

Political agent of Tripura

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- The appointment of political agent in Tripura marked the beginning of a new era.
- In fact, this post was appointed to bring reform for hilly Tipperah.
- The commissioner of Chittagong H. Ulick Brownie first informed Bir Chandra Manikya on the day of his investiture ceremony.
- Moreover, the commissioner assured the king Bir chandra Manikya that The political agent would only advise him and helped him. It was not intention of British Government to interfere in his administrative activity.

Now we will discuss about Political agent and all the details related to this topic.

Historical background

- After the death of King Ishan Chandra Manikya in 1862, a turbulent situation created in the kingdom. In the royal family, brothers and clashed each other for the throne of the state.
- Bir Chandra claimed that while Ishan Chandra was alive, he was proclaimed as the next King with the title of Jubarai and also appointed his eldest son Navadweep Chandra as next sucessor. But this verdict could not be accepted by two step brother of Bir chandra Manikya, Nil Krishna and Chakradwaj. They demanded the intervention of the British authorities.
- As a result even though, Bir chandra was declared as de facto king and de jure king by the British authorities, but his investiture ceremony was delayed.

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- The case went from district court to high court and then final verdict was announced by the Privy council and the verdict was in favour of Bir chandra Manikya. The claims of two step brothers of Bir chandra Manikya was rejected.
- After 8 long years , the investiture ceremony of Bir chandra Manikya was occurred and on that day, The king Bir chandra came to know through the commissioner of Chittagong that British government decided to appoint a political agent in this hilly state on the proposal of Bengal Government.
- But frequent raids by the kookis in Chittagong, Noakhali, Khandai , and southern part of Tripura, and also frequent raids by Lushai community broke the peace of the state. .so Lord Mayo , Governor General at that time advocated placing a political agent in Hill Tipperah to control the situation of the Hilly Tipperah. The British argued that the reform of Tripura was only possible through the appointment of political agent. And Political agent is essential to modernize the hilly tipperah.

Reaction of King

- The King was disappointed after hearing the news about appointing of political agent in this hilly state.
- He strongly objected the appointment of political agent to the British Government
- He felt that his power and prestige would be tarnished after the appointment of political agent. Moreover he would interfere in his inter-administrative affairs and sniff out day to day work

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- The king feared that the local British authorities might have misinformed the British Government about his inter-administrative affairs and the expedition against Kuki or Lushai tribe who raid many villages and rampaged everything in frontier village. So The British Government decided to appoint a political agent in the hilly state.
- He wrote to the British Government three times to reconsider the appointment of political agent, along with his arguments

The British Government's response

- The British Government assured the king that his power and prestige would not be tarnished after the appointment of Political agent. It was not intention of British Government to interfere in his inter-administrative affairs. Moreover agent would have advantage of reforming in various sector of this princely state and he would help the king in his daily work to run his state in peace and prosperity.
- British also added political agent had been created to bring reform into the king's kingdom and his administrative activity.

The appointment of political agent

- The Bengal Government informed Bir chandra that Majesty of State had approved the appointment of political agent in hilly Tipperah.
- The Bengal Government also asked the king whether he would provide a suitable guard for political agent or he would choose British escort for political agent.
- In spite of objections The king assured the Bengal Government that he would assist and cooperate with political agent in every possible way.

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- The King would make arrangement for erection of Bungalow for Political Agent
- He would also provide a jamadar, a havildar and 20 sepoys
- Finally The Political agent for Hill Tipperah was appointed in july 1871.
- The letter of appointment was issued on 3rd July 1871. The letter was signed by S.C. Bayley, Secretary to the government of Bengal.

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- A.W.B Power was appointed as first Political agent for Hill Tipperah. He arrived at Agartala on 1st August, 1871.

Powers and functions of Political agent

- The political agent was directed to acquaint himself with the relations between Raja and hill tribes with the history, culture, administration, police, military and judiciary of Hill Tipperah, to mediate , to suggest remedies to the king.
- Actually the powers and functions of political agent was clearly defined in the appointment letter of first political agent for Hill Tipperah.

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- There were two kind of duties assigned to Political agent.
- 1) First one was related to The king's relation with the tribe of Lushai-Kuki tribes
- And the another one is related to the matter of the king's internal administration.

King's relation with the tribe

- The political Agent was specially instructed by the British authority to find out what type of relation exist between the king and hilly tribe like Kukis and Lushais and also other hilly tribes living on the border of the state
- The Political agent was also said to distinguish between those tribes who are Raja's subject.
- Those tribes who had settled within King's recognized limits of territory and paid him revenue for that, and those who are practically independent are not in the hand of the political agent.

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- Indeed, the king had right to deal with his own acknowledged subjects related to some tribes.
- The political agent had no right to deal those subjects until emergency appeared.
- But the tribes who under Raja's subject refused to accept Raja's authority then it would be duty of the political agent to make sure that the king should not take a aggressive policy against them. Even the king had to secure written permission from the political agent.

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- If the King's claiming authority over any person who repudiated his claim.
- It would be the duty of the political agent to find out the base of this claim.
- If the political agent found the claim was well founded then it would be the duty of the political agent to help the king in asserting it.

a) Special Duty

- The special duty of the Political Agent was to maintain a good relationship between the king and hilly tribes. He had to mediate the dispute between them.
- For that, the Political Agent had to travel about the frontier and always try to open- friendly communication with hill-chiefs.
- He had established a definite frontier to the state in the east to prevent accidental collision between the king and the hilly-tribe.

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- The Political Agent had to put strict on frontier watch to secure no traffic in arms was carried through the hilly Tipperah.

Duties regard Internal Administration of the Political Agent.

- At the matter of internal administration of the state. The British Government directed the Political Agent to acquaint himself first with the revenue, civil and criminal administration prevalent in the state.
- Then the Political Agent was to report on related subjects for the information of the Government.
- He was also to report the British Government about the state's strength, quality, and condition of the military and police forces of the king, and as to their sufficiency for the preservation of internal order and their capability to protect the frontier of the state from the inroads of Lushai and kuki tribe.

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- The Political Agent was also told to keep general watch over the action of the state court without directly interfering administrative of justice of the state.
- He had to submit the report to the government if he found any action of injustice, outrage and barbarity, activated in the state.
- Then the political Agent after getting instruction from the British authority was to counsel the king in regard to bring any reform to eradicate such kind of Injustice.

Analyze the Power of Political Agent

- If we analyze the power of Political we come to understand that the power of Political agent was absolute both in external and internal which the King had so long enjoyed now came to an end.
- The king's power in some cases like declaring war against Lushai- Kukis tribes and send any aggressive expedition against them was taken away from him.
- For any such measure, the king had to take permission from the Political Agent. In other word the relation between the king and the tribes was under the control of the Political Agent.

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- Now the king had to follow up measure of the British policy of establishing friendly relations with the wild tribes of the east Particularly Lushai- Kukis for the protection of tea production areas of Sylhet-Cachar regions.
- But the loss of independence of the king was somehow compensated by the provision that the king would be free to deal with them without any interference within state. And the Political Agent had to support in such cases.

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- The authority of the Tripura Raj was to be maintained within the recognized boundary under the control of the British empire.
- But the king and his state was now free from internal rebellion.

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- But in the case of internal administration of the Hilly Tipperah, The political Agent was not given any controlling power. He was instructed not to direct interfere in the king's administration.
- The political Agent had only right to report to the British Government on every aspect of the internal administration of the king and had to await instruction from the British Government. Then he was to advise and counsel to Raja in matter of administration when the reforms were essential.
- In fact the British authorities had no intention to interfere in the king's internal administration

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as the King was the chief of a vast tribal region and any direct interference with his internal administration might result stimulating wild tribes under his control and as a result Peace and stability of the region would be destroyed.

Reforms and Development by the Political Agent

- Various reforms and development step had been taken by the Raj Authority on the advice of the political Agent. Now we will discuss about it one by one.

A) Reforms in Administration

- Various reforms had been taken in the state administration under the advice of the Political Agent like
 - 1) The introduction of Municipality at Agartala in 1871 and a Municipal act was framed in 1874.
 - 2) The state administrative was decentralized in 1873. However it became possible by the bold attempt of Baboo Nilmani Das
 - 3) Budget system was introduced first time in the state in 1873.
 - 4) Bengali was used as an official language in the administration.

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- On 1st October 1875, The first Post Office of the state was opened at Agartala.

B) Reforms in Judiciary

- A Progressive step to open Khash Appeal Adalat (1872) was an initiative step to rejuvenate the judiciary condition of the state.
- The court was made for final judgement of civil and criminal cases.
- It was established in the imitation of the Privy Council in Britain.

C) Social reform

- Due to the report of the Political Agent to the British Authority there were some reforms in the society in the hilly state. Like-
- 1) The age old practice of slavery was abolished in July 1878 by a judicial order.
- 2) The feudal practice of Joolai was also abolished.
- 3) A Uniform system weekly holiday on every Sunday was introduced.

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Moreover reforms were also brought in Health and education sector also due to the advice of the Political Agent to the king and also his report to the British Government.

- 1) The first hospital was established at Agartala in 1873.
- 2) To improve the educational system of the state two school were established at Agartala and Kailashar in 1872.

Conculsion

Although the king of the Tripura did not agree on the appointment of political Agent in his state due to fear of losing his power and prestige. But it can not be denied the state saw the path of modernity due to the Political Agents. So in the end it can be said that The Political Agent had important role to bring various reforms and developments in this state.

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