals could not rule the place for long, since Dharma Manikya won in the second battle and succeeded in driving the Mughal Zamindar away. After this battle, a pact was made between the Nawab and Dharma Manikya to this effect that the latter would give the Nawab annual revenue, the amount being twenty five thousand coins for the Noornagar District (at present the Kamalasagar Rly. Station area in the Comilla District of Bangladesh). It can be assumed from this fact that the amount which the former Talukdars of Noornagar would have to submit to the Nawab was collected from Dharma-

manikya after this pact was made. But the Mughal Emperor himself did not mention about the collection of this annual revenue in the documents where—in allotment of Zamindaries in favour of different persons was recorded ³ .

In 1732, during the period of Dharmamanikya's rule, Jagatroy, the great grand child of Chattramani-
kya contacted, Mir Habib, the famous Dewan of Newabat at Dacca in order to have the kingdom in his grip. He was helped in this affair by Aqua Sadique, the Zamindar of Baladakhan. Mir Habib treated Jagotroy's approach as the golden opportunity for conquering Tripura and to translate his idea into action. He sought permission of his lord, the Nawab Matimanulmuluk Shuja-Ud-din Mahammad khan Shuja-ud-din Dudhdyulla Assad Zang Bahadur, who has the ruler of Bengal at this time. Taking permission from Shuja-ud-din, Mir Habib marched forward with a huge army and with the help of Jagatory Thakur, attackde Tripura and guided by Jagatroy, his hurried advance enabled him to reach near Udaypur. Thereafter a battle reged and Kamal Narayana, the Ugir of Dharmamanikya was slain in that battle. Dharmamanikya at frist fought a grim fight with some success but finally being pitched into defeat, he took to his heels and had his shalter in a hilly region. Thus save the hilly region, most of the parts of Tripura came under the control of the Mughals. Jagotroy was made the king of Tripura State and he took the name "Jagatmanikya". The twenty

two districts deemed as Chakle Roshonabad, occupied by the Muslims, were given him as his Zamindari. One-fourth of the Mymensing district, most of the parts of the sylhet District, one-third of the Noakhali district and some parts of the Dacca district went under the rule of the Muslims of those parts, near about one-third of the Tripura district was only for the lords of Tripura to enjoy. Thus Tripura which remained an independent state for more than five hundred years, lost its freedom for Jagatroy's betrayal and ultimately succumbed to the Muslim supremacy. ⁴ Jagatmanikya was empowered by the Nawab Shuja-ud-din to lord over Chakla Roshonabad and instead, he was to give the Nawab the annual Revenue, the amount being Rs. 92,993/-

The famous historian Stewart observed in his "History of Bengal" : A nephew of the Raja of Tipperah, having displeased his uncle, was banished from the country. The youth took with a Mohammadan Zamindar, named Aqu Sadiqu and entreated him to assist him in recovering the share of his inheritance. The Zamindar being intimately acquainted with Mir Habib, recommended the case of the youngman to him : and pointed out the favourable opportunity it offered of subjecting Tipperah to the Mohammedan army.

Mir Habib, having represented the circumstances to his master, obtained permission to proceed with all the troops that were then in the vicinity of

Dacca, to effect the object. The Mughal troops crossed the Burma border, and entered Tipperah before the Raja was aware of their intention and having the youngman with them whose cause they espoused, he pointed out to them the road by which they should advance. Aided by such guide, they reached the capital before the Raja could make any preparation to oppose them : he was obliged to flee to the mountains ; and the nephew was raised to the Raja upon condition of paying a large portion of the revenue to the Governor of Bengal * .

The collection of annual revenue Rs. 25,000/- (Twenty five thousand) from the Noornagar district and Rs. 20,000/- (Twenty thousand) to be incurred for defence purposs and for capturing the wild elephants as well, thus totaling Rs. 45,000/- (Forty five thousand) were laid aside from the afforesaid amount being Rs. 92,993/- (Ninty two thousand nine hundred ninty three) in compliance with the order of the emperor of Delhi and the rest of the amount Rs. 47,993/- (Forty seven thousand nine hundred ninty three) came within the perview of revenue to be treated as being collected. In the town of Comilla, there was garrison of Mughal soldiers for safegarding the interests of the King Jagotmanikya. Aqua Sadiqe was at that time appointed to the post of "Fouzder".

Maharaj Dharmamahikya, thus vanquished by Mir-Habib went to Murshidabad. There he made friend

ship with Jogotsheth and being helped by the latter, he communicated the actual situation of Tripura to the Nawab Shuja-ud-din . The then ruler of Dacca was ordered by the Nawab to hand over Chakla Roshonabad to Dharmamanikya, and it was agreed that Dharmamanikya would give Five thousand coins as annual Revenues to the Nawab. Accordingly the name of Dharmamanikya was included into the list of those Zamindars who ruled under the Nawab acknowledging the latter's supremacy. The historian Stuart observed with sorrow : "The province of Tipperah, which from time immemorial had been an independent Kingdom, become annexed to the Mughal Empire" ⁹ Nevertheless, the hilly region of the then Tripura still retained its freedom. Up to the period before 1866, even the most powerful British Government had to admit that the 'Parbatya Tripura' was an independent region ⁹ .

After Dharmamanikya expired, his brother Chandramani took the name "Mukundamanikya" and aided by the Fouzdar, most probably in the year 1733, he ascended the throne. At that time, out of the collection of the annual Revenue Rs. 78,305/- (Seventy eight thousand and three hundred and five) to be made from Chakla Roshonabad. Rs. 45,000/- (Forty five thousand) were put aside for spending defence purpose and for capturing wild elephants and the rest of the amount being Rs. 33,305/- (Thirty three thousand three hundred and five) had to be

given as annual revenues. The eldest son of the Maharaj Mukundamanikya, Pachkari Thakur by name, was kept as the Hostage in the court of Murshidabad. During this period, a Muslim named Hazi Moonsam was appointed to the post of Fouzdar in Tripura ¹⁰

Rudramani Thakur, the 'Suba' and at the same time the great grand son of Jagannath Thakur who happened to be the third son of Maharaj Kalyanmanikya, was intent on driving the Muslim Fouzdar and his followers with the help of some powerful tribal leaders of the hilly region such as Bucharnarayans. But when Rudramani Thakur asked permission from the Maharaj Mukundamanikya for launching a fight, the latter informed the Fouzdar of the former's intention. But the Fouzdar, suspecting the King himself was in alliance with the conspirators, arrested not only him but also his sons Bhadramani and Krishnamani and his Nephew Gangadhar. Having heard this news, Rudramani Thakur and Bucharnarayana marched forward with their armies and laid a siege on Udaypur. The Maharaj Mukundamanikya felt so shocked and insulted for his being arrested by the Muslim that he committed suicide by poisoning himself ¹¹.

In between the period of twenty years after the death of the Maharaj Mukundamanikya and before the occupation of Tripura by the British, the history of Tripura is of lawlessness. The then condition of

Tripura resembled the frightful picture of a glorious state that was on the verge of destruction. Many of these coming of the Royal dynasty bankered after the crown, but none of them had the power to possess it. During the period of twenty years mentioned above, of all the Kings who ascended the throne, only the Maharaj Joymanikya had some power. But his growing power was nipped in the bud by the terrible atrocities of the Mughals and gradually Tripura was led into inevitable disaster.

Probably in the year 1737-33. Rndramani Thakur took the name 'Joymanikya' and crowned himself. Maharaj Joymanikya changed the name of the Meherkul District and named it is 'Joynagar; Mukundamanikya's son Pachkari Thakur who was kept as the hostage in the court of Murshidabad made the Nawab aware of Tripura's situation. The Nawab, being satisfied with Pachkari Thakur, gave him the "Sanand" (the letter of authority) to ascend the throne of Tripura and he ordered his Naib Nisam of Dacca to offer Pachkari Thakur all kinds of help for the letter's access to the throne. Thus for the greed of Kingdom, Pachkari Thakur, after receiving the "Sanand" from the Nawab, did actually ruin the possibility of Tripura having its own independence. Pachkari, with the help of the Nawab's army, defeated Joymanikya and adopted the name 'Indramanikys' and in the year 1739 had his ambition fulfilled.

Maharaj Joymanikya, thus being dethroned, roamed about for six months or so and raised an army of fourteen thousand soldiers. He invited all his subjects of Tripura to join him. Harinarayan Choudhury, the most powerful landlord of Meharkul and some other landlords aided with the Maharaj Joymanikya. Of course, almost all the Talukdars of Nootnagar assembled under the banners of Indramanikya. Thus a battle raged between Joymanikya and Indramanikya. Joymanikya's supremacy was established in South Tripura and Indramanikya's power was established in North Tripura. But finally Joymanikya grew powerful and in the several battles that followed, he returned from the battle fields with flying colour. Indramanikya whose strength was reduced to almost nothing solicited the Nawab's support. As was mentioned in the deposition of Ram-ratam Dewan, Dt. 30th September, 1806, before the provincial court, of Dacca: "Then a war took place with Joymanikya's the said Indramanikya not being able to compete with Joymanikya, again informed the Nobab".

Joymanikya, however, bribed Nizam, the Naib of Dacca and the Naib convicted Indramanikya of his failure to pay revenues and imprisoned him at Dacca. By this time, Joymanikya conquered the whole of Tripura. But the prince, Gangadhar who was son of Dharmamanikya, too bribed the Nizam to help him in having the Kingdom of Tripura. The

Naib Nizam made Mahammad Rafi, a cavalier the captain of a battalion of army and sent him to Tripura to assist Gangadhar. Taking help of the army as headed by Mahammad Rafi, Gangadhar arrived at Comilla and took the name "Udaymanikya" and ascended the throne. But he enjoyed the power of his kingship only for a short time because he was driven away by Joymanikya ¹².

Alibardi Khan, the renowned Nawab, conquered Bengal and appointed his own son-in-law Nibaisah Mahammad to the post of the Naib Nazir Dacca. Hussain Qli Khan was posted as next to Nazir to assist the latter. Due to the manouvre of Joymanikya, Indramanikya was throne into the dungeon at Dacca. But within the short time, Indramanikya made friendship with Hussain Qli Khan and according to the latter's counsel, the former made the Nawab Alibardi Khan aware of Tripura's situation through a petition. Moved by Indramanikya's appeal, the Nawab ordered Hussain Qli Khan to march forward with his army and to penetrate into Tripura and thereafter helped Indramanikya in ascending the throne. Accordingly, Hussain Qli Khan reached Tripura and defeated Joymanikya in a battle that took place and made him a captive. Indramanikya thus became King again and as advised by Hussain Qli Khan, he sent a representative to the Nawab's court at Murshidabad. After some time, he came to learn from his representative that Joymanikya was in intimate term with

Hazi Hussain who was in the good book of the Nawab. Indramanikya was also informed that Hazi Hussain was backing Joy Manikya in the latter's endeavour to recapture the throne of Tripura. This news was enough for Indra Manikya to take precaution and he left Tripura for Murshidabad. But at Murshidabad he suddenly met death. Joy Manikya again had the sceptre in his hand. But soon a tussle cropped up between him and the prince Krishnamani, the younger brother of Indra Manikya. Joy Manikya, however died soon and finally his younger Haridhan Thakur who adorned himself with the name "Bijoy Manikya" had the access to the throne.

The Maharaj Bijoy Manikya was given by the Nawab Alibardi Khan, the Sanand (the letter of authority) from the period dated "6 Julusher 15 Jihida" (1747-48 ?) and ascended the throne of Tripura. But as the Prince Krishnamani was hostile to him, Bijoy Manikya failed to exact revenues from his subjects living in the plain regions save from those dwelling in the hilly sides of Tripura. The inheritors of Govindamanikya had it mentioned in the book 'Rajmala' that the Nawab appointed Bijoy Manikya to the post of the Tahasildar of Chakla Roshonabad for which Bijoy Manikya had to give the former twelve thousand coins per annum. But this report which found in "Rajmala" has been proved to be baseless after an analytical historical study was made on the basis of the sanad given to Bijoy Manikya by the

Nawab and the statistical history of Revenues of the period. Like Indra Manikya, Bijoy Manikya too was given the sanad to rule over Tripura ¹³.

During the reign of the Maharaj Bijoy Manikya, a certain Muslim subject (Samsher Gazi) of Dakshinsik (the adjacent region of Belonia, now included into 'Bangladesh') was growing more and more powerful. The Maharaj Bijoy Manikya after ruling only for a few years, passed away. After that Krishnamani made a move to ascend the throne but his desire was failed. He was miserably defeated by Samsher Gazi, a mere ordinary subject, and started roaming about from Forest to Forest.

4.2 THE EXPLOITATION OF THE BRITISH IN TRIPURA.

The Penetration of the British in to Tripura came as a severe blow upon the mode of lives the people of the plain land lived. Apart from the disaster in the field of agriculture, the industry manufacturing clothes in the traditional way was on the wane. In the year 1756, the employees of the East India Company founded two commercial centres in two places Kadba and Charpata by names. These centres were founded with a view to running the business of clothes known as 'Bapta' made of cotton

from the hilly plants of Tripura. The 'Bapta' clothes costing minimum Twelve Lakhs of rupee were exported to foreign countries by the East India Company every year. The Saha family of Louhagara who got the Agency of 'Bapta' clothes became immensely rich. In East Bengal they were known as next to Jagot-Seth. The foreign industrialists, however, caused a fatal blow to the business of 'Bapta' clothes¹⁴.

Like in other districts of Bengal, planting of indigo was also introduced in Tripura. It runs thus in the 'Statistical' Account of Bengal written by Hunter : "The opposition to the industry on the part both of neighbouring Zaminders and of the planter's tenants was so desperate that none of the factories could hold out against it ¹⁵. According to the opinion of Kailash Singha even the people of Bengal failed to surpass the people of Tripura in respect of showing unity and determined protest as raised against the exploitation inflicted upon them through the exacting of 'Nilkar'. Besides the oppression as caused by 'Nilkar', the repression of 'Laban Mohal' to which the common people fell victim, went beyond the limit of all human endurance. The sad tale of blood-shed and that of sweat and tear of the poverty-stricken men will reveal itself after an evaluation of the history of this exploitation and oppression ¹⁶.

In the month of February of 1761, the British flag was first lifted in Tripura. In the very first

year after the East India company had its Civil power over Tripura, the amount of land revenues was increased by Rs.66,695/- (Rupees Sixty six thousand six hundred and Ninty five) rupees in addition to previously collected revenues. The annual revenue of Chakla Roshonabad during the reign of the Nawab Alibardikhan and Sirajaddaula amounted to Rs 33,305 (Rupees thirty three thousand three hundred and five) only. The British Rulers increased the amount of revenues to such a great extent that the revenues amounted to Rs. One lakh from the level of the aforesaid revenue. Afterwards due to the pact of 1765, the revenues leapt up to Rs. One lakh and five thousand.¹⁷ Like those of other places, the peasants of Roshonabad were on the verge of ruin being caught in between the pressure of heavy amount of revenues as fixed by the British lords and the uncontrollable despotism and terror let loose by the Zamindars and Talukdars. More to all these, there was also the exploitation and repression inflicted upon the people by the King of Tripura.¹⁸ To escape from this state of terrible lawlessness and absolutism, many peasants left their houses and eloped into the depth of forest in order to survive. This was the period when many peasants sold their own wives and children and in some cases themselves to the rich and thus added the numbers of the slaves¹⁹.

Chapter-4

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3. Ibid. P/ 100
4. Majumder, R. C, Op cit.
5. Singha, K, C, Op Cit, P/104.
6. Stewart's History of Bengal, PP/266-267.
7. Singha, K. C, Op Cit, P/105.
8. Stewart's History of Bengal, P/267.
9. Govinda Manikya was the first King of Tripura who submitted to the Mughal Emperor by paying tax in Kind (elephants) and posting Tol in Dacca. After him all the Kings received Sanads. They were appointed as the King of Tripura against the Cash Nazarana. They used to pay an yearly tax.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SAMSHER GAZI : HIS EMERGENCE

When the whole of Tripura was thus passing through these social, economic and political turbulence and chaos, Samsher Gazi appeared with his indomitable fighting spirit against oppression and his unequalled skill in launching struggle which shaped the destiny of Tripura into a new form to much hopes and aspirations of the mass.

As per the available sources Samsher Gazi was born in the village named 'Kunjara' of Dakshinshik Pargana in the year 1710. His mother was an ordinary women and his father was Pir Mohammed, a 'Fakir'. Some of the historians hold that Samsher Gazi's father was a peasant and Sheikh Monohar Ali in his book 'Gazinama' seems to differ with this opinion. He described Samsher as son of Fakir, whatever might be the fact, Samsher's father who was in hardship could not support his wife and children. He took his child Samsher to the powerful Zamindar of Dakshinshik, Nasir Mahammad to sell him to the Zamindar, Nasir Mahammad, finding intelligence in the boy and apprehending that the boy bade

fair to shine in life, arranged for his studies in the midst of his own children. In time to come, Samsher was appointed by the Zamindar at Kutghate to supervise the works as Tahasildar. Samsher's physical strength was astoundingly great and his wit sharp ¹. During this time service, one of his near relation, Chandu Gazi was his associate. Chandu was of Herculean strength. At that time, Dakshinsik was very troubled by the decoits. Samsher subdued the decoits with the help of Chandu and the decoits took the vow that they would never stick to the path of robbery. While serving in the Tahasil at Kutghat, Samsher Gazi was reported to have come across a Fakir named Goda Hussain Khadaker who, so the rumour goes, gave the former a sword and a horse saying 'you will win over the battle with Nasir Mahammad and the King of Tripura with the help of this sword'. Later on Samsher, helped by this Fakir, did actually conquer Tripura. Samsher's alliance with Goda Hussain Khondekar remined one of that between Chandragupta and Chanakya Pandit.

5.1 PREPARATION FOR STRUGGLE.

Samsher Gazi could never forget the miseries and Pangs of his own childhood days. Moreover, while remaining under the control of a Zamindar, he witnessed the repression inflicted by the Zamindars.

upon the poor helpless peasants. He had also the opportunity of understanding how the British was sucking ruthlessly the peasants' blood in British India. When he was at Kutghat,, he came into close contact with the poor people ; and the innumerable peasants who become homeless and have-nots due to the merciless exploitation of the Feudal lords never lost sight of him. His bitter and painful experience hardened him and made him a man of strong mind. Samsher became resolute of fight against the tyrants and to save the distressed peasants. But at the same time he realised that until and unless he prepared himself and raised an army, he could do nothing. And hence, his very next step was to convince the poor farmers of having an army of their own so that they could wage a struggle against their oppressors ^a .

But very soon the realisation that money was to be collected for raising an army dawned upon Samsher's mind. He wanted to seize the Zamindary of Dakshinsik and in order to translate his desire into a reality, he hit upon a plan. One day he went to the Zamindar and expressed his desire to marry the latter's daughter. The Zamindar was so enraged at having heard this, that not only did he refuse Samsher Gazi, but also resolved to punish him. Samsher smelling the imminent danger, took to his heels with all his companions into the Forest ^a . Afterwards he spent some time in Bedarabad Pargana and gained power.

5.2 THE ARMED STRUGGLE LAUNCHED BY SAMSHER GAZI.

Samsher's rebellion against the Zamindar remained no longer a secret and the news that he was getting ready to fight against the landlords was enough to draw the attention of all peasants and workers who came rushing to flock around him. Samsher made them learn the use of arms and organised them with a revolutionary zeal and finally he became capable of forming the peasants' army. Samsher thereafter openly declared war against the Zamindar Nasir Mahammad. The Zamindar Nasir Mahammad and his two sons were slain by a sudden attack made by Samsher. After this, Samsher declared himself the lord of Dakshinshik. In the book 'Rajmala' written by Kailash Singha, it was mentioned that Samsher wedded Nasir Mahammad's daughter Daiya Bibi. But Dinesh Sen in his 'Brihat Banga' asserted, 'The beautiful daughter who was root of all this fire and war committed suicide by burning herself at the news of the death of her father and brothers'. It was written in the 'Adrishtachakra' that Samsher married a lady Bela Begum by name. Bijo Manikya, the King of Tripura, having heard the news of Samsher Gazi's rebellion, sent his Minister with a huge army to subdue the former. A fierce battle arose between the royal army and the peasants'

army headed by Samsher. And the battle ended, in the King's defeat. The Royal army chief was made a captive and ultimately, the King was compelled to recognise Samsher Gazi as the Zamindar of Dakshinsik ⁴ . Samsher was given the 'Sanand' (The letter of authority) of Dakshinsik against some thousand coins given by Samsher to the King. After some time, Samsher took the lease of Meharkool District. But his purpose to free the peasants from the yoke of despotism was not fulfilled so long he remained a subject of the King. So, after sometime Samsher stopped sending revenues to the King and declared himself the King of Chakla Roshonabad ⁵ . At this critical period, Bijoy Manikya died and an internal strife, emerged in the royal family over the possession of the crown of Tripura. This internal chaos in the royal family helped Samsher immensely in consolidating his power and strength. He selected from the peasants Six thousand able bodied persons and with the help of them formed an invincible army. He educated them in the arts of war and using weaponry ⁶ . Krishnamanikya, the prince of Tripura tried to subdue Samsher and each time he failed to defeat this man. Finally Samsher Gazi marched forward with his army towards the then capital of Tripura Udaypur and in order to root out the feudalistic administration from Tripura, he attacked the king's army. In this war, the prince Krishnamanikya was defeated and took refuge at Agartala which later on became the capital of Tripura.

Samsher Gazi was backed by Hazi Hussain, the Nawab of Dacca in his fight with kaishnamanikya. Samsher's army seized Udaypur and plundered it. From that time onward, Agartala became the capital of Tripura¹.

The prince Krishnamanikya, while remaining at Agartala, tried his best to demolish the army marshalled by Samsher, but when he did not succeed, he tempted the ferocious Kukis by giving them money and drove them against the peasants. But although the peasants lost their property and people due to these attacks launched upon them by the Kukis, they defeated the Kukis.

5.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF SAMSHER GAZI'S POWER.

At the time when Samsher Gazi launched his severe struggle against feudalism and monarchdom of Tripura, and was on the verge of establishing his power and supremacy in Tripura, Bengal underwent the threat of imminent danger and war. Alibardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal died and his dearest grand child Sirajaddaula who was too immature to learn the subtle twist of politics ascended the throne. But very soon, war broke out between the Nawab's army and the Britishers; and

as betrayed by Mirzafar, Sirajddaulya was defeated in the battle of Palassy. So when Fortune smiled upon Samsher Gazi, the freedom of Bengal went under the debris for a long long period ⁸.

After capturing the administrative power of Tripura, Samsher sent some persons to the hilly regions with a view to making the tribal people understand the actual position and situation of Tripura which had emerged out of a revolutionary change as actuated by him and collecting revenues from them. One of the representatives sent by Samsher was the Ugir Ramdhan Biswas. But the subjects living in those hilly places, especially the Kukis did not accept Samsher as their King, neither did they agree to give Samsher Gazi Revenues. They expressed their opinions saying : 'We would never give revenues to anybody except a person belonging to the royal dynasty of Tripura ⁹.' And this is why Rev. Long remarked : "The people of Tripura like the shiks were a military race." Understanding this psychology of the hilly people. Samsher did not ascend the throne of Tripura and instead, he installed Banamali Thakur, the nephew of Udaymanikya as the King after endowing him the name 'Lakshman-manikya'. Rev. James Long, the critic of Rajmala said : "Samsher jung obtained the Govt. but the people not recognizing him as the legitimate heir, he then installed as Raja, one of the Tripura family ' But although he was not the King, the power

actually rested in his hand ; and those subjects who at first rebelled against Samsher, were pacified to see Lakhsman Manikya ascending the throne and they were not only willing to pay revenues, but also they recognised Samsher Gazi as Ali in Ali¹⁰. It was mentioned in 'Gazi Nama' that Lakhsman Manikya reigned in Tripura as a puppet King only for three years, and after the lapse of this period, Samsher Gazi named himself as "Shri Shrijut Mahammad Samsher Choudhury" and started to rule over Tripura¹¹.

5.4 DISCIPLINE IN ADMINISTRATION.

Governors were appointed by Samsher Gazi. One for each pargana in the even land. Those Governors belonged to both of Hindu and Muslim communities. Abdul Rajjack was the Dewan of Samsher's army. The Governing power of Bishalgarh Pargana was conferred upon a man named C-hana-Ulla. A man Abdul by name was appointed the administrator of Noornagar and Ganga Mahal. From the available source names of only two Hindu Governors of different Parganas have been found and one of them was Gangagobinda of Jagatpur and the other was Harishchandra of Chanddagran. Gangagobinda living at Dharmanagar was the Head Dewan and Harihar living at Khandal was the Naib Dewan. They

were in-charge of the Revenue department ¹².

Samsher Gazi distributed land at free of cost amongst his poor subjects including the slaves. As per the Revenue Law introduced by him, the poor were exempted from paying revenues ¹³.

By his order, many ponds were dug in so many villages ¹⁴. Besides, Samsher constructed a brickbuilt road from Domoghati, now known as Tapardhum or Tarapadhum, situated near Udaypur, to Khandal. He erected an academic institution into the compound of his own house and thus provided innumerable students with the scope of taking education. He invited a blind Hufez from Sandip and with the help of the letter arranged for importing lessons on Koran. For the teaching of Arabic language he invited from Hindustan a Moulavi, and for the teaching of Bengali and persi languages, he brought from Puddia a Gurumahasaya and from Dacca a Munsif respectively. Teaching was being imported into his school from 6 'O' clock to 10 'O' clock in the morning and from 12 'O' clock to 4 'O' clock in the afternoon. But in order to accomplish all these benevolent deeds, the money collected from revenues was not sufficient. Samsher therefore, in order to collect money, used to rob the miser Zamindars of their treasures and these Zamindars lived in the British occupied places of Tripura, Noakhali and Chittagong ¹⁵.

Sheikh Monohar who was the biographer of Samsher Gazi wrote : 'Samsher once looted one

Lakh rupee of a miser landlord. Because that very landlord was not at all a giver, being a close fist man ¹⁶. According to the report mentioned in the Gazette of Noakhali District, Samsher attacked the house of the rich men of and on and looted their wealth and distributed to among the poor ¹⁷.

But this type of struggle under the leadership of Samsher was launched in Tripura at a time when lawlessness prevailed and as such the smugglers and other criminals of the society became powerful. The price of the essential commodities soared high. Samsher took a stern step against these criminals. Kailash Singha who composed the book "Tripurar Itihash" asserted : Samsher introduced a new rule of purchase and sale of commodities in his state. By his order the weight being 82 'Sikkas' came to be regarded as equivalent to that of one 'Ser' (K G). And what particular commodities would have to be sold upto what definite portion of quantity as against the weight of 'Ser' (K. G) were clearly shown into a list made by Samsher and that list was left hanging at every market place. As per this list all purchase and sale were done. The list runs thus :—

Rice	One Ser	5 'Gandas'	=	One Paise
Paper	One Ser	5 'Gandas'	=	One Paise
Lolasses	One Ser	10 'Gandas'	=	Two Paise

Salt	One Ser	10 'Gandas'	=	Two Paise
Onion	One Ser	10 'Gandas'	=	Two Paise
Cotton	One Ser	5 'Gandas'	=	One Paise
Kalai	One Ser	5 'Gandas'	=	One Paise
Mallet	One Ser	10 'Gandas'	=	Two Paise
Pea	One Ser	10 'Gandas'	=	Two Paise
Mug	One Ser	One Anna	=	Four Paise
Arhara	One Ser	One Anna	=	Four Paise
Oil	One Ser	Three Annas	=	Twelve P.
Ghee	One Ser	Five Annas	=	Twenty P.

18.

The above list vividly shows the market price of the then Tripura and of the period when the battle of Palassy was fought.

Chapter-5

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CHAPTER SIX

6.1 THE DECLINE OF SHAMSHER'S REGIME.

Difference of opinion is there amongst the historians as to how Samsher died. It is said that Krishna Manikya, the prince of Tripura, took help of Mir Kassem the Nawab of Bengal in order to subdue Samsher Gazi. The Nawab was well aware beforehand of the rebellion of the peasants of Tripura the peasants who launched their struggle under the leadership of Samsher. The Nawab recognised Krishna Manikya as the King of Tripura and he sent a huge army to Tripura in order to destroy Samsher's force. The Nawab's army which was well equipped with guns and cannons supported by the British Merchants finally vanquished Samsher who was ultimately thrown in to the prison of Murshidabad by the Nawab's order. And sometime after, Samsher was bound in front of the cannon and was blown up by the Nawab's order and thus he perished ¹ .

According to what was mentioned in the 'Gazinama', Samsher was placed before the Cannon at Ghoraghat, Rangpur by the manoeuvre of Agabakhar

the Governor of Chittagong. It was mentioned in the 'Krishnamala' that during the reign of Jafar Ali, the Nawab of Bengal, Samsher was thrown before the Cannon in the year 1758 and was blown up. According to the opinion of Joykumar Bardhan, Samsher was assassinated by the Nawab's spies while crossing the Feni River secretly. Suprakash Roy in his 'Bhārater Krishak Bidraha O Ganatantrik Sangram', opined that Samsher Gazi was perished in the year 1768. Kailash Singha's opinion that Samsher Gazi was blown up in the year 1760 in the face of the Cannon by the order of the Nawab Mirkassem seems to be possibly true, because krishnamanikya ascended the throne of Tripura on the 17th December of 1670; and in the month of October, 1760, Mir Kassem became the Nawab of Bengal. So if Samsher was killed in the year 1760 he was probably slain by Mir Kassam's order.

6.2 EVALUATION OF SAMSHER GAZI AND OF HIS STRUGGLE

Through traditional sayings and rumours and through representation of distorted facts, so many historians have tried to attribute Samsher Gazi with the terms 'robber', 'decoit' and 'thief', Here goes a saying that Samsher, being a formidable decoit, used to plunder the whole of Tripura and his lootee

Wealth was kept in absolute secrecy into the hilly cavern at Udaypur. His companions brought carpenters into the dense forest & Samsher entered in to the woods of 'Shal' trees taking with him carpenters who drilled holes into those trees. Samsher treasured up his looted things in the holes which were afterwards covered with such a skill that even the slight mark of drilled holes were completely effaced. Samsher, after storing his wealth in those secret places beheaded the carpenters. ².

Another saying is that travelling, being seated on the elephants back, Samsher saw some Hindu women bathing into a pond in the village named Mireswari. The woman who was the most beautiful amongst them, was kidnapped by Samsher and was brought into his home. The woman was married and was a Brahmin by caste. ³

Another saying is that Samsher once at dead of night went with his band of decoits to the temple of 'Goddess Jalamukhi Kali' at Sitakunda for looting. But as soon as he approached the temple, he saw to his bewilderment innumerable Sipahi soldiers standing in guard of the Temple. That night Samsher had to return with a dejected mind and his mission unfulfilled. ⁴ .

Sheikh Monohar, the biographer of Samsher, said that Miraha Chowdhury of Chittagong who was

a very close-fisted man, changed his habit of closing his fist in fear of the plunder of Samsher Gazi ⁵.

It is very difficult to say whether any historical truth lies in all these rumours and sayings. In the book 'Krishnamala', Samsher was depicted as a thief. It can easily be assumed that the then Zaminders and the kings of Tripura failed to suppress Samsher's power. And that such a mighty man as he was, would appear as a ruthless decoit or something akin to a decoit to all those Kings and landlords is not at all surprising. It is very natural that the contemporary historian would describe the enemy of the King as a decoit in 'Krishnamala'. But Samsher's character was analysed by such historians from their own viewpoints which were biased and partial. Kailash Singha asserted that Samsher Gazi collected money from the Zaminders by force. And the historical record shows that during his reign, the administration ran smoothly. Samsher succeeded in maintaining law and discipline to such an extent that Tripura was almost freed from the terror of decoits' attack. We come to learn from 'Gazinama' that the poor subjects were exempted from giving revenues of land in his time and this is what is expressive of Samsher's benevolence. Afterwards, Krishna Manikya was rather compelled to retain this rule of exemption. That Samsher kidnapped a Hindu Woman (who was bathing into a pond) from the Mireswari village and

that he arranged marriage of this lady's husband to another women and appointed the man to a higher post are far from historical truth. But in the book 'Addrishtta Chakra' it has been stated by Joykumar Bardhan that when the people of Tripura got panick-stricken by the oppression of Basirkhan, Samsher subdued him and freed the people from his grip of torture not only that Samsher rescued a lady Bhabarani by name from Basir Khan and he addressed her as 'Mother' and made her find her husband again. Joykumar Bardhan who wrote the book 'Addrishttachakra' was himself a higher official in the Royal Government and whatever he wrote in his book were on the contemporary records and official files. And hence, one can rely upon this book for an understanding of Samsher's character and his activities. People belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities was glad to see him in power.

Dr. Jagadish Gan Chaudhury evaluated Samsher Gazi from three different angle of vision. Frist according to some village poets loyal to Samsher Gazi, Secondly, in the feudalistic outlook of the King's courtiers and thirdly, from the Marxian view point. The first category of writers obviously had a biased approach in favour of Samsher Gazi and second Group resorted to only the negative side. The third Group approached the subject with a pre-conceived notion and depicted Gazi as a revolutionary, reformer, benevolent administrator and allways against the

authoritarian forces ⁶. Obviously, Dr. Gan Chaudhuri extended his support in favour of the second category of writers and put forward some arguments in favour of his support. The arguments so placed were mainly based on sources like Rajmala and Krishnamala, Since Rajmala and Krishnamala are full of compliments of the then rulers of Tripura, hence Gazi being the sole rival of the King, he did not find any favour. Besides Dr. Ganchaudhuri did not accord any importance to the writings of Seikh Monohar Ali, the biographer of Samsher Gazi, Joy Kumar Bardhan, Dr. Bijit Kr. Datta, Suprakash Roy and others who assessed Samsher Gazi from the first and third angle of vision.

Peer Mohammad, the father of Samsher Gazi was brought to the Zaminder Nashir Mohammed with the charge of theft of a pump-King ⁷. The thief was settled in land for his reformation by the Zaminder but the irony of fate was that the Zaminder was beheaded by Samsher Gazi, the son of so-called thief, not for ideological cause but for amorous reason ⁸. Though behaviourists are of the opinion that the temperament of the thief is the root cause of theft, but Socialists differ as to this fact. In Socialistic, or Marxian view point poverty mainly induces persons to indulge themselves in such anti-social activities.

The first half of the 18th Century was the period of shame, grief, general tribulation of integrity and greed for power and of possible besize

of Tripura by enemies from inside and outside as well. Besides natural calamities was also aflame. Obviously enough in such precarious condition the economic structure of Tripura was in a State of collapse. In order to survive and finding no other alternative some poor people resorted to antisocial means. Crushed by poverty Samsher's father sold all his belongings even along with his only son Samsher to Zaminder Nazir Mohammed. He might have been charged with theft (Pumpkin) but considering the most pathetic and precarious circumstances it should be excusable and it must not be a fatal slur to his character.

It has already been mentioned earlier that 'Samsher beheaded Zaminder Nasir Mahammad not for amorous reason, but he resorted to this means in order to translate his desire into a reality, that is to seize the Zaminderi of Dakshinsik.

Samsher Gazi dared not to face royal army in broad day light but he attacked the royal army at dead of night and somehow managed to make the royal-army-chief as captive and compelled the King to recognize him as the Zaminder of Dakshinsik⁹. In comparison with royal army Samsher' power was very poor. So it was definitely his farsightedness that without resorting to open confrontation, he adopted guerilla warfare.

Dr. Ganchaudhuri opined that there were mainly two objectives behind the excavation of big

ponds by Samsher Gazi. First to establish his victory and secondly to establish military base ¹⁰. It would have been better if Dr. Ganchaudhuri would include one more objective, i. e., public service. There are so many precedents in history that the benevolent rulers would excavate ponds for benefit of the common people. Obviously, Samsher Gazi had this idea in his mind.

Samsher Gazi distributed land, free of tax, to the landless people irrespective of caste and creed. Nowwhere it is found that Samsher distributed land to the Hindus and the Mahammedans only being pleased by their dance and music. Rather it is found in the Noakhali District Gazetter that at times Gazi would distribute money among the down-trodden section of people.

Besides that while expanding educational facilities, Gazi's efforts was limited to a communal circle¹¹ is undoubtedly a distortion of historical facts. His love for education was really praiseworthy,

In comparison with other communities, the Muslim community was lagging far behind in all respects. And hence if Gazi paid a bit more importance for the betterment of the Mahammedans, it surely deserves excuse. Samsher not only tried for the education of Arabic and Parsi language, but he extended his efforts also for the education of

Bengali language and with this point of view he brought one Gurumohasaya (scholar-teacher) from pargana.

When Samsher Gazi launched his struggle, the Nawab's administration was at that time on the verge of collapse and the whole Tripura was submerged into a terrific turmoil that was caused by the internal conflict of the royal family and the unbearable poverty of the poor subjects of Tripura. So the people were very eager to get freed from this chaotic situation in the state and they embraced Samsher's rise to power with much hope and happiness.

Here goes the saying that Samsher Gazi was the worshipper of Goddess Kali and he would pay homage to Goddess Tripura Sundari whenever he launched war against his enemies. Perhaps there lies no historical truth behind such sayings. Of course, the respectful mind of the Hindu subjects towards Samsher Gazi probably gave birth to this adage. Hence, historical facts have been distorted in the history of Tripura by depicting Samsher Gazi as robber, thief and so on and it is undoubtedly an injustice towards Samsher Gazi. Dr. Bijit Kr. Dutta affirmed, "Samsher Gazi was a famous person in East Bengal." 'Rajmala' authenticates that he was adorned with much distinctions during the reign of Alibardi Khan. 'Gazinama' of Mir Habib marks that the image of Samsher Gazi was still green in the

mind of the people of Tripura for a long period even after his sad demise¹². Samsher Gazi was the representative of the peasants, workers and down-trodden people of Tripura. The struggle launched by Samsher Gazi initiated the dawn of political consciousness among the exploited, neglected peasants and workers of Tripura. This was for the first time that the people became conscious as to their rights. They could imbibe that the people are the real sovereign and they can change the Government if they so desire. Hence the struggle launched by Samsher Gazi instilled democratic consciousness for the first time in the minds of the people of Tripura.

Prior to this struggle the minority people particularly the Muslim community was very neglected in Tripura. Being inspired by the ideal of Secularism Samsher employed high Official from among the people of Tripura irrespective of caste and creed. No such precedent is found that a mohamedan took the responsibility of high office under the Royal Government prior to this struggle. Later on, the Kings of Tripura took a liberal view for the minority people and inspired by the ideal of secularism.

Despite all those appreciations, it can hardly be held that Samsher Gazi earned a stainless reputation. Seik Monohar the friend, employee and biographer of Samsher Gazi. stated in Gazinama that

Gazi himself became the sole agent of cotton, rice, salt. He did monopoly business of those commodities. No one was allowed to purchase cotton, rice and salt etc. from the cultivators and trade on those commodities. He used to give 'dadan' (advance) to the cultivators who could not but sell their products to the agent of Gazi. It is stated in the Gazinama :

“বিজার। চাপাস কেহ নিতে নাহি পারে।

গাজী এ দাদন করি গোলাজাত করে ॥

O O O O

নগরের কাজে ছিল মনগাজী হোয়ার।

দাদন মলঙ্গীগন গোলাজাত করে ॥

O O O O

ধান চাউল যদি কোরত জয় সনে।

সেক ছাড়া ভাই সবে করে রক্ত সনে ॥”

ইত্যাদি—

Goolam Ali, a brother of Samsher was his agent in the private business. Some critics opined that in fact there was no difference between Samsher Gazi and other common traders who used to exploit the poor peasants. It is further criticised that ideals of liberty, fraternity, equality, freedom or speech etc. are all products of Renaissance in the early nineteenth century and these ideals were not known to the people of middle age. Since Gazi is not a singular example and if he is treated as a leader of the

people then Pratapaditya of Jessore also may be treated as the leader of the people. But great historian such as Ramesh Chandra Majumder and Sir Jadunath Sarkar refused to give him that status. Even Rabindranath Tagore also declined to give him that position. Thus Samsher Gazi should be evaluated in the norms that were prevalent during his time.

In the end it can be asserted that whatever is told about Samsher Gazi, but the struggle of Samsher Gazi which took place in the middle of the eighteenth century, is a landmark in the history of Tripura. This rebellion can be assumed as the first well organised struggle in Tripura against Feudalism. This was for the first time that the basis of feudalism in Tripura was undulated by this struggle. Later on the Kings of Tripura were compelled to limit their exploitation as a consequence of this struggle. Evil customs such as 'Titun Custom', 'Julai Custom, etc. upon the subjects and 'Kaziana Tax' particularly upon the Muslim community were withdrawn by degrees. Exemption of taxes for the poor subjects was retained and land revenue was lessened. Feudalism was at its peak in different states of India when Samsher Gazi launched his struggle in Tripura. So it was next to impossible to root out Feudalism in a detached way particularly in Tripura. This rebellion only initiated a good starting of struggle against Feudalism. Therefore, considering from the view point of political ideal this struggle was very much important.

Chapter-6

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5. —do— Letter written by the
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