

Tripura Administration

THE ERA OF
MODERNISATION

Banikantha Bhattacharyya



The Book

This Volume probes into the process of changes made in the Administration of the Tripura State during a period of nearly 100 years from 1870, the year of coronation of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya, to 1972, the year of its attainment of full-fledged statehood in the Indian Union.

It attempts to describe the steps of modernisation in Executive, Legislative and Judicial spheres during the rule of the Maharajas of the particular age and the period of administration of the State after Integration, through which a primitive, tribal and patriarchal set-up having directly little control all over the State has been turned into a fully bureaucratic and modernised democratic system, extending administrative control throughout the interior of the land.

The author has also tried to analyse the forces behind the evolution of the administrative system and to explain the changes through input-output analysis as far as practicable. The following comments of some experts of the subject are worth mentioning :

'The Introduction enables one to have a clear conception of the term modernisation. The theoretical discussion is stimulating.

Comparison between Indian Councils Act, 1861 and Radhakishore's Council is not only interesting but also stimulating.

The author has eminently succeeded in presenting the collected materials lucidly. It is a definite contribution for the advancement of knowledge on the subject.

We are impressed by the amount of labour involved in its preparation. The search for the materials must have been a search for a hairpin in the haystack'.

It undoubtedly marks solid contribution to the contemporary history of Tripura which is likely to prove of immense help to historians and research scholars who want to make a further in-depth study of the history of North Eastern region of the country.

The Author

Dr. B. K. Bhattacharyya (born 1925) obtained his M.A. in Political Science in 1951 from the University of Calcutta and was awarded Ph.D. of the same university after a lapse of thirty years.

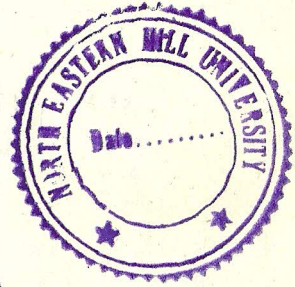
Dr. Bhattacharyya served as lecturer in Economics at the Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya, Kailashahar, Tripura from 1952 till he joined the M. B. B. College, Agartala in 1957 where he was promoted as Head of the Department of Political Science in 1960. He served as Principal, Dharamnagar College from 1980 to 1982 till he became Secretary, Calcutta University Post-Graduate Centre at Agartala, a position which he is currently holding.

He participated in several conferences and seminars held in various universities of the country.

He is the author of a large number of articles both in English and Bengali, which were published in different newspapers/journals and books of Tripura and out side. He translated "Introduction to Politics" by Harold Laski in Bengali which became very popular among the general readers, specially among the students and teachers of Political Science.

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~~TRIRURA~~ ADMINISTRATION
The Era of Modernisation
(1870-1972)



Bhattacharya

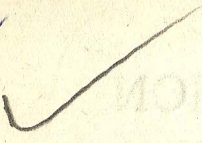
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Foreword

WORKING as a college teacher in Tripura for a long period since 1952 made me interested in the study of its administration and the history thereof from the time when I took a decision to spend my service career in this State. It was 1957 when I joined the Maharaja Bir Bikram College and found a big library with its treasure of books and manuscripts. Thereafter my interest was more intensely attracted towards the history of the development of administration in Tripura, particularly when I witnessed the process of democratisation in this State for more than a decade. In this respect the main problems among many others, faced by me, were the absence of a written history of the recent past and that of a State Archive with systematised stock of old records. Large number of papers and documents were lying with private individuals who were connected with the past administration for a long time. Some of them particularly to be mentioned are Late Dwijendra Chandra Dutta, Captain Nagendra Deb Barma and Sri Monimoy Debbarma who were kind enough to show me some old and valuable documents. Two other persons, Sri Ramaprasad Dutta, who is famous for his collection of old publications in Tripura, and late Tripur Chandra Sen, a pleader interested in historical research, also rendered immense help in my search for the old facts. Another pleader, Sri Anil Chakravarty, also allowed me to look into his collection of old news-papers and gazettes. These sources of papers and documents encouraged me to make an attempt to find out the course of development of administration in this State.

In the meantime perhaps through the attempt of some research-minded officers, the record room of the Agartala Secretariat began to be arranged somewhat systematically and the preparation of file indexes started. I found it in its preliminary stage when it was not very systematised nor fully arranged. There was every chance for the documents being misplaced or lost. Under these circumstances, the papers and documents I found were not easily accessible to all nor there was guarantee of their being well-preserved. Though some of them have been recently published in Bengali, I had, in the course of my writing, to incorporate them in the body of this book for the perusal of readers. I did not append them at the end as it would be more inconvenient to look into the appendix for each point of facts, analyses and arguments.

Moreover, the period of modernisation of the administration, which covers more than a century from 1870, the year of coronation of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya, to 1972, the years of attainment of full-fledged Statehood of Tripura, is a fairly long one. To record the changes and the events leading to those changes during this period requires a considerably large space, which could not be shortened in spite of my best effort. I had to trace also the political history of the period according to the need of the analysis, as there was no written history of the greater part of the period covered in this study. It also took some space to make the volume larger. All these compelled me to present a voluminous work in my humble attempt to study the modernisation of Tripura Administration during the last hundred years.

For this study of the era of modernisation I am indebted to a large number of persons and institutions. Without their ungrudging assistance, I would not have been able to find out the rare materials necessary for my work. After a long period, which I have devoted to this study, it is not possible to remember the names of all, who had helped me in this respect. Still, I express my gratitude to all including those whose names I can recollect at this moment. They are : Late Dwijendra Chandra Dutta, Captain Nagendra Debbarma, Sri Monimoy Debbarma, Sri Ramaprasad Dutta, Late Tripur Chandra Sen, Sri Ajit Kumar Bhattacharyya, Sri Anil Chakravarty, Sri Taritmohan Dasgupta,

Sri Subir Mukhopadhyaya, Sri Monoranjan Dhar, Sri Rakkhal Mallik, Sri Subodh Banik, Sri Suchintya Bhattacharyya, Dr. Jagadish Ganchoudhuri, Srimati Ratna Das, Sri Shibdas Choudhuri, Sri Hem Chandra Nath, Sri Ajoy Roy, Sri Kalipada Dutta, Sri Krishnapada Dutta, Late Maharaj Kumar Brojendra Kishore Deb Barman, Prof. Somen Bose, Dr. Subrata Gupta, Sri Sankaran, Sri Subodh Ball, Sri Rabin Sen and many other officers of the Administrative Reforms Department and the Department of Education. I am also thankful to the officers of the State Archive and the Secretariat Record Room of the Government of West Bengal.

During the long period of study many of my friends, colleagues and well-wishers encouraged and urged me to finish the work as early as possible. I am grateful to them and particularly to my wife, Srimati Amita Bhattacharyya, for her ungrudging assistance and constant encouragement.

In violation of the Indian custom in which the preceptor is to be worshipped first of all, I pay my deep reverence and sincere gratitude, in the last, to my affectionate teacher, Dr. Subimal Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, M.A., D. Litt. In the busiest hours of his life as the Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, and as the Vice-Chancellor, Kalyani University, he undertook the irksome task of going through the lines of all the Chapters of this volume. Without his scholarly guidance and leading counsel, it would not have been possible on my part to finish this long and strenuous work.

Final copies were typed by Sri K.K. Mallik with utmost care. I again express my gratitude to all with whom I have come in contact in this regard.

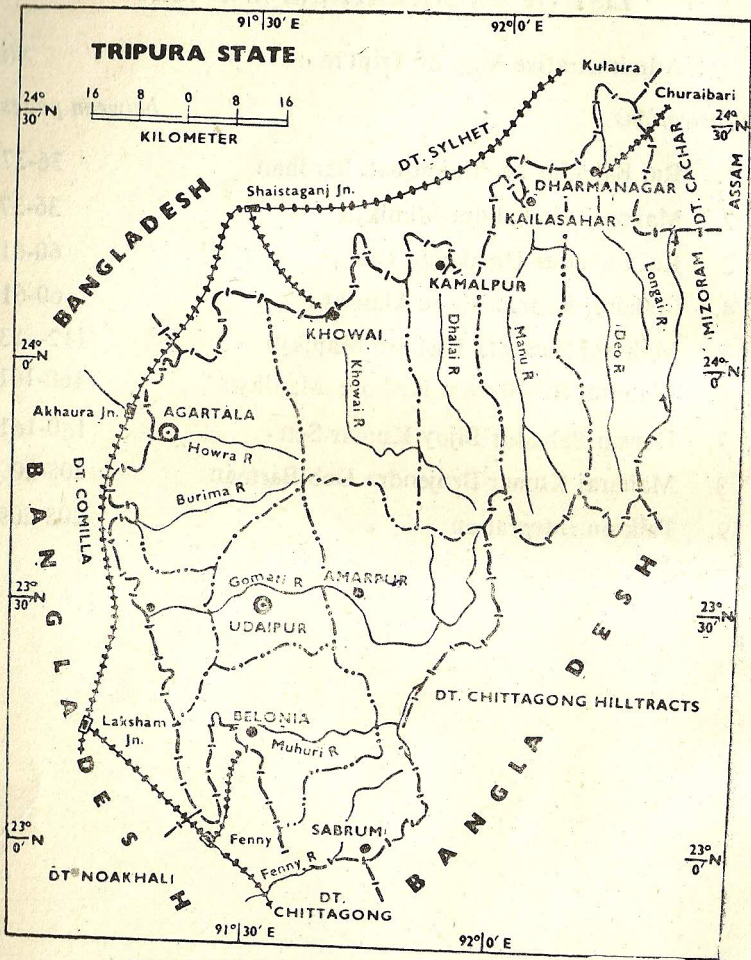
BANIKANTHA BHATTACHARYYA

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ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF TRIPURA

Introduction

THE CONCEPT OF MODERNISATION IN ADMINISTRATION

I

MODERNISATION, particularly in an administration, is an evolving process. The changes in the mode of rules, code of laws, character of the institutions of the State are brought for different reasons, by various influences, to meet the needs of society or any of its sections. Social thinking transforms itself into different schools of thought bearing and rearing new philosophies through the ages. Political thought of distinguished authors becomes guide to the statesmen, the rulers and the people to remodel their political systems according to the ideals presented to them. Thus the evolution of political process has given numerous forms to the Government of States in various ages. From the ancient political system of monarchy, the world has experienced imperial, feudal, democratic and socialistic patterns of administration upto the present age. This is, of course, too simplified an analysis of the stages of modernisation in administration. Some aspects of innovations may be taken into consideration as new stages of evolution in the political system of a particular society.

Material outlook can in no way go contrary to the question of evolution in the field of modernisation in administration. In the filtering process of history, administrative modernity gathers momentum. The whole of structural patterns and functional prerequisites of an administrative setup to be modernised,

requires the points of historically significant junctions. Any such attempt of discussion on the issue of modernisation in administration demands the scanning of historical antecedents. History, to be more accurate, is a document of social processes. The processes get dynamism in and through institutional operation. Institutions are run by individuals. Hence the well circulated utterance that 'man makes history' is the most significant point to be remembered in the discussion of modernisation in administration. In short, the question of modernisation to be treated in the light of historiography must be related to the societal requisites and the responses made thereto in and through the institutional functional arrangements.

Modernisation in administration, it may be noted, is a branch of, and specialisation in, the field of modernisation process as such. The standard definition of modernisation is not, however, established because of the consensus problem. Thus while economists like Paul A. Baran, Norman S. Buchanon, Howard S. Ellis, Benjamin Higgins etc. give full stress on economic development that ultimately leads to 'societal modernity' including political and non-political organs, the non-economists cannot accept this view. Lucian Pye in his *'Aspects of Political Development'* challenges the political prerequisite of economic development and again he rejects the idea of W.W. Rostow that modernisation is the politics typified by industrial societies along with the pace of industrialisation. He thus is in the position to disagree with theorists like James S. Coleman, Karl Deutsch and S.M. Lipset, particularly for his intellectual freedom on defining modernisation without confusing it with Westernisation. He is of the view that historical traditions of a particular system are the most impressing point in the process of modernisation. But, in analysing the historical traditions and socio-historical forces, Pye never arrests himself to the intellectual belief that modernisation centres round an effort to democratize the State apparatus. Nor, for that matter, he believes solely on the perspective of the use of force or power as the touching-stone of modernisation.

Pye is of the belief that modernization is a sociological fact which differs from country to country and also from time to

time due to the variation of social forces and operative movements plus methods. But his understanding of modernisation effort includes three main premises: "Equality" or consensus effort on the process of implementation and materialization of modernisation aims, "capacity" of the political system itself to materialize or to give 'outputs' and "the extent to which it can affect the rest of the society and economy". Finally "differentiation" signifying diffusion and specialisation of structures is an important tenet of modernisation process.

The last one, of the three premises of L. Pye, is important particularly for its contribution in the field of modernisation of administrative set-up. As it is evident, modernisation having its basic value of developing self-reliance, a particular State structure demands, above all, institutional arrangement. Thus administrative institutional arrangement is the tangible and palpable factor symbolising modernisation in administration. The intangible factor, being, broadly speaking, the dominant ideological force, becomes meaningful, if and when it is materialized in and through the institutional set-up. In short, modernity in the field of administration involves both subjective and objective aspects. The subjective aspect is of varying nature and differs from country to country and from time to time. The basic subjective modern element is the hard-core belief system that one has to stand on one's own foot. Thus whenever an effort of self-reliance and self-help is in the field, there remains an attempt to get recovery from the existing bottlenecks. The rolling of modernity begins to unfurl. The objective aspect is simply the institutional arrangement that helps to materialize subjective efforts.

In the institutional field the basic and prime query is location of power. Diffusion of power is thought to be a modern outlook for concentration of power may lead to: (i) tyrannical atmosphere, and (ii) administrative bottlenecks. On the other hand diffusion of power itself develops a set of new institution. Those institutions, because of the limited works assigned to them, create division of labour on the one hand and specialization of functions on the other. Administration of these specialized functions necessitates different offices, agencies and other institutions. It also involves the integration of complex structures and

processes. Thus differentiation "is not fragmentation and the isolation of the different parts of the political system but specialisation based on an ultimate sense of integration."¹ As such, differentiation, in modern administrative set-up, contributes to the socio-political integration as a whole.

Similarly division of labour has also a contributory significance. In the structural functionalism, specially of Parsonian variety, there is an interesting account of "pattern maintenance" function of bureaucracy. The institution of bureaucracy develops out of specialization of function. It is also known as officialdom, magistracy, non-political or permanent executive departments. The functionalist school is of the view that in modern times bureaucrats are officially non-political but actually they have to officiate the political decisions. Thus the bureaucrats are the medium through which the model of Government or the pattern of rule is in the process. Ralph Braibanty observes that bureaucracy is the most rational means for the conversion of public will and agreed policy into executed programmes and actions. But in modern times the division of labour based on specialisation of functions creates the institution of bureaucracy which other than officiating assigned functions creates a pressure on the government as a whole (by dint of their specialized know-how) and thus forestalls the despotic, powerful and capricious political activities.

Max Weber, a sociologist of this century, puts high faith on the bureaucratic institution. He argues that political obligation stems from three different types which are the typologies of societies and their authoritative bases. These are the traditional society, charismatic society and the modern society. In the modern form there is no role of traditional belief and personal charisma, but the significance of this form lies in its most "rational-legal" base. Here the authoritative position is honoured for its most rational calculations which are again codified in the legal documents as such. In modern industrial societies bureaucratisation is believed to be an inevitable process and indispensibility of it is marked for its attempt to make the rational calculation of values and attain these rational goals. On the other hand, the modern complex industrial societies, because of their secondary relationships (as

against the primary face-to-face relationship in the pre-industrial closed societies), are marked by a differential social structure with multifarious institutions, interests and roles. High specialization in the functional fields contributes to the impersonal or secondary relationships treating it most natural.

Viewed from this angle Max Weber argues that modern industrial societies, at best, require the bureaucratic apparatus for rational, efficient and smooth working of large-scale, ever-expanding administration. Hence the institution of bureaucracy and the bureaucrats are most instrumental to nurture, develop and/or maintain the administration as a whole. They don't possess the 'means of production', to use the Marxist terminology, yet they are the masters of these instruments for their specialized, technical efficacy. Hence they are symbolized as the typical workers, busy in the official duties.

But such a dominant role of the bureaucrats is not to be regarded in the perspective of unlimited power or the use of whimsical decisions. Such is the beauty of this modern industrial model of society, following Max Weber, that there is less scope for authoritarianism of bureaucrats. Bureaucratization is inevitable but this does not mean the absence of law and order. Legal imperatives are also a matter of count.

In fact, in modern times there is an honoured role of law symbolized in the 'rule of law' doctrine. "None is above law". This statement signifies that there is, over and above, a comprehensive, all-powerful role of law. The idea of the authority of law, though much disputed, puts at least a control over the fanciful authority of a Head of the State and/or Head of the Government and sets up a purpose other than his own interests. Development of such an attitude towards law means introduction of a new idea in the conduct and purpose of administration.

Again it may be noted that legal compulsions, besides acting as a 'brake' on the use of whimsical power, help to maintain law and order. Legal order is also instrumental to the maintenance of law and order and hence to modernisation as such. As modernization means a better but easier life, in the field of modern administration, the idea of welfare State is regarded as the most modern idea. The purpose of the State is the

welfare of its people and nothing else. Neither it is a power organisation intriguig for increase of its power, nor is it an instrument with ultimate purpose of establishing law and order for the sake of order. It is not also administered to serve the interest of the ruler or the ruling class only. It is an organisation for the welfare of the whole people. This idea of the State did not fully prevail even after the middle age. But it is now an accepted principle of all types of State-organisation. Introducing this idea in a backward State is an innovation in thought of the rulers. It does not mean that an autocratic ruler cannot administer for the welfare of his people, there are abundance of benevolent rulers in the history of princely States. But to take this idea as a principle of State administration is a modern approach towards the function and purpose of the State.

II

The aspects of modernisation in the field of administration stylized above are only the basic points of paramount importance. The present study, "Tripura Administration—The Era of Modernisation, 1870-1972", is framed not only on these aspects. It must be noted that : (a) Tripura is a State where kingship was the most natural form of rule, (b) democracy, in its present form, was not the honoured precept in that social organisation.

Hence in this discussion some light must be thrown and due treatment is to be made in the perspective of democratisation of administration, which has a physical correlation with the rolling stone of modernity. The question that can well be raised in the form of a discourse : how then the point of link was established with the question of modernisation of Tripura administration run by kings ? In short, 'Kingship' and 'democracy' are not only the two opposite political forms but also the contradictory ideas. How then the question of modernisation comes at all ? To answer this question we will have to know the development of democratic elements in the Princely period and thereafter.

We know that constitutional reforms were gradually introduced in British India from the last part of the 18th century

and the Imperial Government not only continued the effort but also promised gradual popularisation of the government from the beginning of the 20th century under the perspective of the political movement in India. The Maharajas of Tripura, when they come in closer contact with the British power in India, were obliged to take their advice in modernising the system of administration prevailing in their State. The British had also some interest in developing the administrative system of this territory to prevent the Kooki menace on the British subjects in the Eastern region of British India. So they pressed the Maharajas to develop an effective administration stretching throughout the nook and corner of the State with introduction of modern elements as stated in the previous section. It should not be assumed that the whole of developmental process was effected through the British pressure only, for there were other factors also, but the ideas of democratisation introduced in this State followed in part the model of reforms in British India in the development of executive councils, legislative councils and the improvement of judicial administration in different periods during the course of hundred years. In this discourse an attempt will be made to show the democratic developments with documentary proofs and interplay of different factors in the arbitrary rule of the Princely period and after the integration of the State with independent Indian Union.

It is also necessary to trace the course of development in Democratic decentralisation or Local Self-Government in Tripura as an element of modernisation. Before the advent of the era of modernisation, the tribes had their own well-organised self-administrative systems. In course of time they fell into decay. In spite of the best attempt of Maharaj Bir Bikram during the thirties of this century, it could not revive its social and administrative importance in the tribal society of Tripura perhaps due to the development in the administrative system and the growth of political consciousness of the people in this State. Then the Maharaja wanted to introduce a system of urban and rural self-government by following the model of self-government in Bengal as far as possible. But that effort of his also did not fully materialise. After integration with Indian Union the rural self-government has been introduced partly in

the form of U.P. Village Panchayats. These changes have also been discussed in this book as a feature of modernisation.

'The proliferation of institutional and infrastructural apparatus for converting will and policy into action, the expansion of popular participation in the democratic process, national integration through the accommodation of divisive and disintegrating forces and the evolution of an aggregated popular will oriented to the realisation of equity and justice have been regarded as the characteristics of political modernisation. The editor's summation of these characteristics of modernisation is, more or less, generalisations from the experiences of American democracy but their application in wider frame of reference cannot be ruled out.'² This remark of Dr. V.P. Varma is, to some extent, relevant to this study of modernisation of administration in Tripura.

However, a system is modernised when all the aspects of modernisation are evolved in the process of development. It depends upon the capability of the system itself and the people under it. Before the introduction of the efforts of modernisation, the State of Tripura was in the stage of a primitive undeveloped tribal type of administrative system. It is absurd to think of the symptoms of modernising process in American democracy in the system of Tripura administration. An humble attempt has been made here to show, in the following Chapters with documentary evidences as far as practicable, how far those aspects of modernisation, discussed above, have effectively evolved in the administration of Tripura State with interplay of different historical, social and political factors during the last hundred years. An effort has also been made to trace the course of developmental process through which this once-isolated territory has become an equally important unit of Indian democracy.

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1. Pye, Lucian—*Aspects of Political Development*, p. 47.
2. Varma, V.P.—*Review of Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition* edited by Ralph Braibanty, Indian Journal of Political Science, October to December, 1968.

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