

INTRODUCTION

Cooch Behar as a princely state had undergone tremendous changes in different fields of life to grapple with the rapid changes which affected the Cooch Behar State system both from within and without. As a matter of fact, the rigid and closed characteristics of a traditional society had to undergo changes because of innovative ideas in respect of-political and economic milieu.

Evidently, the study confines itself to the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan (1863-1911) which witnessed the most significant changes that ushered in modernity in the State. Now the basic questions are : (1) what was the nature of the whole society as well as the nature of administration under the rule of his great grand father, Raja Harendra Narayan ? (II) What were the factors and forces responsible to bring about change in the society, its economy and administration ? (III) What were the factors and forces

contributed to the making of a modern ruler ? (IV) What elements of modernity influenced the socio-economic milieu and administrative system under the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan ? (V) How much modern was the modern King ?

Theoretically, an attempt may be made to understand 'tradition' and the process of 'Modernization'. The celebrated writers of the sub-continent as well as European scholars, in their attempts in exploring the factors and forces influencing the society, have tried to analyse the process of historical development. For example, David E.Apter in his work The Politics of Modernization (1965); S.N.Eisenstadt in his treatises Modernization-Protest and Change (1967) and Tradition, Change and Modernity (1973); N.J.Smelser in his book Sociology - An Introduction (1973); M.B.Jansen in his edited work Changing Japanese Attitudes Towards Modernization (1965); Singer Milton in his work Social Changes in Modern India (1972); Bipan Chandra in his article on the theme of "Colonialism and Modernization" (1970); Amales Tripathy in his note Vidya Sagar - The Traditional Modernizer (1974); Yogendra Singh in his volumes Modernization of Indian Tradition (1973) and Essays on Modernization in India (1978), have attempted to investigate the factors and forces in the process of societal development.

All these scholars while defining modernization pointed out some basic ideas. As for modernization, M.N.Sriniwas

stresses on rationalisation¹; Smelser implies institutional change²; Eisenstadt refers to the process of change in socio-economic and political systems³; Yogendra Singh favours it as pan-humanistic, trans-ethnic and trans-ideological⁴.

Thus, the semantics of modernization bear on ideas of change, rationality and institutional development. But in the historical process it is a relative phenomenon and an open-ended process. The present import of modernization emphasises the transformation of society through the development of modern industry and technology, accompanied by far reaching political and social changes. But in the nineteenth century, colonial India, industrial and technological development was not real. Hence it was political and social developments which mostly contributed to the process of modernization in a colonial state.

Modernization involves some basic characteristics. They are urbanization; secularization; social mobilization; a system of bureaucratic administration which is participatory in nature; and development of communication and media exposure⁵.) The characteristics are important as they bear on the process of transition from the traditional to modern sectors. Eisenstadt mentions "without some minimum degree of social mobilization and structural differentiation no modernization is possible"⁶.

In the present trend of studies there are two distinct approaches to the question of structural modernization capitalistic and socialistic⁷. In the post 1917, these approaches have involved a choice between capitalistic and socialistic paths of developments⁸.

One of the important factors of modernization is the nature of impetus which gives the initial push to modernization. Now the question is whether it generated through the internal activities of various groups and elites or through the impact of external forces such as colonial influence. Generally the changes in the colonial social structure are the conglomeration of both internal and external forces.

✓ In the colonial states changes introduced have been focused on the central institutions of the society⁹. The colonizers wanted to introduce some basic changes in the political system of the state. They are : (i) a unitary system of a state; (ii) a regulated system of taxation; (iii) the establishment of modern court procedures; (iv) limited types of representation in the administration along, interalia, the system of education and economy¹⁰. The changes thus effected can be called colonial modernization which involves not only the economy but also the social, political, administrative and cultural life¹¹.

✓ (The historians and sociologists also differ among themselves about the process of modernization in the Asian Sub-continent. Prof. Salah-ud-din Ahmed while citing Rammohun mentions "the greater the intercourse with European gentlemen the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs¹²". ✓ M.N.Sriniwas stresses upon the need that modernization can be achieved by establishing contact, direct or indirect, with the West¹³. ✓ Anales Tripathy mentions that social changes arise not merely from the impact of the external forces but it can emerge out of the inherent traditional system¹⁴. C.R.Prasad Rao points out "... it is not emulation but rather a process of inner growth, which can be attained not by mere imitation but by creation, not by adoption but by creative adaptation, not by outright rejection of tradition but by gradual process of synthesis¹⁵".

Thus, although there are divergent views among the historians and social scientists about the process of modernization, it can be maintained that modernization forms a dialectic of both external and internal, traditional and modern forces of change.

Tradition, therefore, can not be taken simply as the opposite of modernity. It is desired not to be tradition ridden but tradition ought to have been taken into consideration in the process of modernization. The continuity of every society depends, whether modern or non-modern, on the

persistence and development of certain traditions. Jansen points out "tradition like the use of logical reasoning, may be conducive to modernization while other may not be, and even the use of reason may inhibit change if it is employed only to defend and justify the statusquo¹⁶". Thus, the valid opposite of modernity, is not tradition as such, but 'traditionalism' or the rigid adherence to particular set of existing traditions in a manner which prevent or inhibit changes¹⁷.

If we look into the process of historical development in the princely states of India, especially the State of Cooch Behar it would be evident that after the consolidation of the Paramount Power, the British rule produced obvious and lasting changes in the society and culture. The British brought in their trail, their own technology, institution, knowledge, beliefs and values. During the nineteenth century the British started gradually to induce the modern values in the princely states and laid the foundation of the process of modernization by surveying lands, settling revenues, instituting law courts, codifying the laws, developing communications and introducing modern system of education. The case of Cooch Behar may be treated along, interalia, with the other princely states as a case of colonial modernization.

In so far as modernization of Cooch Behar is concerned, social structure and tradition remained impervious to major elements of modernity until the contact of the State with the

British. But the process of modernization made greater headway mainly owing to the power, prestige and initiative of the enlightened ruler.

The modernization of Cooch Behar started mainly with the contact of the State with the East India Company in 1772¹⁸. The contact had a special historicity which brought about far reaching changes in culture and structure of the society in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The period of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan (1863-1911) experienced tremendous changes, both qualitative and quantitative, in the society, economy, land revenue, administration and education. His interaction with the British resulted in achieving the modernity while the extra societal environment like the Brahmo Samaj, and the influence of the Bengali intellectuals contributed a lot in building modernity. It can be mentioned that Maharaja Nripendra Narayan was matrimonially connected with Babu Keshab Chandra Sen - the leading exponent of Brahmo movement in India. In addition, the enlightened attitude of the Maharaja had added extra stimuli to this effect.

Thus, while the personal rule of Maharaja Harendra Narayan (1801-1839) has been marked as response between old ideas and innovations as well as political hegemony and subjugation, the period of 1839 to 1863 the period of Raja Shibendra Narayan and Raja Narendra Narayan may be viewed as period of gradual

accommodation and compromise with a subjugated attitude in relation to British colonialism. On this socio-political edifice Maharaja Nripendra Narayan steered his kingdom towards a desirable goal - a change towards a positive direction - towards a modern Cooch Behar which had been the ideal or model kingdom among the contemporary princely states of India.

In the present work, the factors, forces, ideas, institutions and the internal and intra-societal as well as external milieu which have had their influence in making a modern ruler and a modernized administrative system are studied in the light of historical trends and events of the last half of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Srinivas, M.N., Social Changes in Modern India, Orient Longmans, Reprint, 1984, p.52.
2. Smelser, N.J., Sociology - An Introduction, Second Edition, John Willey & Sons, New York, 1973, p.748.
3. Eisenstadt, S.N., Modernization - Protest and Change, Hebrew University, Prentice Hall of India, Reprint, New Delhi, 1969, p.1.
4. Singh, Yogendra, "Modernization of Indian Tradition", Thompson Press (India) Ltd., Faridabad, 1973, p.61.
5. Jansen, Marius B., (Ed.) The Changing Japanese Attitudes Towards Modernization, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1965, p.18.
6. Eisenstadt, S.N., op.cit., p.2.
7. Singh, Yogendra, op.cit., pp.16-20.
8. Sarkar, Sumit, A Critique of Colonial India, Papyrus, Calcutta, 1985, p.16.

9. Apter, David E., The Politics of Modernization, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1965, pp.50-56.
10. Eisenstadt, S.N., op.cit., p.110.
11. Chandra Bipan, Presidential address, (Modern Session), in Indian History Congress Proceedings, Jabbalpur, 1970, pp.5-5.
12. Bengal Harkara, 17th December, 1329, cited in Ahamed, Salah-un-din, Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal - 1818-1835, Second Edition, RDDHI, Calcutta, 1976, p.10.
13. Sriniwas, M.N., op.cit., p.50.
14. Tripathy, Amales, Vidyasagar - The Traditional Modernizer, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1974, p.1.
15. Cited in Rao, C.R.Prasad, in Article "Elite and Modernization", Modern Review, Vol.LXX-IX, No.6, December, 1971, p.416.
16. Hay, Stephen N., "Western and Indigenous Elements in Modern Indian Thought : The Case of Rammohon", in Jansen, M.B., op.cit., p.324.
17. Ibid., p.324; Apter, D.E., op.cit., pp.83-94.
18. Proceedings of the Revenue Department, Vol.I, 13th October to 30th December 1772, No.131, p.369.