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THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN THE EASTERN INDIAN FRINGES: THE CASE OF TRIPURA

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ABSTRACT

From the dawn of human civilization, the history of mankind has recorded multiple events of conflicts, battles & wars. But it has never witnessed something destructive & devasting like World War II (1939 -1945). This global conflict between Allied & Axis powers lasted for 2191 days, involving as many as 110 million armed soldiers from 72 nations. At least 50 million people lost their lives in this great war among them 28 million were innocent civilians. Major cities across Europe and Asia, including Berlin, London, Warsaw, Tokyo, and Hiroshima, were extensively bombed and reduced to rubble. In the initial stage, the war was only confined to European nations though their colonies in Asia & Africa were indirectly affected severely. But with time, the African colonies caught fire from this war and in later stages, it spread all over Asia. India, being a British colony at that time was pushed into the war by its colonial masters who looked over the will of Indian masses. The British Government exploited India's valuable resources and labour force for the War preparations. The heat of the war also reached Tripura, a small princely state under the British Suzerainty. The involvement of Japan in the Second World War and its hasty advancement on the eastern front changed the whole scenario of the war from the Indian perspective. The fall of Burma at the hands of the Japanese brought the war to the very door of India. As a result, Tripura and the northeastern region fell under the direct threat of the Japanese offensive. In this paper, I have attempted to sketch a picture of Princely Tripura of that time concerning the Second World War. Here I have discussed extensively about the threat of Japanese invasion, economic strains, military organizations, war preparations, and other administrative activities in the state, all centred around the Second World War. In the middle of the war, the Congress-led 'Augst movement' or 'Quite India movement' increased difficulties for the trouble-torn British Raj. The turmoil created all over the country by the 'Quite India Movement' also impacted the state of Tripura. Here I also tried to track down the events related to the 'Quite India Movement' in Tripura during the war and how the ruling class of princely Tripura met those challenges. In a nutshell, through this paper, an attempt has been made to shed light on the relevant events, that took place in princely Tripura during the Second World War and analyse different events & developments related to it from various socio-economic and political aspects. Nevertheless, this paper is a small initiative for the history enthusiast to enhance the understanding of the role of Tripura in a global phenomenon like World War II and to reconstruct the events in a systematic way to conduct further study.

KEYWORDS: *Allied power, Axis power, Tripura, British suzerainty, Northeastern India, Invasion, Burma.*

INTRODUCTION

Tripura is one of the seven sisters of northeast India. Before merging with the Indian Union in 1949 it was ruled by as many as 185 Kings of the Manikya family who used to claim their descent from the legendary Lunar lineage. From being a 'C' category state to a Union territory of India and from a Union territory to a full-fledged state, the people of Tripura have witnessed a long path of constitutional transition. Before all these developments, it was a princely state under the British Suzerainty. The reign of Maharaja Birchandra Manikya marked the beginning of the modern era in Tripura. The notable rulers who ruled the state after him were Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya, Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya & Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya respectively. During the Second World War, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya was the ruler of Tripura. He is also known as the 'architect of modern Tripura' for his visionary policies and immense contribution in transforming Tripura. Tripura was indirectly involved in the Second World War along with the British army engaged in the eastern Indian frontiers. Due to this involvement, Tripura witnessed multifaceted effects in different spheres especially in the politics and economy of the state. This paper attempts to unravel the War-related developments during that time and how a global event like World War II left its mark on a frontier state.

India in World War II

In the initial years of conflict, the Britishers pushed India into the war against the will of its people. Enemies of Britain were not present on the Indian frontiers. However, the scenario changed after the Japanese involvement in the war. On 7th December 1941, the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor brought the war in Asia. This incident became a pivotal moment in World War II as it provoked the United States to formally enter the conflict the following day, declaring war on Japan. In the Eastern frontiers, Japan tasted some early and significant success. Japanese army hastily overran British Malaya and captured the strategic British stronghold of Singapore, an impregnable fortress. The fall of Singapore was a considerable blow to British prestige and control in Asia. After conquering the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies and Hong Kong, Japan invaded and occupied Burma, threatening British India. The eastern frontier of India became a heated battleground

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overnight. The first Japanese air raid on Calcutta took place on 20th December 1942, adding problems to the Britisher's fate.

To put a check on the enemy and save Britain's most valued possession, India, the Britishers took all possible measures and preparations. In 1939, the strength of the British India Army was 1 lakh 81 thousand, which had gone up to 25 lakhs in 1945. Similarly, the strength of the Royal Indian Navy & the Royal Indian Airforce reached up to 30000 each from 2300 & 1600 respectively. To train 4 lakh 70 thousand armed forces at once, 70 new training centres were established. More than 200 airfields and 7 fully functional major airports were commissioned. The 800-mile capacity of the Bengal-Assam Railway was quadrupled. At the time of war, 6500 ships of 3 crore 88 lakh 40 thousand tones were repaired in 56 factories of the country.

Indian Army in 1945 as follows:	Numbers (In Person)
Indian Armoured Corps	31000
Royal Indian Artillery	83000
Indian Engineer	263000
Indian Signal Corps	68000
Indian Medical Corps	167000
Royal Indian Army Service Corps	360000
Indian Army Ordnance Corps	64000
Indian Army Electrical & Medical Engineer	99000

In 1909, the number of commissioned Indian officers in the Army was 1115. And in 1945 this number increased to 15740. During the war, the Indian Army suffered a large number of casualties. At least 24338 soldiers were killed, 64354 armed personnel were injured, 11754 army men were gone missing and 79481 people were made prisoners of war. In the Second World War, the Indian Army won 31 Victoria Crosses, 27 of these were awarded for exceptional gallantry in the Burmese War. Apart from these, 20 more gallantry awards were won by the Indian Army. A total number of 4208 awards were presented to the Indian Army for displaying unparalleled bravery in the war.

Tripura in World War II

Before World War II, Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya visited Europe thrice. His third voyage to Europe was forced to be a world tour due to breaking out of the Second World War. The tour was full of adventure, anxiety & risk. Maharaja and his companions returned to Calcutta safely on 24th December 1939.

Maharaja's Policy regarding World War II

"His Highness who was en route to America when War was declared against Germany on 3rd September, 1939, wired to the Viceroy immediately on arrival in New York, placing his personal services and the entire resources of the State at the disposal of His Majesty's Government."[1]

So, it was crystal clear from the beginning of the Second World War that the Maharaja of Tripura was readily available to help and render his services to Great Britain in this global conflict when it was not knocking at India or Tripura's door and was only limited to far West.

"The King with all his associates came back to Agartala on 11 Magh 1349 T.E. (25 January 1940). By an order dated 11 Magh 1349 Tripura era (25th January 1940), all political activities and propaganda were strictly prohibited in Tripura."[2]

After making a safe comeback home, Maharaja's policy to prohibit all political activities and propaganda immediately within the state reflected his concern for the British Government. This prohibition order was simply a testimonial to Maharaja's attempts to repress anti-British forces within his territory during such crisis hours.

"It was also decided to increase the strength of the Armed Police and Militia at an estimated expenditure of Rs. 50,000 in view of the possible utilisation of the regular State troops on duty outside the State, for which offer had promptly made."[3]

Maharaja's decision to strengthen and enhance the Army-police force along with the creation of the militia in various parts of the state indicates that he might have expected an upcoming conflict in the east Indian frontier.

"A War committee was also established under His Highness's orders dated the 19th Magh, 1349 T.E. (2nd February, 1940) more or less for the same purpose for which District War committees in British India were formed."[4]

An internal security and A.R.P and Civic Defence Schemes were prepared and organizations initiated or set up including Civic Guards. The state adopted all laws and rules relating to the war including those for rationing and control of various commodities and civil supplies. Defence of India ordinance and similar other legal measures had been adopted so far as the conditions in the state necessitated. It was declared that, "As his Majesty's Government is at war with Germany, it is hereby ordered that any potential hostile foreigners entering into or

[1] *Bodhjung, R Bodhjung, Rana, Tripura State Consolidated Administrative Report, 1937 – 1940, p. 14*
[2] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 290*
[3] *Bodhjung, Rana, Tripura State Consolidated Administrative Report, 1937 – 1940, p. 14*
[4] *Bodhjung, Rana, Tripura State Consolidated Administrative Report, 1937 – 1940, p. 15*

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living in Tripura state be arrested at once and kept in custody pending orders of the Political Department."[5]

"In 1941, Tripura witnessed abnormal situation. The Maharaja in his message to the people explained the position of Tripura and its attitude with a view to call up the full energy of the people for vigorous activities in aid of Great Britain in the War."[6]

From all these activities it is evident that as a Princely state under British suzerainty, the ruler of Tripura gave his full sup port and co-operation to the British Government.

High prices of Commodities Due to War

The extreme demand of the Great War had an adverse economic effect all over British India in the form of rapid price rise, famine, exploitative taxes & inflation. The heat of economic evils could be felt in Tripura too.

"Price of rice rose gradually from the second year of the triennium till they reached abnormal proportions towards its end, those of other commodities also evincing a substantial rise, while shortage of stock and high prices in the adjoining British district had their reaction in the State and gave strong impetus to export and smuggling. The changed condition of the rice market came in, no doubt as a matter of relief to the agricultural population and perchance of gain to middlemen and traders, but the landless classes with a limited income were soon thrown on the verge of breakdown. Wages of labour also went up, in spite of a rapid influx of labour population, the normal demand being considerably affected by new and attractive sources of diversion."[7]

In 1943, a disastrous famine broke out in Bengal. The government of Tripura made vigorous campaign with the slogan: **Grow more food**. From Bengal numerous Muslims infiltrated into Tripura in swarms."[8]

In addition to these, public health turned unsatisfactory with the outbreak of malaria, cholera, dysentery, and smallpox. Cattle diseases caused havoc in some places and proved a grave menace in the complications of the economic situation.

Maharaja already constituted a committee of nine members on 18th Magh, 1349 Tripura era (February, 1940) to take precautions against abnormal price-rise and to keep people informed all about the war and also to collect donations to be given to the war fund.

Monetary contributions by Maharaja in Great Britain's war efforts

From the beginning of the war, Maharaja had placed all the resources of the state and his service at the disposal of the crown. Towards the end of 1939-40, an announcement was made of contributions in various war-related funds.

In 1940 the following donations to the war fund were made:[9]

Indian Red Cross Society	20,000/-
St John Ambulance Association	20,000/-
St. Dunstan's Fund	20,000/-
Viceroy War purpose fund	30,000/-
Miscellaneous	88,755/-

The following donations to the war fund were made in 1941:[10]

Indian Red Cross Society	20,000/-
St John Ambulance Association	20,000/-
St. Dunstan's Fund	20,000/-
Viceroy's War purpose fund	30,000/-
Miscellaneous	1,26,716/-

The following donations to the war fund were made in 1942:[11]

Indian Red Cross Society	20,000/-
St John Ambulance Association	20,000/-
St. Dunstan's Fund	20,000/-
Viceroy's War purpose fund	30,000/-
Miscellaneous	2,11,488/-

[5] *Roychoudhury, Nalini Ranjan, Tripura Through the Ages, p. 64*
[6] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 291*
[7] *Bodhjung, Rana, Tripura State Consolidated Administrative Report, 1940 -1943 p.1*
[8] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 295*
[9] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 291*
[10] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p.292*
[11] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 293*

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Indian Red Cross Society	20,000/-
St John Ambulance Association	20,000/-
St. Dunstan's Fund	20,000/-
Viceroy's War purpose fund	30,000/-

The following donations to the war fund were given in 1944:[13]

Indian Red Cross Society	20,000/-
St John Ambulance Association	20,000/-
St. Dunstan's Fund	20,000/-
Viceroy's War purpose fund	30,000/-

During this tenure investment in 3% Defence Bonds stood at 1,25,000/- by the state, Rs. 1,49,000/- by Maharaja personally and Rs. 21,000/- by local Banks. Apart from these, the annual rent for the polo ground at Comilla occupied by Indian Army troops amounted to Rs. 9,540/- was remitted by his highness Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya. Huge quantities of materials like timber, bamboo, cane and other forest produce were supplied for extensive roads and military constructions in and outside of the state.

Taking action on the Government of India's request Maharaja Bir Bikram allowed the Famine Inquiry Commission to use a portion of Tripura House, Calcutta in 1944. Again, at the request of the Government of Bengal, he permitted the Bengal Administrative Inquiry Committee to use a few rooms of Tripura House, Calcutta.

Mid-War Events in Tripura.

The Fall of Burma at the hands of Japan had brought the war to the very door of India. The world war was no longer a distant land phenomenon. The whole northeastern region including Tripura came under the direct threat of the Japanese invasion. Most of the ladies and children of the royal family were already sent to Baria in Maharashtra and Panna in Madhya Pradesh suspecting the danger at an early stage. The first Japanese air raid on Calcutta took place on 20th December 1942. To check Japanese advancement further, preparations were made along with the eastern borders. Thus, Tripura came under the warring zone.

The Japanese air raid on Agartala airport took place on 20th November 1943. Overnight Agartala turned into a battleground. Hundreds of British, Indian and Negro soldiers camped in and around Agartala. The pressures of modern warfare compelled rapid changes and road construction. Maharaja Bir Bikram deployed Tripura troops in Chittagong Hill Tract, Arakan and Burma to cooperate with British-Indian Troops in checking the Japanese advancement.

In June 1942, Maharaja organised Tripura Rajya Rakshi Bahini, Chaudda Devatar Dal, Palli Rakshi Samiti, and Palli Rakshi Dal. All these home guards and village guards had their units in every village. It was a sort of militia arrangement in case of the enemy's advancement to the interior part of the state. In August 1942 Maharaja Bir Bikram was promoted to the honorary rank of Major in His Majesty's regular army.

In October 1943 Lord Wavell succeeded Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy of India. A disastrous famine broke out in Bengal in the same year which impacted the princely state of Tripura too. The Government of Tripura stressed growing more food to combat famine. An ample amount of Muslim immigration took place in Tripura from adjoining Bengal province.

In 1943, Tripura virtually became an active battleground and was subjected to the Japanese offensive including air strikes and heavy bombing. The utmost urgency to the speedy completion of military construction irrespective of cost enriched many people including contractors, labourers and peasants.

In 1943 the services of the First Tripura Bir Bikram Manikya Rifles were promptly placed at the disposal of the Government of India. All other units of the forces were strengthened and kept ready for emergencies. For guerrilla warfare, another contingent named, the Tripura Mahabeer Legion was raised. The Tripura Rajya Rakshi Bahini was raised to man a chain of picket posts all along the state border. At the request of Military authority, several works including the construction of strategic trunk roads were undertaken by the Government of Tripura.

In 1942 and 1943, the First Tripura Rifles and the Tripura Mahabeer Legion worked with the 14th Indian Division, which was the largest single army deployed in the world war. Tripura troops served in Arakan, protecting the lines of communication of the forward troops and killed a large number of Japanese, through skilful ambushes.

"On 11 May 1943, a public reception was given to the Tripura Mahabeer Legion at Agartala on return from the Arakan campaign. On 22 May 1943, the 1st Tripura Rifle returned to Agartala and were given a very hearty reception."[14]

On 19 August 1943, a tragic accident took place during a mortar fire practice demonstration. Lt. Col. Kumar K.C. Deb Barman, Captain Maharajkumar ArjunKisor Deb Barman Bahadur, Major Harka Bahadur, and Major D.M.B Smart died on the spot."[15]

[12] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p.296*
[13] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 297*
[14] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 296*
[15] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 297*

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Japan again bombed Agartala airfield on 29th November 1943. The officers of Agartala Airfield became terrified and deserted the place swiftly. Gedu Miah[16] rushed to the airfield and lifted several bags full of Indian currency Notes. (Aghor Dewarma: Tripuray Communist Party Ebang Ganatantric Andolaner Prathamik star: Agartala, 1986; p.27)

In early 1944, the Japanese troops marched towards Imphal. British Indian Army put up a stiff resistance. After numerous bloody conflicts, the Japanese forces retreated from Imphal in July 1944.

On 8th March 1944, Maharaja Inspected a camp in Sonamura. The British army officers came to Agartala for inspection on 18th April 1944. On 24th September 1944, Bir Bikram Manikya inspected Jamatia troops at Udaipur. Maharaja inspected the Dohajari battlefield in Chittagong on 16th October 1944.
Japanese surrender on 15th August 1945 brought an end to the prolonged war. Tripura heaved a sigh of relief. In January 1946, the British Government honoured Maharaja Bir Bikram by conferring the distinguished title of Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire.

"On 3 February 1946, the Tripura troops landed at Calcutta from Burma. The Maharaja Went to welcome them there. On 5 February 1946, they came back to Agartala. They were accorded a hearty reception. On 9 February 1946, the British Government acknowledged the services of the Tripura Rifles. Field Marshal His Excellency Sir Claude Auchinleck wrote a letter to His Highness Maharaja Bir Bikram Kisor Manikya Bahadur. An extract from the letter runs thus:
Now that the Tripura Rifles have finally returned to the state, I would like to record my gratitude to Your Highness for having placed them at the disposal of the crown during the war.

Almost from the day they left the state, they have been employed in actively fighting the Japanese. They have covered many miles in Burma during these long years of war and have always earned the highest praise from the commanders under whom they have served. They have made the name of Tripura famous.
I wish all ranks every success in their future."[17]

Revolutionary Activities in 1939

Revolutionary incidents within the state increased in the early part of 1939. It was reported that some students of Umakanta Academy and Tulshibati Girls' H.S. School at Agartala hoisted Congress flags in front of their schools. They were expelled from Tripura. Due to their anti-governmental activities, Sachindra Lal Singha and his other associates were exiled from Tripura for one year and six months respectively. The exiled revolutionaries started roaming around the border areas of the state in British Districts, provoking the bordering inhabitants who were subjects of Maharaja's Zamindary of Chakla Roshnabad to approach the Maharaja to abolish Ghasuri Kar[18]. A crowd of four thousand people gathered peacefully before the royal palace demanding the abolition of this tax. However, their peaceful representation did not ripe any fruit. "Some revolutionaries like Sachindra Lal Singha, Sukhamoy Sengupta, Umesh Lal Singha and Ashu Mukherjee began to deliver their speeches against the Government of Tripura in its bordering places. So, they were arrested by the British authority and handed over to the Tripura State police who kept them in Central Jail, Agartala without any trial. They were released in the early part of 1945 from Agartala Central Jail. Biren Datta of Janamangal Samiti who was already arrested was released along with others."[19]

August Movement of 1942 and Tripura

After the failure of the Crips Mission, a state of uncertainty prevailed in Indian politics. On 10 May Gandhi wrote in his paper: "The Presence of the Britishers in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India" and in June he wrote: "Leave India in God's hands, or in modern parlance, to anarchy."[20] On 8th August, amidst the war due to ongoing disagreement with the British Government, All-India Congress Committee decided to launch a massive mass movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The very next morning Gandhi was arrested and interned along with other key leaders of Congress. The All-India Congress and Provincial Congress committees were banned by the Government. Protesting people without proper leadership turned violent. Government establishments and lines of communication came under attack. A serious disorder broke out in different parts of the country. In reply, the British Government banked on excessive force to suppress the movement.

The heat of the August movement was felt in Tripura also. A large number of people in Tripura took part in this movement and were arrested and exiled by the Government. "On the 6th September, 1942, the Government of Tripura issued a notification by which (i) the Congress Working Committee, (ii) the All-India Congress Committee and (iii) All provincial and District Congress Committee were declared unlawful associations within the meaning of part II of the Indian criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908, as adopted in the State."[21]

Role of the Great War behind the Reang Unrest (1942-43)

Reang uprising led by Ratanmani was one of the important episodes in the reign of Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya. It was partly a socio-religious movement and an anti-feudal movement. The key reasons behind this uprising were oppression by the intermediaries, discriminatory tax burden, and privileges held by the Choudhuries.[22] While Maharaja's appointment of Khagendra Reang as Rai over the existing

[16] *Gedu Miah, who set up a branch of Anjuman-e-Islamee at Agartala and wanted to annex Tripura with East Pakistan.*
[17] *Gan-Chaudhuri, Dr. Jagadis, A Constitutional History of Tripura, p. 299-300*
[18] *Ghasuri Kar: Every British Subject who wanted to have his cattle reared in the state had to pay the tax of eight annas per owner annually.*
[19] *Roychoudhury, Nalini Ranjan, Tripura Through the Ages, p. 74.*
[20] *Shastri, K. A. Nilakanta & Srinivasachari, G., Advanced History of India, p. 739.*
[21] *Roychoudhury, Nalini Ranjan, Tripura Through the Ages, p. 74*
[22] *Like all other tribal societies, the Reang society was dominated by the village headmen who were known as choudhuries. The head of the choudhuries was called Rai.*

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incumbent fuelled the situation as it was against customary practice.

During the Second World War Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishor Manikya determined to raise a band of soldiers from the Reang Community. Regarding this, he assigned the Choudhuries to collect soldiers from the Reang youths. The Choudhuries failed and it was reported to the King that Ratanmani and his disciples obstructed them from recruiting Soldiers from the Reang youths. In addition to this, the sudden price rise of essential commodities due to War conditions pushed the Reang population into distress. All available paddy was purchased to feed the army and the people of Agartala town. Some selfish Choudhuries were involved in hoarding as they wanted to make profit from this situation. Ultimately famine prevailed all over the areas of Amarpur, Udaipur, Belonia and Subroom. Ratanmani and his disciples set up some Dharma Gola (for the distribution of food) in their villages which increased their popularity and many became Ratanmani's disciples. Though the uprising was suppressed brutally by the authority.

Nehru's letter to the Maharaja of Tripura

Senior Congress leader Jawahar Lal Nehru was informed that many members of the Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad and Congress party were imprisoned without any trial since the beginning of the Second World War. They were treated very badly in prison even though many of them were seriously ill. Further, he came to know that since the beginning of the year 1940 all meetings and processions were banned and civil liberty was completely curtailed in Tripura. "He was surprised with these news and sent a letter to Maharaja of Tripura on 9th December, 1945 with a request to the Maharaja to enquire about this news."[23] "The Maharaja in his reply on 14th December, 1945 denied all these charges."[24]

The Socio-Political Implications of World War II in Tripura

The Second World War impacted Tripura in the military, economic, and Socio-Political aspects. It was evident from the policies adopted by the then-ruler of Tripura that ensuring the British interest was his top priority during the war. In the early days of the war, Tripura kept all its resources in the service of Great Britain's war preparation. And at the later stage when the Japanese dragged the war in the door of Tripura and as well as India, we witnessed the direct military engagement from Tripura forces on behalf of the crown. All the wartime laws and regulations passed by the Maharaja to ensure the British interest and suppression of anti-British revolutionary activities with hard hands indicated his firm stand in favour of the British Raj.

During the war, common people faced adverse economic distress as they witnessed the price rise of essential commodities by leaps and bounds. Bengal, the neighbouring British province of Tripura, witnessed one of its worst famines, which claimed almost three million lives. Naturally, all these events affected Tripura to a great extent. During the War and post-war, economic conditions were not favourable and people faced miserable economic hardship.

Economic distress and social discrimination caused simmering discontent, resulting in the 'Reang Uprising' led by Ratanmani. Revolutionary leaders like Sachindra Lal Singha, Sukhamay Sengupta etc took up various programs in this turbulent time to pressurise the government. Prohibition of political programs, propaganda and detention of leaders without trial by the ruler dragged the attention of the national leaders. Nehru's letter to Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya regarding the arrest and ill-treatment of local leaders is a testimonial of these events. Though in reply the King denied all the claims made by this veteran Congress leader.

From the perspective of the war, Tripura was strategically important for the allied powers. Being situated at the junction of Burma, Assam and Bengal border Tripura's position was significant to mobilize the forces in the eastern battlefield and secure undisturbed logistic support to the soldiers who were already fighting on the Burmese front. This strategic importance of Tripura during the war compelled the Britishers and the then ruler of the state to strengthen the existing infrastructure and start some new projects. "In the wake of the Second World War, the 10-line magenta exchange was started at Agartala. There were three telephone lines. The telephone centre was first opened in the premises of the royal palace connected to Comilla trunk junction."[25] "During the Second World War, Akhaura road became the first pitch road and the road named Akhaura road as it went up to Akhaura station."[26] Establishment of Agartala airport (a technical base for the Royal Air Force), Kailashahar and other airports were built to facilitate to allied powers. "According to AAI official S. Haokip Jempu, the Agartala airport was used as a technical base for the Royal Air Force during World War-II when the allied forces took on the Japanese soldiers in Arakan Ranges, in Burma, now Myanmar. The first known flight which took off from this airport was Curtise C-46 Commando transport aircraft of 4th Combat Cargo Group (4th CCG) of the United States which flew to Burma (Myanmar) during World War II in December and January 1945."[27] "According to historian and writer Pannalal Roy, the land for the Agartala, Kailashahar and various other (now abandoned) airports in Tripura had been donated by the then Tripura Kings."[28] The strategic importance of the Agartala airport could be understood easily by the Japanese eagerness and efforts to destroy it. In this connection, the Japanese bombers attacked twice at Agartala Airport in 1943. This Agartala Airport now known as Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Airport is the single operational airport of Tripura which was elevated to International Airport in the recent past by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. So, in this regard, it can be said that due to the war, Tripura had some positive developments as well, especially in the field of transportation

[23] *Roychoudhury, Nalini Ranjan, Tripura Through the Ages, p. 75*
[24] *Roychoudhury, Nalini Ranjan, Tripura Through the Ages, p. 75*
[25] *Lodh, Debasis, Aiee Shahar Agartala, p. 34*
[26] *Lodh, Debasis, Aiee Shahar Agartala, p. 50*
[27] *World War II era Agartala airport to be 3rd international airport in northeast, Deccan Herald, 9th January 2022, (Accessed on 15th October, 2024)*
[28] *World War II era Agartala airport to be 3rd international airport in northeast, Deccan Herald, 9th January 2022, (Accessed on 15th October, 2024)*

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and communication in the forms of airports, massive road constructions, telecommunication and other infrastructural developments.

World War II made a profound contribution to awakening the political consciousness among the common masses. Due to war and famine a large number of refugees entered in the state, along with them, they bore their political ideas, and social and cultural practices from other parts of India. On the other side Americans and British contingents came here with the British Indian Army to fight in this part of the world, with them they brought global news, political ideas, progressive mindset and Western culture. The interaction of the local people with these soldiers and refugees resulted in the exchange of political and cultural ideas. The formation of various socio-political organisations like Tripura Rajya Jana Sikhya Samiti (1945), Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal (1946), Tripura State Congress (1946) & state level Communist party (1949) just after the great war reflected the socio-political awakening and aspiration of the people.

The Second World War completely changed the power alignment in the international sphere. Washington and Moscow replaced London and Paris as new global power centres. Major Colonial powers like Great Britain and France faced significant economic and military losses. They could not hold on to their colonies with such war-torn economic and devastated military strength. On the other hand, due to the war, native colonial soldiers came in contact with liberal social and political ideas, which inspired them to fight for their freedom. The national movement caught fire against these colonial powers. In India, anti-British sentiments were also intensified as common masses rose with a nationalistic spirit. Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya predicted India's independence and upcoming challenges rightly. However, he passed away on 17th May 1947, a few months before India's independence but it was told that he was willing to join in Indian dominion after independence with this connection he nominated Baboo Girijasankar Guha to represent Tripura in the Constituent Assembly of India for drafting the new constitution.

CONCLUSION

Tripura's involvement in the Second World War underlined its strategic importance in this global conflict. The Second World War almost impacted every nation. Along with India, this global phenomenon left some immediate and long-lasting implications for Tripura. Being a transit point for the allied forces and a site of military operations, Tripura and its people witnessed multifaceted consequences in the social, political and economic spheres. The events that occurred in Tripura during this period shaped the historical narrative of the state. The role of Tripura in this global conflict reminds us of the complex interconnection and contribution of the King and local people with such global events as the Second World War.

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