



# Diplomatic Dimension of the Manikya Dynasty: A Historical Perspective

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**Abstract:** Manikya dynasty exercised suzerainty across length and breadth of Tripura and in course of political reign for about 540 years, deployed an array of diplomacy ranging from cultural diplomacy to faith-based diplomacy. Geographically, Tripura has been in touch with Assam, Manipur, and Bengal. Socially, Tripura came into contacts with the Bengali Hindus, Meitei- a contact that led to acculturation. Historically or rather Imperially, Tripura encountered the Ahom dynasty, the Manipur dynasty, the Afghans, the Mughals and the British. The history of Tripura, so far as it is written, begins with the settlement of Yayati exiled son, Druhya. The Kings of Tripura draw their ancestral relations with the Lunar Dynasty, which had its capital in the north-western part of Bharat. The period of Manikya ascendancy at the centre of Tripura during the 12<sup>th</sup> Century constitutes an epochal in its history. This paper attempts to navigate and study myriads of diplomacy and geo-political calibration operated vis-a-vis neighboring political prowess, nature of diplomacy, modus operandi, and ramifications.

**KEYWORDS-** Diplomacy, Geo-political Calibration, Bilateralism, Multilaterism and Reformation.

## Introduction

Diplomacy is the art and science of building relationship between nations, groups, or individuals. Often diplomacy refers to representation of different groups discussing such issues as conflict trade the environment technology or maintaining security. The early history of Tripura is essentially the history of a few scattered regional suzerainty in a sylvan environment. In all likelihoods, there were five principalities; four were in the eastern highlands and hills and one was in the Meghna valley in the west. The Bengali, the Mog, the Kuki, the Riang and the Tipra resided in these principalities. The period of Tipra ascendancy at the centre of Tripura during the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and early 14<sup>th</sup> century constituted the most brilliant chapter in the history of Tripura.

Manikya Dynasty bestowed Monarchy in Tripura and set a new paradigm in the regional history of North-east India. The history of Tripura, so far as it is written, begins with the settlement of Yayati's exiled son, Druhya. The great king Yayati of Lunar Dynasty had five sons namely- Yadu Turvasu Druhya or Anu and Puru by two Wives Devayani, daughter of Sukracharya and Sarmistha daughter of Vrishparva. The Kings of Tripura affiliates their ancestral relations with the Lunar Dynasty, which had its capital in the north-western part of Bharat.

Ratna Manikya, a monarch of the Tripura, presented the coveted Ruby to his benefactor the ruler of Bengal. The ruler of Bengal gladly accepted the Ruby and conferred on Ratna Pha, the honorary title Manikya. His successor continued the title. It is very significant to point out that Tripuri community undertook an ambitious Programme of acculturation. They took full advantages of geo political and incubated Manikya Dynasty. Monarchs of the dynasty erected temples to forge social cohesion and foster cultural progression. Vijay Manikya and Kalyan Manikya erected a temple at Kailagarh. But foreign Muslims invaders desecrated the temple and its idol. Ratna Manikya repaired the temple and having

collected an idol from Srihatta installed the idol inside temple. He also arranged to bring a beautiful idol of Kalia Devi from Varanasi in northern Bharat and duly installed the idol of the goddess in a new temple at Comilla.

Although Tripuri Principality was encircled by other prominent community principalities, Tripuri community adopted the process of acculturation and such process of Sanskritization paved channels for communication and bridged among communities. It accelerated the process of state-formation for which neither alone was capable. The Tripuri dynasty became connoisseur of Indian arts and crafts culture and civilization and built tanks and temples. The Tripuri Kings granted lands to the Brahmanas. The Brahmanas were allowed priests court-poets bureaucrats and even ministers. The Bengali soldiers recruited from the four Varnas came to be known as Laskar; their descendants survive every today. The Hindu kings of undivided Bengal did never attack Tripura. The Hindu zamindars of Bengal sent diggers to dig the tanks of Amar Manikya. The Tripuri kings also built Libraries extended financial assistance to educational institutes and synergized with luminaries of Bengal.

Matrimonial alliance between royal families to enhance the power prestige and influence were a prominent feature of the Manikya Dynasty. Rajdhar Manikya married the daughter of the king of Manipur and thus established friendly relations with Manipur. In 1900 Radha Kishore Manikya arranged the marriage of Jubaraj Birendra Manikya with Grand Daughter of Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal which was occasion of great festivities and rejoicings. The Muslims were not debarred from holding offices and practicing religion. The kings granted lands free of all taxes for Muslim religious institutions. During certain Muslim festivals public holidays would be observed. Maharaja Govinda Manikya built the Suja Mosques at Comilla and granted lands for its maintenance though Suja was behind the dethronement of Govinda Manikya. The motely composition of the Tripura army had many Afghans mercenary who treacherously changed side during the reign of Vijay Manikya. The Cabinet of Maharaja Bir Bikram had a Muslim representative.

Relationship between the princely states of India and the British Indian Government is an important area of investigation. The positions of the East India Company were almost the same as that of the Pathans and the Mughals. The grant of the Diwani in 1757 legally converted the company into a Governorship in commission. So far as Tripura was concerned with the grant of the Diwani the transference of vassalage from the Mughals to the company took place. The British Indian Government had a policy to lend British officials and British Trained Indian officials to serve in Chakla Roshnabad and in Hill Tipperah. It seems to be a polite policy of peaceful interference.

Authoritative insistence on social reforms was another technique. In this way practice of Sati and practice of slavery were abolished in Tipperah. Annual administration reports were prepared and printed since last days of Bir Chandra on being insisted by British authority. During World War many of the princely states rendered services to British Government. Summing up the relations between Manikya Dynasty and British Government the relation was one of co-operation conflict and conciliation. British Government. Summing up relations between Manikya Dynasty and British Government the relation was one of co-operation conflict and conciliation.

### **Review of Literature**

Jagadish Gan Chaudhuri in his book, "A Constitutional history of Tripura" highlights myriads wavelength of the history of Tripura within the demographic political and socio-economic contexts of the period studied (642-1949). Focusing particularly on Tripura's establishment in 42 AD and its development and flourish as a princely state up to 1949. Thus, for the first time in a single accessible volume this book traces Tripura's trajectory from the beginning to the formation of a state. This book reflects how the Tipperah monarchs attempted centralizing his authority at the outset and thereafter to show how decentralization of functions took place gradually. The span of period surveyed here is a long one. It is more than thirteen hundred years. During this period Tripura witnessed a kaleidoscope of such major events as the rise, reform and decline of a dynasty. The Tipperah people reached the zenith of power and prestige by establishing a monarchy and left marks of their glory in architecture administration and literature. It cherished and transmitted the culture and civilization of ancient India.

Jagadish Gan Chaudhuri, *A Cultural History of Tripura*, is a modest book about a local culture of India. It explores the expressions of culture found among the people of Tripura. It provides information about climate and human settlement marriage and family temple architecture and temple management. It traces the history of intercommunity relations and presents current thoughts about insurgency. Till, 1948 the monarchs of Tripura were the acknowledge leaders the elegant pioneers to set the standards of culture and eager patriarchs to solve the problems of all subjects. Socially Tripura came into contact with the Bengali Hindus and Manipuri's a contact that led to acculturation and later came into contacts with the Afghans and Mughals and the Britishers.

A.C. Bhattacharya, *Progressive Tripura*, sheds light on the military achievements the necessity for external defense and dispensation of peace education sanitation arts literature industry and commerce. This book has bifurcated facts from fiction with a critical analysis of events based on solid foundations of History. A prominent process of patronage and initiatives adopted for welfare of the state has also been highlighted in this book.

Priyabrata Bhattacharjee, *Tribal Pujas, and festivals in Tripura* sheds light on the origin and evolution of religion and belief system of the indigenous. This book encapsulates knowledge and wisdoms as articulated through ritualistic folk songs and dances. It also tries to decode the influence of Hinduism on indigenous faith and belief system.

Fariha anwal Fatima Ali, *Mughal Rulers (1526- 1787) Religious tolerance policy and its impact on the society of sub-continent*, delineates secularity and approach of Mughals towards religion. Religious tolerance formed the core basis of social morasses and was prerequisite for a progressive's state. This article encompasses myriads of religious policies implemented by the Mughals to uphold secularity and mutual co-existence.

Gregory Winger, *The Velvet Gauntlet: A theory of defense* seeks to identify the concept as a variant of soft power which is used to co-opt the strategic thinking of another state. By linking defense diplomacy to the concept of soft power, it illustrates the underlying mechanism that makes defense diplomacy an effective geopolitical tool. Defense diplomacy has emerged as one of the most important tools of military statecraft. Although the exact definitions of defense diplomacy sometimes labeled military diplomacy remain uncertain, it is generally considered the nonviolent use of state's defense apparatus to advance the strategic aims of a government through cooperation with other countries.

Chandramani Debbarma, *Glory of Tripura Civilization* portrays vividly glorious past of the Tripura civilization. This boo deciphers veracity and corroborates antiquity of the past. A plethora of references and diplomatic spectrums are entailed in this book.

Sukhendu Debbarma, *origin and growth of Christianity in Tripura* tries to decode why and how Christianity spread in Tripura during the reign of Manikya Dynasty and initial reactions of the natives to the inroads. This book is an attempt to examine the origin and growth of Christianity in Tripura.

Rena Laishram, *Early Meitei History Religion society and the Manipur Puyas* is a concerted effort towards presenting an objective reconstruction of the religion and society in early Meitei history. The study focuses on ancestor worship, a critical study of which is crucial for understanding other aspects of Manipur History. The traditional religion passed through a long process of evolution and survived even after Vaishnavism was declared the state religion of Manipur in the 18<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Gangmumei Kamei, *History of Manipur Pre-colonial period* is a succinct survey of early Manipur. The author has made a humble attempt to reconstruct the history of Manipur inhabited by various ethnic groups from the very early times by utilizing the archaeological evidences literary and historical sources. This book also attempts to highlight myriads of diplomatic mechanisms utilize to establish sound relations with neighboring powers.

Ranjit Shehar Mooshahary, *Rediscovering History of Assam: The country of Circe* is a bold attempt to highlights to decode history of Assam from early period to modern phase. This book gives a fresh insight into the Kachari dynasty and Ahom Dynasty that exercised suzerainty across Assam. It also entails



diplomatic channels with contemporary ruling dynasties and prevailing socio-cultural milieu of corresponding period.

*Narottam Debbarma and Richa Dangayach*, Historical Background and present situation of Tripura Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education Vol. 16, Issue No. 6, May-2019, ISSN 2230-7540 throws light on the genesis and evolution of the Manikya Dynasty. It attempts to reconstruct and corroborates facts and references to decode growth of Manikya dynasty and existing socio-political milieu.

### Statement of Problem

The Manikya Dynasty exercised suzerainty and monarchy in Tripura for about 450 years and calibrated diplomacy to exert its importance. Manikya Dynasty despite its antiquity there is a paucity of scholarly investigations particularly about its diplomacy. In Context of Globalization and emerging political spectrum, it is tantamount to study and analyses diplomatic channels. This research aims to fill the lacunae by incorporating systematic deduction of available literature and drawing new landscape.

### Aims and Objectives

- 1) To study and decode Diplomatic mechanism of the Manikya Dynasty with its neighboring Political Dynasty.
- 2) To Navigate and Evaluate ramifications of Diplomatic channels deployed by the Manikya Dynasty.
- 3) To analyze and decipher diplomatic implications on the neighboring dynasty.
- 4) To study and trace its role in the evolution and transition of socio cultural and political morasses.

### Methodology

This paper will study diplomatic mechanism of the Manikya Dynasty using a historical research methodology. This process will systematically examine past events and analyses data to identify patterns, causes and effects, and then interpreting those findings. In this research, systematic sampling will be put into function to select a database for analysis. It will provide a cross section of data and allows to incorporate a chronological component into the database. In analyzing and decoding mechanism of Diplomacy a myriad of literatures will be utilized. In Content analysis of Historical database, contexts and subjects will be simulated to obtain information and facilitate inferences. Interview with key figures will also be formulated and implemented, such as prominent researchers and with noted historian under study, will assist to develop hypothesis. Quantitative method will include statistical analysis of data related to diplomatic including demographics and economic inputs. Qualitative method will involves reviewing official government documents policy papers and cultural exchanges. As Data Collection is paramount to any research paper. Accordingly, two sets of data Primary Data and Secondary Data were collected. Archives, Newspaper, Articles Letters and Statistical reports were extensively utilized for Primary sources of information. Also, secondary source of information such as academic journals book review textbook and thesis was intensely utilized.

### Diplomatic procedures of the Manikya Dynasty-

Manikya Dynasty operated a wide range of Procedures to expand, consolidate and exert suzerainty. Historically, the Monarchs of Tripura developed an eco-system of co-operation and conciliation with neighboring prowess and diverse communities.

#### A. Patronage of art and Literature-

Drawing analogy to the Mughals and the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, the Manikya Dynasty also patronage art and culture. Rulers historically patronized the arts to accentuate their social position and political power by using arts as a tool to project their image, legitimize their rule and demonstrate their cultural influence. Dharma Manikya was the pioneer in the dynasty to commission the writing of history of the kingdom. To accomplish the task of historiography, he assigned two Brahmins, namely, Sureshwar and Baneshwar, and the Chief Priest Durlavendra Chantai. They named it SRI RAJ RATNAKARAM.

The war of Dhanya Manikya with Hossein Shah, Nawab of Gour, for supremacy over Chittagong. To commemorate this triumph, Dhanya Manikya constructed Tripura Sundari at Udaipur in 1501 and

immortalized himself by various works of public utility. Like his predecessor, he was also a patron of art and culture. He patronized literatures, music and instructed learned Pundits to author Panchali (religious couplets). He also brought expert musicians from Tirhoot for the improvement of musical culture. Books like Preta Chaturdasir Gan, Utkal Panchali and Yatra Ratnakar Nidhi were composed. Some Sanskrit books were translated into Bengali.

Likewise, modern monarchs of the Manikya Dynasty were patrons and connoisseur of art and literature. Bir Chandra Manikya earned the epithet of Vikramaditya from the grateful people of Bengal. As such he assembled myriads of distinguished artists, musicians and pundits well versed in philosophy and religion. He patronized Dinesh Chandra Sen, author of 'Banga Basha-o- Sahitya' and Pandit Ramnarayan Vidyaratna of Murshidabad, edited the "Sree mat Bhagbatam" with sufficient notes and Bengali Translations.

#### **B. MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCE-**

Rulers often pursued matrimonial alliances as a diplomatic tool to expand their territory, to secure loyalty from neighboring kingdoms, to foster cooperation and consolidate their power by creating kinship with other ruling families. Analogous to the Mughal emperors and the Gupta dynasty, The Manikya dynasty followed matrimonial policies for a myriad of rationale. Rajdhar Manikya was the first monarch of this Dynasty to initiate a nuptial relation with a Manipuri Princess. He was married to Harisheshwari, the daughter of Manipuri king Jay Singha Bhagya Chandra. This wedlock was effective in fostering cooperation and genial relation among the States. After the marriage alliance road connecting Tripura and Manipur were widened and easy immigration between the state became constant. It was in 1804 that the Meitei's even helped the Tripuris in suppressing raids made by the Kuki's in the Tripura border. In 1900, Radha Kishore Manikya arranged the marriage of the Jubaraj Birendra Kishore with the granddaughter of Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal. Radha Kishore like his antecedents married many Manipuri girls. He had three Manipuri Maharanis and six Manipuri Ranis. Acculturation and assimilation were conceived as a result of matrimonial alliance ushering a new paradigm of socio-cultural milieu.

#### **C. LAND GRANTS AND DONATIONS-**

Historically, Land grants were one of the tools used by the rulers to establish their legitimacy and were integral to their political system and social structures. This land grants made to the Brahmanas played an important role in spreading new methods of cultivation and increasing the size of rural communities. Amar Manikya donated innumerable Taluks to Brahmins and paved path for incubation of cultural progress. Dharma Manikya was a pious King and gave away to Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayethas many rent free lands. Radha Kishore deserves to be remembered for what he did to improve the quality of life of the people through education, health care, efficient administration, and public works. This great patron of learning gave substantial donations to Comilla Victoria College, Bose Institute, Bengal Technical Institute and Tagore's Santiniketan. Radha Kishore had friendship with all the intellectual elites of Bengal. The Tagore family stood firm by the side of the kings of the Manikya Dynasty.

#### **D. MONUMENTS, RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES AND PUBLIC UTILITY-**

Manikya rulers also built monuments, religious structures, and public utility to earn respect from their subjects, to impress their neighbors and to demonstrate devotions to their Gods and to seek their blessings. Dhanya Manikya signalized the victory over the Nawab of Gour by erecting in 1501 A.D, the famous Temple of Tripura Sundari at Udaipur and immortalized himself by various works of public utility. The big tank of Kamala Sagar was excavated at huge expenses and named after his queen Kamala Devi. The Tank supplies water to a vast population of the locality. Following the footstep of his predecessors, Ratna Manikya II laid the well-known temple at Jagannathpur near Comilla called Satero Ratna or Seventeen Jewels. Krishna Manikya accomplished the construction of the Satero Ratna Mandir.

Ram Ganga Manikya built a sanctuary at Brindavan and installed therein the image of Deity Rash Behari. He also set apart the Pargana of Bamutia as a Debutax property to meet the expenses of the Deity. Radha Kishore Manikya erected Victoria Memorial Hospital in memory of the late queen Empress Victoria to deliver quality health care system and cater the medical requirement of the subjects. He also incurred huge sums of finance for the spread of education. He established a new High School, a Sanskrit Tol and several girls' school and primary school in different parts of the state. Special scholarship and stipends were provided to indigent students to facilitate studies.

## RELATION OF THE MANIKYA WITH THE NEIGHBOURING RULING FAMILIES

Tripura suzerainty had vast geographical areas and calibrated sound relations with Burma, Manipur, Assam, and Bharat. It is certain Manikya Dynasty played a crucial role in the evolution of socio-cultural landscape in Tripura. Rajmala, a chronicle of Tripura, provides historical records and indicates relationship of the Manikyas with neighboring ruling families. During the reign of Ratna Manikya, Ratna Kundali Sharma Kakoti and Arjun Das Bairagi, two envoys of Assam Monarch, visited Tripura in three different occasions in between 1709 to 1715 A.D. They wrote “Tripura Buranji” –A chronicle of Tipperah (Tripura Deshar Katha Likha-1724). Tripura Buranji was edited by Surya Kumar Bhuiya in 1938 and published by the Govt of Assam and original manuscript is preserved in British Museum. Manikya Monarch, Ratna Manikya II also sent official Envoy to the Monarch of Assam. There was mutual friendship and co-operation.

Geographical proximity and congenial contacts with Bengal opened doors for assimilation and acculturation. It accelerated the process of state-formation, for which neither alone was capable. The Tripuri Dynasty became the connoisseur of Indian arts and crafts, culture and civilization; and built tanks and temples. The Tripuri Kings granted lands to the Brahmanas. The Brahmanas were appointed priests, court-poets, bureaucrats and even ministers. The Tripuri soldiers and the Bengali soldiers, with a zillionaire spirit, fought in battle-fields to defend Tripura. The Hindu kings of undivided Bengal did never attack Tripura. The Hindu zamindars of Bengal sent diggers to dig the tanks of Amar Manikya. The Bengali soldiers did never change allegiance in the battle-field out of greed or grievance. The Tripuris and the Bengalees have, however, failed to save the western part of Tripura from the destructive inroads of the iconoclast. The nemesis has overtaken the destiny of Tripura in general, and the Tripuri Bengali relations in particular.

## RELATION WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The historic Battle of Plassey on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1757 between Siraj-ud –Daulah and the East India Company marked the beginning of a new era to the whole of India including Tripura. With the rapid consolidation of the British power in India after the Battle of Plassey, Tripura assumed an indomitable position. The position of the east India Company was almost analogous to the Pathans and the Mughals. Robert Clive and others made the Company an Indian power since 1757. The grant of the Diwani in 1765 legally converted the company into a Governorship in commission. So far as Tripura was concerned with the grant of the Diwani, the transference of suzerainty from the Mughals to the company took place. The company thus got a scope for encroachment and intervention. Since 1783 till 1947, the company and British Indian Government went on recognizing the Tipperah kings one after another.

Besides this vital method of interference, the British Indian Government had a policy to lend British officials and British trained Indian officials to serve in Chakla Roshnabad and in Hill Tipperah. It seems to be a polite policy of peaceful interference. Those officials tended to reorganize the administration of Tipperah after the British Model. Many laws were enacted in imitation of the British laws. The advice of the political agency was yet another method. The political Agents, appointed since 1871 to aid and advise the kings of Tipperah, were like masters.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the Manikya Dynasty's extensive diplomatic strategies profoundly shaped the socio-political landscape of Tripura over a reign of approximately 540 years. Their approach to diplomacy, encompassing cultural exchanges and intercommunal relations, established significant ties with neighboring regions, including Assam, Manipur, and Bengal, facilitating acculturation and social cohesion. Key historical figures such as Ratna Manikya exemplified diplomatic prowess, fostering mutual respect and cooperation, highlighted by considerable cultural investments like temple constructions and religious tolerance. Marriages that linked royal families across territories underscored the strategic alliances that contributed to the dynasty's stability and influence. The dynasty's interactions with the British colonial authorities showcased a dynamic of cooperation and conflict, ultimately leading to significant administrative reforms. This research elucidates the intricate diplomatic mechanisms employed by the Manikya Dynasty, revealing the impact of their policies on regional politics and cultural assimilation while addressing the need for



deeper scholarly exploration of their diplomatic legacy within the context of globalization and contemporary international relations. By systematically analyzing historical literature, this study aims to bridge gaps in understanding the diplomatic significance of the Manikya Dynasty, thereby enriching the narrative of North East India's historical discourse.

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