

**BENGALI IMMIGRANTS AND RENOVATION OF THE
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF PRINCELY STATE TRIPURA:
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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Abstract:

Movements of immigrants were not a new phenomenon for the state Tripura. Tripura began to witness the flow of immigrants' right from the last quarter of the 19th century and before her amalgamation, she witnessed a large number of immigrants especially from Colonial Bengal. The close affinity between the Colonial Bengal and Hill Tipperah caused the movements of the people from one place to another. Whether the rulers of Tripura whole-heartedly wanted to make a close affinity with Colonial Bengal is a matter of long discussion, but it is true that they had to admit the Bengalis into their territory. Now what were the reasons for which the rulers of Tripura pulled the Bengali immigrants especially from the educated sections from their state of origin? The present study is made to find out analytically the reasons behind those educated Bengali immigrants who immigrated into the Princely state of Tripura.

Keywords: Bengali immigrants, Manikya rulers, Population.

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Development means positive all-round growth, in every sector of a state or country. However, development is the outcome of various issues, and in the present global phenomenon, migration plays an important role behind the development of a state or country. Development of a state is generally depended either on internal migration or on international migration. It is not possible for a state or country to be developed with its motionless community or citizen. Development needs dynamic forces and dynamism comes from the movable character of the human beings, which means migration.

In the colonial period though migration was started in the hilly Princely state of Tripura but in the 20th century the small state Tripura witnessed a large influx of immigrants which not only outnumbered the aborigines of the state but also changed the socio-economic and political structure of the state. The huge number of immigrants, especially the Bengali immigrants those who immigrated into the state played as a sheet anchor behind the modernisation process in Tripura during the Manikya rule, especially in the last fifty years.

In the last fifty years of Manikya rule and before the amalgamation of Tripura with the Indian Union (15th October, 1949) the number of immigrants those who penetrated into the hill Tripura were highly patronised by the Royal house of Tripura. In addition, during the period a large number of Bengali people from the adjoining territories immigrated into the state due to communal violence and changing political scenario in Colonial India. The independence and along with it the partition of India caused huge immigration into the state. The below table no. 1 shows how the number of population increased in the state and table no. 2 depicts the number of immigrants those who immigrated into the state.

Table No. 1. Population of Tripura according to various Censuses

Year	Population	Decadal variation	% decadal variation
1901	1,73,325	–	–
1911	2,29,613	56,288	32.48
1921	3,04,437	78,824	32.59
1931	3,82,450	78,013	25.63

1941	5,13,010	1,30,560	34.14
1951	6,39,029	1,26,019	24.56

Source: Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, District Census Handbook, Section – I, C.R.Paul, Government of Tripura, Government Printing and Stationary Department, Agartala, 1964, p. 35.

Table No. 2. Number of immigrants in Tripura in some specific years

Year	Number of immigrants
1901	43,894
1911	81,663
1921	96,386
1931	1,14,383
1947	8,124
1948	9,554
1949	10,575

Source: 1. Thakhur Sri Somendrachandra Debvarma, 1340 T.E. Census Bibarani of Tripura (in Bengali), (Census Report of Tripura 1340 T.E.), Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1997, p.34.

2. R. B. Vaghaiwalla, *Census of India, 1951, Vol. XII, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, Part I-A, Report*, Shillong, 1954, p. 359.

During that phase of Manikya rule, among those Bengali immigrants a large number of them were uneducated. Only a few number of educated Bengali immigrants immigrated into the state. However, those few immigrants helped to renovate the administrative structure of the state. Now a question arise that how is it possible for those Bengali immigrants to renovate the

administrative structure of a Princely state like Tripura, where the aborigines of the state as well as the rulers were not Bengali?

Firstly, due to smooth association between the Colonial Bengal and Hill Tipperah, there was an excellent arrangement of socio-economic interaction, which started in the last part of the 19th century and carried on upto its merger with the Indian Union. Moreover, it was the result of the geographical proximity between the two borders of Bengal and Tripura, which ultimately helped the people of both the territory to come closer to each other.

Secondly, the rulers of Tripura continued the permanent settlement in Tripura and instead of distributing small pieces of land to the immigrant cultivators; they used to give a vast area of land to the rich and sophisticated persons of British Bengal. The rulers thought that if the rich, educated and resourceful persons took the land then by their endeavour roads and other way of communication also will be built up which will open out the way for general advancement and prosperity of the State.

Thirdly, the Census Report of 1901 reveals that the educated people in Tripura were very few in number. The person those who were educated especially belong to the Bengali immigrants. Until the thirties, the *thakur* families represented the educated section of the tribals. (Hamlet Barih 2007) Table 3 shows the educated aborigines of Tripura in the year 1901.

Table 3. Educational Statement of the census 1901.

Total Population	1, 73,325	
Name of the Tribes	Population	Educated Tribes
Chakma	4,510	10
Tripura	75,781	107

Kuki	7,547	04
Halam	2,215	Nil
Lushai	135	Nil
Mog	1,491	137
Total	91,679	258

Source: Atish Chandra Choudhury, *Census Report 1310 T.E. (1901 A.D.)*, *ibid.* pp. 17-18.

The above table depicts that the educated aborigines were only a few in number for the administrative machinery of the state. Thus, it became necessary for the progressive minded rulers of Tripura to invite the educated persons to run efficiently the administration and to make it a modern one.

Fourthly, according to the Imperial Gazetteers of India, Vol. XIII, only 2.3 percent of the population could read and write and the number of pupils increased to 3125 (3008 boys and 117 girls) in the year 1903-04. The number of educational institution was 103 in Tripura (Imperial Gazetteers of India. Vol.XIII 1908). Based on this data it becomes very clear that there were no sufficient educated people in Tripura. Accordingly, it became necessary for the rulers of Tripura to invite those educated immigrants to strengthen the weak educational infrastructure.

Fifthly, conversely, the educated people those who migrated to Tripura from British Bengal were really in search of good jobs with respect and honour and the Tripura's ruler, to make their administration much more modern and advance, invited those educated Bengalis into Tripura.

Sixthly, almost all the lucrative posts were occupied by the Bengali educated people except some of the posts, which were left for the people of Royal blood. And the educated Bengalis began to take maximum interests in the administration of Tripura when an order was published on 1326 T.E.(1916-17A.D.), regarding Tripura State Civil Service. .

“The Tripura State Civil Service was renovated on the basis of the order issued by Maharaja Manikya Bahadur on 5th and 15th Chaitra, 1326 T.E. and they are as follows:

1. After the declaration of this order nobody will be accepted in the service other than a B.A. degree-holder of the Calcutta University and whose age does not exceed 30 years.
2. The service included the following posts:
 - a) Chief Judge of the Khas Court.
 - b) Second Judge of the Khas Court.
 - c) First Assistant to the Chief Dewan.
 - d) Second Assistant to the Chief Dewan.
 - e) Private Secretary to the Maharaja Manikya Bahadur.
 - f) Assistant Managers of Chakla Roshnabad.
 - g) Collectors, Magistrate and Munsiffs.
 - h) General Treasury Officer.
 - i) Police Superintendent.
 - j) Assistant Police Superintendent.
 - k) Naib Dewan to *Sanshar* Office.
 - l) Settlement Officer.
 - m) Assistant Settlement Officer.
 - n) Second Officers to the Magistrates of the Divisions
 - o) Deputy Sadar Magistrate.
 - p) Forest Officer.
 - q) Inspector of Schools.
 - r) Auditor.
 - s) Sub-divisional Officer.
 - t) Sub-Manager of Laharpur.
 - u) Sub-Manager of Chakla.
 - v) Sadar Registrar, Agartala. (Tripura State Gazette Sankalan, 1903-1949 1971)

Hence, it becomes clear that the educated Bengalis got many opportunities to enter into the administrative setup of the State. Not only in the administrative machinery but also in the other welfare departments, the Bengalis made themselves indispensable.

Seventhly, to increase the revenue it became essential for the rulers of the state to invite those efficient and experienced Bengali administrators. Under the supervision of the efficient revenue officers, the tax collection increased rapidly. In addition, those efficient revenue officers diversified the source of state revenue. Because of those Bengali educated immigrants, the revenue administration became much more efficient and turned out to be a profit-making agency for the rulers. The table 4. clearly shows the enhancement of revenue collection.

Table No. 4. Collection of Revenues of some specific years.

Years	Revenue
1881-82	2.4 lakhs
1892-93	4.6 lakhs
1901-02	7.06 lakhs
1903-04	8.17 lakhs
1910-11	10.93 lakhs
1911-12	10.4 lakhs
1912-13	11.06 lakhs
1930-31	13.9 lakhs

- Source:
1. *Imperial Gazetteers of India*. Vol. XIII, Oxford University Press, London, 1908, p. 121,
 2. *Tripura State Gazette Sankalan (1903-1949)*, Director of Education, Government of Tripura, November, 1971, p.43,
 3. Jalad Baran Ganguly, *An Economic History of North East India, 1826 to 1947*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006, p.449.

Therefore, the educated Bengali immigrants not only made their future bright and established in Tripura but also made the ruler happy by increasing the revenue and by improving their image in the eyes of the British Government.

Eighthly, in the process of modernization, many schools including primary and secondary schools were established. The below table 3.5 depicts the number of primary schools from the year 1907 to 1946.

Table No. 5. Number of Primary schools in Tripura from 1907 to 1946.

Year	Number of Schools	Number of pupils
1907-08	137	4,011
1916-17	125	4,842
1926-27	139	4,215
1936-37	111	5,110
1943-46	123	5,115

Source: *Tripura District Gazetteers*, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1975, p. 316.

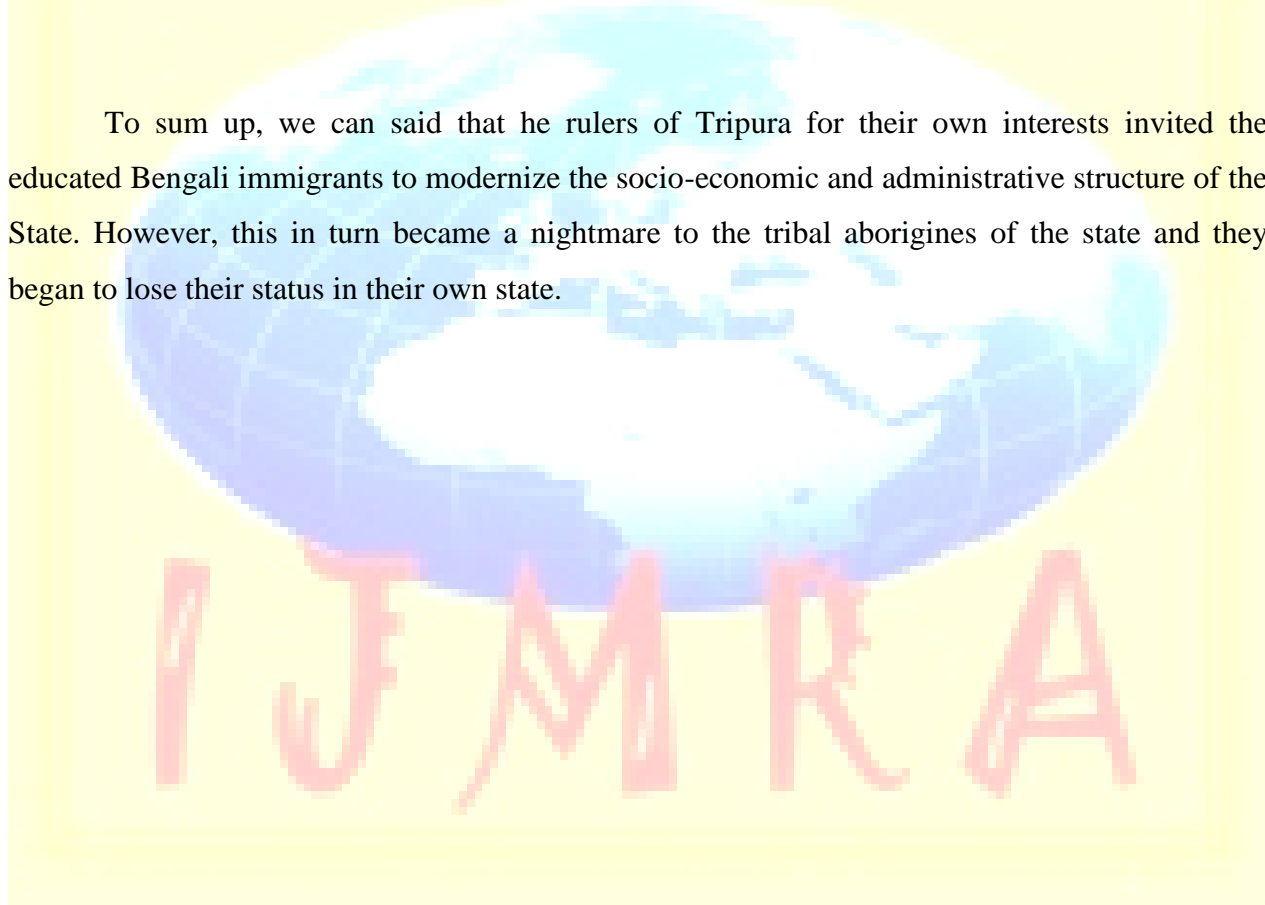
So as the number of schools were increased during the period, to run those schools it became necessary to provide sufficient number of educated teachers. Hence, due to deficiency of educated people in Tripura, it became necessary for the rulers of Tripura to appoint the qualified educated immigrants in the educational institutions to carry on efficiently the educational set-up of the state.

Ninthly, advancement in the health services was also a part of modernization. The first ruler of Tripura who could realize the use of scientific and modern methods of medical treatment was Maharaja Birchandra Manikya. In the year 1904, the first general hospital named as Victoria Memorial Hospital came into existence to commemorate the benevolent rule of Queen Victoria. Efficient administrative stuffs and administrator were appointed in the hospital (Tripura State Gazette Sankalan, 1903-1949 1971). The rulers of Tripura patronized all the systems of medical treatment – allopathic, homeopathic and ayurvedic. However, it was not possible by the rulers of

Tripura to provide efficient staffs and administrators from the indigenous source. Hence, they had to depend on Bengal for those competent and professional medical staffs and administrators.

Tenthly, the tribal rulers of Tripura always gave importance to Bengali culture. They were very much acquainted with the culture and literature of Bengal. The main fabric of the society of Tripura is an active reflection of a certain image, and that image is nothing but the respect for the language and culture of Bengal. Later the respect and admiration for the Bengali culture and language, have taken roots among the aborigines of Tripura.

To sum up, we can say that the rulers of Tripura for their own interests invited the educated Bengali immigrants to modernize the socio-economic and administrative structure of the State. However, this in turn became a nightmare to the tribal aborigines of the state and they began to lose their status in their own state.



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