

1936-86

Golden Jubilee Series No. 7

**GANA MUKTI PARISHAD IN  
BUILDING THE PEASANT  
MOVEMENT IN TRIPURA**

**DASRATH DEB**

*May 1986*

*Price : Rs. 1.20*

---

**ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA**

## FOREWORD

THIS PAMPHLET IS THE SEVENTH IN THE SERIES OF AIKS Golden Jubilee publications. This pamphlet gives the inspiring narrative of the growth and development of the peasant movement among the tribal peasantry of Tripura.

Tripura stands today as a strong outpost of the Left movement in the north-east of our country on the borders of Bangladesh. When the divisive forces are very active in the whole north-east region, and trying to destabilise the country, with imperialist backing, Tripura stands as a symbol of unity of the tribal and non-tribal people. Even the efforts of the Congress(I) to join hands with the separatist forces of the TUJS to destabilise the situation in the state, have not borne any fruit. The basis of this unity was laid by the growth of democratic consciousness among the tribal people through their powerful organisation, Ganamukti Parishad, which is today a constituent unit of the All India Kisan Sabha.

This pamphlet tells the story that has its beginning with the organisation of Jan Shiksha Samiti to eradicate illiteracy among the tribals, started by educated tribal youth at the time of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman in 1945. Faced with repression, the leaders of this organisation were forced to set up Tripura Rajya Ganamukti Parishad as a political platform of the tribal people in the post-independence period, in 1948.

The Parishad started agitation against the practice of *dadan* which meant advance purchase of crops from the tribal peasantry at throw-away prices. It also took up the questions of feudal and usurious exploitation. The Parishad had to face severe repression which forced them to organise armed resistance to defeat their legitimate right to free themselves from bondage. They forged alliance with the non-tribals and developed a powerful movement which came under the influence of Communists who were the best champions of this cause. Many laid down their

lives in the struggle, inscribing with their blood a glorious chapter in the history of the peasant movement in the country.

The leaders of this movement were Comrades Dasrath Deb and Biren Dutta who were able to win both the Lok Sabha seats in Tripura in the first general election in 1952. Comrade Desrath Deb became a legendary figure and a symbol of the struggle of the tribal peasantry.

This story is written by Comrade Dasrath Deb himself, one of the founders of the movement, who went through untold sufferings during the last forty years but stood loyally by the cause of the tribal people, the working class and other toiling people. He has won the affection of all sections of people of Tripura—both tribal and non-tribal—and heads the Ganamukti Parishad down to this day. This pamphlet is going to be a valuable education for all those who are struggling for the completion of agrarian revolution in the country.

*Harkishan Singh Surjeet*

## GANAMUKTI PARISHAD IN BUILDING THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IN TRIPURA

*Dasrath Deb*

AT THE INITIATIVE OF A FEW EDUCATED TRIBAL youth, the Tripura Rajya Janashiksha Samity was formed in 1945 to combat illiteracy then prevalent widely among the tribal communities. The movement launched by the Janashiksha Samity gained instant popular support in the tribal areas, but Maharaja Birbikram Kishore Debbarman, the monarch who was then ruling, did not approve of it. From the very beginning the Communists tried to develop a close relationship with the Janashiksha Samity and they spared time to extend their support to the latter's anti-illiteracy drive. Dasrath Deb, Sudhanwa Debbarma, Hemanta Debbarma, etc. were the front-ranking workers of the Janashiksha Samity, and notable among the Communist workers who maintained close contact with them was Biren Dutta.

In 1948 the Communist Party was banned by the Union Government headed by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The impact of this anti-Communist drive of the Government was felt also in the far off Tripura. The movement of the Janashiksha Samity against illiteracy was dubbed as a ramification of the Communist movement and hence had to be suppressed. Following the ban imposed on the CPI, the Government made it almost impossible for the Janashiksha Samity to carry on its work openly. A large number of Communist leaders and workers were arrested in the country while a desperate effort continued to arrest those who had managed to dodge the police dragnet. Warrants of arrest were also issued against the leaders

of the Janshiksha Samity, namely, Dasrath Deb, Sudhanwa Debbarma, Hemanta Debbarma, etc. Interestingly, the Janshiksha Samity was not formally outlawed by the Congress Government. But notwithstanding its legal existence, there were all out efforts to curb its activities and to put its leaders in jail under the Preventive Detention Act.

At this crucial stage the Janashiksha Samity leaders—Dasrath Deb, Hemanta Debbarma and Aghore Debbarma—along with the Communist leader Biren Dutta—sat in secret consultations to work out the future course of action. The outcome was the formation of the Tripura Rajya Ganamukti Parishad as a political platform of the tribal people. Vigorous efforts were made to extend the organisational base of the Ganamukti Parishad amongst the tribals as speedily as possible.

The attack on the Janashiksha Samity by the Government was taken by the majority of the tribals as an attack on the tribal community as a whole. Within a short time, the Ganamukti Parishad emerged as a powerful organisation of the tribals with large numbers of them having been rallied under its banner. The Congress Government began to face strong opposition from the tribal people.

### THE GOLAGHATI SHOOTING

Tripura was gripped by an acute food crisis in 1948 and the situation went out of hand at Golaghati, a tribal hamlet situated only at a short distance from Agartala. Those days almost the entire economy of the tribal areas was controlled by the exploitative moneylenders. These leaches mercilessly fleeced the simple tribals by practising *dadan* which meant advance purchase of the crops of the tribal peasantry at throw-away prices.

The notorious moneylender Hari Saha, who used to operate from Bishalgarh market, extended his *dadan* racket to Golaghati and the adjoining areas. Every year he used to collect a huge quantity of paddy and rice from the tribals to whom he advanced *dadans* and carried away the stock of foodgrains thus collected to Bishalgarh for sale at high rates. As has been stated above, the food situation in Tripura was critical in the year 1948. The tribal people of Golaghati got panicky when they

learnt that the moneylender Hari Saha was making arrangement to lift huge quantity of foodgrains to Bishalgarh which, if true, would mean further aggravation of the already serious food crisis. They decided to open dialogue with Hari Saha and to persuade him not to carry away the foodgrains from Golaghati area.

Organised by the Ganamukti Parishad, agitation against moneylending, especially against the practice of *dadan*, was gaining ground among the tribal peasantry. A section of Bengali Muslim peasantry also was drawn into the orbit of agitation in course of time. Agitation against moneylending and usury was started in a limited way during the reign of Maharaja Birbikram Debbarman which gained considerable strength by the time monarchy was replaced by the direct rule of the Central Government run by the Congress party.

A dialogue between the moneylender Hari Saha and the representatives of the tribal and Muslim peasantry of the Golaghati area, was started when Hari Saha loaded the collected foodstocks in several boats for carrying them to Bisalgaah market. It was pressed that the foodgrains, instead of being lifted to any other place, should be sold among the local crisis-ridden tribal and Muslim peasantry. Since the peasants were not in a position to make cash payment it was urged that the foodgrains should be sold to them on credit with reasonable interest. The representatives made it clear that there would be written documents of such credit transactions which would be made over to the moneylender Hari Saha after being duly signed by the peasants. Meanwhile, the peasants decided among themselves that in case Hari Saha refuses to accept their terms they will forcibly capture his stock of foodgrains, whatever might be the consequences.

Feeling the pulse of the local people Hari Saha decided to take recourse to deceit. The leaders of the agitationists were informed by his men that he was agreeable to the sale of his stock of foodgrains on credit, of course, with interest mutually agreed upon. Date and time were also fixed for finalising the talks.

But on the appointed day a police party from Bishalgarh arrived on the basis of a secret understanding with Hari Saha.

It laid an ambush in the shrubs overlooking the river Burin-ganga near Golaghati. The people fixed up some local influentials to stand as guarantors, if there was agreement with Hari Saha on credit sale of foodgrains. As all of them together were proceeding towards the place fixed for talks, they were suddenly fired upon by the police party from its ambush. The incident occurred on 23rd of Aswin, 1948. Nine persons were killed by the police firing, among them seven were tribals and two Bengali Muslims. The peasants had to pay a heavy price but the Golaghati massacre gave a new turn to the peasant movement in Tripura, particularly among the tribals.

The tribal people of Tripura realised from this bitter experience that the police of the Congress Government will not act in favour of them ; rather they will do everything to protect the interests of the moneylenders and other exploiters. They also realised that the Congress Government is no friend to them but the defender of the vested interests. It is because of this class bias of the Congress Government that they used the police force to kill the impoverishd, half-fed peasants who came to place their demand quite peacefully and without taking recourse to any violence.

The Government, however, was wrong in its calculation. They had killed nine peasants at Golaghati, but failed to kill the growing movement of the peasantry. The resistance movement had taken a militant turn in Khowai and Sadar sub-divisions after Galaghati killings. The Government deployed military in addition to the police force to meet the rising tempo of movement among tribal peasants. But, competing with the increasing repressive measures by the military and the police, the resistance movement of tribal people gained further and further momentum.

Since long a system of forced labour called '*titun*' was in vogue in the tribal areas of Tripura under the princely rule. According to the system, members of the tribal families, both men and women, were bound to carry the luggage, of any visiting Government staff free of any charge. As the movement among the tribal people gained strength, they continued to refuse free labour (*titun*) to any Government official. Besides "*dadan*", which has been explained earlier, "*titun*" was another

major issue which the Ganamukti Parishad had taken up to rouse the tribal peasantry into action.

Having failed to meet the situation by other means, Martial Law was promulgated in Khowai sub-division which was thus placed completely under the control of the army. Large number of tribal people were arrested both in Khowai and Sadar sub-divisions. Hundreds of huts were burnt down. The authorities kept up a frantic bid to arrest the leading members of the Ganmukti Parishad, especially its President Dasrath Deb, all of whom had gone underground. But all of their attempts failed. The failure to arrest the leaders only increased the wrath of the authorities which resulted in more intense repressive measures against the ordinary tribals.

On an information that Dasrath Deb was hiding in the Padmabil village under Khowai sub-division, the military raided that village, on the 14th of Chaitra, 1949, to arrest him, but without success. Finding no male member in the village available, the army personnel ordered the women to carry their baggage free of charge to a nearby village which the women refused to comply. The army then tried to forcibly compel some of the women to carry their baggage. Meanwhile, almost entire womenfolk of the village assembled there to put up resistance against any attempt by the army to apply force. The army which was sent with clear instruction to apply any brute force, did not hesitate to open fire on the helpless women which resulted in the killing of three tribal girls—Kumari, Madhuti and Rupasree.

The shocking incident of Padmabil only increased the hatred of the tribal people against the Congress Government. The determination to resist the Government offensive at all costs continued to grow among the tribal people. It was decided to organise guerilla forces, comprising of both men and women, to put up effective resistance.

In the meantime, an agricultural cooperative society, named Swasti Samity, was registered in Dharmanagar sua-division with one Rajani Vidyaratna as its Chaiman. The membership of the society was restricted to the Bengali immigrants from the erstwhile East Pakistan, and that too of a particular caste. Although it was a cooperative society in name, it was, in fact, a new type of *zamindari* institution operated and controlled mainly



by a few individuals for their interests. The society was allotted 500 *drones*. (one *droen* equalled to 6.6 acres) of Government *khas* land in Kanchanpur-Dasda area of Dharmanagar sub-division, but the society continued to illegally occupy more lands, extending its control to no less than 10 thousand *drones*. The vast valley between the Manu and Deo rivers came under its occupation in course of time. The area was inhabited by the indigenous Chakma and Reang tribes and the society continued to evict hundreds of those tribal families from the land under their possession. Though the Reangs left their hearths and homes without much of a protest the, Chakmas refused to accept the eviction drive as an accomplished fact. Soon, the discontent took an organised form and a resistance movement, under the leadership of Farakinkar Chakma, was started. The Ganamukti Parishad was yet to build up its organisational base in Kanchanpur-Dasda but even then the impact of the armed resistance which was going on in Sadar and Khowai sub-divisions under the leadership was not altogether absent in other places, especially in the Kanchanpur-Dasda tribal belt.

The Chakmas of the area with Farakinkar in the leadership, at a certain stage of their resistance movement, caught the Chairman of the society, Vidyaratna, and two others and, handed them over to the Ganamukti Parishad's central leadership for further decision about them. It was done as there was standing instruction of the Ganamukti Parishad that enemies, if caught, should not be killed. Instead, they should be produced before the leadership in any case. Vidyaratna and his two associates were, however, set at liberty by the Ganamukti Parishad subsequently.

Police intensified its repressive measures in the tribal areas of Kanchanpur-Dasda, following the apprehension of Vidyaratna and others by the Chakmas. More than thirty people, including Farakinkar, were arrested on the criminal charge of kidnapping. They languished in jail for about two years as undertrials; three of the undertrials died while in jail.

Except Farakinkar, all the other accused were acquitted by the Sessions Court. Although Farakinkar was given a two-year sentence by the Sessions Court, he also got his acquittal from the High Court on appeal.

The Congress party as well as its Government tried ceaselessly to divide the people on ethnic lines by painting the struggle of the tribal peasants against the eviction drive of the Swasti Samity as a "tribal militant movement against the Bengalis", and thereby to instigate the Bengalis, especially the Nath community which is the dominant community among the Bengalis there, against the tribals.

The fight had to be fought over many years against the eviction drive and, at the same time, to build up unity of both the tribal and non-tribal peasantry on class line. This was not an easy job, but doing it goes to the credit of the peasant movement which was launched in those early days and gained increasing strength and momentum among the peasants of both tribals and non-tribals with the passage of time.

Farakinkar Chakma, who was the founder of the peasant movement among the Chakma tribals of Kanchanpur, became a member of the Communist Party shortly after the movement was started, and continued to work tirelessly for the Party till his death.

Jiban Banerjee, one of the big landlords (*taluqdar*s), had his landed estates (*taluqs*) at Barkanthal and Noabadi under Jirania Tehsil of Sadar sub-division. There was strong discontent among tribal tenants of his *taluqs* and their discontent took the form of an organised peasant movement in 1952. The tenants had to be content with too little of their produce to subsist after paying heavy rent to the *taluqdar*. Rent has to be paid in crops and not in cash. The tenants demanded that the rate of rent should be substantially reduced, the system of paying rent in cash instead of in crops should be introduced, the names of the tenants have to be recorded along with necessary details, and eviction of tenants has to be stopped. After the movement was launched the tenants stopped payment of rents to the landlord. The *taluqdar* was at last forced to come to a compromise with the tenants and exempt them from payment of outstanding rents. This apart, he had to reduce the rate of rent and to stop eviction of sharecroppers.

The steps taken by the Ganamukti Parishad to control usury in the tribal areas in 1949, had caused much enthusiasm among all sections of tribal people. As banks and other credit institu-

tions were completely absent in those days, the tribals had to depend entirely on the moneylenders for credit. For the moneylenders it was an ideal situation to exact as much interest as they could, and to make easy fortune. The usual rate of interest was twice or even thrice the principal amount. The tribal peasants had to repay three mounds of paddy for loan of every one mound.

The Ganamukti Parishad decided that the rate of interest must not be more than twentyfive percent in any case, and there must not be any compound interest. In the then prevailing situation, it was indeed a historic decision which helped to mobilise the tribal people in larger numbers against moneylenders and, for that matter, against blood sucking feudal exploiters. As the Ganamukti Parishad had already attained enough strength, its decision had the force of law in the tribal areas for all practical purposes, and the moneylenders had no other alternative but to obey the decisions of the Ganamukti Parishad, although grudgingly.

There are a good number of Hindustanis (immigrants from Hindi speaking States of northern India) in Tripura who are nothing but rural proletariat. As they have no land they have to depend solely on the sale of their labour power. This section was attracted by the Ganamukti Parishad's decision to distribute Government *khas* land among the landless free of charge. Many Hindustani youth, adept in archery, joined the guerilla forces of the Ganamukti Parishad. Government *khas* lands were distributed by the Ganamukti Parishad in many areas among the landless which benefitted the Hindusthani landless as well.

However, after the 1952 Parliamentary polls, most of the *khas* lands thus distributed were forcibly taken back by the Congress Government. The cessation of the armed struggle by the Ganamukti Parishad provided the opportunity for the Government to snatch away these lands from the poor and landless peasants. At the same time the Congress Government succeeded to a certain extent in dissipating and weakening the tempo of the peasant movement by presenting a distorted picture of a conflict of interest between the Bengalis and the tribals, and raising communal bogies.

In 1953-54 Khowai sub-division was gripped by a serious

food crisis. The Ganamukti Parishad got down to the task of collecting paddy and rice from the rich peasants to meet the emergency. It also fixed up the maximum prices at which rice and paddy would be sold. In fixing the price, a marginal profit over and above the production cost was taken into consideration. The price of one *pura* ( $7\frac{1}{2}$  seers) of paddy was fixed from Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 3. The responsibility of implementing the rates at different places was entrusted with the primary committees of the Ganamukti Parishad, on the promise of paying 25 percent interest. The Ganamukti Parishad managed to collect paddy and rice on loan for distribution amongst the poor, from the rich peasants and moneylenders.

Lists of those poor people, to whom rice and paddy had been distributed on loan, was maintained, copies of which were given to the primary committees of the Ganamukti Parishad and also to the moneylenders and rich peasants giving the loan. It was the duty of the primary committees to see that the repayment was made by the loanees in time. Although the rich peasants and the moneylenders, by and large, agreed to abide by the decisions of the Ganamukti Parishad, there were also exceptions who refused to agree to the conditions of loan, as narrated above. Their stocks were seized and forcibly taken away. Full details of the rice and paddy distribution programme were carefully maintained by the committees of the Ganamukti Parishad. But these details were not given to the landowners and the mahajans from whom rice and paddy had been forcibly collected, lest these reactionaries file cases against those amongst whom rice and paddy had been distributed, as it was possible to use those lists against them as evidence in courts. Having been conscious of the mischief-making capacity of the Congress Government and the reactionaries, nothing was left to chance. That is why the Government and other vested interests did not succeed in winning a single case against the Ganamukti Parishad.

Some big *jotedars* of Khowai sub-division opposed the move of the Ganamukti Parishad to collect rice and paddy from the rich peasants and moneylenders, and to distribute them among the poor people. Notable among those *jotedars* were Ramkumar Talukdar and Sashi Kumar Sarkar. While the former was a

tribal, the latter was a non-tribal Bengali. The poor peasants of the area under the leadership of the Ganamukti Parishad forcibly took over the store of foodgrains of Sashi Sarkar. This action took place at a distance of hardly a kilometer from the Khowai town, right under the nose of the police station which indicates the desperate mood of the tribal and Hindusthani peasantry at that time. Even in this instance, the Ganamukti Parishad maintained elaborate lists of those amongst whom the foodgrains were distributed.

The police came to the aid of the landlord Sashi Sarkar. A criminal case was instituted, implicating many leading workers of the locality. Although the criminal case dragged on for many months, the case was finally dismissed by the Sessions Court.

The landlord Sashi Sarkar also had to face a strong peasant movement from his Hindusthani tenants who demanded their legal rights on the lands they used to cultivate. The tenants stopped payment of all rents to the landlord. Though Sashi Sarkar was a big *jotedar* with immense power and had the support of the Government and the police behind him, he failed to put down the organised force of the peasant movement even after spending a lot of money on court cases. Ultimately, he was forced to come to terms and compromise with the leaders of the movement.

As per terms of the compromise, Sashi Sarkar had to agree to the payment of rent in cash by the tenants although the rate was a little higher than the officially prescribed rate. Before this agreement the sharecroppers had to give fifty percent of their produce to the landlord as their share. The compromise was arrived at after the Ganamukti Parishad President Dasrath Deb, then a member of Parliament, personally intervened. The agreement was formalised after the transfer of lands to the tenants was registered with the competent authority and Sashi Sarkar withdrew all the court cases filed by him against the tenants. The tenants, on their part, had to leave a part of their occupied land to Sashi Sarkar for "personal cultivation" as per the terms of agreement.

The struggle against the landlord Sashi Sarkar by his tenants was a major event in the development of peasant movement in Tripura in those days, which helped in a big way in strengthen-

ing the peasant unity and peasant movement as a whole.

Victory of the Communists in the 1952 parliamentary poll in Tripura, the release of the political prisoners and the withdrawal of all warrants, and the relaxation of the stringent measures undertaken by the Government to suppress the democratic movement, provided the Ganamukti Parishad the opportunity to work openly.

In the village Baishnabpur under Sabroom sub-division, a big *jotedar* had then started eviction of the tribal sharecroppers, belonging mostly to Mog community. It took little time for the police and the local Congress to take the side of the landlord against the sharecroppers. The sharecroppers who had the guts to protest against eviction, only met with the repressive measures of both the landlord and the police. Things were made worse for the sharecroppers, as the Mog tenants were unorganised till then.

But the situation took a completely new turn when the Ganamukti Parishad took up the cause of the sharecroppers and put up a strong resistance against eviction. As the attack of the *jotedar* and the police increased, the sharecroppers came more and more to realise that there is little chance for them to survive, if there was no unity and no struggle. Within a short time the Mog sharecroppers got united under the leadership of the Ganamukti Parishad. It was not that easy for the landlord to evict the sharecroppers as they were now united and were ready to fight back at any cost. The landlord engaged hired goondas to break the morale of the sharecroppers, but failed. Criminal cases were instituted and the leaders of the movement were put behind the bars. But the peasants fought heroically and with their backs to the wall. Baishnabpur added a new and glorious chapter to the peasant movement in Tripura.

Following Baishnabpur, the struggle for the protection of the rights of the sharecroppers spread to Paikhola under Belonia sub-division. In Paikhola, lands were concentrated in the hands of a few absentee landlords residing in Belonia town. Most of the Government *khas* land in that area was grabbed by them although they had no legal title on those lands. The dispute arose when the poor peasants and sharecroppers laid

their claim on the *khas* lands, illegally held by the landlords.

There were plenty of refugee agriculturists whose hunger for land remained unsatiated due to paucity of land. The landlords started evicting the local peasants who were occupying and cultivating the lands, and tried to lease out those lands to the refugee agriculturists hailing from East Pakistan at a much higher rate of rent. This was a clever move to divide the peasantry by putting one section against another. The move of the landlords also affected the interest of some of the marginal and small farmers living in the vicinity of Paikhola.

Notwithstanding the machinations of the landlords, the sharecroppers were firm in their resolve to repulse all attacks on their rights with determination. The local committee of the Kisan Sabha and Ganamukti Parishad plunged headlong into the struggles of the sharecroppers and the poor peasants for the protection of their landed interests. Clashes became unavoidable and, in fact, took place repeatedly. Thousands of fighting tribal peasants, both male and female, participated in the struggles alongside the poor Bengali peasants. At a time when instances of fighting unity between the tribal and Bengali peasants were rare, the peasants of Paikhola set an example by rising above all parochial influences. The bond of class unity was stronger than any other thing. The class unity of the tribal and non-tribal peasants was possible as the Ganamukti Parishad and Kisan Sabha moved with a clear perspective and did their best to inculcate class ideas among both sections of the peasantry. The struggle of Paikhola was successful to generate a sense of self-confidence among the poor peasants and the sharecroppers of the whole of Belonia sub-division. In this case also, the police of the Congress Government was seen to side with the landlords as against the sharecroppers and the poor peasants.

The anti-eviction struggle of the poor peasants of Panchashi under Kamalpur sub-division was yet another bright example of the growing peasant movement in Tripura. Here the tea planters cornered large tracts of Government *khas* land on the plea of extension of the tea estates which they did not do really. The vacant plots beyond tea plantations were being utilised by the landless and poor peasants for agricultural

purposes. The planters conspired to evict the poor peasants from the lands under their occupation. Under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha and Ganamukti Parishad the peasants got themselves organised into a fighting unity to foil the attempts of the tea planters to evict them. To weaken the militant mood of the peasantry, the tea planters decided to harrass them by instituting criminal cases in the law courts and bringing in the police into action. Many of the peasant activists were implicated in those criminal cases and till late they were being harrassed. The struggle of Panchashi witnessed commendable unity between the tribal and non-tribal peasants built on the edifice of sustained ideological struggle; thus adding another historic chapter in the history of Tripura's peasant movement.

The peasant movement in Tripura can advance very little without preserving and strengthening the unity of the two different ethnic groups—the tribals and the Bengalis. But the task is not an easy one, especially when almost all the divisive forces are very much active in the State. The role of the Congress, which is the ruling party at the Centre and which represents bourgeois-landlord interests, is the biggest stumbling block before the communal amity in Tripura. The Congress policy has always been to disrupt the unity between the Bengalis and the tribals, and to make political capital out of that disunity. While its attitude was totally hostile towards the tribals, it pretended as if it is very much sympathetic to the Bengali interest. It was done with the sole aim to win over the support of the Bengalis, who constituted nearly seventy percent of the total population.

The Congress Government adopted a programme to rehabilitate the Bengali refugees on land in totally tribal-compact areas like Akhra Mouza, Ramdulal Mouza and Santinagar Mouza of Khowai sub-division, Palku Mouza of Amarapur sub-division, and similar other areas, in a bid to break the compactness of the tribal areas and, simultaneously with it, to disrupt the tribal-non-tribal relationship.

Although the lands in those areas were in possession of tribal Jhoomias and other tribals, for long they were forcibly dispossessed and uprooted from those lands by the Government with the help of the police in 1963-64, to rehabilitate the Bengali



refugees there. Barring a few exceptions, the entire leadership of the Ganamukti Parishad was then undergoing detention in the Hazaribagh Central Jail of Bihar, following the outbreak of the India-China border clash. Many ordinary tribals from different parts of the State were taken into custody, after having been implicated in false cases by the police. While thus creating a reign of terror there was an all-out drive by the Government to evict the tribals from their lands and to rehabilitate the Bengali refugees in their place. The political motive behind this move was to create and intensify mutual distrust between the tribal and non-tribal landless. It is true that the Government's move did much damage to the peasant unity, but it could not go very far due to the timely intervention by the lower level committees of the Ganamukti Parishad. A compromise was arrived at ultimately, due to this timely intervention.

The rehabilitation of the Bengali refugees in the totally tribal-compact areas was a source of permanent tension in the relationship between the two communities. It, therefore, increased the responsibility of the Kisan Sabha and Ganamukti Parishad to take steps to unite the peasants belonging to two ethnic groups on the basis of common class demands and class struggles.

In a State like Tripura, where the peasantry is divided broadly into two ethnic groups—the Bengalis and the tribals—there is no escape from finding out a solution of the nationality question. Therefore, while fighting for the common demands of the entire peasantry, the Kisan Sabha and the Ganamukti Parishad had also to fight for special safeguards for the tribal people, such as the introduction of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and the restoration of the illegally transferred tribal lands to the original tribal owners. Because of the awareness of the leadership of the peasant movement about the urgency of the nationality problem in the context of Tripura's special demographic reality, it was successful in maintaining the unity of tribal and non-tribal peasantry, notwithstanding serious provocations by the divisive forces. If the peasant movement in Tripura has to achieve further successes, it will have to protect this ethnic unity as an apple of the eye. □

TO commemorate the Golden Jubilee Year of the All India Kisan Sabha, the Central Kisan Council has planned to bring out a series of pamphlets which will highlight the various important movements conducted in various states under the banner of the Kisan Sabha - movements which assumed national significance. This will help the Kisan cadre to understand the important role which the AIKS has played in awakening the Indian peasantry.

The following pamphlets have hitherto been published :

1. *Revolt of the Walls*, by Godavari Parulekar, Vice-President, AIKS ;
2. *Terhga Struggle of Bengal*, by Abdullah Rasul, Vice-President, AIKS ;
3. *Kerala : Ponnappu-Vayalar & Other Struggles*, by V.S. Achyuthanandan, member, CPI(M) Polit Bureau, and T.K. Ramakrishnan, President, Kerala state unit of the AIKS ;
4. *Anti-Bettement Levy Struggle of Punjab*, by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, member, CPI(M) Polit Bureau ;
5. *Struggle of the Surma Valley Peasantry*, by Biresh Misra, Pranesh Biswas, and Achintya Bhattacharya ;
6. *Fifty Years of the Kisan Sabha*, by EMS Namboodiripad, General Secretary, CPI(M) ;
7. *Gana Mukti Parishad in Building the Peasant Movement in Tripura*, by Dasrath Deb, Deputy Chief Minister, Tripura, and member, CPI(M) Central Committee.

We are making efforts to get pamphlets written on other movements as well.

All those interested in knowing about the peasant struggles in India, must send orders to—

**ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA**  
12-B Ferozshah Road, New Delhi—110 001

**NATIONAL BOOK CENTRE**  
14, Ashoka Road, New Delhi—110 001

---

Published by P.K. Tandan on behalf of the All India Kisan Sabha, 12-B, Ferozshah Road, New Delhi 110001 and printed at Progressive Printers, C-52-53, DDA Sheds, Industrial Area, Okhla Phase-I, New Delhi-110 020.