

Introduction

Since March 3, 2018, as the announcement of results for the Assembly elections in Tripura confirmed that the CPI(M)-led Left Front is being unseated from the state government by the BJP-IPFT opportunistic alliance, a wave of widespread fascistic attacks were unleashed against the CPI(M) cadres and offices by the RSS-BJP. These attacks continue even today.

These attacks have many dimensions. At one level, there is an outright brutal murder of CPI(M) workers. At another level, CPI(M) offices have been burnt or forcefully captured. At yet another level, the homes of CPI(M) workers have been attacked, burnt and looted.

Post the formation of the BJP-IPFT government, physical attacks on CPI(M) workers and the constant vigilance on their activities continue with the patronage of the State administration and the law and order machinery to enforce that CPI(M) workers desist from participation in any political activity. This has resulted in an unprecedented situation of terror and violence in the state. As a consequence, in the recent by-elections to local bodies, 96 per cent of the seats were won uncontested by the BJP as the opposition candidates were violently prevented from filing their nomination.

Yet another level, there are attacks on CPI(M) workers and families aimed to eliminate their livelihood and to economically incapacitate them.

Many such horrendous attacks on the homes of CPI(M)

workers take place when little children witness, traumatising them for life. Many families have been forced to shift from their homes for safety, disrupting all activities of the family and the education of the children.

Post the formation of the BJP-IPFT government, the perpetrators of such fascistic attacks have been receiving police protection. In many instances, even after formal complaints have been lodged, FIRs are not filed. The perpetrators of such violence, far from being arrested, are allowed to continue to intimidate and threaten and further attacks are mounted on the victims, forcing them to withdraw their complaints.

This is the real face of the RSS-BJP.

My colleague and CPI(M) Polit Bureau member, Brinda Karat, has painstakingly documented 70 such instances, out of the many hundreds that have wrecked the state of Tripura. These instances, however, reflect the inhuman depravity of the RSS-BJP goons.

This publication contains separate sections. The first deals with interviews with the families of the martyrs. Five CPI(M) workers have been killed since these fascistic attacks began from March 3, 2018. These chilling accounts reveal not only the agonies of these families but also their resolve to resist and defeat such forces.

The next following section contains accounts of attacks on CPI(M) workers homes, offices and properties. Seven districts of Tripura have been covered in this section. The next section documents similar such attacks at the level of the panchayats.

Section four contains instances revealing the manner in which the livelihood of CPI(M) supporters is sought to be destroyed in order to disable them from continuing any political activity. This is happening in two ways. The first is by drastically cutting down social welfare expenditures and subsidies aimed at improving people's livelihood meticulously implemented by the Left Front government. The other method employed is by forcibly removing CPI(M) activists from work places by politically witch-hunting Left

supporters. The traditional 'jhum' cultivators as well as rubber plantation workers are forcibly displaced and fisheries run by Left Front supporters have been destroyed. This section contains first hand accounts that describe the diabolical methods employed by the RSS-BJP in destroying the livelihood of a large sections of the people.

This documentation is of immense value to understand the fascistic methodology employed by the RSS-BJP in seeking to eliminate political opposition. This underlines the scant respect the RSS-BJP have for democracy, human rights and Liberty. Through such attacks, the RSS-BJP hope to achieve their objective of not permitting the Left from rising once again as a dominant political force in the Tripura.

The CPI(M) led Left Front in Tripura have been subjected to severe attacks earlier in the late 1980s by the then Congress-TUJS government in the state. The CPI(M)-led Left Front, fought back, reemerged to win the confidence of the people and win the following five consecutive elections and form successive Left Front governments.

This only reconfirms the fact that as long as the colour of the blood that flows in our bodies is red, the Red Flag can never be lowered.

It shall rise to lead the people of Tripura, once again, for creating a better life, participatory democracy and eventually towards their emancipation from oppression and exploitation.

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Sitaram Yechury

Democracy Under Attack: Testimonies from Tripura

The attack on democracy in Tripura has many dimensions. CPI(M) workers have been killed, Party offices burnt or forcibly captured, homes of Party workers attacked, burnt and looted. This started with the wave of violence on March 3, 2018, after the election results were announced. There are physical attacks on Party workers, the constant monitoring by BJP-RSS men of their activities, and further attacks if they participate in political activity. There are also attempts to destroy the livelihood of CPI(M) workers and supporters, to cripple them financially.

These attacks take place in front of children, who are totally terrorised. Where families have had to shift, the education of children suffers. Some children have had to drop out of school or have been unable to appear for examinations.

In many instances, the BJP men leading the attacks were earlier with the Congress. Some took part in the anti-communist violence under the Congress-TUJS regime in the late 1980s.

The police and administration back the BJP-RSS miscreants. When CPI(M) workers are attacked, cases are filed against them, while the attackers get police protection! In other cases, where the FIR is filed, the police does not act and permits the perpetrators to bully, intimidate, threaten and once again attack the victims to force them to withdraw the FIRs.

These interviews and experiences in this booklet are illustrative of a much wider use of anti-democratic, authoritarian and fascist methods against Left supporters.

Section I: Martyrs

Since the election results were announced, the BJP has killed five CPI(M) activists. Some of the family members spoke about their loss.

Rakesh Dhar, killed on April 12. His body was recovered the following day.

Monorama, 23, is Rakesh's wife. She and her child Ayan live with her widowed mother-in-law in Santir Bazaar, South Tripura district. As she speaks of her husband, tears run down her face. Her child looks up at her, holding his little hands to her cheeks to stop her tears, stroking her face, reaching up to kiss her. After the boy leaves the room with his father's brother, Manorama wipes her face and speaks of her husband, their life together and the cruelty of the killing.

“My husband had a small meat and vegetable shop in the locality. He also helped to cultivate paddy in the small family plot of land. When I got married and came to my in-laws' place I saw that they were economically poor, but very rich in the love they gave me. Never once in these four years of our married life was there ever a quarrel or any problems. My mother-in-law is a widow and we all lived together in our small home happily.



“He was very active in the CPI(M). I knew of his politics when I married him. My family too are Party supporters and my mother was an elected pradhan of a neighbouring village. He was very popular among the youth and influenced them. In fact, in these years I have seen how my husband used his own small earnings to help people. I liked the way he worked for the Party. Sometimes

when his income was very low, some of his relations would advise him to look for a job and he replied, 'If I get a job who will work for the Party?' He was that dedicated.

"Everything was peaceful till the election campaign started. The BJP came to my husband and offered him two lakh rupees to join their Party. My husband told me of this and he said 'These people are mad if they think they can buy me, a communist, they will have to kill me if they want to take the flag from my hands.' At that time I thought nothing of his words. But today I remember those words, because that is what they did, killed him to take away the red flag.

"After the election results on March 3, BJP people attacked a number of homes and shops belonging to our Party sympathisers. I stopped Rakesh going to the shop for some weeks, but he had to go as people owed him money. But he was harassed and humiliated every time he went. There were several incidents. Once they threatened him and said, 'Why aren't you charging higher prices for the things you sell? We order you to charge more because our BJP traders are not being able to make money because of the low prices set by you.' Another time he had gone for a haircut. They stopped him on the way and said, 'Your hair is not short enough.' They caught him by the collar and forcibly took him back to the barber and made him cut his hair short. Another time they surrounded him and said 'A foul smell is coming from you, the smell of burning, your Party is burning and you smell dirty.'

"At home he would be contacted by the village people. They would come or telephone him and complain. I told him, 'Please be cautious now, let a few more days pass, and then you can work.'

"On April 12 when he was at home playing with our child, he got a telephone call. He went out without even changing his clothes. When he did not come back for some time, I started calling up his friends to ask if they had seen him. My relatives and neighbours also went looking for him. They saw two or three people in the dark whom they could not recognize. Another neighbour saw a bigger group. I was crying and worried that something had happened.

Suddenly a neighbour came and took away my mother-in-law. They had found Rakesh's body with a rope around his neck. The rope was tied to a very thin branch of a rubber tree. His knees were touching the ground. They had killed him but made it out to be a suicide.

"A pair of spectacles was lying nearby. His phone was there too. The police took it all away and till now we do not know who the last call was from.

"This is such cruelty. The Government and police are denying us justice. Everyone knows that Rakesh would never commit suicide. He was a fighter. At the funeral there was a big crowd of people, many were crying. I have to be strong for his mother and my son. I try not to cry in front of them. But when I am alone, and everyone is asleep, I think of him, I think of his smile, the way he loved us, the way he proudly held the red flag, and the tears don't stop."

Pradeep Deb Barma, 30, killed on June 2/3.

Pradeep was killed near his home in Baskcobrapara, Binapanigrampanchayat in Jirania, West Tripura district. He had a wife, Somarani and a boy, Deba, not yet three years old. Pradeep was the only son and youngest in his family with three older sisters.

His mother, Rajakini Deb Barma, lost her husband when Pradeep was a young boy. She took the responsibility of bringing up her children by working as an agricultural worker and later in MNREGA projects. The children also did odd jobs to earn a livelihood while the children studied. It was she who was active in the Party and in mass movements. Her children supported her work for the Party. One of her daughters was married to a Party member who is a brick kiln worker. Along with him, Pradeep would often attend Party processions and meetings. In the 2018 Assembly Elections he actively worked for the Party, taking leave from his job and leading the election work squads in his area. He had good contacts among the tribal youth in the area and encouraged them to work for the Party.

When in 2015, Pradeep, who had worked hard hours as a

trucker's helper for many years, got a better job as a supervisor in a construction company, his family was happy even though it meant he had to shift to Agartala. He came home frequently to see his family, sometimes just for the night. On June 2nd he made one of those trips home.



His elder sister Mandira, 38, who remained single to help bring up her siblings, is solemn and controlled, but her voice trembles as she speaks about what happened. Through her narration she often reaches out to hold her mother's hand.

“The day the election results were announced BJP men came to our house and stood at the gate shouting abuse and throwing stones. They were calling out for my brother and my brother-in-law. Fortunately, neither of them was at home. But we understood then that the peace that we had enjoyed all these years was broken. My sister-in-law who was at home with the baby was extremely concerned and felt that they would not be safe here. We also felt that my brother should avoid coming home till things settled down. In the following weeks he hardly came home. His wife and baby would go to meet him and would sometimes stay over or go to her parents' home.

“After a few months we thought things were getting better. Little did we know the hatred in their hearts for my brother because he had worked for the Party during the elections. My mother had seen the old days of the Congress-TUJS Government and she had experienced the fear and terror of those days. But even she did not think that they would be so cruel.

“On that day, June 2nd, Pradeep called me earlier in the evening and asked about Mother. He was very concerned about her

deteriorating health and asked if she had eaten. Mother told me to say we would eat together when he came home. But that was not to be.

“We waited for him but when it got late, and he had not yet reached, I started calling his colleagues to find out where he was. His phone was switched off. His wife was with her parents that night. My younger sister went to the thana to file a missing persons complaint and to request the police to search for him. They refused to do so. We went out to look for my brother. Many people from our neighbourhood also searched everywhere but there was no trace of him.

“Early the next morning I got a call from the thana to identify a body found in the canal. This was the very place we had searched at night. The police told me that they had found his motor bike lying on the side of the road some distance away. Even though the motorbike was not damaged at all and without looking at the body, they started saying ‘Oh, it is an accident’. I realized then that they were going to cover up the death.

“My brother's body was in the canal, caught in the bamboo bushes. The police refused to bring the body out, ‘We will not touch that body. Go and hire some workers to do it’, they said to me. I had rushed out of the house, determined to be strong but when I heard those cruel words, I could not stop my tears. I left my brother and arranged for some workers.”

She stops. After a long pause she says, “Even in death they denied him dignity.” She breaks down and this time it is her mother who holds her hand and consoles her.

Pradeep was killed. His body brought and thrown into the water. His face was not recognizable. The police refused to file an FIR of murder. Only after a lot of public protests they did so and had a cursory investigation but there have been no arrests. Till now no post-mortem report has been given to the family.

His funeral was attended by hundreds of people. Mandira says, “Even though my brother has been killed, we continue to support

the Party. This BJP-IPFT Government is bringing violence where once there was peace, it is destroying our livelihoods and now there is no MNREGA work. My mother can no longer go out for work. But she says when she is well enough, she will certainly join a demonstration called by the Party.” She looks at her mother and she, who has lost her beloved son, nods and smiles.

Tapas Sutradhar, Panisagar Padabi, North Tripura district. Killed on June 18.

The CPI(M) lost the Panisagar constituency by a narrow margin of 250 votes. In the booths where Tapas Sutradhar worked, the Party led by about 1000 votes. A full-time worker of the Party and member of the sub-divisional committee, he was a very popular leader. This area has a mixed population. Reactionary forces tried to disturb peace in this area by fomenting religious tension. They failed. Tapas stood like a rock in defence of communal harmony. He had worked at all three levels of the panchayats, having been elected first to the post of the village pradhan, then as a member of the panchayatsamity and then was twice elected as the zilaparishad member. His popularity and ability to mobilise people made him a target for the BJP in its drive to forcibly break the links of the Party with the people through terror, intimidation and killing of selected members. Tapas was killed on June 18. One person was arrested but later released. The family has not received the post-mortem report yet.



Rekha Sutradhar

Tapas is survived by wife Rekha Sutradhar, 42, and daughters Lucky, Class 12, and Tuli, Class 5. Rekha describes the day: “I am usually an early riser. That day too I got up at 5 am. Suddenly I heard a commotion outside. My nephew Umamad came running down the road screaming and crying ‘We are finished, we are finished, come all of you, see what has happened.’ I rushed out and he said,

Ajendra Reang: an activist of the Tribal Youth Federation went missing from his home in Kurma, Amarapur in Gomati district. He had participated actively in the Left election campaign, especially among tribal youth. He was therefore a target. After frantic searches, his body was found cut and bloodied in the jungle. He had been murdered by the miscreants of the ruling alliance.



‘They have killed uncle.’ There was a ringing in my head as I ran down the road trying to stop crying. I saw his body, lying on the ground, his neck cut though there was not that much blood. His mobile phone was lying next to him. Even in my grief I thought, this looks staged, he must have been killed somewhere else. I tried to look closely at him. I think they suffocated him with a cloth to stop his breathing and then cut his neck to make sure he was dead.

“There was a crowd around the body. My daughters were asleep when I had left the house. My nephew brought them to their father. My poor girls. They loved him so much. He had named my elder daughter Lucky and always believed that her birth had brought luck and happiness to the family. He was always kind and calm, never raised his voice.

“The police came with a trained dog. They made the dog sniff my husband’s mobile but when the dog started to move, they pulled the dog back. It was very strange. Every time the dog barked and wanted to run, the leash round its neck was tightened. Remembering that day, I think that I should have objected then, but I was too

Anima Das: a teacher and active in the teacher's organisation and movements in the State was literally beaten to death by BJP goons. On September 11, a gang of BJP men broke into her home and tried to attack her husband, a local committee member of the CPI(M) in Kamalpur. Anima rushed out to save her husband and was mercilessly beaten with sticks. They broke her collar bone and she suffered multiple injuries. She was rushed to the hospital. For a month this courageous woman battled death, but ultimately on October 12th a month after the attack she succumbed to her injuries.



She leaves behind her heartbroken son Biprajit, a Class 10 student, and her husband, Biswanath Sen.

dazed to speak. People were trying to console me, and I could not concentrate. Others asked, but the police shut them up.

“Later they arrested one person, but he was soon released. There will be no justice under this BJP Government.”

The previous night Tapas had gone to attend the wedding of a distant relative in a neighbouring locality. The relative was a BJP supporter and his wedding was going to be attended by the local BJP leaders. Rekha did not go as her daughters were studying for their exams. She told Tapas that if it got late, he should stay overnight at his uncle's home. So, when he didn't come back that night, she was not worried. The uncle says that Tapas did come to his house but left soon after, saying he was going home.

He was killed on his way back home.

Rekha says: “I don't trust anyone. I don't know who is speaking the truth. I want the Party to come back into the government because only then will I get justice. If I had been with him that day this would not have happened. He was so kind to people, only those who are against his work would have killed him. The BJP leaders or their MLA have not come even once to express their grief, although they all knew my husband. Does it not show their guilt? If the BJP threatens me, I will show them what courage I too have, like my husband. I will always be with the Party, no one can dare to tell me to leave the Party.

“We are all supporters of the Left, both our families. I knew he was a full-time worker of the Party when I married him and that our life would be difficult. But I was proud of his work and the way he helped people. There were always people coming to meet him and I liked that. People come and see me even now, but it is not the same, it can never be the same. He is gone.”

Section II:

Attacks and Resistance

North Tripura

Atafur Miah, 45, is the Vice President of his village panchayat in Bhagyapur, Dharmanagar. Looking at his bright eyes and smile you would never guess that he was beaten to an inch of his life. He required nine stitches to seal the large wound at the back of his head.

He says, “After the BJP won, its MLA sent me a message on the very next day saying ‘Leave the CPI(M) and join us. You will otherwise face problems.’ I sent a message back to him, ‘I don’t get money from the CPI(M) nor do I get business from them. What I do for the CPI(M) is from my heart not my pocket.’”

The BJP had fared poorly in the booths where Atafur worked, getting only 100 or so votes. Since he refused to join them, he had to be taught a lesson.

On March 6 around 7.30 in the evening, a crowd of about 200 BJP workers led by the MLA surrounded his house. Atafur lives in a joint family home with some 20 families in the compound. The BJP miscreants burnt his uncle’s threshing machine in the presence of the police. They then broke open the door to another relative’s home, Farooq Miah, inflicting injuries on his head, requiring 17 stitches. He has permanent brain injury and severe loss of memory.

After these two attacks, the family members came out to resist the attackers who soon ran away. However, the next day when Atafur’s wife Nuarulnisa went with his aunt to file an FIR, the police refused to take her complaint. On the other hand, the police arrested Atafur and two of his relatives under Sec 307 and sent them to jail saying that they had injured the BJP workers with no cause.

After his release Atafur continued to stay in his village, refusing

November 6, 2018

Tripura Terror: District-wise breakup

South Tripura District. 258 men and 34 women attacked. 92 houses, 15 shops, and 7 agricultural lands attacked and damaged. 86 Party offices and 22 offices of various class and mass organizations attacked. 62 Party offices and 3 offices of various class and mass organizations demolished by the state government.

Gomati District. 168 men and 16 women attacked. 342 houses, 58 shops, 9 vehicles and 19 agricultural lands attacked and damaged. 73 Party offices and 34 offices of various class and mass organizations attacked. 24 Party offices and 2 offices of the various class and mass organizations demolished by the state government.

Sipahijala District. 136 men and 8 women were attacked. 404 houses, 59 shops, 1 vehicle and 18 agricultural lands attacked and damaged. 104 Party offices and 18 offices of various class and mass organizations attacked. 14 Party offices demolished by the state government.

West Tripura District. 258 men and 45 women were attacked. 789 houses, 103 shops, 21 vehicles and 11 agricultural lands attacked and damaged. 97 Party offices and 58 offices of various class and mass organizations attacked. 14 Party offices and 8 offices of various class and mass organizations demolished by the state government.

Khowai District. 107 men and 9 women were attacked brutally. 366 houses, 21 shops, 13 vehicles and 29 agricultural lands attacked and damaged. 40 Party offices and 1 mass organization office attacked. 12 Party offices and 1 mass organization office demolished by the state government.

Dholai District. 69 men and 7 women were attacked. 279 houses, 4 shops, 8 vehicles and 10 agricultural lands attacked and damaged. 42 Party offices and 23 offices of the various class and mass organizations attacked. 24 Party offices and 3 offices of various class and mass organizations demolished by the state government.

Unakoti District. 97 men and 7 women were attacked brutally. 68 houses, 34 shops, 12 vehicles and 13 agricultural lands attacked and damaged. 23 Party offices and 23 offices of various class and mass organizations also attacked. 7 Party offices and 7 offices of various class and mass organizations demolished by the state government.

North Tripura District. 60 men and 5 women were attacked brutally. 17 houses and 103 shops attacked and damaged. 9 Party offices and 12 offices of various class and mass organizations attacked. 7 Party offices demolished by the state government.

to resign from his post of Vice President. He would accompany Party leaders to express solidarity with Party workers who were being attacked. On August 31, when he was going to the local hospital to visit a comrade who had suffered injuries in an accident, he was stopped by the lathi-wielding motorbike cavalcade of the MLA. They once again threatened him to leave the CPI(M). Again, he refused. They beat him up, hitting him on the head. He fell down, semi-conscious. Women of the neighbourhood, all Hindu, helped him up. In the hospital, BJP leaders arrived and ordered the doctors not to treat him. Municipality Chairperson Salil Bhattacharya and local committee secretary Swadip Chakravorty who had come to see Atafur, were beaten up by BJP goondas in the hospital. The doctors were deeply distressed and tried to help Atafur. Ultimately, they advised him to go to Guwahati for treatment, which he did.

Atafur's sister Husna Bano went to the thana the same day to file the FIR. The police refused, despite his grievous injuries. The MLA was there. She told him, "People have given you power, don't forget they can also remove you from power." Atafur returned from the hospital on September 11. When he rang up the police to ask about the FIR, he was told "Jai Shri Ram".

Atafur says, "My family has been with the red flag for generations. We are in the stone cutting business. My father saw the dark days of the earlier Congress-TUJS rule and he told us 'If you ever want to do politics, always be with the red flag, only they can protect us'. I remember his words. I am still the target. Our pradhan of the village has resigned but I have not. I say, the country has been through one Partition, but today the BJP wants to partition our hearts. I say with pride, if there is one man left in the whole country who will hold the red flag, it will be me."

Shubhojit, the child

Imagine a three-year-old child in his mother's arms, the safest place for a child, being suddenly confronted by shouting men, who beat up his father mercilessly, pushed and shoved his mother, and threatened the child.

On March 3 they came to little Shubhojit's home since his father Sujit, his uncle Ashish and his grandmother Rashomati Nath were all supporters of the CPI(M). They live in Barnakandi village in North Tripura district. The CPI(M) MLA, Vijeta Nath retained her seat in this area. This angered the BJP. Both Sujit and Ashish, were targeted as they had refused to leave the CPI(M) and join the BJP.

That day the goons broke into the house and started beating Sujit in front of his child and his wife. They looted everything in the house. Two motorbikes were smashed. A relative's car parked outside was broken. In the melee, Ashish managed to escape. Sujit rushed out and hid under a paddy stack in the kitchen outside the house. But the men found him. He ran across the field and jumped into the 24-foot well of a nearby school. The goons threw stones into the well, but as they got no response, thinking he had drowned, they left.

Injured and bleeding, Sujit stayed inside the well for two hours till the villagers located him. The police came and pulled him out and took him to the thana. Meanwhile Ashish had come home. The police went there, saw the damage and took Ashish to the thana too. The brothers thought they were going to record their complaint and FIR, but instead, both brothers were charged with Attempt to Murder (Sec 307) and sent to jail. They were locked up for two weeks.

When they asked the police who they attempted to murder and what were the injuries, the police told them that there were no medical reports on record only complaints by BJP workers.

Rashomati had tried to file an FIR but the police refused. The family has now been forced to shift from their house. The child was too traumatised to go back to their home.

West Tripura

This is the story of 55 families, including 31 Muslim families from the suburbs of Agartala, who were earlier displaced from Mandai when that area had been engulfed by ethnic violence in

1980. They were rehabilitated by the Left Front Government and were given residential plots as compensation in the Sadr sub-division of West Tripura.

After the election results in March, there were some communal elements who wanted to remove the Muslim families from the area. They started harassing and attacking the families in various ways. But both Hindus and Muslims together resisted these attempts. One among the targeted was Abdul Fayaz Miah - an auto rickshaw driver, he was considered by the BJP to be their main opponent. A big group of BJP men descended on the area, cut off the electricity and started beating up people mercilessly, including women. Sakina Khatun, for example, was badly beaten that day. In that specific lane there are seven Muslim families and each one of those present was dragged out and beaten up. Abdul Fayaz's family had already shifted to a relation's home. They burnt Abdul Fayaz's home. They broke his arm. They said, 'We have broken your left arm, why should the left leg be spared?' Then they broke his left leg and right hand. The beatings resulted in injuries all over his body. He required 19 stitches.

The police arrived but refused to take the seven seriously injured people to the hospital. They left them at another nearby police camp. Fainting with pain, Abdul only remembers that some neighbours later came and took them all to the hospital. He and four others were in hospital for about a month.

In June the goons were back. A shop belonging to a Muslim family was burnt. There was terror in the area. Today they live in fear. Abdul says with tears streaming down his face, "What can I say? It was a *sonar* (golden) Tripura. Today it is a *mastaner* (goonda's) Tripura. I know the men who attacked us. Some of them are from my community too. They were notorious earlier as Congress elements. Now they have all joined the BJP. It is ordinary folk like us who suffer."

Siraj Miah is a respected leader of the community in Jirania sub-division. The BJP and IPFT went to him and asked him to join them. He refused. He says, "In the last two decades none of us

faced any problems. Today things have changed drastically. I am aged now, yet I have had to leave my home and take shelter elsewhere as I cannot tolerate the constant tension. I have been with the Left for fifty years. How can I change now?"

Ratua Miyah and his son work in a brick kiln. His house was attacked on March 3 and he left along with his family. They returned after a week. His attackers said that he could stay provided he did not go out of his house and that he give up all contact with the CPI(M). When he fell ill, he needed to go to the hospital. He was beaten up by BJP men on his way back. It was punishment for leaving his house. On March 29, his son was attacked in the brick kiln. The same day a gang burnt a portion of the verandah of his house. He says he realized then that if he succumbed to their threats, there would be no end to their attacks. He felt that it was also motivated by communal feelings. He asked for help from the Party and the following day the police came. The police officer who came said, "We knew what was happening, we would have come earlier but others in the police station stopped me." Ratua named his attackers.

Inter-community marriages are not uncommon in Tripura. Amita Deb Barma is a tribal woman married to Biplab Debnath, a non-tribal. Amita's sister-in-law Khelan Debnath says that some men came to their house and started making sexist comments against Amita. This happened several times. Both the women are active in Left politics. On one occasion, when women of the area heard about the harassment, they all went to Amita's house and chased the BJP men away. But a few days later, the BJP men came back and burnt Amita's house. They have shifted to a relative's house. Khelan was a cook in a women's college but she has not been able to go to work. BJP men asked her to join them and "all problems would be sorted out."

In the same group from Jirania is Manju Deb, an ICDS helper. Her house was attacked twice on March 6 and then again on March 25. The second time her neighbours came to save them. But because the BJP men were forced to leave, and Manju was protected, they

filed false cases against her and her two sons. The elder son was in jail for 16 days and the younger for four days before they got bail. In that period, the BJP came back and burnt her home partially. She says that although after this the police gave security to them, it was soon withdrawn on the instructions of BJP leaders.

In the Khumlungarea in Jirania sub-division, Adhia Deb Barma faced the wrath of the IPFT because he was a counting agent for the Left candidate. He had gone some distance to Jampuijala and had warned his wife that he would be late and advised her to go to her relative's home in Agartala. He said he had seen the rowdy behaviour of some of the ruling alliance men and did not want to take any risk. On the night of March 3, they broke into his house and burnt everything including his children's school books. His daughter insisted on doing her entrance test but did not get through. His son could not sit for his class 9 exams. He will now have to do it through open school. Adhia says, "Elections come and go. But here they are taking away our rights as citizens."

Kajol Sarkar walks into the room wearing dark glasses. In her late forties she has earned a living as a construction worker residing in village Bidyasagar colony, West Tripura district. She is accompanied by her husband Rash Mohan, her neighbour Satyanarain, and Dilip Das, the Vice Chairman of the panchayat samity. On March 4, groups of BJP men were roaming around in gangs abusing communists and bursting crackers outside the homes of party workers. Her son Durjo, 10, was playing outside. She rushed out to protect him. BJP men deliberately threw burning crackers at her. One of the crackers hit her eye. She fell down unconscious. When she regained consciousness, she found that she was blinded in that eye. She went to several hospitals, including one in Guwahati. Although her eye was operated on, she has not regained her vision. She needs another operation in a few months.

She gets severe headaches and is unable to return to construction work. This independent woman is now forced to take help from her elder son. She is worried because the operation and trip to Guwahati will mean expenses of around Rs 50,000. Kajol's family

are all active workers of the CPI(M). Kajol filed a report naming four of the men who attacked her, but there have been no arrests. In her area, the MLA has close links with the RSS. They monitor the activities of all CPI(M) workers.

Her neighbour Satyanarain was a pump operator of the common tubewells in the area. After the defeat of the Left Front Government, his house, and that of Dilip Das, were attacked and destroyed. The keys of the pump house were taken away from him. He was forced to pay a fine of Rs 15,000 for supporting the CPI(M). Dilip Das was asked to resign from the Vice Chairman's post. When he refused to do so, his house was attacked twice. For 15 days the entire area was terrorized. He complained to the police who did nothing. Finally on June 1, after intolerable threats and pressure, he resigned. But he too had to pay a fine of Rs 20,000.

Kajol says, "Since the advent of the BJP Government, small businesses and livelihoods have taken a hit. In our area there were around 300 families who survived on fish trade with Bangladesh. Their income has dried up. These men who flaunt flags and scarves of the ruling party demand money from construction contractors, from small shopkeepers. Everyone is affected. Who are these men? Everyone knows they are the old Congress workers who have switched to the BJP. They think now that they are in power they can extort money from people. I believe in the Party. I know things will change."

Nehera Begum is the Secretary of the Asha Workers Union. She has a son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren aged 12 and 8. She was a counting agent in Sadar subdivision area, West Tripura district. After the results, she heard rumours that she and her son were going to be attacked. She sent her son, a casual worker, to a relative. She heard of the attacks on other party sympathizers and workers and prepared herself for the worst. When it happened though, she was terrified, not so much for herself but for her grandchildren. About 30-35 BJP men came on March 7. At that time her daughter in law and the younger child were away, so only her 12 year old grandson was with her. He screamed with terror as the

men barged in. They tore her blouse, half stripped her in front of the child and threw her down on the road. They started beating her with sticks, and pulled her by her hair. They said “Stop working for the CPI(M). You are poisoning the minds of the women against us and no women are coming to our programmes because of you.” Meanwhile her grandson had rushed out of the backdoor screaming loudly to the neighbours that his granny was being attacked. Within a short time, the women mobilized and came out of their homes with brooms and sticks. On seeing them, the men ran away.

Nehera suffered internal injuries and was laid up in bed for over a month. When she was able to move, she went to the police station to file an FIR. The police kept her waiting for hours. They gave information to the men who had attacked her that she was filing an FIR. The BJP men sent her a message that if she filed the FIR, she would be attacked again.

The following month, in April, her son was abducted from his worksite by BJP men. They said that he would not be released till Nehera withdrew the case against them. Nehera says “Those hours were a terrible time for me. I did not feel helpless even when they dragged me out and beat me. I knew the women of the area were with me and would rescue me. But when I heard about my son, for the first time since my husband died, I felt helpless. But he somehow escaped from the room in Agartala where they had taken him. My son later came home. We are staying at home now, all of us. I continue doing my work for the union and the Party. I was a housewife who did not understand politics. Then I met Panchali Bhattacharya who she set up a health camp in our area many years ago. I came to know of the Party. I love the Party. Even when they were beating me, I never felt that I should leave the party, not even for a second. It is because of my work in the Party that I, a single woman, am now a respected person in my locality. I can never forget that

Dholai

In Dholai district, there are reports of extortion, loot, apart from the ‘pattern’ of attacking homes and destroying livelihoods. The

type of men involved in this ‘political activity’ of the BJP can be gauged from an example from Kalachuri, as told by a group of residents. The owners of a fairly big farm, which had poultry, fisheries and water tanks, allowed their vacant land to be used for a meeting of Left supporters before the elections. After the results, a mob of about 200 men broke into the farm and each took two to three chickens. When the employees objected, they beat them and said, “You are lucky that we are not taking your heads.” Apparently, this was the same mob which had burnt and attacked the houses of Left supporters in neighbouring Harerkhala. Over the next week, with the police taking no action, the mob went on a looting spree. They came back to the farm, looted the fish, stole thousands of chickens and destroyed large Syntex tanks. The value of the looted property is worth over 2.5 lakh rupees. The owners have appealed to higher officials, but it is said that the MLA and Minister are directly involved in this theft.

A student, the son of a retired police officer, was a counting agent for the Left candidate. He was at his home in Kamalpur, when on July 9 a group of men barged into his home demanding to see his laptop and his phone. They accused him of promoting mob lynching. He strongly objected. The police came and arrested him. They forcibly took his laptop and phone. The police called the BJP IT cell in charge and a BJP lawyer to examine the devices. They said to him, “You think you are so smart, we will teach you a lesson.” The lawyer said, “You have two accounts, and this is illegal.” The student asked him to show him the law, but they kept quiet. He says, “At that moment I decided that I would study law! That is why I do not mind not living in my home. So, in the end I have gained and anyway I continue to do my political work!”

His colleague, also a counting agent says that after the results were declared he went to the Party office. He got a call in the middle of the night that his home had been attacked and burnt. His brother is also an active Party worker. He is from Harekhela, where 17 houses were attacked and two were burnt including his own. The BJP gang told CPI(M) supporters if they wanted to stay in the area they would have to pay up. People say that earlier there was

peace, but now they are afraid to go out after dark.

Paritosh Das is also from Dholai district. He runs a small electrical goods shop. During the elections he shifted to the Party office. After the results, he continued to stay frequently in the Party office to help its functioning. On April 4, on his way back from the market, he was stopped by a gang of BJP men on bikes. They dragged him to their own office. They beat him up, saying, "Stop staying in the Party office. Leave the red flag otherwise we will not leave you." By then it was quite late in the evening. The ligaments in Paritosh's knee were torn and he was in great pain. His head was bleeding. He was hardly conscious. After dark, they took him to a nearby rubber plantation. Paritosh says, "While they were dragging me, I fell down. I heard two of the men say, don't kill him, we have given him a taste of it, now he will not do political work." Meanwhile someone called his wife. Carrying their small child, she went out looking for him. A crowd had gathered. Party leaders reached the spot.

Paritosh was in hospital in Agartala for over a week. When he recovered, he went to Chief Minister's office. He insisted on meeting officials since the CM was not there. He told them, "Is this democracy? I am taken to the BJP office and beaten? I demand action." They assured him that they would speak to the police. When he went to the police station on May 31 to file an FIR, they asked him to forget about the case. But he insisted and gave his complaint naming ten of the men whom he recognized.

The group with him says, "Because of his stand the BJP office where he was beaten is now closed! We consider this our victory because it was there that our comrade was beaten."

Suleiman Ali, 30, was a counting agent during the elections. It was because of the support of his village in Kamalpur sub-division of Dholai district that he survived today. This is how it happened:

In January of 2018, BJP workers tried to burn the flags of the CPI(M). There was resistance. Complaints were made on both sides. Suleiman was arrested and spent two days in jail. He says,

"Even though it was our Government since there was a complaint I was arrested. But look at them. Their Government refuses to arrest any of their workers even in the most serious of cases." Suleiman's village has an equal number of Hindu and Muslim families. His house was attacked. He started staying with neighbours. Under pressure, he decided to leave the village for a few months. He returned in May for the court case. On May 16, his house was surrounded by BJP men. His sister-in-law was badly injured when she stood at the door to protect him.

The villagers, led by women, took on the BJP men. They tried to make a getaway, but the villagers managed to catch three of them and called the police. The police took them away and released them without any case filed.

The next day Suleiman was to go to court escorted by villagers worried about his safety. BJP men were lying in wait outside the court. The villagers, hearing this, started an indefinite sit-in protest on the main road. The VHP tried to communalise the situation, but the villagers did not budge. Suleiman got a protection ordered by the court and the BJP/VHP men had to disperse.

But Suleiman has had to leave the area for the time being. He says, "The VHP tried to communalise the situation but did not succeed. People in the village regardless of their community support me. I will go back when things settle down. I work for the Party not because it was in power but because of its service to the people. I will serve people under the red flag wherever I am."

The group ends with this experience which sums up the utterly irrational and uninformed anti-Left politics of Amit Shah's karyakartas. On March 3, they had tried to burn the Che Guevara statue erected in the town. The statue was damaged but still standing. The football World Cup was on. The day Argentina lost, gangs of BJP youth morcha members burnt crackers in front of the statue of Che Guevara. They brought hammers and tried to smash the statue. When they were asked, 'Why now?' they answered, 'Che Guevara is a communist. He is from Argentina so if Argentina loses, CPI(M) loses. So, we are happy!' Someone should have told

them that Argentina has a right-wing president whose polices are close to those of their own leader Narendra Modi!

Sepahijala district

The groups from the Sonamura and Bishalgarh sub-divisions of Sepahijala district have faced multiple attacks from the BJP. Their experiences vary, but each point to the murder of democracy and minimum democratic rights under the new regime.

Arun Deb Barma, 46, a member of the Gana Mukti Parishad, the tribal organisation founded by the legendary Dasrath Deb Barma, lives in a locality named after that beloved leader in Bishalgarh, Sipahijala district. He says that the current attacks and violence against the CPI(M) reminds him of the dark days of the Congress-TUJS Government when as a young man, he had seen his home attacked and burnt as his parents were active members of the Party. He says that the Left Front Government had brought so much benefit to tribal families like his. Under a special scheme of the Rubber Board and Tribal Welfare, families like his whose land used to lie fallow were helped free of cost by the Government. The Government provided the plants and then looked after the plantation for seven years. He says he could get the first benefit of rubber sale on one hectare of land in 2013 of about Rs 5000. For the next two years, the production of rubber increased and he could earn between Rs 15-16,000 per hectare per month, on each of the three hectares he owns. The cost of tapping the rubber and maintenance came to about Rs5000 per month. All tribal families in the area benefitted from these Government programmes. His wife too is active in the Left movement and is a leader of the women's organisation here.

He says "On March 5, late evening, BJP men came to our house and cut open the tin boundary wall. Around 15-20 of them, with scarves hiding their faces, charged into the compound and broke open a door with their lathis. Seeing their aggression, we decided not to confront them and escaped through the back door. We stayed the night in the nearby woods. I thought to myself, these cowards attack us at night hiding their identity, what hateful poli-

tics. When we came back the next morning we found that the men had taken away two gas cylinders and other items too."

Arun contacted the police and filed a complaint. Although they did provide protection for 12 days, they did not investigate and no one was arrested. Arun and his family decided not to leave the house and continued their political work, though more discreetly. Arun had suffered a minor stroke the year before and was undergoing treatment.

On August 30, Arun and a group of comrades decided to organize relief collection for the Kerala Flood Relief fund. Eight of them set off with the red flag to the nearby market. People were happy to see them and came forward to donate. After a while, Arun got a call from one of the shopkeepers that the group should leave as a big gang of BJP workers were coming to attack them. After a few minutes, a group of about 50-60 lathi-wielding men surrounded the small group and asked them to leave the market. Arun stood his ground. They tried to attack him but the shopkeepers came out in Arun's support and the BJP men had no alternative but to leave.

But they took their revenge. The next night, about 30 men, drunk and abusive, came back to Arun's house and burnt it. Everything was destroyed. The family rushed out screaming for help but BJP men had posted themselves along the lanes blocking anyone who tried to help. The family now stays in an outhouse trying to rebuild their home. Arun says, "If I had not been sick because of the stroke I would have confronted them. But they can never stop me from working for the red flag, as long as I am alive. If I die, my son is there to continue my work."

His son Siyari nods in agreement. He was studying in class XI in Faridabad while his sister was studying in an institute in Kurukshetra. When he heard of the attacks in March, he returned home. "How could I stay away and leave my parents to face all this? Yes I have lost a year, but I too want to join the resistance against what the BJP is doing in Tripura."

He joined a local school. IPFT men started trolling him on

social media, abusing him for being a supporter of the CPI(M). He refused to be intimidated and said there was every reason for tribal students to support the Left. IPFT students caught Siyari at the end of July, stripped and beat him. He fought back. Later, parents of the students apologized.

Seyari says, “It is mainly the BJP which is inciting violence against the CPI(M) and all of us. They support all the drunken and goonda elements. But they will not succeed. Why would we surrender to them.? They are destroying the peace and harmony we had earlier in this area. The red flag is necessary to ensure peace.”

Gopal Dev was earlier with the BJP but left them in December 2017 and started working for the Left. “I joined the BJP YuvaMorcha in 2014. Impressed with my work I was among those selected to attend a training school in Agartala. In 2014-15 I attended many sessions, the longest being for one month. Although I was never in the RSS, I could understand that the training they were giving had nothing to do with youth issues like employment. They gave us physical training and would constantly tell us that we had to be aggressive towards our opponents. They also started holding camps, which can only be described as Hindutvabrainwash classes. In one of these sessions attended by 137 youth from all over the State we had to give a written test and I did very well. I was recognized by them.

“Before the elections they gave me a motorbike, hundreds of others also got these bikes. I was sent to different places in the State to organize, including the present Chief Minister’s constituency. But later on, in the course of my work I got disillusioned with them. They were interested in powerplay and sycophancy. I left them in December 2017. I went to return my bike. They threatened me and said, don’t do this, you will regret it.

“After I started working with the Left campaign, they told my family that I would be kidnapped. The pressure was too much for my father and he suffered a stroke. Soon after the election results, they attacked my home. To save my family I took shelter elsewhere. I have told my family, I will never go back to the BJP, whatever

they may do.”

A school teacher stands outside the nursery school holding a three-year-old by the hand. Suddenly they hear a lot of shouting. The child sees her father being attacked with sticks by a crowd of men. His clothes are red with blood. The child starts crying. The teacher rushes back with her into the school.

This happened on May 4 in the Sonamura division of Sepahijala district. The girl is the daughter of a fulltime CPI(M) worker Nityananda Barman. Nityananda would fetch her from school every day. Since the election results, he had been receiving threats from the BJP.

On that day as he was going to the school, he was stopped by around 20-25 men. They hit him so hard that his helmet was damaged. They pulled it off and tore his clothes. When he started screaming, some women in the nearby locality of Koraiyapara rushed out. In trying to save him they too got beaten by the goons. He managed to get away but again they stopped him. This happened several times. More people came out and the BJP men were forced to leave.

Nityananda had no alternative but to go to the school in that condition. He picked up his crying daughter in his blood-soaked clothes and was taking her home when again he was stopped. This time they told him, “You have a daughter. You did not remember that when you started work with the CPI(M).” Later he went to the police station to file an FIR but there have been no arrests.

The child has stopped going to school. Nityananda says it will take some time for her to get over the trauma. “No one has asked me to stop work for the Party. My wife is supportive, but she is very worried about the child. We do not want our baby to suffer.”

Another member of the group is Krishna Prasad Saha. His house was burnt. Latex stored in the rubber plantation of his elder brother was looted. His entire family has shifted to another district. But he stayed behind and continues his Party work.

Sudhir Debnath is a fulltime worker of the Party in the Bishalgarh sub-division of Sepahijala district. He was a primary school teacher but left his job to work for the Party. He was a clear target for the BJP since he was a counting agent. He was out of the house at the time but was forewarned by his wife and mother, so he stayed at a relative's home. His wife was pregnant.

Over the next three weeks, the BJP men went on a rampage harassing people, taunting them, throwing stones at homes of CPI(M) supporters, and so on. His uncle's small shop in the Rajnagar market quite close to his home was burnt. On March 28, Sudhir joined a procession on the issue of unemployment at the sub-divisional headquarters.

On the way back after the procession had dispersed, participants were attacked. Sudhir too was dragged to the side of the road and badly beaten. They warned him, "This is the last chance we are giving you to stop working for the Party."

But Sudhir continued his Party work. On September 5, as part of the all-India programme on workers and peasants demands there was a big procession in the district. This enraged the BJP. Sudhir was leading the slogans when he got an anonymous call warning him that he was being watched and that he should stop the slogans. Sudhir says he was so angry with the audacity of these men that he led the slogans with even more vigour. After sometime, the BJP district youth morcha leader called with a threat. Sudhir refused to back down. BJP men started stoning the dharna. The police were mute spectators.

At night Sudhir got a call from his wife. At the time she was nine months pregnant. She was alone at home and the BJP men had surrounded the house. Even while she was speaking the men attacked the house and broke the mud wall of an outer room. He quickly called up his mother-in-law and some neighbours who rushed there. She was terrified but safe. Sudhir went to the police and filed an FIR. He is still waiting for action.

Khawai

Sukhendu Vikas De is from Durganagar in Khawai district. The area where he lives was targeted by the BJP after the CPI(M) candidate won the seat by 2600 votes. 36 houses were burnt, out of which 14 were totally burnt. The properties of forty families were destroyed. The Party office was attacked 4 times. This is the context in which Sukhendu, 71, relates in a most calm manner the horrors that he and his family have faced.

Sukhendu is highly respected, having served as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Khawai Municipal Council for several years. Although his own family was traditionally with the Congress he was attracted to the Left as a student. He is horrified at how former Congressmen are acting as the attacking arm of the BJP. As the election agent for the CPI(M) he played an active role to oppose the misdeeds of the BJP. They tried to intimidate him and throw him out of the centre, but he stood his ground.

Between March and July, his house was attacked eight times. On the last occasion they broke a motorbike parked there and started banging on the door. His wife fell unconscious. He called up the police who finally arrived. They helped him to take his wife to the hospital.

Yet this senior leader remains resolute. He goes to the Party office every day and says with pride, "I consider it a crime if I don't go." He also says with a smile, "The people support us. In the recent collection for funds for the Kerala flood relief, 15 comrades in the collection group were attacked by the BJP, but we still managed to collect 1.67 lakh rupees."

South Tripura

Bhagya Joy Tripura, Deepak Dey, Dinesh Kanti Dey and others are from Sabroom division of South Tripura district. Prabhat Choudhury, CPI(M), won this tribal reserved seat.

Bhagya Tripura and Deepak Dey were counting agents for the CPI(M). BJP-IPFT started targeting tribal cadre of the Left

and Bhagya was one of their first targets. He was in the outhouse in his compound when his house was attacked. His neighbours helped him get away. For 26 days he stayed in the jungle. Once things appeared to settle down, he came home. On April 9 his house was again attacked by around 20 men on bikes. This time on the complaint of the Party, the police came and filed a complaint, but no action was taken.

In August, he was again attacked and was hospitalized for two days. The next time when he was with his wife in the market, some drunken men accosted them and misbehaved with his wife. He retaliated. Cross cases were filed. Later the IPFT leaders intervened and withdrew the case. Bhagya continues to live at home, working for the Party.

Deepak De's house too was attacked on March 3 and he is now staying at a relative's home. He also continues his Party work and maintains contacts with supporters. On one occasion on June 8, when he was having a cup of tea with some tribal friends in the market, he was attacked by the BJP. The tribals saved him and took him to the hospital.

Undaunted, once he recovered, he resumed distribution of copies of *Deshar Katha*, the progressive daily newspaper. BJP goons demanded that he stop. People again came forward to support Deepak. The goons tried to destroy 400 rubber trees that Deepak owned. Deepak says, "Things are changing. Earlier they gave money and alcohol to people to make them attack us. But now they are desperate. So the leaders are directly getting involved in the attacks on us. Police is helping them. But people are getting alienated from them and this is what matters."

Deepak De's sister Shikha Aich is equally brave. She was instrumental in saving another member of this group, Dinesh Kanti Dey from certain death. In his area of Sonaicharai the ruling alliance partners had locked up the Party office. Jiten Choudhury, the CPI(M) MP, had been to the area, mobilized people and got the office reopened. In June, a group of men surrounded Deepak and asked him not to go to the office. One of them hit him on the head

with a glass bottle seriously injuring him. He was rushed to Kolkata for surgery. He returned on July 20 and recuperated at home.

On August 9 he went to the Party office. He was brutally attacked. They deliberately hit him on his wound which had not fully healed. In excruciating pain, he pretended to be unconscious. They dragged him to an empty storage tank and threw him down 20 feet. They left him for dead. Luckily, someone saw this. He informed Shikha. This brave woman called out the women in the area. Forty to fifty women gathered and managed to get Dinesh out. He says, "But for these women I would have been dead." Dinesh filed a case on August 21. A few days later a group of BJP leaders met him and said, "none of our people are involved, please withdraw the case and let us all live in peace." He refused to withdraw the case, and told them "if they are not your people why would you want the case withdrawn." Such is his courage.

Gomati

In a rural area of Gomati district, Sanjit Das was a village pradhan working with the state-wide Dalit organization. He was a counting agent for the CPI (M). Left supporters were demoralized after their loss. They came to his home, many of them weeping. BJP men arrived there and started abusing him. They said no meetings here, no processions, this is now BJP raj. When he protested, they started to beat him but were stopped by the villagers.

At the end of the month, about 20 men on motorbikes came to his home and demanded 50,000 rupees. They said this was a fine for his "past crimes". Sanjit had been attacked in 1999 by Congressmen. His arm was broken. He had filed a case. In 2006 the court found one person guilty and he was imprisoned for a year. Now that man has joined the BJP and was demanding the "fine". Sanjit refused to pay. As "punishment" all the fish in the tank owned by the joint family were poisoned. The loss was over 3 lakh rupees.

On July 24, Sanjit organized a Party procession with red flags. A week or so later, Sanjit got a call from a sick person requesting help to reach the hospital. He was going there when he was stopped

by gangs of BJP men. They asked him why he had joined the Party procession. They took off his helmet and started beating him on the head. Some had iron rods. They dragged him off the road around 30 feet. They had gagged him, so he could not shout for help. But hearing the noise of the crowd some women came out of their homes. They said, “We know him, he is a good man, why are you beating him?” Sanjit leapt up and ran behind the houses. He was literally smuggled from house to house while the BJP men blocked the road. He was blood soaked. Finally, someone managed to get a car, and he was taken to the hospital. More than 70-80 women from the area came to see him in the hospital.

He says, “My brother and I filed an FIR as soon as I was better. I gave evidence to the police of my medical records. They had thrown my motorbike into the drain. The police recovered it, but it was totally destroyed. They had taken my mobile phone. But in spite of all this the police have taken no action. Even today I go to the Party office every day. I know the people are with us otherwise I would not be sitting here today.”

Krishnapada Chakraborty relates the experiences in Udaipur town. He says the environment the BJP has created is like a big spy centre. “Everywhere we go we are followed.” He says, “There is no personal freedom now.” He has a small shop. The BJP men forbade him to entertain a single person. He decided it would be better to shut the shop since his livelihood was in any case being affected by such restrictions. He confirms what Sanjit said, that the people are in constant touch with them. He goes to the Party office every day.

Taher Miah is also from Gomati district. He says, “For so many years we have lived peacefully. There was never any problem. But after the elections everything has changed.” His house was one of the first to be attacked. The so-called victory procession of the BJP surrounded his house and started throwing crackers and stones. His wife, Rupashree Begum, an ASHA worker, was injured by one of the crackers, but he was unable to get any medical aid for her. Late at night, their Hindu neighbours brought them out through the

back door and gave them shelter. His wife and son went to a relative’s home while he stayed in the Party office. A few days later he got a frantic call from his wife. “They have taken our son.” she cried. “They say he is a terrorist.” The police were contacted and fortunately the boy was saved but as a result his family has had to shift out of the area. In the first week of August Rupashree Begum went to re-join work. Some BJP women came and abused her and demanded that she be removed. The ASHA supervisor argued that she had worked very well for the last 12 years and there was no cause to remove her, but they forcibly removed her.

Taher Miah says that there was never any communal feeling in Tripura. But under the BJP-IPFT rule such feelings are being promoted.

Section III:

Panchayats

In the recent panchayat by-elections, candidates of the Left and other opposition parties were not allowed to file their nominations and 96 per cent of the seats were captured by the BJP. The elections were necessitated by the forcible and coerced resignation forced on elected members belonging to the Left. Here are a few of the stories behind the shocking statistics.

Shefali Mazumdar, 60, was elected as a Zila Parishad member in 2014 from Matai Champaknagar. She is a veteran of many struggles, respected and popular. Her own life has been a struggle; she chose to remain single to help bring up her siblings. She now lives with her younger brother. They are a close-knit family, all supporters of the Left. She had her first run-in with the BJP a week after the election results. When she was in the market, a group of BJP toughs confronted her and asked her to leave. She refused. She was supported by the shopkeepers. On her usual route home, she saw a group of bikers waiting for her. She promptly turned around and went on another route. She was harassed on seven different occasions, but each time she stood her ground with the support of the people.

On September 14, when she was going to inspect the fields cultivated by her brothers, she heard a commotion. A crowd of around 60, both men and women, caught hold of Shefali and asked her to resign. She replied, "If the Party on whose ticket I was elected asks me to resign, I will do so. Thousands of people have voted for me. Have you brought their signatures asking me to resign?" They started abusing her. A group of around twenty broke into her house even as she was surrounded by the others on the road. Her nephew's pregnant wife was pushed and thrown to the ground.

Shefali herself was being dragged into a van. She managed to get out, but again they pushed her forcibly into an auto rickshaw.

They took her to the Dakshin Matai gram panchayat hall and gave her a piece of paper. "Sign it or else we will lock you up," they screamed. For quite some time Shefali refused. The police knew what was happening, but they did not come to rescue her. Finally, she signed the paper which read, "I am resigning from the ZP post because of ill health." Shefali says "I was firm all through. But after I signed and came out, I cried. Why did I cry? I felt that I had been defeated, that I had let down my Party."

But this brave fighter did not let it end there. She went to the office of the District Magistrate and told him not to accept her resignation letter as it had been taken by force. She insisted on filing an FIR, knowing that she would have to pay a price. Meanwhile, her nephew's pregnant wife was rushed to the hospital. She had to have an emergency caesarean operation and delivered a premature baby on September 17.

Shefali shifted elsewhere, not wanting to endanger the baby and his ill mother. Her nephew was called by the BJP to their office and threatened to get his aunt to withdraw the case or else he would lose his job as a teacher. The water line to their house was cut. Her three brothers who cultivate vegetables were not allowed to sell their vegetables in the market by BJP men, despite protests from other shopkeepers.

Shefali says, "The police are failing to act properly. I have named the people who attacked me and yet there are no arrests. On the contrary they are trying to terrorize my family. For how long can we live in fear? My three sisters-in-law have told me not to worry and not to surrender. They say they too will resist. They are going to sell the vegetables in the market as a sign of protest." She lifts her fist up in a salute. "We said Lal salaam when we had a government. Today when we are fighting for the dignity of the people, that slogan has even more meaning."

Ratna Das, 43, is the Chairperson of the Panchayat Samity in Rajnagar block in South Tripura District. On March 3 as election results came in, she was at the panchayat office. A group of BJP men started attacking the office, but the police came and escorted

her out. The next day she went back to the office. BJP men attacked again, but the police did not turn up. She somehow managed to get away, but the goons locked up the office. Every night men would come outside their house, throw stones and shout filthy slogans. The houses of a number of Party supporters were also being attacked. Ratna and her husband, in consultation with others, decided to leave the place for a while. She shifted to a relative's house. In April she went back. Her husband was running a small rented grocery store in Chottokhola Bazaar. The shop had been closed since March. She opened it. She was welcomed warmly by the shopkeepers. The local BJP leaders threatened her and said she could not open her shop till she resigned. She said, "You want me to resign from the post of the Chairperson. You want me to shut my shop. All because I belong to the CPI(M). When we were in government did we ever stop any of you from doing your business? I know all of you. Many of you were with the Congress, now you have joined the BJP. I will not close my shop."

The BJP formed their own shopkeepers' association. They called a meeting and forced everyone to attend. Shopkeepers requested her to attend. She decided to go. When she reached there, 100 men were sitting around. She was the only woman. BJP men said they were going to elect an 'action committee' to decide who would run the shops. Ratna got up to speak. At first, they did not let her but ultimately when other shopkeepers supported her, they had to allow it. Imagine her courage! Surrounded by utterly hostile men determined to humiliate her, she said, "This meeting itself is illegal. Who has called this meeting, who authorized it? The panchayatsamity has the responsibility for this entire area. We have not objected to any of the present shopkeepers running their business." There was a ruckus. The meeting broke up.

The next day a BJP office opened next to her shop. Her customers were heckled. She lost lakhs worth of provisions. The owner of the shop was forced into terminating the agreement with her. She lost the shop. Her husband had a small rubber garden. The BJP men burnt the machine and cut the electricity line.

At the end of July, Ratna went to the block office in her capacity as Chairperson. She was gheraoed by BJP men. They had tried to mobilize women against her but did not succeed. Ratna says, "When they were shouting at me, I answered them. Tell your BJP President to call me and ask me to resign. Are these the principles of your Party, to harass and bully an elected woman Chairperson?" The same day they attacked the Party office and it was Ratna along with women supporters of the Party who went to the office and retrieved all the Party documents. She has refused to resign.

She says, "They attacked me, they threatened me, they have destroyed our sources of income, but I am still standing, I have the red flag in my hands. They said join the BJP. I said I would rather be on the streets than give up my ideals."

Tunu Malakar, Ashaponna Das, Sanjay Bhattacharya and others from Kumarghat sub-division, Unnokoti district.

On the day that nominations were to be filed, Tunu Malakar, former MLA, defied the diktat of the BJP and accompanied the candidates to the panchayat office. It was brave of her to do so. She had been viciously attacked after she lost the elections. She had a small rubber plantation with about 300-350 rubber trees. The day after the results were declared the BJP men set fire to the garden and all the trees were burnt. She had called the police and the fire services, but the BJP men prevented the fire engines from reaching her plantation. She filed an FIR but no action was taken. Every day when she goes about her work, they harass her, calling her names, threatening her. Her home has been attacked several times. In spite of these attacks, she accompanied the candidates on September 11. The BJP were particularly enraged because on the previous day, there was a spontaneous response to the Bharat Bandh against price hikes.

Among the group of 65 Left candidates going to file their nominations was a young woman, Ashapurna Das. Her father-in-law had resigned from his post of panchayat ward member after the BJP men attacked their home three times. They warned him that if he did not resign his son Mohit and daughter-in-law Asha

would be harmed. But even after he resigned, the violence did not stop. His son Mohit, who is a driver, was called to the BJP office and warned that his Maruti van would be taken away from him if he did not join the BMS Union. When he refused, the owner of the van refused to rent it to him. They started a car servicing centre. This too was attacked, and electricity and water lines cut. Asha herself is very active, especially in mobilizing women for their rights. The BJP wanted her to join the BJP. The BJP men again called Mohit and told him that if he did not join, his wife would soon become a widow. He told them, “Don’t threaten us. Nothing will come of it. You can wipe the sindur from my wife’s head, but she will still hold the red flag.”

When the Party asked her to stand for the panchayat elections, she agreed knowing that it would mean further attacks. Asha says, “I am proud of my husband. I told my father-in-law, you resigned to save us, but they are still attacking us. It is better to fight than to meekly surrender.”

Also present was Sanjay Bhattacharya, Vice Chairman of the Panchayat Samity of RD Block, Kumarghat. Sanjay is among the 15 Panchayat Samity and ZP members of this area who refused to resign. He was a special target of the violence that ensued. Sanjay was brutally attacked by the BJP men who had surrounded the office where nominations were to be filed. Abhijit Chakravorty, a local photographer with a small weekly, who captured these attacks on camera was surrounded by the goons, his camera was smashed, and he was so badly beaten that he was bedridden for 12 days. The women candidates were behind. They were surrounded by the BJP men who abused and threatened them. They singled out Asha and told her that they would break her legs if she dared file nominations. The women stood their ground. But faced with a totally non-cooperative administration, they were ultimately forced to go home. They filed reports with the police and also informed all the concerned authorities. But no action was taken.

Asha says, “Sometimes you have to step back to go forward. It is true that we have stepped back by not filing our nomination

papers, but people have seen for themselves the real face of the BJP. Many women have contacted me in support. The way I look at it is, we lost one fight, but won another. We won people’s support.”

Piyush Debnath, 42, was elected to the Melagarh municipality (Sonamura sub division, Sepahijala district) in 2015 as a ward councillor. Soon after the Assembly election results, a group of 10-12 BJP men came to his home and asked him to resign. He said he would discuss it with the Party and let them know. They came back in ten days, on March 20, this time led by the BJP block level president. They threatened Piyush and said that he would not be allowed to leave his house if he did not resign.

In April two meetings of the Municipal Board were held. This infuriated the BJP. On May 14, they attacked Piyush’s house. His elderly parents, wife and four-year-old daughter were at home. The first attack was at 11.30 in the morning. The second was at 5.30 pm. Piyush says, “That day seven houses of CPI(M) supporters and members were attacked. My father is so brave. He called me up on the phone and said don’t worry we are all fine. These things will happen. Be firm. I got tremendous strength from my father’s words. My entire family is with the Party. But at 6 pm after the second attack on my home, my little girl got totally traumatized. She fainted and had to be rushed to the hospital.”

With a heavy heart, Piyush resigned on August 7. The Chairman of the Municipality refused to resign. His house was attacked with bombs. Piyush was still on the BJP radar. On August 20 they came again to his house and warned him not to work for the Party. A week later, Piyush led a group for collection of flood relief funds for Kerala. When the group was returning to the Party office, they were confronted by a gang of twenty bikers flaunting BJP scarves. All these motorbikes had been given to them as part of the BJP’s election campaign. They stopped Piyush and pulled him into a shop owned by a BJP supporter. They beat him on his head repeatedly. Piyush had to be hospitalized for several days.

He says, “I resigned because of threats to my child. But even after that they have not stopped attacking me. They want us all to

Panchayat Section

Showing its utter contempt for elected representatives in the panchayat system, the BJP-IPFT Government has appointed so-called advisory committees and monitoring committees to illegally replace elected bodies at all levels of the panchayat system starting from the village committee to the block and district levels where majority of members elected at each level are from the left front.

Correspondence between the IPFT leaders and the Government officials in Dholai district released to the Press by CPI(M) State Secretary Bijon Dhar show the extent to which the subversion of democratic processes is taking place.

The BDO of Ganganagar R.D. Block in a letter dated May 27, 2018 states, "A list of Monitoring Committee members has been submitted by the IPFT party for smooth and proper functioning of development works in respective village committees... this is for your information and doing the needful."

At the Block level, Jiban Roy Reang, IPFT leader claiming himself to be the Chairman of Ganganagar Block Advisory Committee writes to the branch Manager of the Cooperative bank in Ambassa, Dholai, ordering him not to make any payments to MNREGA workers without his permission. The letter reads: "not to make payment of MNREGA wages, PMAY-G, PTG dwelling without the verification by the Chairman of BAC, even if the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the village committee give such a verification letter." Thus, the power is taken to deprive genuine workers of their wages unless they get the 'approval' of the Chairman of the Block and also the power to verify false name son the muster rolls to make payments illegally to people of their choice. [There was no Government notification nominating Jiban Roy Reang as Chairman of Ganganagar Block where an elected Chairman existed]

stop working for the Party. I will never do that. I am proud to be part of the struggle to save Tripura from this politics of destruction."

Pratima Banik Roy is from village Joynagar, Jirania block, West Tripura district. She was elected to the Panchayat Samity. Mother of an eight-year-old girl, she experienced BJP violence even before the elections. On the last day of campaigning, the Prime Minister held a public meeting in which he had made a very aggressive speech. Pratima says, "The immediate impact was that the highly enthused BJP men started shouting abusive slogans against us. When I came out to protest, a gang of drunken men started stoning our house." After the results, Pratima sent her daughter away to a relative's home. On March 3, the BJP totally burnt her home. Her husband Khokhan ran a small shop, but under threat he had to shut it. Under tremendous pressure, she resigned in July and shifted from her place of residence. But people of her area kept calling her expressing their support. She took a major decision with the support of her husband to once again file her nomination on the CPI(M) ticket for the panchayat elections, on September 6.

What followed was horrific. On September 8, when she was going to collect her rations, she was stopped by a group of men who beat her. She tried to get away, but they chased her. She was running along the Haora river bank and in desperation she jumped about 10 feet down into the river. She fell hard and hurt herself, but continued to run through the water, which was about two and a half feet deep. She ran through the water for quite some distance and reached a locality inhabited, as it happened, by Muslims. She took shelter there. Finally, she reached the Party office.

She says, "Yes, I do feel sad as I have not seen my daughter for the last two months. I am fortunate that I have the support of my mother-in-law and my husband. The BJP men have snatched everything from me, my home burnt, my family life disrupted, my child without her mother. But the ray of hope for me is the contact with the people of my area who constantly phone me and strengthen my resolve not to surrender and to fight for the people's cause."

Section IV: Livelihoods

One of the ways to disable activists or Party supporters is to kill their livelihoods. Since March, thousands of Left Front supporters and workers from diverse professions have been victimized. There are two aspects.

The first is that the BJP government has cut down on social welfare schemes, on subsidies of different types which were being given to enhance livelihoods. Tripura had an unbroken record of provision of the largest number of man-days of work under the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) since its inception. For four years in a row the average was between 85 to 88 workdays. This year since March the average according to the official website is just 18 days. Generally speaking avenues of livelihood and subsidies have decreased as part of the policy framework of the BJP Government.

The other aspect is the direct destruction of livelihood or forcible removal from workplaces because of political witch-hunting of Left supporters by the new regime. Rubber plantations, which have been an important source of income and employment, have in many instances been burnt or damaged. Rubber plantations have been an important avenue for the rehabilitation of jhum cultivators, mainly from tribal communities. This has stopped under the new government affecting both the jhum cultivators as well as the rubber plantations. Fisheries sector has also been impacted with the fisheries run by Left front supporters being looted or captured. This is a direct attack on constitutional and democratic rights.

The following first-hand accounts give a picture of this diabolical method of the BJP. In some cases, names have been changed.

Shankar Das was the Chairperson of a Fisherspersons Cooperative in Udaipur, Gomati district. The cooperative had four ponds on lease from the municipality. Shankar lives in a joint family of four brothers, each of them involved in the fish trade. The entire

family was active during the elections in support of the Left Front. Before the elections there was a clash between Left supporters and those from the Congress who had recently joined the BJP. Cross cases were filed. After the election results, Shankar and his joint family home were attacked by the same men. While the male members took shelter elsewhere, Shankar's wife and school-going son were attacked. She was a mid-day meal scheme worker. The BJP forcibly removed her from her job.

In April, all the four ponds, which were full of fish, were looted. BJP men close to the MLA were directly involved. But the family decided against going to the police. Shankar was threatened that if he came back to the area he would be killed. His entire livelihood and that of his family was destroyed.

BJP and RSS men asked him to join them: "We are Hindus originally from Bangladesh. You are too. Let us work for Hindus." When he refused, his family was again attacked. On August 26 there was an attempted stabbing of his younger brother. On the same day, his house was raided by the police, who came with 17-18 BJP men who complained that arms were being stored. When the police found nothing, the men called Shankar and said, "This is just the beginning, if you do not surrender you will be destroyed." Shankar and his family have refused to subordinate themselves to the BJP goons.

Paresh Rudra Pal and Santosh live in Dukli, West Tripura district. Both have been involved in the fishery business for the last 15 years. Both are Party supporters and had worked in adjoining booths during elections. Generally, in one tank there are about 10,000 to 12,000 fish worth about 1.5 lakh rupees. They said, "From around March 5, the fish in the tanks started dying. Ever since we started the business many years ago, we have never faced such a situation. When we brought out the fish, there was a terrible stink. All the fish had been poisoned. We heard later from other people, that the BJP men had boasted, 'Let us see how these communist dogs survive'."

Santosh's pond was poisoned three times and then taken over

by BJP men. When his son was beaten in the market by the BJP men, he decided not to file a case. He is now forced to sell fish to earn a living.

Paresh has a bigger tank, with more fish. Here too eight quintals of fish were poisoned. He says when he saw the fish all dead, he fell unconscious, he had lost lakhs of rupees. Several of the tanks were captured by the BJP. But he shows extraordinary resilience: "I have an old mother, four daughters and a son in my family. My daughters told me not to worry, and never to surrender. They have destroyed my entire business, but I believe that the people will punish them soon enough. I have only one request. Please remove Modi from Delhi, then we can survive, Tripura can survive."

Tribal Group from Gondacharra

They have come in a group, six of them from Gondacharra in the Dholai district. Padmarani Tripura, 28, and her husband Nanda Kumar Tripura, are the youngest in the group. She is articulate and strong and had been active in mobilizing women in her village for the Left Front in the elections. Her husband is a Jhumia, a kisan involved in shifting cultivation. He also works as a construction worker. He says, "My wife is more interested in politics than I am. I encourage her because I believe that the Left Front Government was helping us tribals. But since I am away from home for long periods, I am not able to be that active. As Jhumias we got a lot of help from the Manik Sarkar Government." Padmarani says she used to work in the MNREGA projects in and around Dolapati village where they live. Last year she says she got 89 days of work and earned Rs 170 per day as wage. This year after the elections till September, she could get only ten days of work and only Rs 155 to 160 a day. She has an explanation for why the wage rate has come down. She says that in every MNREGA group there are a few men from the IPFT or BJP who do no work but are included in the muster roll, so the piece rate calculation for the amount of work measured comes down. She says, "This robbery of our labour in MNREGA projects never happened during the Left Front rule. Now

we work, and they get the money."

A group of men and women led by a local BJP woman leader attacked Padmarani in her home while her husband was away. They beat her, snatched her earrings and necklace and warned her not to organize the women. Padmarani says for a few days, on the advice of the Party she did not go out much. But then the village women came to her and assured their support. She now attends meetings, encourages others to do so and says, "I know that I was attacked because of my love for the Party. My family is with the Party for three generations because we know the red flag is the flag of the tribals. How can these BJP people change our history?"

Krishna Ram Tripura, also a Jhumia, joins in the discussion. He says, "The Left Front Government really helped us. We got free seeds of pumpkins, beans, maize, brinjal from the agricultural department, apart from paddy. Last year I got 20 kgs of seeds free of cost. This year I had to borrow 15 kgs of seeds as the department did not give us anything. After the paddy has grown, I will have to return 30 kgs as that is the rate being demanded. Even for harvesting we used to get a government subsidy of 500 rupees. This year we have got nothing. You can understand the difference between the two governments by just this one fact."

As part of government policy under the Left to provide alternatives to Jhumia cultivation, the government had given Krishna Ram Tripura pattas for three hectares of land. The government had also provided plants for the cultivation of pineapple, betel nut and bananas. Krishna says, "Since the trees are still growing and the income is yet to develop, I continue Jhum cultivation. But I hope the income will increase soon. It is my tragedy and that of thousands of tribals like me, that the government has changed, just when we needed support of pro-people policies of the Left."

Krishna was attacked in Premkumar locality by a group of BJP men who broke into his house. They left him bleeding profusely. Krishna somehow reached a Tripura State Rifles (TSR) camp nearby who refused to help him. His neighbours took him to the hospital where he was admitted for three days. "I know who my

attackers are. Earlier they were with the TUJS and have now shifted to the IPFT. But at present there is no point in filing a case as the police will do nothing. So, I have decided I will mobilize people for justice.”

A few weeks ago, he accompanied a group from his village that had been affected with malaria, to the Gondacharra sub-divisional hospital. “I took Uttampriya Tripura and his grandchild to the hospital. The child had high fever and was shivering. The doctor said you have to buy medicines. We said malaria medicines were always free. He said not any more. They had not received any medicines for the last few months.”

Khudi Ram Reang is a 44-year-old kisan. On August 9 he, along with other people from his village, was going to attend the ‘court arrest’ programme on kisan demands as part of the all India agitation. The BJP had also organised a procession at the same time. As Khudi Ram’s group crossed the market, he was stopped by some BJP leaders. They told him to throw away the flag. When he resisted he was set upon by BJP men. Again, he resisted, and raised the flag high. Others came to help him, and the BJP men fled. He says, “Do they think we will let them take away our flag so easily?” But he too believes that there is no use in filing a case.

According to him kisans, tribal people understand the difference between this government and the Left Front government. He says, “We used to get good subsidies every year. Last year I got two kgs of seeds, 20 kgs of urea and 15 kgs of potassium totally free. If you take the total it will come to about 4000 rupees.” Will the BJP Government give us this subsidy? When we ask the IPFT they only answer, wait till we get our own state. People have started questioning them, so they are trying to terrorize us.”

Voices from Longotharai Valley

Dhananjay Tripura, Joben Mani Tripura and others are a group of tribal citizens from Longotharai Valley in Dholai district and their experience is quite representative of what is happening in the absence of government provision of work in many tribal areas. They

say that they are traditional jhumcultivators and with the paddy produced along with the work provided through MNREGA they manage to meet the needs of their families. However, this year there was a crisis created because the subsidy for jhum cultivation given earlier by the Left Front government for seeds was stopped. Joben says, “We went along with seven other families to the Chowmanu block where we used to get the seeds and the subsidy. But this time they told us that no subsidy or seeds would be given as the new government had not given any instructions. We were all shocked. The IPFT says that they cannot do anything until they get their own separate state. Now people are suffering.”

With the jhum subsidy removed the group went to the block again to ask for MNREGA work. In this area they used to get work through the forest department. But here too there was no work. In eight months, they received only ten days work. Even the dal, sugar and oil subsidy they used to get through the ration shops has stopped, they say.

They have taken desperate measures to meet their family responsibilities. Many tribals make secret trips across the border to Bangladesh to collect a plant locally called ‘gandhaki’ which fetches them 180 rupees a kg. They say they have never done this trip before but in desperation to ensure family survival they had to undertake this risky journey. “It is full of danger. We never know when we will be stopped or taken to jail by the police on either side. But we cannot see our children starve. This is our plight under this new government.”

Group from Sepahijala district

The experiences of the group from Sepahijala district reveals the planning behind attacks on the livelihood of Left front workers by the BJP. In many cases the BJP first contacts the workers and asks them to join them. The next step depends on their response. This could be physical attacks combined with the destruction of means of livelihood.

In the case of Ranjit Saha, 49, it was a combination of all these methods. He is a father of three, running a food stall in the Melagarh bus stand. Before the elections, BJP men came to his stall and asked him to join their party. He refused. He and his four brothers are CPI(M) supporters and they had worked actively during the elections.

On March 4, the day after the results, he went as usual to open his stall. A group of BJP men came to the area and started attacking the shops. People in that crowded area protected the shopkeepers and the BJP men fled. Later the BJP men came back and burnt six shops including Ranjit's stall. In the meanwhile, the police arrived and instead of arresting the arsonists, filed cases against Ranjit and other shopkeepers. They had to surrender to the police and later got bail. The affected shopkeepers were too scared to file a counter FIR.

A few weeks later, as he prepared to reopen his stall, he was surrounded by the BJP gang and severely beaten. His right hand was broken, he required stitches. He was hospitalized for 15 days. He decided to file a case. He has been able to reopen his stall but says, "The entire bazaar is affected because of the atmosphere of fear. Not just my livelihood but that of other shopkeepers too has been badly affected."

Rafiqul Islam is from Rahimpur, Boxanagar, Sepahijala district. He has a 60 decimal fish cultivation tank and two shops on rent from the panchayat for Rs 2000 a month. He had spent a large amount of money renovating the shops and for the merchandise. For ten days after the election results, the BJP men created havoc in the area, burning the Party office and attacking homes of Party supporters. These men were earlier with the Congress, many of them from the Muslim community, who joined the BJP. He and his family left the area and stayed with relatives.

He says that the men came in three vans, fully prepared, with huge nets. The first time they looted around 530 kg of fish. He complained to the police, but they did not take any action. Around 12,000 kg was looted over three raids. He lost lakhs of rupees.

Enraged by his complaints to the police, the BJP men coerced the panchayat into shutting his shops. They have now been taken over by the BJP men. He says, "The shops are given annually. Often the lease is given to others, but here they did not wait till the lease was over. They did it only to teach me a lesson and to terrorise the other shopkeepers." When asked whether the fish were insured, he says, "In all these years we have never required insurance. The Left Front government was our insurance." He says he will not give up his political work.

Nepal Das worked in the forest department as supervisor of the rubber tapping workers. He was a leader of the rubber tappers union. After the election results, his house was attacked. He escaped along with his family to a neighbour's house. Coincidentally, the goons came to the very next house of a BJP supporter and started drinking there. Totally drunk they went back to Nepal's house and broke into it. His tenant works in the BSF, who immediately rang up his superior who sent his men. Seeing the BSF vehicle, the goons ran away. However, Nepal was removed from his work in the forest department. Eighteen workers who were active in the union have also been removed, losing their livelihood.

They have however been helped by other rubber plantation owners who have given them two hundred rubber trees to tap. He says, "I can always find alternative work to survive, but I can never find an alternative Party."

Radha Balabh Debnath, 66, has a rubber plantation in Sonamura sub-division with 500 trees from which he gets Rs 20,000 a month. His sons run a small photocopying shop. At the end of March, BJP gangs set fire to the trees. He and his two sons worked for the Party during the elections. Not satisfied with destroying the income from the rubber plantation, the goons attacked his son and then locked up his shop with the machine inside. They demanded a ransom of Rs 20,000 for the machine. He paid up, but ultimately his son had to shut the business.

Deba Prasad Choudhury of Bishalgarh sub division was the pump operator for the panchayat waterworks in Rajnagar. His two

brothers run a small rubber plantation and also a ration shop. All are Party supporters. After the results, the three brothers were warned not to stay at home as the BJP was going to attack them. They locked the house and left. On the night of March 4, a group of 30-40 men arrived in several vans. There were around 70 quintals of rubber sheets in the house worth around Rs 2 lakh. The entire lot was stolen, along with some household articles. The family filed an FIR, but the police did nothing.

This emboldened the gang. They looted ten quintals of rice and 300 litres of kerosene oil from Deba Prasad's brother's ration shop. Even though the family filed another FIR, this was not accepted by the Food department and the brother had to pay for the losses of around 30,000 rupees.

It did not end there. They called Deba Prasad and warned him not to go to the pump station. He felt it was his duty as otherwise the entire water supply to the village would have been affected. On April 17, they caught him at the pump and assaulted him. He managed to escape on his bike. Pressure was put on the village pradhan to remove him from his post. So, he too lost his livelihood and his job.

He says, "My brothers are trying to find other work. I have shifted from the place of my permanent residence. The BJP men have told me that nothing will happen to me if I leave the area and stop Party work. Already I have lost so much now. I have decided to continue my work for the Party."

Narayan Debnath lives in a village in the Mandai block in the Autonomous District Council area of West Tripura. He has been active in Left politics and had several run-ins with the BJP and IPFT men from 2017 onwards. They attacked his house on March 3. The next day they came again and burnt it. On March 5 they looted about 250 kgs of fish from his tank. That night they called their supporters and had a feast with the fish they had looted. They were drunk and were shouting 'We are eating the flesh of Narayan Deb'. People who heard this were disgusted, even their

supporters. Then they attacked the Party office. The police have taken no action. Narayan says. "Whatever they do, I will not leave the Party."

Senjit Deb Barma, 48, had worked with both the TUJS and the INPT. He joined the CPI(M) and since then he has been a target of these groups, many of its members who have now merged into the IPFT. Soon after the election results were declared, they started a rampage against tribal supporters and members of the Left. On March 4, they came to his house, when he was not there and broke everything. They took a kitchen knife and showed it to his twelve-year-old daughter. "We are going to kill your father with this knife," they said. The weeping girl hid behind her mother. The cowards slapped her mother, abusing her. In the next few days, his mother was attacked, his brother's home was also broken into. Then they came back and burnt his home.

Senjit says he was most concerned about his daughter because she was to give her school exams later that month and all her books had been burnt. This young brave girl told him that if he could arrange for some of the books, she would study hard and give the exams. With the help of some teachers he did manage to get the books. She gave the exams. He says with pride, "She stood first in her class." She has now been sent to a hostel so that she is safe from any further violent incidents.

Suraj Deb Barma lives in Khumlung in the ADC area in the Jirania sub-division of West Tripura district. He has been an active member of the Party, working among tribals. In August 2017 he was threatened by the IPFT. Suraj filed an FIR at that time and the group backed off. After the election results, he was again threatened. He has around 1500 rubber trees under the government programme since 2005. An IPFT leader from Jampijala demanded five lakh rupees as protection money for the trees. He told them that his protection are the people.

Mithun Sarkar was employed by a cooperative to look after a ration shop, in the Jirania sub-division of West Tripura. In March, around 200 houses of Party supporters were attacked in the

Promises and the Reality

The BJP had promised a minimum wage of 340 rupees for MNREGA work.

On April 6, Government of India issued a notification declaring the wage to be 177 rupees

Not workers, but the personally appointed assistants to Ministers, got a big pay hike. On April 10, through a notification the Confidential Assistant (CA) to Chief Minister got a hike from 8000 rupees given for the post during Left front Government to 25,000 and for the CA to the Dy Chief Minister from 7000 rupees to 20,000 rupees.

The BJP had promised implementation of Seventh Pay Commission on the morrow of their taking office.

Instead of benefits, the Government has issued a memorandum signed on July 24, threatening compulsory retirement to any employee on grounds that are subjective, arbitrary and against the principles of natural justice such as “ineffectiveness.” This provides a pretext to remove anyone who does not fit in to the BJP’s political agenda.

BJP promised regularization of casual workers.

On July 31, Government issued a memorandum withdrawing the Left Front Government decision to regularize the services of daily rated, casual, and contingent workers who had completed ten years of service. The memorandum states “the policy decision for regularization of services ...has been reviewed and in supersession of all earlier memorandums a new one has been issued.”

BJP promised to increase pensions and social security to 2000 rupees.

Not only has there been no increase, the numbers of beneficiaries have been brought down from 4.19 lakhs during LF Government to 4.07 lakhs in August 2018 and the numbers are being further reduced.

Subsidies to farmers, jhum cultivators, for rubber plantation, for fisherpersons in the forms of seeds, fertilisers, rubber plants, small fish, fish food, etc have been stopped.

aftermath of the election results. His house was broken into. His son had to miss his exams and was unable to go to school for over a month. In September BJP men targeted him again. He was caught by a gang of BJP men and accused of misbehaving with a shopkeeper. The shopkeeper was brave enough to refute the BJP lies. They beat up Mithun and made him do sit ups holding his ears saying he would not ever work with the CPI(M). He was devastated by this public act of humiliation. He says, “I am a heart patient. But this attack has strengthened my heart. I will work for the Party with more dedication.”

Sadhana Debi, an active worker of the Left-oriented Nari Samity in Jirania, works as a Class 4 employee in the municipality. She is a widow living with her only son who is employed in a small shop. On March 5, she was confronted in her office by a group of men who pushed her around and warned her not to come for work. She had no alternative but to go home. She took leave from work, hoping that things would settle down. She re-joined work but some days later, on April 6, a gang of men came to her house. It was around 7pm in the evening. They knocked at her door and said “Sister, open the door, we want to speak to you.” She did, and saw that they had put the outside lights off and in the darkness, they started to beat her, shouting abuses. She suffered head injuries and was hospitalized for five days. She went back to work. She says, “It is not a question of my courage, it is a question of my livelihood and survival. At 52 years, a single woman who will look after me? My son has a petty job in a shop with a negligible salary. So, I decided that it is better to die than beg for my survival.” She has re-joined work but has shifted out of the area. She now travels to work from quite a distance every day, which means extra expenditure. But she stands firm, a proud working woman.

Food Security

The Left Front Government through its own funds had ensured the coverage of 6.76 lakh people for subsidies for pulses and kerosene through direct benefit transfers. This has been cut down to 5.78 lakhs according to the Government website.

The LF Government had provided subsidised food grains through its own funds for those wrongly categorized as APL through central Government's faulty methodology. That has been stopped and those sections have to pay 13 rupees per kg of rice instead of two rupees.

Conclusion

Even while attacks continue, the resistance is growing. Tripura is a most graphic example of the authoritarian methods used by the BJP against its opponents, the violence deployed against the Left because the BJP has failed to buy out Left workers.

These brave voices of Tripura need to be taken across the country, so that fellow citizens can express solidarity with the women and men in Tripura to save democracy and to save the State.