

# On Right to self determination of the oppressed nations and the indigenous people's struggles

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Dear Comrades,

I am very happy to participate in this important international conference of leftist organisations. I would like to express my profound gratitude to the sponsor organisations for that. On behalf of my organisations- **GMP** and **TYF**, I convey my warm revolutionary greetings to you all.

Frankly speaking, I am not an expert theoretician to contribute on this topic. As a grassroots' worker of my organisation, I will try to share our experiences and views on this particular subject.

India is a federal republic nation comprising many major nationalities- at least more than two dozens of them, each having a minimum of 15 and maximum of 200 million populations and a language of their own. Apart from these major nationalities, there are more than two hundred ethnic minority groups having their own separate languages. Therefore, the question of right of the nations to self determination is very much important as well as relevant in our country.

The secessionist forces are conducting terror activities in the name of right to self determination, to secede the northern province of Jammu & Kashmir from India for long. In the north-east region of India, different extremist groups are also very much active to separate this region from India.

There are eight provinces in north-east India. Most of the major ethnic population of these provinces are anthropologically Mongoloid in origin. Most of them are known as tribal or adivasi i.e. indigenous population. These people also perceive themselves as the son of the soil in north east India. A section of these people in the name of self determination is continuing terrorist activities demanding separate independent state seceding from India.

Personally, I am from Tripura, - one province out of the eight north east provinces mentioned; myself also is from this indigenous population, as well as my organisation **GMP** and **TYF** are also represents these populations. In Tripura, we are fighting these outlawed separatist organisations for more than three decades. The underground terrorists are well equipped with sophisticated arms. But we are fighting without arms. More than one thousand and five hundred leaders, workers, and supporters of our organisation have laid down their valuable lives in this struggle to save the unity and integrity of India. Nevertheless, we are growing but they are weakening. Today, they are losing mass support extremely. In the last election of Autonomous Council of indigenous people in our province the political party of the secessionist forces lost and the left front won all the council's seats.

It is also to be mentioned that Left Front headed by Communist Party of India (Marxist) is running the provincial government in our province. Our organisations had great roles in establishing this Left Front Government. In order to understand the position of **GMP**-my organisation, on the issue of Right to self determination of the oppressed nations and the indigenous people's struggles, one has to know the history of our struggle.

## Brief history of **GMP**

India was a British colony for almost two hundred years till 1947. There were more than five hundred small native kingdoms in India under British rule, apart from the ever increasing area under direct British rule. Our province Tripura was also under a native indigenous king. Under the Tripura king, whose dynasty was ruling the province even before the British came to India, the indigenous people were subject to crude exploitation

of monarchy, and the common people had no idea about education as well as modern civilisation. The Kings were building modern and more modern palaces, whereas the indigenous people were living the same medieval darkness.

There was a joking that during Second World War, many fighter and bomber planes of both British and Japanese side started appearing in the sky over Tripura. The illiterate indigenous people even used to pray for wealth before those aircrafts thinking them angels of heaven due to their ignorance.

This was the time when few indigenous youth got a little bit of education, and decided to spread education among the indigenous masses. They formed *Jana Siksha Samiti* (People's Education Forum or association) and started a movement for spreading education in the hill areas of Tripura. Within a short period they set up many schools. However, they came under fire from the monarchy pretty soon. They were also arrested and tortured by the King.

In order to defend, the movement for education they had to resort arms struggle against the King, and through this process education movement converted into a armed political movement with the new name of the organisation – *GMP- Gana Mukti Parishad* (People's Liberation Council) in 1948. Meanwhile India got its independence from British in 1947 through a partition of the country creating India and Pakistan out of the British colony. The Princely states were given choices to join either of them. The royal family of Tripura decided to join India; however, a big part of their estate went to Pakistan (i.e. East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh) even before independence as it was made a part of “ever increasing area under direct British rule”. This lost part of Tripura was mostly inhabited by non-tribal – comprising mostly a bigger ethnic population-known as Bengalis.

A point should be noted here that the partition of India and Pakistan was made on the line of religion- Pakistan for Muslims, India chosen to remain for all religious communities i.e. secular. There were big communal riots elsewhere in British India. Above all there was a big migration of non-Muslim, i.e. Hindu population from the East Pakistan to the adjacent provinces of India, including the province of Tripura. Basically, the Hindu population of the lost part of Tripura came to live in the princely Tripura which was going to join with India. In 1949, there was a formal merger of Tripura with India.

As a result of this migration the demography of Tripura had been drastically changed. The majority indigenous tribal people became a minority. The identity question of the indigenous tribal came to the fore-front.

After independence, a bourgeois party *Indian National Congress* ruled our province for thirty years, apart from running the central government of India during that period uninterruptedly. They never seriously took up the issue of identity of indigenous people during this period. The demand for protection and restoration of tribal land, recognition of our mother tongue and its introduction as medium of instruction, protection of culture, and regional autonomy were consistently denied by them. On the contrary the Left parties of India, particularly the Communist Party came forward to champion these causes. And that is how, the *GMP- Gana Mukti Parishad* got related with Communist Party. In this way the leaders of *GMP* became familiar with Marxism and Leninism. The *GMP* slowly became a mass front of Communist Party. Throughout the fifties, sixties, and seventies, the *GMP* and The Communist party together uniting tribal and non-tribal population of the province launched strong movements on those issues as well as issues of settlement of refugees migrated from East Pakistan. In 1978, the Left Front led by Communist Party of India (Marxist) came to the power of the provincial government for the first time winning landslide victory in provincial assembly election. Since then the Left Front Government introduced our language in education, set up regional autonomy and restored our lands.

## Our ideology- our strength

Through the long struggle, *GMP* experienced and realised that only Leftists are available to protect the interests of minority ethnic groups like us. On the other hand the bourgeoisie parties try to exploit us more. They want to wipe out our identity. ‘No nation

can be free if it oppresses other nation' - this historical saying of Karl Marx is now **GMP**'s mantra. About the question of nationality, the analysis of Lenin is now our guide.

We know, being guided by Leninism, the great revolutionary Ho Chi Minh liberated Vietnamese by defeating French colonial power and chasing out US imperialist super power. We strongly believe that in the path of Lenin, we will be able to establish to secure equal rights, dignity and security for all ethnic groups in India. This can be possible only through united struggle of all working class and common people of all nationalities and establishment of socialism in India.

Different separatist forces of India are trying to create division among the common people. They are trying to help the ruling capitalist class of India. Because bourgeois policy is also divide and rule. This is also helpful to the imperialists. They also want that independent India goes fragmented. If India is to be divided according to nationality, then India has to be broken into more than two hundred pieces. This will be good for no population group. In the light of Lenin's analysis, no particular population group in India is identifiable as either oppressed or oppressor group. Therefore we do not support the right to self determination of any population group. Because in our opinion, right to self determination means right to form a separate independent nation state.

We can't forget Lenin's word that, 'the bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and dose so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interest of the class struggle.' Also we know that the nation state has historically been merely a vehicle for capital to enforce the logic of the market. So, we are in favour of regional autonomy for deferent nationalities in India, but opposed to secession.

We have to note the famous statement of Lenin: in human society, we acknowledge the right to divorce of any family. But all families have to be divorced for that- this we do not agree.

## **National movement - we support**

Many national movements are there in the world as well as in our country. Which type of national movement will get our support? Our clear opinion is that we have to analyse in the light of the four major contradictions prevailing in human society. If any national movement helps the third world cause against the imperialist world, then we will support that. We will support if it helps the working class interests against the capitalists.

In Indian arena, we have observed that the separatists are getting help from the imperialist camp. The same imperialists who violates the numerous UN resolutions on Palestine people's right to self determination, imposes inhuman embargo against Cuba or conducts aggression one after another in the middle east, and finally has kept the indigenous American-Indian and Afro-American communities as second class citizens in their own country.

Thirty thousand peasants have died in India due to the neo-liberal policy of Indian capitalists surrendering before the imperial forces. We do not support them. Unity among the all section of the toiling masses of India is required to dislodge this anti-people ruling class. The ruling class creates obstacles to this unity. In North-east India, one would observe electoral alliance of the divisive separatist forces with the ruling bourgeois parties. That is why we can not support these separatist and divisive forces.

Throughout the Americas, there has been an upsurge of indigenous people against US imperialism, which has brought Ivo Moralase an indigenous leader to power in Bolivia. We are trying to spread out the same message of anti-imperial solidarity in the North-east region of India. #

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