

# Janashiksha Andolan: An Enlightenment in Tribal Masses of Tripura Through the Educational Revolution

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**Abstract:** *Seventy- eight years ago 'The Janashiksha Andolan was accomplished. The worldwide socio - political situation of that time contributed a lot behind this mass movement. The Fascists were defeated in the second world war and some socialist powers raised their heads in so many countries in the world. 'Tripur' was a princely state, surrounded by dense forest and hilly areas. Throughout the land, Tribal people (having 19 clans) lived in a maximum portion. Agartala was the capital. Besides the place, nowhere any type of educational infrastructure, nor any initiative for education existed in Tripura. Only the sons of the royal employees, the Thakurs and the Kartas of urban areas of Agartala got the scope to be educated. Some boardings were established in Agartala or the adjacent areas to Agartala with the inspirations of the compassionate royal employees like Ramkumar Thakur, Oakhirai Thakur. The boy - children from remote hilly lands were brought to the plain land for educating. Umakanta Boarding was one of them. Maximum students of this boarding were conscious about the pains and sorrows, troubles and hardships of the poor tribal people in the state. Aghore Debbarma, Dasarath Deb, Sudhanya Debbarma, Dinesh Debbarma, Dr. Nilamani Debbarma, Hemanta Debbarma were the pioneer leaders of the movement. And the primary leadership of Biren Dutta led the movement to a destination. It was him, who became the via in involving communist Party in this movement through various social reforms among the tribal community of Tripura. P. C. Joshi was the secretary of the - then Communist Party.*

**Keywords:** Education, Communist involvement, Tribal people, Superstitions

## 1. Introduction

Unless any evaluation & analysis would be done properly, the content of history cannot survive, it can be lost. The emergence of 'Janashiksha Samiti' and 'Janashiksha Andolan' are just a past chapter of 78 years to the new generation. It is tragic. Inequality in the Tribal people in the recent time is clearly visible. A very few percentage of tribal people are getting all the privileges staying in Agartala when the major portion are struggling with the poverty & hardships in hilly areas. Due to poverty, it grows ignorance, as well as superstitions prevail in the society.

'Janashiksha Samiti' was formed in 1945. Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur was the king of 'Tripur' state. The kings never wished their subjects to be educated. They remained afraid that if their people got enlightened with education, they would raise questions and could revolt against the regressive decisions of the kingly regime.

In 1947, India got independence. In 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru Govt declared Communist Party of India banned. Many members of the party got arrested. In Tripura at that time 'Diwani Aain' (civil law) was put into effect. Maharaja Bir Bikram Debbarmann died, with his death the royal administration came to an end at once. When the king was living, Sudhanya Debbarma, Hemanta Debbarma, Dasharath Dev initiated to form 'Janashiksha Samiti'. In 1945 the samiti was formed. In leadership of eleven young tribal people the movement was running throughout the state. To educate the innocent tribal people, to eradicate poverty and superstition from their lives, the leaders spread the movement everywhere. Tripura was still under the British Govt (1945). The king was suspicious about the activities of this samiti but the - then education minister W. D. A. Brown

became curious to know about the activities of these young tribal leaders of the samiti. The samiti knew that the Govt was not willing to give education to the common tribal people. So, they decided to take such initiative. This realisation was so important to turn the history of education in Tripura in tribal people's life. This educational movement is unparalleled and incomparable in the history. It made an upheaval to eliminate superstition in the tribal life.

## 2. Objectives of the study

- 1) The prime objective is expressed in the leaflet of 'Janashiksha Samiti'.  
"To eradicate illiteracy from the life of 'TRIPUR' race today, we the entire Tripura are getting united. We are to pledge with conviction without any fear, we must proceed to be consistent with firmness, may there be obstacles, may there be any type of torture.
- 2) The history of 'Janashiksha Samiti' is a huge success in educational arena of Tripura. It must be unveiled properly and should be spread everywhere.
- 3) The movement was happened in 1945, now we are in 2024. As an Indian from the state, Tripura when I see the present scenario of tribal people in Tripura. I feel urge to discuss or to write about the 'Janashiksha Andolan'.

## 3. Analysis

Thakur Ramkumar Debbarma was a very simple 'Jhum' cultivator. In search of his own fortune he came to Agartala and got admitted to 'Binandia' post. The 'Binandia' was formed by the king himself to make control on the simple - minded tribal people of Tripura. Ramkumar Thakur was a wise and an intelligent person. As a common 'Binandia' he came, later he reached to the royal court. In course of time,

gradually Ramkumar gained the king's reliance and trust. He was the founder of Umakanta Tripura Boarding. The pioneer leader Sudhanya Debbarma narrated that as he was the first boy in the class, Ramkumar loved him very dearly. Ramkumar once shared that, the king remained very happy sometimes. In the meantime Ramkumar said to the king "Your Highness, you are not the king of Tripura Tribals". The king got flared up with anger "Why Ramkumar? My Blood is Tipra, pure Tipra !"

"If so, how many are Tipra govt. employees, How many are students? All the ministers in your state are non - tribals. How many tribal teachers are there?" Ramkumar asked in a teasing way.

The king became more furious and went away into majestic inner part of his mansion. After an hour the king suddenly appeared before Ramkumar and screamed: "If I make the Tipras educated, they would fall on my shoulder and would hold by the nape of my neck". Ramkumar shared all these things with Sudhanya Debbarma, one of the pioneers of 'Janashiksha Andolan'.

Now this is clear, why the Maharaja did not establish school in Tripura rural areas. In Umakanta Boarding, Sudhanya Debbarma, Hemanta Debbarma, Aghore Debbarma, Dr. Nilima Debbarma, Harinath Debbarma stayed. More thousands of Tribal youth came out of home to achieve the goal of educating the tribal masses to get rid of them from their superstitious mind setup. Dasarath Deb was studying in Habiganj when he was informed, at once he left his study and joined the movement. In 1945, in a small meeting 19 young boys formed a committee: Sudhanya Debbarma was the president, Dasarath Dev became the vice - president and Hemanta Debbarma was selected as the secretary. Maharaja came to know about this meeting and published a pamphlet against Sudhanya Debbarma and Dasarath Deb and spread it everywhere in Tripura state. After a few days, almost eleven numbers where discussing about the road maps of the movement, suddenly the education minister Mr Brown took entry in that room fortunately. Dasarath Deb was holding a simple paper in his hand. Mr Brown saw that the paper was full of the name of the schools, where the committee was thinking to set up new schools. Mr Brown became very happy to see the efforts of these youngsters who were reckless to spread education everywhere in the state. In Pitra, Tichrupa, Tulsiram, Golaghati, Takarjala, Khowai these leadership laboured very hardly. They made a list of schools and went to the remotest areas they instructed the local people to make kucca schools and teachers were selected from those particular areas.

Maharaja also was getting all these informations. He formed 'Seva Samiti' with this own 'Thakurs' and 'Kartas'. They took initiative to set up schools only to destroy the plan of establishing schools, that plan had already been taken by the tribal youngsters of Janashiksha samiti. Moreover, the 'Thakurs' of the Maharaja determined to pluck money from the poor tribal people through torturing brutally.

Then Maharaja was sick, Sudhanya, Nilmani, Aghore, Ashwini and many more went to the Maharaja for a discussion but the Maharaja turned a deaf - ear, he offered

the boys for having jobs. But the determined youngsters humbly rejected the offer.

They tried to unite Tipra, Jamatia, Halam, Reang, all these tribal clans together through this movement. 150 volunteers proceeded towards the movement.

In 1946 in the month of May, Maharaja Bir Bikram breathed his last. In the meantime much water flew across the Howrah & Gomati. Arrest warrants were published against so many leaders, they kept hiding. In the meantime the entire country became full of political turmoil's. Gandhiji called for 'Karengge ya Marengge', In this turmoil, Abanibhushan Chatterjee was selected as Dewan and Queen. Kanchanprava Devi became the regent. Tripura joined with India. The activities of Janashiksha samiti were postponed.

#### 4. Conclusion

The initiatives and activities of the tribal leadership of Janashiksha Andolan must be unveiled more. Our young generation need to know about the sacrifice of Sudhanya, Aghore, Dasarath or Nilmani Debbarma. In 1945, without having any communication system, how could they organise such a movement, its really surprising !. At this moment so many young tribal young people have been leading their lives in such a self - centred way with multi - storeyed buildings, vehicles, foreign tour in urban areas, addicted in drug or alcohol in rural areas, it's really wondering to imagine to think about those selfless people then.

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