



Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya: A Clear Vision out of Chaos

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Abstract: Tripura, an ancient princely state in the north-east corner of India, has a unique history of being ruled by a single dynasty for several centuries (642-1949). Monarchy was the prevalent pattern of administration. During the long period of thirteen centuries, the subject sometimes enjoyed the benefit of the rule of some benevolent monarchs, and sometime suffered during the maladministration of some malevolent monarchs. Chaos and confusion was an inheritance characteristic of manikya dynasty. Empty treasury, Palace politics, waste of money, corruption, indifferences, ineligible employees, kooki raid, jamatia raid, foreign attacks and invasions etc. made the administration chaotic. In this juncture Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya, a benevolent king, appeared as a protector of this chaotic situation. He took some benevolent but strict steps towards good governance and peace. The major thrust of this paper is on the contributions of Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya to eradicate the civic problems of princely Tripura. In order to carry out the study both historical and content analysis methods has been used.

Key words: Manikya dynasty, benevolent, chaos, protector, palace politics.

Introduction:

Princely Tripura (a north-eastern state of India), previously bled red by attacks and invasion, the gross financial abuses and princely indifference to administrative issues aggravated the gravity of the financial situation. The public administration from top to bottom was clogged. A handful of officials were in earnest. Their eagerness to control and correct the affairs of the kingdom made a small coterie jealous and led to royal displeasure. So problems had sprung up one hundred years, since the time of Durga Manikya (1809-1812 A.D).¹ Problems were piled on right from the very beginning of the 19th century. The behavior of the kings of the first half of the 19th century of Tripura was unworthily needed the strong hand of a statesman to remove the debris. Herein lays the importance of Maharaja Radhakisore Manikya, a king of Manikya dynasty of Tripura. Most of the successors of Krishna Manikya (1747 – 1783) were problem-creators. So, problems were accumulated right from 1784. Radhakishore had

to rectify and reform a problem – ridden administration. However, the problem becomes coarsely manifest during the shameful reign of *Maharaja Krishnakishore Manikya*.

Objectives of the study:

This research work has two specific aims:

- 1) To analyze the progressive and modern benevolent administrative steps taken by *Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya*.
- 2) To evaluate the administrative steps of the king to eradicate the civic problems of princely Tripura.

Methodology of the study:

In order to carry out the study both historical and content analysis methods have been used. In order to follow the historical method, I have consulted archival materials like Administration reports, letters, books, journals and articles, various proclamation and documents. On the other hand, in order to follow the content analysis method I have selected two objectives of the study. Following those objectives I have tried to analyse the contribution of Radhakishore Manikya to eradicate civic problems of princely Tripura.

Problem during the reign of Maharaja Krishnakishore Manikya (1830 – 1849):

Maharaja Krishnakishore Manikya paid least attention to the public administration. Lasciviousness was his ruling passion. He had a polygynous family consisting of many wives, nine sons and fifteen daughters. Beside this, the king's lascivious character and his extravagant policy gave on opening to a set of troubles. He spent very lavishly. He threw away many with both hands. He was indifferent to finance. Durgamani *Uzir*, the then treasure asked him for measure to regulate the huge expenses of the royal household, he refused and began to make himself as an absolute ruler. The misunderstanding between the king and treasures went to such an extent that the treasurer had to flee at night 1833 A.D from Agartala to Singarbil.²

Another problem of Krishnakishore Manikya was Kooki raid (1836, 1843, 1844, 1886, 1847 and 1849 on the Bengali Subject of Zillah Tipperah). In all likelihood the fear of kooki recurrent raids, impelled Krishnakishore Manikya to shift his capital from old Agartala to new Agartala, a marshy land down the course of the Haora River.³ A beginning was made in 1838 A.D. Actuate shifting was made much later.

The ignominious reign of the imprudent king come to an abrupt end by an incidence of lightning shock in April 1849 A.D.⁴ He left behind a large family, an empty treasure, a corrupt bureaucracy, a crippled administration and a lot of other problems.

Problems during the reign of Maharaja Ishanchandra Manikya (1849-1862 A.D).

Isanchandra Manikya assumed the throne on 1st February, 1850. From the beginning of his reign, several serious problems lay ahead to Isanchandra Manikya. The king was under the steady pressure of acute anxieties. The problems were administrative, bureaucratic, financial, and political in the nature. He inherited many of those problems from the previous regime, some of the problems are- an empty treasury and a heavy burden of debt of eleven lakhs of rupees. It was extremely difficult to pay the salary of the employers. Isanchandra was not fortunate to have efficient and honest officers. Frequent recurrence of incidence of atrocious massacre by the kookis in Chakla Roshanabad was a major problem of the king. The raiders used to plunder ornaments, utensils, iron instruments like cleaver, spade, sickle, knife, hoe, axe, and kidnap young women and girls and carry human heads.⁵

Hunter writes “In January 1860 a murderous raid was made by the Kookis on the district of Tipperah, and 186 British Subjects were murdered and nearly 100 taken prisoners.”⁶

From the time of Maharaja Isanchandra’s succession, there occurred several issues of bargaining relationship with British Government. The question of the amount of *Nuzzar* to be given by the new successor became a matter of bargaining. Another Controversial issue occurred regarding the river Feni. The commissioner in his report, dated Chittagong 10th May 1850, reported on the claim of the *Raja* of Tipperah to levy toll on the river Fenny. The Tipperah *Raja* claims for himself the whole river. The British Government has an equal right to insist upon proof, before admitting of that claim..... The Deputy Governor therefore must hold that no ground has been shown sufficient to support the claim of the Tipperah *Raja*.⁷

The old dispute regarding the boundary line between the district of Sylhet and the kingdom of Tipperah first determined by Fisher in 1819-1821 continued till the reign of Isanchandra. Moreover Maharaj Isanchandra had a large family. He had so many brothers and sisters. His brothers were greedy and ambition. Under the circumstances, his brother Birchandra, in connivance with a few dishonest people, prepared and published a proclamation of succession in his forever, genuineness of which is not beyond doubt. The royal family became a divided hours. *Maharaj* Isanchandra’s family left Agartala and took shelter in Comilla. Isanchandra was a sincere king but his family members were so much lazy, and considered royal treasury as personal account. So they used to take money this Irainse even on flimsy ground from the royal treasury, lead to economic crisis. He was unable to nominate next heir because his son was too tiny to be a ruler, and also the king’s greedy brothers had a mind to capture the throne. If had the king nominated Brajendrakashore, to be the next king, he might have been killed.⁸

Problems during the reign of Maharaja Birchandra Manikya (1862 – 1896):

A few days after the death of Isanchandra, Birchandra came out with a document as to be the Yubaraj and next succession with the help of a few courtiers. He Became the

legal king of Tripura on 1870 (19th March). Thus the early period of his rule was full of claims and counter claims and cases for the throne. During Birchandra's reign, political feudalism was rapidly declining. Jamatia revolt, kooki raid were some problems of Birchandra Manikya. Birchandra meant to warm the Jamatia community and others against further rising; but he committed a mistake. His cruel treatment of the Jamatias only made them hate him the more.⁹ Birchandra Manikya was a usurper of the royal throne. From the beginning of his succession there prevailed misunderstanding between Birchandra and British Government. Birchandra had many wives and children, Every Queen wanted her son as the next king of Tripura. As a result, everyone entered into this group. Even some of the ministers got inclined towards the groups. Bhanumati was the king's favorite *Maharani* (queen); she wanted Samarendra Chandra, her son, to be the next king. But Samarendra was younger than Radhakishore. So Radhakishore was nominated *Yubraj* and successor. Bhanumati indulged in palace politics to advance the case of Samarendra Kishore. The king did not thwart this strategy of Bhanumati. So, Bhanumati and Samarendra Kishore resorted to all sorts of malpractices against his step brother Radhakishore Manikya.¹⁰

Steps taken for recovery by Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya:

Became a king, Maharaja Radhakishore painfully observed that the public administration had been almost completely paralysed because of royal insincerity and bureaucratic intrigues. Maladies like extra vagance, corruption, clique, lack of supervision over the distant offices, irregular collection of revenue corroded the whole structure of administration. Like a veteran doctor, the king correctly diagnosed disease and perfectly prescribed remedies.

i) Appointment of trusted persons in administration:

By an important proclamation dated 15 *Poush* 1306 T.E (= 1896) the division of work was clearly made and responsibility was categorically divided among some trusted and faithfully officers thus:¹¹

- (1) *Raja* Mukundaram Roy and Thakur Gopi Krishna Devvarman for revenue, register, police and treasury.
- (2) Thakur Dhananjay Devvarman for judiciary (except *Khash* appeal court), accounts, public works, public health, municipality and jail.
- (3) Colonel Thakur Mahim Devvarman for military.
- (4) Baboo Bangachandra Bhattacharya for education and political department.
- (5) Baboo Haracharan Nandi for reception and domestic affairs.
- (6) Baboo Amritlal Mitra for public gardens, transport, stores, elephants, horses, palanquins.

ii) Austerity of the king himself:

Radhakishore Manikya was admirably a modest and simple man. He maintained austerity in food cloth and livelihood. It was a sort of self-flagellation. As simple and cheap clashes. He did not permit himself the luxury of the table in the dining room.

iii) Retrenchment of some employees / forceful retirement:

In 1896, Radhakishore Manikya by an order abolished the office of the secretary to the royal palace. This was an important redemption operation for the reduction of the dead-weight of debt. The corrupt and incompetent officers, employees were rather forced to retire.¹²

iv) Marriage Politics:

Tripura royal family was closely related Manipuri royal family. From the time of Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya. The Manikya rulers used to marry the princes of royal family Manipur. Since then, one of the spoken languages in the place was Manipuri and it favoured vaishnavism. Thus Manipuri became influenced the royal family of Tripura. Not only that they tried to control the domestic politics. Radhakishore's mother and wife were also Manipuri. But Radhakishore tried to divert the trend of marriage politics. To counteract, to neutralize the Manipuri- dominated domestic politics, Radhakishore sought to introduce Nepali culture. This was done by arranging the marriage of his son, Birendrakishore, with the Nepali prince. It was a sort of strategic balance of power.¹³

v) Separation between family budget and state budget:

In 1900, one remarkable step was taken to maintain financial propriety. First budget system of allocation and expenditure was introduced. Two budgets were prepared – one for the king's fund and other for the states administrative and welfare expenditure.¹⁴

vii) Regulation of leaves account of royal employees:

Another remarkable step to find the so far unchecked absenteeism in the office was the introduction of employee's leave details to be mentioned in each month's pay bill in the remark column. It became mandatory to write in the remark – column of the pay bill of each staff, the leave beginning date, period of leave, position of sanction, type/casual leave, joining after enjoying leave etc. It was instructed that in absence of the leave accounts written in the remarks column of the bill, it would not be accepted by the treasury.¹⁵

viii) Fixed annual allowance:

The king started reforms from the palace first by introducing fixed monthly allowances for the *Rajkumaris* (Princesses) in 1897 in the following manner:

Princess	Married in RS.	Unmarried in RS.
Main Princess	60	30
2 nd Queen Princess	50	23
<i>Yubaraj's</i> Princess	50	25
<i>Yubaraj's</i> 2 nd Queen's Princess	45	22
<i>Barathakur's</i> Princess	45	22
<i>Barathakur's</i> 2 nd Queen's Princess	40	20
Step mothers son's 1 st Wife's Princess	45	22
Step mothers son's 2 nd wife's Princess	40	20
<i>Sevairs</i> son's Princess	30	15

To curtail royal family expenditure, allocations of *sansar* budget were reduced by an order dated 2nd *Baishak*, 1307 TE/1897. Later on monthly family allowances of the royal family members were fixed and notified by the order dated 28th *Kartik* 1311 TE/1901 as desired by the king. Barathakur and his family were allowed to draw Rs 600 per month while Tripendra Thakur and his family got Rs 440 and Joytrindra Thakur got Rs 220 per month.¹⁶

ix) Preparation of penal code:

In 1903 the king felt the need for some punishment for the erring officials of the *sansar* office and asked for a system of imposing punishment to the subordinate staff. As desired in 1903 two deputy *seresta* officers Radhamohan Thakur and Bidhubhusan Mukherjee were empowered to suspend a staff for negligence of duty for three months or impose a fine of Rs. Five or to impose both the penalties.¹⁷

x) Loan taken from British Bank:

Owing to the great Assam earthquake, the royal palace at New Agartala was completely damaged. As a result the king was without any royal room to stay that presented a great personal problem for him. So, he made the royal plan for the establishment of new royal palace but his resources did not allow him to go for such a big venture due to the natural calamity. Many advised him to take installment loan from the British Government but he was firm to adhere to his principle of not yielding to the alleged trap of debt of the British banias. He perhaps sensed that in case of failure of repayment of such credit taken from Government loan department, it may intervene directly by forfeiture of the property and seized opportunity to disturb the states sovereignty. He got advice from Rabindranath Thakur that time and managed a loan of ten lakhs rupees from the Bank of Bengal.¹⁸

xi) Extradition of Samarendra Chandra:

Samarendra Debbarman, one of the younger stepbrothers of the king had been claiming the throne after death of their father. He was allegedly engaged in intriguing activities against the king and state. So Radhakishore decided to expelled him from the kingdom by an order on Saturday the 11th *Ashar* 1314 T.E. giving him 10 day's time to leave the capital by Tuesday the 21st *Ashar*. The Title of Barathakur was repealed; He was allowed to get monthly allowance of one thousand rupees from the date he would start to stay outside the state.¹⁹

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it is found that Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya played a role as a rescuer from a disturbed and chaotic administration. He developed an efficient administration by cleaning the weeds associated with the administration though he had to face many hardships for this. He removed financial insolvency and improved administrative efficiency. Habitually charitable, high-minded, moderate and temperate, he brought about a positive change during his twelve years (1896-1909 AD) of kingship by his wisdom.

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