Tripura Adimjati Sevak Sangh

*Chittaranjan Dev

The writer outlines the manifold activities of Tripura Adimjati Sevak Sangh, a pioneer voluntary organisation. It has played a commendable role in the socio-economic emancipation of the members of Adim Jati. It had made a valuable contribution to the restoration of peace in the hill areas during the communal riots in 1980.

Tripura Adimjati Sevak Sangh is a voluntary social welfare organisation established on 7th June, 1961 with its Headquarters at Joynagar, Agartala. The aims and objectives of the Sangh are to work for the development of the Tribal communities in Tripura — socially, economically, culturally and educationally — with a view to enabling them to take their legitimate place in the national life of the country as equal citizens. Shri Chitta Ranjan Dev, a volunteer of the Freedom movement and a devoted constructive worker is the founder of this organisation. Thakur Jitendra Mohan Deb Barma, a grand old man of Tribal community, was its first president and Shri Dev as the honorary secretary.

The Sangh started its activities from 1961 by establishing a Primary School for the children of Garu community at Jarjaria village of Sadar sub-division and then expanded its activities in other hill areas of Sadar, Sonamura, Kailasahar and Udaipur sub-divisions by starting pre-school education centres for children and literacy centres for women. In 1963-64, the Sangh opened two Ayurvedic Charitable Dispensaries and two Women & Child Welfare Centres at Taijiling in Sonamura and Barksthal in Sadar sub-division. In 1972-73 the Sangh started two Homeo Charitable dispensaries for the tribal people at Gongrai and at Manikya village, five Balwadi and Nutrition Centres at Kandraichhara, Gongrai Bijoynandi and Hezamara in Sadar sub-division and Halambastee in Kailasahar sub-division. Due to stoppage of grant by the then Left Govt. in 1980-81 without stating any reason, the Sangh was compelled to close all the state Govt.-aided centres. But the Balwadies, Nutrition feeding centres, Seminars and Conferences on National Integration, Women Welfare, Tribal Welfare, etc. continued with the financial aid of the Govt. of India received through Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, New Delhi, and donations by the benevolent well wishers.

In 1980’s communal riots in the hill areas, the Sangh played a vital role in establishing peace and amity in the disturbed areas of Sadar, Sonamura, Udaipur, Amarpur and Khowai sub-divisions. From June, 1980 onward the members and workers of the Sangh under the leadership of Kumar P.K. Dev Barman, vice-president of the Sangh, Sri R.N. Bhattacherjee, Executive Committee member of the Sangh, Shri Chitta Ranjan Dev, secretary, visited all the disturbed areas, met people of different castes and communities to bring back peace and amity in their villages or bastees. The members and workers of the Sangh residing in the disturbed areas, took active part in the rehabilitation of the displaced people.

At present, the Sangh is conducting 22 Creches in the hill areas of Sadar and Udaipur sub-divisions, and one Shortstay Home for women & girls in trouble at
Sinachan, Agartala, with the financial aid of the Union Ministry of HRD received through the Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, New Delhi.

As a routine programme, the workers of the Sangh, in addition to their institutional activities, carry out propaganda against the danger of intoxicating drinks and drugs, dowry, exploitation of women & girls by distributing pamphlets, folders, posters etc., published by the Sangh and other sister organisations. Recently our workers also organised meetings to create awareness among the people about consumers’ rights and protection.

*The author is a veteran Gandhian worker of Tripura.

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GOVERNMENT OF VILLAGE

The Government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office....

I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the center if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village’s honour.....

There is nothing inherently impossible in the picture drawn here. To model such a village may be the work of a lifetime. Any lover of true democracy and village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good results

(Extracts from "The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, pg 374-75)