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The demand for a Greater Tripraland

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Why is in news? The newest political party in Tripura, the Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) Motha, floated in 2019 by Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma, the son of Tripura's last king, has created a flutter with its demand for a Greater Tripraland.



Constitutional Provisions for creation of a new state

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Article 2 of the Constitution deals with admission or establishment of new states. “Parliament may by law admit into the Union, or establish, new States on such terms and conditions, as it thinks fit,” it states.

Article 3 comes into play in the case of “formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States” by the Parliament.

A Brief about Greater Tipraland

Greater Tipraland is the core ideological demand of the TIPRA Motha. The party released what it called a Vision Document where it said that it was committed to seeking a permanent solution upholding the rights of the indigenous people of Tripura as per the Constitution of India.

Among the 19 notified Scheduled Tribes in Tripura, Tripuris (aka Tipra and Tiprasas) are the largest. According to the 2011 census, there are at least 5.92 lakh Tripuris in the state, followed by Reangs (1.88 lakh) and Jamatias (83,000).

They want the Centre to carve out the separate state under Article 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

In its current form, the contours of the new State would go beyond the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) areas to include several other villages where the Tiprasa (indigenous people of Tripura) reside in large numbers.

In addition, the Motha would set up task forces to connect with the Tiprasa living in other regions of the country and the world to help them with their linguistic, cultural, social, and economic development

Origin of the demand

Tripura was a kingdom ruled by the Manikya dynasty from the late 13th century until the signing of the Instrument of Accession with the Indian government on October 15, 1949

The demand mainly stems from the anxiety of the indigenous communities in connection with the change in the demographics of the state, which has reduced them to a minority.

It happened due to the displacement of Bengalis from the erstwhile East Pakistan between 1947 and 1971.

From 63.77 per cent in 1881, the population of the tribals in Tripura was down to 31.80 per cent by 2011. In the intervening decades, ethnic conflict and insurgency gripped the state, which shares a nearly 860-km long boundary with Bangladesh.

The joint forum has also pointed out that the indigenous people have not only been reduced to a minority, but have also been dislodged from land reserved for them by the penultimate king of the Manikya dynasty Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman.

Between 1950 and 1952, nearly 1.5 lakh refugees had entered Tripura for shelter. The flood of refugees led to bitter differences and, eventually, conflict between the tribals and the non-tribals escalated in 1980 and took the shape of armed insurgency.

The demand for autonomous regions or separate statehood during this time metamorphosed to sovereignty and independence. However, after a political truce was reached between the State and the rebel groups, the demand for statehood was revived.

Measures taken to address the grievances of indigenous tribes

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The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTADC) was formed under the sixth schedule of the Constitution in 1985 to ensure development and secure the rights and cultural heritage of the tribal communities.

The TTADC, which has legislative and executive powers, covers nearly two-third of the state's geographical area.

The council comprises 30 members of which 28 are elected while two are nominated by the Governor.

Also, out of the 60 Assembly seats in the state, 20 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes. 'Greater Tipraland' envisages a situation in which the entire TTADC area will be a separate state.

It also proposes dedicated bodies to secure the rights of the Tripuris and other aboriginal communities living outside Tripura.

Conclusion

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