

CONCLUSION

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Cooch Behar, at present a district of West Bengal, is a picturesque town with its planned straightcut roads, innumerable ponds, beautiful temples, buildings and above all the magnificent Royal Palace, which is now under the supervision of the Archeological Survey of India attracted the tourists from all over the world. This erstwhile princely state still bears the glory and fame because of the endeavour of the State during the time of the Maharajas, particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century till the merger of the State with Indian union in 1949.

The history of Cooch Behar is a multiple dimensional picture which consists of social - cultural – political – economic history of the princely state. At the same time it represents the welfare activities of the Maharajas. The advanced modern ideas of the rulers set an example in British India.

In one side the history of Cooch Behar explains the Anglo – Cooch Behar relations since 1772; on the other side it explains Cooch Behar – Bhutanese relations. Thus we find a new chapter in the history of Cooch Behar. The weakness of the Koch ruler gave the Bhutias an opportunity to meddle into the internal affairs of Cooch Behar State (practically Bhutan became the king – maker of Cooch Behar).

When Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan ascended the throne of

Cooch Behar in 1765, the glory of the dynasty was already set in. Taking the opportunity of the weakness of the Koch ruler, the Bhutias captured and imprisoned the Maharaja.

The continuous interference of Bhutan in the Duars areas irritated the British Indian Government. Cooch Behar became strategically important to the British Government for a secure peaceful North - East frontier. A system of indirect rule was likely to be experienced from the model of administration they developed in many parts of the world and the case of Cooch Behar was a glaring example of such a design.

When the British came to India, their main objective was to develop a congenial position of trade and commerce. But from the second half of the Eighteenth Century, they created a Political Residency System. Such an attempt gradually shifted their interest from trading to political goal. As the British realized their new opportunities and needs, they began to transform their network of commercial representatives into a system of political agent. The Colonial Government had a soft corner for the State of Cooch Behar and they found their opportunity to fulfill their desires as the State experienced a political turmoil since the accession of Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan. During this period Dewan Deo, Nazir Deo and Maharani played important roles to run the state. On the other hand Bhutias continued hostility against Cooch Behar and carried away Maharaja and Dewan Deo as prisoners. Then Nazir Deo applied for military help from the Colonial Government against Bhutan in 1772. They responded immediately as it gave them an opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Cooch Behar. This resulted in the signing of

the Treaty of 1773 between Cooch Behar and the Colonial Government . Since then the British Government tried to implement various clauses to fulfill their designs . Although from 1783 to 1839 they faced obstacles as Maharaja Harendra Narayan didnot cooperate with them . But after his death Company had free run in the state and the successors maintained good relations with them as they had a pro – British attitude since the period of Maharaja Shivendra Narayan (1839 – 47) .

After the 2nd Anglo – Bhutanese war (1864 – 65) , all the 18 Duars areas came under the authority of the British. For their proper security and maintenance the importance of Cooch Behar was also increased . To establish a well organised British Raj in the North - East frontier , the development and modernisation of Cooch Behar was very much essential .

So the period of Maharaja Narendra Narayan (1847 - 63) can be viewed as the beginning of development in Cooch Behar . His son Maharaja Nripendra Narayan also set a new dimension of modernization and development .

In 1863 after the death of Maharaja Narendra Narayan , Maharaja Nripendra Narayan succeeded him at an early age of ten months . But the state did not face any kind of problem due to the friendly relations with the British . Since his forefathers the state of Cooch Behar maintained friendly relation with the East India Company .¹

A British Commissioner undertook the direct management of affairs on behalf of the Prince during his minority. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan was

first educated in the Ward's Institute at Venaras, and next in the Bankipure college , Patna and subsequently attended the law lectures at the Presidency College , Calcutta for three years .²

Among the many improvements effected during this period , was a complete survey of the State, although it started earlier . It is important to note that the state was connected with adjacent commercial centers by the construction of good roads and of bridges over rivers and water courses . An efficient system of postal and telegraphic communication was established ; the police administration was re – organized and an education department was constituted . The introduction of Cooch Behar State Railways was a distinct land mark from the economic point of view. It not only ushered a new avenue of communication with the out side of the state but also symbolized the modern means of import - export facilities of trade .

During the rule of the Maharaja industrial development was notable , specially introduction of artizan school . Now -a - days it is no important matter , but during those days it was a symbol of advanced modern activity of the ruler .³

The military achievement of the State was remarkable . For instance the good service rendered by the state in the Bhutan war , ten guns were presented to Maharaja Nripendra Narayan by the British Government, in 1866. At the Delhi Pro -clamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India in 1858, the Cooch Behar chief was present ed in 1877 with medal and sword along with other Princes of the same rank. ⁴

Maharaja maintained a military force that included a cavalry

regiment – two hundred infantry and four guns and he was entitled to get a salute of thirteen guns.⁵ The administration of the State was well organized.

Development of education in the State of Cooch Behar was a top priority for the Maharaja. He made sufficient grants for the infrastructural development of the Jenkins School, which was formed in 1861. This school had a long history of its own. In 1857 a Bengali medium school was established in the State of Cooch Behar under the instruction of prince and kinsmen of the royal family, in 1859, English began to be taught at this school.⁶ In course of time it took the shape of Jenkins School. In commemoration of the jubilee, Maharaja founded the Victoria College, which taught up to the standards of the Calcutta University examination, and was an absolutely free institution. In addition to this, he helped a wide circle of poor but intelligent boys from his own purse. His enlightened views on education and on the necessity of physical training expressed his advanced modern ideas for the state.⁷ He held that the Calcutta University should approve the suggestion that physical education should be made compulsory and should be introduced for the benefit of the student (at that time Calcutta University controlled the educational department of Cooch Behar).⁸

The establishment of a library namely Maharaja Library which later on was renamed as North Bengal State Library shows the reading interest of the Maharaja. Such an attempt was an instance of the welfare thought of the ruler. Mr. J. W. Trotten, in his book “India under Victoria”, writes: ‘The little state of Cooch Behar on the Assam border can boast of a library richer

than any outside Calcutta.”⁹ In 1897 the appointment of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal as the Principal of Victoria College was an important step. His philosophical ideas moulded Maharaja to take benevolent measures for the people of Cooch Behar. All these measures indicated that Maharaja was out and out modern in outlook.

It was he who felt the urgency of registration of birth and death, because such kind of calculation helped the state to understand what was its population and what was the condition of the health of the general people.¹⁰ In 1901 and in 1911 Census operations were organized in the State.

It is gradually held that the old rajas were very careless as regards the preservation of records. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan was the first ruler of Cooch Behar, who introduced the work of copying from old records, which in course of time helped the successors to run the state of Cooch Behar successfully.¹¹ Keeping Records in printed form was nothing but the farsightedness of the Maharaja. The two volume of Select Records containing day to day correspondence with the British Government is a valuable primary source for the history of Cooch Behar. Researchers who are now investigating the different aspects of the history of Cooch Behar during the Maharajas, the Select Records are the valuable source of information to them. In fact he had brought the state to the present satisfactory condition.

In the place of what was an uninteresting tract of land (selected apparently on account of its natural defence), a picturesque town with flourishing business centres, prospered due to his endeavour.¹²

The construction of various buildings shows the artistic taste of the

Maharaja . The arrangement was neat and orderly . Domes, spires , minarets , public buildings and palatial residences were established in the town of Cooch Behar , although the rural areas and the sub – divisions of Cooch Behar was not far from the developmental works of the ruler . During his rule medical system of the state of Cooch Behar was on the whole on satisfactory condition . A significant measure was taken by the state authority during his rule in the settlement operations . From the earlier mistakes the authority got a major experience and introduced a system of survey and settlement work in the town and in the sub - divisional areas .¹³ Maharaja maintained a well formulated finance department , through which the state could be able to know what measures were appropriate to the situation and what was the income and expenditure of the state . In the cultural sphere he created a new avenue which was full of sporting arrangements, khedda operations for taking elephants under control .

After Maharaja Nripendra Narayan , his successors Maharaja Raj Rajendra Narayan (21st) and Maharaja Jitendra Narayan (22nd) continued the developmental works in the State . They were engaged in the implementation of benevolent works as their father did for the state . For his benevolent activities Maharaja Jitendra Narayan is known as ‘ Prajabatsal Maharaja ’ . During his reign Cooch Behar had a rich literary tradition . Maharaja also himself was a great literary person . His poem “Hello Darjeeling” is pleasant to read.¹⁴ Maharaja Jitendra Narayan was also aware of environmental pollution . For saving the state, he followed in the foot steps of his father (through the work of plantation of saplings in

the State).

The 23rd and the last ruler of the Princely State of Cooch Behar, Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan deserved an amount of popularity for his innovative activities in the State of Cooch Behar .¹⁵ He maintained the royal tradition (welfare works) and invented one after another advanced schemes like introduction of income tax act , public health department , Cooch Behar State Transport for travel through bus , air – craft act of 1946, cultivation of commercial crops , motor spirit - rationing order , ancient monument preservation act of 1947 etc.

The modernisation cum development of the State of Cooch Behar , can be compared with the same of the developed princely States of Western , Southern and Northern India . It would not be irrelevant to point out that the mental make up of the Maharajas of Cooch Behar was moulded according to the taste of the English . The general policy of the Raj towards the native princely state during 1890's was that the system of princely rule , stripped of its dead wood , could be made an instrument of progress and modernisation, there by ensuing that the darbars continued to play an effective role in the governance of the subcontinent.¹⁶ But according to Ian Copland this civil mission began to fatter. There was criticism of the slow pace of modernization in many states, and disillusionment with the impact of modernization on the life style of the ruling prince.¹⁷ Cooch Behar may be set an exception to this end . Reference may be made of Prince Gayatri Devi s' statement , “ a few princely states of the time enjoyed all sorts of privilege ”.¹⁸ The Maharajas of Cooch Behar by their developmental policy

and benevolent works succeeded in achieving the loyalty of their subjects .

It can be concluded by saying that during the long run of the State of Cooch Behar , the period from 1847 to 1949 was an golden and modern era of development under the Maharajas and thus the study of their work on social – cultural – economic sphere on the whole historically significant .

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Chowdhury. H.N. , *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement* ,
Cooch Behar State Press ,Cooch Behar, 1903 ,p, 294.
2. Jehangir , Sorabji , *Princes and Chiefs of India* ,Vol.- II, London,1903 , P – 36.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p, 37.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *S.J.S (2011)*, p, 9 .
7. Jehangir , Sorabji , *op. cit*, p, 37 .
8. *Ibid.* , P – 39 .
9. Campbell, Aurther Claude , *Glimpses of Bengal* ,Vol. – I ,London, 1907, p, 306 .
10. *T.C.B.G. (1896)* , p, 70

“ In 1910 regarding registration of birth and death in the Municipal town in Cooch Behar State , it is here by enacted as follows –

- a) The father or mother of every child born in the a municipal town, or in case of

the death , illness , or inability of the father or mother , the occupation of the house in which each child is born shall within eight days after the day of the birth , give information to the municipal office of the town , according to the best of his or her knowledge and belief , of the several particulars prescribed in schedule hereto annexed .

b) The nearest relative present at the death of any person dying in a Municipal Town , or in case of the death , illness , absence , or inability of such relative the occupier of, or some person living in, the house , shall within eight days after the death, give information to the Municipal Office of the town , according to the best of his knowledge and belief of several particulars prescribed in schedule II here to annex -ed –

i) If the death occurs in a hospital in the Municipal town , such information shall be given by the Medical Officer in charge of the hospital .

ii) If the death occurs in a jail or lock up, such information shall be given by the officer in charge of the local police station to give information of such death.

iii) Omission to give such information as is laid down in this act, shall be punishable with fine a fine which may extend to Rs. 5 .

iv) Whoever gives any information under this act , which he knows, or has reason to believe , to be false , shall be punishable with a fine not exceeding to Rs. 50 .

v) The shall be read with , and form part of the Cooch Behar Town Act iv of 1903 .

vi) This act come in to operation from the date of its publication in the Cooch Behar Gazette . ”

11. *A.A.R. of the C.B.S. (1878 – 79)*, p, 80 .

“ Colonel Haughton the first Commissioner of Cooch Behar with the object of preserving important state papers, procured at the expense of the State copies all the letters and reports that had passed between the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and the officers of the British Government from the year 1777 to 1864 , with a object of publishing those papers which were interesting and important .”

12. Campbell, Aurther Claude , *op. cit.* ,p, 303 .

13. Chowdhury , H.N. , *op. cit.* , p, 358 .

14. Majumder , Prof. Amlan Jyoti - *Literary Memoirs of Maharaja Jitendra Narayan* , N.L.Publisher , Siliguri , 2010 ,(Introduction) .

15. Majumdar, Durgadas –*West Bengal District Gazetteers (KochBihar)*,Feb.,1977,p, 40.

16. Copland, Ian – *The British Raj and the Indian Princes* ,Orient Longman, Bombay, 1987 ,p, 182 .

17. *Ibid.* , pp, 184 – 185 .

“ Among princes of weak character Anglicisation invariably had the effect of sharpening old vices and adding new ones . Extravagance was as much an oriental as a western trait , but westernisation gave it new outlets , motor cars and foreign travel featuring prominently among them . As early as 1874 Alfred Lyall had predicted that ‘ the next generation (of princes) will be seen squandering their revenues in the great hotels of Paris and London , demoralising England rather than improving India .”

18. Devi, Gayatri and Ram ,Santha – *The Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur , A Princes Remembers*, Vikash Publishing house Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi,1982 ,(Introduction) .