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## Electoral Politics in Tripura: A Brief Analysis

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### Abstract

This paper examines the electoral politics of Tripura, focusing on demographic changes, indigenous aspirations, and women's participation in elections. Following its merger with India in 1949, Tripura underwent significant political shifts, notably the influx of refugees post-partition, which altered the state's demographic structure, reducing indigenous tribal people to just 31% of the population (2001 census). The first elections were held in 1952, and since then, the contest between major political parties like Congress and the Left Front has shaped the state's political environment. Regional tribal political parties, such as the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS) and Indigenous Nationalist Party of Twipra (INPT), emerged as responses to the changing demographics and political landscape. The impact of refugee influx has let indigenous tribal demands for autonomy to the formation of regional parties. Additionally, women have increasingly participated in the electoral process, with notable representation in the 2008 elections. The paper also highlights the 2008 Legislative Assembly election, which saw a record voter turnout and provided details into the complex political dynamics in Tripura, including the role of the tribal population, the dominance of Left Front in rural areas, and the Congress's success in urban constituencies. The election was hailed as a model of peaceful and fair elections in India.

**Keywords:** Electoral politics, demographic change, refugees, tribal autonomy, women in politics.

Tripura an independent princely state merged with the Indian Union on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1949. Earlier to the merger, the state was ruled by the indigenous Borok Maharajas. In British political parlance Tripura was known as "Hill Tipperah". So 15<sup>th</sup> October 1949 is important not only from the point of view of the merger but the abrupt change in the system of administration from monarchy to democracy. The most significant change that took place immediately was the inflow of the refugees in the state. The strong impact of Indian independence and partition had a direct bearing in Tripura through the influx of refugees. The influx continued over a long period of time and ultimately outnumbering the indigenous tribal people of the state. Thus, electoral politics in Tripura can not be discussed in isolation without taking into consideration of the demographic change. There is a direct relation of demography with democracy.

Year-wise Registered Influx of Displaced Persons (East Pakistan /Bangladesh) into Tripura

Table-I

Year	No. of influx	T O T A L	Year	No. of influx
1947	8,124	6,09,998  (24 <sup>th</sup> March, 1971)	1956-57	57,700
1948	9,554		1957-58	3,600
1949	10,575		1958-1963	Registration was discontinued
1950 (Feb)	67,151		1964-65	1,00,340
1950-1951	1,48,00		1965-66	13,073
1951-1952	23,300		1966-67	1,654
1952-1953	80,000		1967-68	12,299
1953-1954	3,200		1968-69	3,120
1954-1955	4,700		1969-1970	4,334
1955-1956	17,500		1970-71 (24 <sup>th</sup> March)	5,774

The situation can be gauged as within the period of about 24 years i.e. 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 to 24<sup>th</sup> March 1971, there were 6,09,998 refugees officially settled in the state.. Another figure put the refugee population between 1950-51 to 1957-58 as 3, 73,000 and 1964-65 to 1970-71 as 1, 40,600. However, these excluded those refugees settled in Tripura without being registered and any rehabilitation facilities from the Government. It is estimated that such unregistered population of refugee between 1951-1961 being about 1, 80,000. The refugees at present constitute the main business group and play a vital role in the economy and political affairs of the state. Today, the indigenous people of the state are only 31% (as per 2001 Govt. of India Census). The reason for such drastic demographic change is because of illegal migrants who have now acquired Indian citizenship.

Year wise showing total population, tribal population, influx and % of population growth

Table-II

Year	Total Population	Tribal Population	Total Registered Influx	Percentage of Growth
1951	6,39,029	2,37,953	1,01,200	24.56
<b>1961</b>	<b>11,42,000</b>	<b>3,60,070</b>	<b>3,94,883</b>	<b>78.71</b>
<b>1971</b>	<b>15,56,342</b>	<b>4,50,544</b>	<b>6,09,998</b>	<b>34.32</b>
1981	20,53,058	5,83,920		24.19
1991	27,57,205	8,53,345		12.75
2001	31,99,203	9,93,426		15.62

The first election that was held in Tripura in 1952 was to elect the Electoral Collage. In the same year election to the Lok Sabha also took place. In the Lok Sabha election the main contest always being between the Congress and the Left Front. In the State Legislative Assembly also the contest is between the Congress and the Left Front but the regional political party becomes the factors.

#### Performance of Political Parties in Lok Sabha election 1952-2004

Year	Tripura (East)		Tripura (West)		
	INC	Left Front	BLD	INC	Left Front
1952	00	01		00	01
1957	00	01		00	01
1962	00	01		00	01
1967	01	00		01	00
1971	00	01		00	01
1977	01	00	01	00	00
1980	00	01		00	01
1984	00	01		00	01
1989	01	00		01	00
1991	01	00		01	00
1996	00	01		00	01
1998	00	01		00	01
1999	00	01		00	01
2004	00	01		00	01

#### Tripura Electoral Collage (1952) (No. of Constituencies-30)

Year	INC	CPM	CPI	Ganasangha	FBL	IND
1952	18	12	01	03	00	03

#### Tripura Territorial Council (No. of Constituencies-30)

Year	INC	CPM	CPI	Ganasangha	Halam Sangha	PSP	IND
1957	14	12	01	02	01	00	01
1962	18	12	00	00	00	00	00

#### Performance of Political Parties in Legislative Assembly election 1967-2008

Year	INC	CPM	CPI	RSP	CPI(ML)L	FBL	TUJS/INPT*	IND
1967	27	03	01	00	00	00		00
1972	41	16	01	00	00	00	00	02
1977	00	51	00	02	00	01	04	00
1983	12	37	00	02	00	00	06	03
1988	25	26	00	02	00	00	08( 1 bye election)	00
1993	10	44	00	02	00	00	01	01
1998	13	38	01	02	02	00	04	00
2003	13	38	01	02	00	00	06	00
2008	10	46	01	02	00	00	01	00

Thus, the paper will look into the change in the demographic pattern, aspiration of the indigenous people who have become minority in their own state and women participation in the electoral politics in Tripura. The paper will conclude with some observations regarding the recently held Legislative Assembly election 2008.

**Tribal People & Party Politics**

Year	Total Population	Tribal Population	Total Registered Influx	Percentage of Growth
1951	6,39,029	2,37,953	1,01,200	24.56
1961	11,42,000	3,60,070	3,94,883	78.71
1971	15,56,342	4,50,544	6,09,998	34.32
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The democratic electoral politics came in Tripura from 1952 with the election of the 30 members' electoral college and Lok Sabha election. Since then the indigenous tribal people have been actively participating in the electoral politics.

The origin of the regional political party began with the birth of the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS). The origin of Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS)-historic Conference of tribal intellectuals Kainta Kobra Para 10-11 June 1967. Major demands: introduction of 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule, Inner Line Permit, stoppage of influx of refugees, restoration of illegally occupied lands from 1960, Kokborok language as medium of instruction in educational institutions etc. While writing about the growth of TUJS the genesis in the words of Prof. Mahadev Chakravarti, "True, the waves of immigration, particularly since the partition of the country, had not simply disturbed but totally altered the ethnic structure of Tripura's demographic map and there are reasons for resentment among the tribal youth" (Gassah, p.232). In the words of Jagatjyoti Ray, "During the period from 1950-1960 the tribal reserved lands were occupied by the 'infiltrators' and also distributed by the then government among the non-tribal refugees for rehabilitation resulting in the destruction of tribal compactness". (Gassah, p-218). Thus one can understand that the regional political party of the indigenous tribal people is to protect themselves.

**NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES**

Year	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES	TYPE OF CONSTITUENCIES		
		GE	ST	SC
1967	30	18	09	03
1972	60	36	19	05
1977	60	34	19	07
1983	60	33	20	07
1988	60	36	17	07
1993	60	33	20*	07
1998	60	33	20	07
2003	60	33	20	07
2008	60	33	20	07

**Performance of the Tribal Regional Political Party**

Year	Name of the Political Party	Contested	Won
1972	TUJS	06	00
1977	TUJS	28	04
1983	TUJS	14	06
1988	TUJS	14	08( 1 bye election)
1993	TUJS	14	01
1998	TUJS	10	04
2003*	INPT	18	06
2008	INPT	11	01

The TUJS most of the time had electoral alliance with the Congress. The Congress- TUJS alliance came to power in 1988. In 2003 the TUJS along with other tribal regional political party formed the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT). Unlike other states of North East India, the tribal regional political party of Tripura are not able to play an effective role.

**Women & Party Politics**

As in the case of national politics, women in Tripura are also involved in the electoral process.

Year	No. of Constituencies	No. of Contestants Male      Female		No. of Electors	No. of voters who voted	Polling %
1967	30	86	01	605934	450334	74.32%
1972	60	230	04	766093	516053	67.36%
1977	60	322	06	961998	764930	79.51%
1983	60	195	11	1134257	941785	83.03%
1988	60	268	03	1343066	1151658	85.75%
1993	60	393	14	1673028	1358244	81.18%
1998	60	249	21	1727463	1396565	80.84%
2003	60	235	19	1931720	1520417	78.71%
2008	60	282	31	2036979	1889839	92.33%

**Women Contestants  
(1967-2008)**

Year	No. of Contestant	Won
1967	01	01
1972	04	02
1977	06	01
1983	11	04
1988	03	02
1993	14	01
1998	21	02
2003	19	02
2008	31	03

**Tripura Legislative Assembly Election 2008**

An analysis of the total 313 contestants candidates was carried out by Association for Democratic Reforms revealed that only 6(six) candidates i.e. 2% candidates have criminal cases pending against them. A large numbers of candidates i.e. 102 contestants candidates did not complete their schooling.

Encouragingly, women contestant touched all time high with 31 i.e. nearly 10 percent representations. This is significant in comparison to the national scenario and in comparison with other states (where it hardly touches 7- 8%).However, only 3 (three) women contestant won the election.

The Assembly election of 2008 is the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly election of the state. Every arrangement was made to ensure fair, free and peaceful election. The Election Department right from the beginning took right measures and in fact termed...as a model for the whole country. Apart from the normal observers, this time micro-observers were appointed to ensure free & fair election. The Central Para Military Forces (CPMC) was given the sole responsibility to maintain...law and order before and till the completion of the election process.

This Assembly election set the all time record of voting percentage of 91.86 in the country. According to the media reports voters thronged to the polling stations right from the morning till late night to cast their votes. Thus, the 10<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly election of Tripura created a history in the state as well as in the country.

As per the seats won by political parties, it is seen that although the CPM & allies won capturing large numbers of seats but most of those seats are in the rural areas. From 20 seats reserved for ST, the CPIM & allies won 19 seats. The Congress won in all the 4(four) seats within the town area of Agartala. The reason being that in the Congress manifesto promised to constitute Sixth Pay Commission and pay Dearness Allowances as per the Central government employees.

As per the election analysis when such high percentage of voters turnout is seen the anti-incumbency factor takes turn but here it did not apply in the case of the just conclude Legislative Assembly election.

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