



Tagore & Four Princes of Tripura

Suren Debbarman



Tribal research and Cultral Institute,
govt. of Tripura, Agartala

Tagore and Four Princes of Tripura

Tagore and four Princes of Tripura

Suren Debbarman



Tribal Research & Cultural Institute
Government of Tripura

Tagore and four Princes of Tripura
Suren Debbarman

Published by :
Tribal Research & Cultural Institute
Government of Tripura

© Tribal Research & Cultural Institute
Government of Tripura

First edition : 28th February, 2020

Cover design : Pushpal Deb

Type settings : Shabdachitra

Printed by : Kalika Press Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata

ISBN : 978-93-86707-26-0

Price : ₹ 100 INR

PRELUDE

The erstwhile princely native state of Tripura has a long and chequered history. The pages of past history of this charming land of the state are replete with anecdotes of cultivation of music, fine arts, crafts and literature. The rich variety of culture and refinement were the products of the ancient and modern ruling kings of the state. The ruling princes were great patron and connoisseur of art, music and literature. The noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore himself was a great admirer of the Maharajas of Tripura, only because the Maharajas of Tripura had been not only the patron and lover of Bengali language and Bengali culture, but also they had been creative genius of fine arts, music and literature. This mental and intellectual capacity of the kings charmed the great poet. Tagore was instinctively drawn towards the kings. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore remained a life-long great friend.

From the inception of the establishment of the Manikya dynasty, the arena of cultivation of music, fine arts and literature commenced and subsequently blossomed out to the fullest form with the successive four erudite ruling princes, namely, Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya, Radhakishore Manikya, Brajendra Kishore Manikya and Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya.

Before entering into the details of the historical period of Manikya dynasty, it will be fairly well to dilate upon the period of tradition of the royal line of Tripura. It is claimed by the ruling princes of the ancient Tripura that they came from the direct line of the Lunar dynasty of the King Yayati of the *Mahabharata* era. The ancient scion of the King Yayati known as Trilochana, alias Subrai Raja of Tripura attended the *Raj Suya*--sacrifice performed by the King Judhisthira, the paramount ruler of the Mahabharata era.

But it is all about tradition and antiquity. Therefore, our dealing is solely concerned with the recent historical period.

After Maha Manikya, his son Dharma Manikya ascended the throne in 1431 A. D. He was contemporary of Bengal Nawab Jaladdin (1413-1430). Dharma Manikya is claimed to be the Renaissance figure in the arena of reviving the art and literature of the ancient Tripura. The erudite and far-sighted ruler engaged two Brahmin scholar brothers named Baneswar and Sukreswar. He was a votary of Brahmanical cult and culture and gave land-grant to several Brahmin families to reside permanently in Tripura. And consequent upon the contact with the Bengalee people, the Tripuri people adopted the superior culture and language from the neighbouring society of Bengal. But now-a-days, Bengali culture and language are no longer alien to Tripuris; rather these have become the cultural assets of their own.

In the present work, I have dealt with the last four kings of the Manikya dynasty with whom the noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore had a life-long relationship. The history of this relationship is very interesting in the history of the cultural as well as the literary bonds between Bengal and Tripura. The historic relations have left a freshening effect on Tripura as well as on Bengal.

Dramatis Personae

Maharaj Bir Chandra Manikya (1839-1896)

Maharaj Radha Kishore Manikya (1856-1909)

Gurudev Rabindranath Thakur (1861-1941)

Maharaj Birendra Kishore Manikya (1883-1923)

Maharaj Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya (1908-1947)

Maharaj Kumar Brajendra Kishore

Ramendra Kishore (1913-1974)

Suren Debbarman

Preface

It is an honour as well as pleasure to be requested to write a preface to a book written on the recent history and culture of Tripura. The author, Sri Suren Debbarman, has matured his hand by writing several books. The present work, *Tagore & four Princes of Tripura* traces the historic relations of Tripura Raj family with Jorasanko Thakur family of Bengal; and highlights the episodes which made the mutual relations memorable. The two famous families were worthy of each other. The relations were not one of spring time only; it was one of weal and woe, marked by noble intentions.

This book covers the local history of a period of about one hundred years (1839-1947); it outlines the history with little detail. However, the intention of the author is clear : to trace Tagore's relations with the last four princes/kings of Tripura. In that respect, he has done justice to the scope of the work. This period was peaceful, marked by reform & relaxation. The Battle of Plassey (23 June, 1757) and the Victorian reformative spirit brought relief to Tripura.

The period preceding needs a sketchy narration. It will be outlined very briefly in three phases :- the Barak Valley Phase, the Gomati Valley Phase and the Haora Valley Phase. The royal chronicle of Tripura, *Sri Rajmala*, has traced the ancestral relation between the Lunar dynasty of the *Mahabharata* and the Tripuri dynasty. Leaving that ancient history, the recent history of the manageable past is pointed out here.

The Barak Valley Phase (c. 635-c. 1300 A. D.).

It was located in and around Kailashahar, Dharmanagar, and Srihatta, etc. At least 19 kings ruled here. The Tripuri Chief Dungur Pha (c. 635- c. 675) invited Maithili Brahmans and organised a big sacrifice, in 642 A.D. and offered lands to the priests. The land grant had the distinction of being the first

written document of Tripura history. It was a period of acculturation. But, a sudden attack by Hiravanta Khan in 1240 A. D. dislodged the Tripuri dynasty. They left the place and migrated to the Gomati Valley.

The Gomati Valley Phase (c. 1301-1747)

It is located in and around the southern part of Tripura. At least 37 kings of this dynasty ruled here. The brunt, heat and shock of attacks by the Afghans, and the Mughals fell heavily on Tripura during this period. At last, the attack by Samser Gazi dislodged the dynasty and forced Krishna Manikya to take Shelter in the Haora Valley. The external attacks left Tripura sick & suffering, despondent and desolate.

The Haora Valley Phase (1747-1949)

It is located in and around Agartala. Thirteen kings ruled here. It began with the rule of Krishna Manikya (1747-1783), and ended with the rule of Maharaj a Kirit Bikramkishore Manikya (1947-1949).

This period is one of reform and reconstruction, ease and peace. Schools, hospitals, post offices were opened. Administration was decentralised.

But alas! The Princely administration became chaotic and bankrupt. Extravagance, inefficiency, domestic feud paralysed the royal administration. Some of the kings were least respected. Problems were piled upon problems.

Even with all these problems, Maharaj Bir Chandra (1862-1896) spent a considerable period of his rule in music, painting, poetry-composition and photography.

Herein lies the statesmanship of the Maharaj Radha Kishore Manikya (1896-1909); as well as the Brahmanical wisdom of Tagore. Radha Kishore, with caution & advice from Tagore, removed financial insolvency, improved administrative efficiency, patronised learning in Tripura as well as in Bengal, and frustrated the partisan interests of a coterie. Such rare alliance had been praised by the Vedas (Yadur Veda 20.25). Tagore's caution rendered a few powerful plots unsuccessful.

The behaviour of some of the kings was unworthy of their position. But, a good number of Tripura Kings were a good statesmen. They defended the kingdom, patronised Bengali and Sanskrit language, promoted science & technology, strengthened national integration, prohibited headhunting and human sacrifice, embellished the capitals with big water-tanks and temples and commissioned the writing of history.

The history of their contributions and struggles should be rescued from oblivion and flashed back to the next generations. Herein lies the merit of this book.

Jagadis Gan-Chaudhuri

Acknowledgement

Several persons have gladly assisted me in preparing this book. It is my duty to put on record my deep sense of gratitude to them.

I am indebted to the pioneers in this field; so, my obligation has been recorded in the bibliography.

Sri Dhabal Krishna Dev Barman of the famous Uzir-bari has been kind enough to serve as a link-man.

TRCI has readily taken the onerous task of publishing this book.

Sri Bidyut Kanti Dhar has efficiently co-ordinated between planning & printing.

My younger brother, Dr. Gan Chaudhuri has set his hand to add, alter, amend and edit.

My wife, Smt. Phulrenu Devi has silently rendered domestic services, and genuinely sympathized.

280, Kayastha Para
Road
4th Lane, Haltu
Kolkata-400078

Suren Debbarman

Foreword

We are happy to note that TRCI has emerged as a major publishing house, and several scholars are contributing to our list of publications.

Sri Suren Debbarman (b. 1939; B. A. from Calcutta University in 1962) has a long (1965-1997) career in Tripura Civil Service. Moreover, he has, to his credit, several books on the history and culture of Tripura.

The present work is a welcome addition; it has furnished certain new informations. We appreciate him for his love's labour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Debbarma', with a date '28.02.2020' written below it.

(D. Debbarma)

Director,

Dated, Agartala
28th February, 2020

Tribal Research & Cultural Institute,
Government of Tripura

CONTENTS

1. Maharaja Birchandra Manikya and Tagore	17
2. Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya and Tagore	25
3. Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya and Tagore	39
4. Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya and Tagore	47
5. Prince Brajendra Kishore and Tagore	59
6. Ramendra Kishore and Tagore	69
7. Chronology	79
8. Bibliography	87
9. Illustrations	89

1

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya and Tagore

Birchandra was Krishna Kishore Manikya's (1830-1849) son and Ishan Chandra Manikya's (1849-1862) step-brother

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya was a versatile genius, an architect of modern Tripura; a Renaissance figure in the realm of art, music and vaishnava poems and also photo printing of the princely state of Tripura. The Maharaja ascended the throne in the year 1862 and reigned upto 1896 A. D. His rule marks one important era in the Manikya dynasty of Tripura. The modern period in Tripura actually began from his regime. An able administrator, the prince was also a great patron of literature, arts and music. He was not only a patron of music and literature, but also a creative musician. He had, to his credit, a good number of books, songs, literature and Vaisnava lyrics composed by him. He was well-versed in the Bengali language. The Maharaja used to cultivate Brajabuli dialect and composed several song-poems in Brajabuli imitating Vaisnava poets, Vidyapati and Chandidasa. Though imitations, the poems are not dull, but breathe a spirit of simplicity and sweetness. But, it is a matter of regret that these books have never gone beyond the boundaries of the State, as the Maharaja was averse to publish them. Had they been published, there is no doubt that he would have secured a high place among the poets of Bengal. Himself being a distinguished musician, he would devote considerable time to the cultivation and culture of music. The Maharaja was a first-rate music-lover; so, even in the midst of his busy life including administrative job, he did not miss to listen to the melodious songs of the court musicians. The Maharaja earned the covetable and appropriate title of Vikramaditya of the present day from the grateful people of Bengal. He gathered from all over India many distinguished artists, musicians and Pandits well-versed in Indian philosophy and religion. Birchandra Manikya

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

was called, appropriately and verily, Vikramaditya of the modern age, because of the attendance of nine erudite scholars in the arena of arts, literature and music. The great maestros who attended the court of Birchandra Manikya were :- violinist Qusem Ali Khan, lyricist Madan Mitra and vocalist Jadu Bhatta, who won the mind of Birchandra Manikya. And charmed with the unique art of rendition of Jadu Bhatta, the Maharaja conferred the title of "Tanraj" on Jadu Bhatta. The Maharaja being himself a erudite scholar in music, composed the "Tilokamod Chautal" in a bid to do great honour to Jadu Bhatta. The song was later sung by the famous musician Ramesh Banerjee. The galaxy of great musicians, who came to Agartala at the instance of the Maharaja, were—Ostad Kulandar Wuaks from Kashmir, Sur Singer and Esraj Player Haider Khan from Gawalior, great sitarist and Sur Bina player Nisar Husain from Uttar Pradesh, Pakhoaj player of Chandan Nagar, Drupad Singer Kshetra Bose, Kheyal and Tappa singer Bholanath Chakraborty, Violinist Harish Chandra, dancer singer Imani Baiji and Chanda Baiji from Rampur and Banaras respectively. The last two were granted life-time pension for their talent.

Bir Chandra Manikya had been truly a connoisseur of art, music, literature, folk-literature and photography, etc. The Maharaja did not confine himself merely to the pursuit of art, music and literature; he would also spend time in studying the past history of the royal lines of Tripura. Historically minded, Maharaja came to the rescue of the young poet Rabindranath, when the latter could not keep to history attempting to compose the life-history of the ancient King Govinda Manikya of the Tripura dynasty. It is well-known to all that the King Govinda Manikya is the principal character of Tagore's famous novel '*Rajarshi*' (saint king) of which adramatized form is '*Visarjan*' (sacrifice). Photo-printing was one of the great hobbies of the Maharaja who followed the rapid developments in photography with keen interest and was always found making photographic experiments in his studio equipped with scientific experiments. He used to hold an annual photo Exhibition at Agartala to encourage the princes, nobles and the people of the State. The

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya & Tagore

photo art of the Maharaja had become so much widely popular that the photographic journal of America namely "Practical photographer" published an illustrated biography of the Maharaja in one of its issues. The Maharaja was also adept in painting. The Maharaja appointed a French artist for painting the portraits of some of the deceased Maharajas. There was no end of Maharaja's fancy and inclination. The Maharaja would spend fabulous amount to print various kinds of books written by the prominent writers of Bengal. Pandit Ramnarayan Vidyaratna of Murshidabad was given financial assistance by the Maharaja in editing and publishing the "*Sreemat Bhagabatam*". The famous book written by Rai Bahadur Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen entitled "*Bangabhasa-O-Sahitya*" had been able to be seen through press with the help of the Maharaja. What awaits for the curious readers is the fantastic interest to preserve the time-honoured fairy tales, fables, folk songs and literature. And for that purpose, the Maharaja once appointed a famous story-teller from Dhaka. In this connection I feel inclined to refer to Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen who mentioned the matter in the Chapter-II of story-telling, a profession. In the book of Folk-literature of Bengal, Dr. Sen wrote : "Hindu kings not only had such story tellers engaged in the queen's palace but kept a number of them in their courts. Even in our own times we find this custom, which has come down from a remote antiquity, followed by some of the Rajas of this province. Late Babu Bharat Chandra Sen of Dhamrai in the district of Dacca, was appointed not very long ago, by Raja Birchandra Manikya of Tippera as the story-teller of his court on a pay of Rs. 60/- a month. I had an opportunity of hearing a story related by this gentleman. His intonation, gestures and manner of speaking added a wonderful poetic vividness to the story that had been related. And I knew that he had learnt this art from the professional story-tellers-an art that had been handed down from a very remote age.*

* Raibahadur Dr. Dinesh Ch. Sen : *Folk-literature of Bengal*

Maharaja Birchandra's ties with Rabindranath Tagore

The acquaintance between elderly Bir Chandra Manikya and juvenile Rabindranath came to pass through a sad event. "—In 1883 the Maharaja was stricken with a great bereavement in the death of his queen consort Maharani Bhanumati Devi to whom he had been very much attached. The Maharaja, resting the responsibility of royal administration upon the Administrative Council, left for Brindaban to perform the last rites of the deceased. After his return from Brindaban the Maharaja unexpectedly received a copy of the lyric—"*Bhagna Hriday*" (Broken Heart) composed by the juvenile poet Rabindranath who wrote the same immediately after his return from England. Smitten with sorrow as the Maharaja was at the time, this book created a great and deep impression in his mind thereby deriving mental calmness and peace, and as a token of gratitude the Maharaja sent one of his ministers to Rabindranath conveying congratulation and desiring his acquaintance. The emissary was Mr. Radharaman Ghosh, a scholar in Vainsava literature.

Referring to this incident, Tagore wrote in the "Jiban Smriti" (Reminiscences) :- "I remember after this book came out, Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya's Minister called on me to convey this fact only that the poem has deeply impressed the Maharaja who entertained high hopes of the future of the poet. This brought about a never failing friendship between the Raj Family and the Tagores of Jorasanko in Calcutta.

Since then whenever the Maharaja would come to Calcutta, he used to send for Rabindranath and took great delight in listening to Rabindranath's recitation and music. The poet felt very shy; but the Maharaja's eagerness and genial temperament served to banish all shyness. When ailing, Birchandra went to Kurseong for a change; he took Rabindranath along with him. There the Maharaja used to discuss poetry and music with Rabindranath far into the night. The presence of the Vaisnava poet Radharaman Ghosh, private Secretary of the Maharaja, enhanced the charm of the literary discussion.**

** An extract from A. C. Bhattacharyya : '*Progressive Tripura*'

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya & Tagore

LETTERS

Tagore's letter to
Birchandra Manikya

From :
Rabindranath Tagore
6, Dwarakanath Tagore Lane
Jorasanko, Calcutta
Baisakh 23, 1293 B. S.

To
Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya

Most respectfully, your Highness Sir,

I venture to write to your Highness to call up those old memories.

Your Highness may have heard that I am at work on a novel named "*Rajarshi*" which is based on the history of the royal family of Tripura. But this, I admit, does not keep to history. The reason is :- I have no historical record at hand. I consider it my duty to apologise to your Highness for this. Now it is rather late; nevertheless, should your Highness be pleased to send me the particulars about the reign of Govinda Mannikya and his brother, I shall try and revise it as far as I can. It would be immensely helpful if I get to know which part of Chittagong Maharaja Govinda Manikya lived in during his exile and how he spent his life there. I shall be also benefited if I can possibly get photographs of the old capital city of Udaipur and of other places important in the history of Tripura.

I shall consider it a privilege if I get a reply to this and can make any acquaintance of your Highness.

With kindest regards from

Sri Rabindranath Devasarmana

* The letter, written in May, 1886, was published in '*Rabi*' (a monthly journal in Bengali) Vol. II No. 4, 1332 B. S. (1925 A. D.) This English version has been translated from Bengali by Prof. C. Kaviraj.

Reply letter from Birchandra Manikya

Accomplished Sir,

I am immensely delighted to receive your letter. It is your desire, you say, to remind me of the old relations between our two families. Those happy relations have not faded out of my memory; and I feel honoured and obliged to see you coming forward to grace them once again. I trust, you will write to me at your leisure amiable letters like this.

I have read both of your works, 'Mukut' and 'Rajarshi'. It will not be far difficult for you to set right the occasional deviations from history.

There is a book in Sanskrit named "*Rajaratnakar*" which gives a systematic history of the kings of Tripura. The work of its compilation was taken up during the reign of Raja Dharma Manikya who assumed royal power in 868 Tripurabda. The present date, according to the Tripura calendar is 1296. *Rajaratnakar* mentions yet another work in Sanskrit named '*Rajamala*' of which we have no trace. The existing '*Rajamala*' is an abridged version of '*Rajaratnakar*' and is cast in the Bengali verse form. It was recast with a view to making it easily intelligible to all. It gives the account from the time of Maharaja Daitya. There is no record of many of the kings before his time. The writer of this later '*Rajamala*' in Bengali, I remember to have seen when young. Apart from the '*Rajamala*', the only other record is a sketch of Maharaja Krishna Manikya. This, too, is in the Bengali verse form and is known as '*Krishnamala*'. There is a practice among the tribal subjects of composing lays in their respective dialects on some significant events in the lives of the kings and singing them. A good deal of material may possibly be gathered from these lays. And it is needless to add that plaques on the temple walls as well as charters and documents may also furnish materials of history.

I am grateful to you for having taken pains to write a novel with materials drawn from the history of Tripura. I assure you that I shall be glad to collect for you from the sources mentioned above any historical information you may require. I, too, feel that

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya & Tagore

your writings, so highly appreciated for many other qualities, should also keep to history. If you want immediately any information about a particular period of history, I can furnish you all that can be derived from '*Rajaratnakar*' itself; if, however, you allow me some time I can also gather it from local sources. I believe the latter will be more to your liking.

My predecessors had their capital also at places other than Udaipur, viz. Dharmanagar, Kalyanpur and Amarpur. Many relics can be found at these places. If required, I can supply informations about these places as well.

The photographs of Udaipur that I have with me I shall send you later with their descriptions. Sketches of Govinda Manikya and his brother Chhatra Manikya, as given in "*Rajaratnakara*", have been copied out and we propose to get them printed. A copy of these will be sent to you when printed. A glance at the extract from "*Rajaratnakara*" will reveal to you which portions of "*Rajarshi*" are not true to history.

I am trying to get "*Rajaratnakara*" printed; the preparation for this is yet in the process. If, by God's grace we get it printed I shall send you a copy of it.

"*Rajaratnakara*" falls into two divisions – the mythical and the historical. In the mythical section the life stories of the kings like Daitya and in the historical section a considerable portion of the history of the period when Bengal was under the Muslim rule are nice reading. To my mind, it will be far more laudable if you draw on these for material of your novels.

We are all well here and I shall be happy to learn that you all are in the best of health and spirits.*

With kindest regards
From
Sri Virchandra Dev Varma,
Jaistha 18, 1296,
Tripura Era.

* The letter written in June 1886 was published in '*Rabi*' a quarterly journal in Bengali, Vol. II, No.-4, 1332 B. S. (1925 A. D.)

2

Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya and Tagore

Radha Kishore Manikya, the worthy son of Birchandra Manikya, was endowed with sterling qualities. Rabindranath Tagore, who charmed the entire globe with his epochmaking genius, had been life-long appreciative of the kingly culture and refinement of the two Maharajas :- Birchandra Manikya and Radhakishore Manikya (the father and son). The people of India and abroad, who are devoted to Tagore, may be in the know that Maharaja Birchandra Manikya highly appreciated young poet Tagore's *Bhagna Hriday* (Broken Heart) and gave recognition as the prospective great poet by sending an emissary to Tagore's family-house at Jorasanko of Calcutta.

Having been recognized as the best poet by the elderly Maharaja Birchandra, the juvenile poet Rabindranath was overwhelmed with great satiety and rejoicings. And therefore, the young Poet, Rabindranath Tagore remained loyal and grateful to both Birchandra and Radhakishore, throughout his life.

After untimely demise (11.12.1896) of Birchandra, his worthy son Radhakishore Manikya succeeded on 12.12.1896 at the age of forty. Meanwhile, he has already gathered much experience in the matter of running royal administration. The terrible and disastrous earthquake of 12 June 1897 shook north-eastern India, and damaged the Palace of new Agartala, and the images of Unakoti hills. That natural calamity put Radhakishore to financial crisis. Radhakishore was an erudite scholar and evinced great interest in the education of the common people as well as of the princes and nobles of the state. The Maharaja not only took effective steps for development and spread of education in his state but also extended help to some of the educational institutions of Bengal particularly to Rabindranath Tagore's International

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

University at Bolepur, to the Bengal Technical Institute and to Comilla Victoria College, now in Bangladesh. Comilla is about 64 Km. away from Agartala. Radha Kishore Manikya was a great lover and patron of Bengali language and literature. He was, therefore, very much eager to mix with the society of literary men. This desire brought him into contact with the world poet Rabindranath Tagore who enjoyed the friendship of Radha Kishore's father Birchandra Manikya. Subsequently, Radha Kishore Manikya had the chance to win over the best minds of Bengal, such as Dr. Jagadis Chandra Bose, Lady Abala Bose, Sir Nripendra Narayan Bhup, Maharaja of Cooch Behar; Maharaja Sir Rameswar Singha of Darbhanga; Sir Jatindra Mohan Tagore, Maharaja Jagadindranath Roy of Natore, Lord Sinha of Roypur, Sir Taraknath Palit, Sir Rash Behari Ghosh and others. By this contact, he won the heart of Bengal and introduced the culture and refinement of the State, specially, of the royal house, well known to the Bengalees. At that time the ovation that was given to Radha Kishore by the literary society (Sangit Samaj) of Calcutta deserves description. In honour of the honourable Maharaja's presence, Tagore's '*Bisarjan*' (Sacrifice) drama was staged. Tagore himself took the main role of the priest Raghupati. Tagore composed a song in praise of the Maharaja on this occasion and it was sung by the Maharaja of Natore while garlanding the Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya. It is a great pride for Tripura that the state had been made immortal and widely known through the two books namely *Bisarjan* (Drama) and *Rajarshi* (Novel) by the world poet Tagore. Radhakishore was very much sympathetic to distressed literarymen. But the donations were done in secret. When he happened to know the misfortune of the renowned poet Hemchandra by reading '*Sanjibani*', the Maharaja immediately arranged for him a monthly allowance through Rabindranath. The Maharaja received great relief when he came to know that the distress of Hemchandra Bandyopadhyaya had been removed due to Maharaja's token financial help and the Maharaja said the followings : "I may be a smaller Ruler, but if poet Hemchandra is allowed to end his life miserably in a charitable hospital like Michael Madhusudan Dutta, woe be to

Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya & Tagore

the country in which he has been born. If my councilors are not alert in such cases they will not only commit a great wrong but will also cover me with sin" – "*Deshiya Rajya*" – Colonel Mahim Chandra Deb Barman. The great scholar of Bengali language and literature and professor of Calcutta University, Rai Bahadur Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen was also granted lifelong monthly pension to the tune of Rs. 30/-. Radha Kishore Manikya was not only a lover of literature but also a great inquisitive in science and technology. The Maharaja followed with keen interest the epoch-making discoveries of the great scientist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose. One day Sir J. C. Bose arranged a demonstration of his discoveries in the Presidency College where Rabindranath Tagore and other friends of Sir Bose attended. The Maharaja was not then intimately acquainted with Sir J. C. Bose; but as soon as he heard of it, he appeared, though uninvited, at the college laboratory at the appointed time and surprised one and all by his presence. Though not well-versed in English, the intelligent Maharaja could easily follow the experiments. The Maharaja easily understood the worldwide significance. Maharaja's explanation on Dr. Bose's experiment surprised all, specially Dr. J. C. Bose. He mentioned that even the students of M.A., M. Sc. classes could hardly follow the experiment but the Maharaja easily understood the experiments. Dr. J. C. Bose was extended financial help by the Maharaja in many ways. Of course, the most significant role was played by Tagore himself. Being a great and faithful friend of the Maharaja, Tagore had the rightful claim to ask for help from Maharaja for the cause of Dr. J. C. Bose's research works and cultivation of science.

– "When Rabindranath Tagore started raising funds for the erection of a laboratory for Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, as private experiments were not permissible in the college Laboratory, the Maharaja made a large donation towards the building fund. His

* A. C. Bhattacharyya, *Progressive Tripura*

* The said *Rajmala* was written in poetry form (in *payara* metre)

* The book of poems '*KAHINI*' was dedicated to Maharaja.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

interest for and sympathy with the work of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose grew intensely and when Sir Jagadish Chandra was passing a very anxious time in England trying hard to convince a biased scientific world of the truth he has discovered and was in financial difficulties, the Maharaja wrote to him a very sympathetic letter and sent him a big remittance which was pregnant with the fate of a nation. The value of this generous help may better be described in the words of the Scientist himself.

In one of his discourses at the "Bose Institute", Sir J. C. Bose said : "When his experiment brought vividly before him the universal sensitiveness of matter and the outcome of this generalization in different realms of thought, he had a visit from the late Maharaja of Tripura, Radha Kishore Manikya. The Maharaja was a great scholar in vernacular, though he was totally unacquainted with English language. According to the prevailing standard, the cultural value of his acquirements would be questioned. But the Maharaja's ignorance of English did not stand in the way of his instantly realizing the significance of the lecturer's experiments. Indeed his own mind was put to its fullest activity in answering the Maharaja's most intelligent questionings as regards the trend of his work in clearing up many difficult problems. The reference to this subject may be opportune in view of the controversy whether Akbar the great was literate or illiterate and whether the University Commission should recommend the vernacular language as a suitable vehicle for scientific instruction. The Government of India sent him on his second scientific deputation to the West to announce his discovery and he experimentally demonstrated before the meeting of the Royal Society the sensitiveness of the ordinary plants. The discovery was refused publication to reach the scientific world. The period of his deputation was then nearing its end. He had to make his returning to India discredited or overstay in England risking his appointment or the chance of convincing some unbiased scientific men. While in this dilemma he received a communication from the Maharaja assuring him of his firm belief and also a large remittance towards the possibility of continuation of his researches. He was thus

Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya & Tagore

enabled to prolong his stay and thus secure many true friends among the scientific men in England who stood for fair play resulting in the acceptance of his work. It was the special request of the late Maharaja that he wished to remain unknown in this connection. He has now passed away and it is permissible to speak now of one who stood by him at a time when such friendship was most needed”.

(*The Englishman*, 12th March, 1918)

Radha Kishore's contribution towards growth of science and technology

A great educationist, the Maharaja would spend huge sums of money for the spread of general and technical education. Though the Maharaja had little scope to spread technical education in his State, out of great and wide outlook, the Maharaja lavishly extended financial help for technical education in Bengal. It is a matter of pride for the people of Tripura that the Maharaja, being the ruler of a tiny state in the far-flung eastern region of the country, gladly and lavishly came forward to finance the newly established Bengal Technical Institute in Calcutta (now faculties of Engineering and Technology of Jadavpur University. The Maharaja visited the Institute and also granted a monthly aid for maintenance of the same.

Radha Kishore's keen interest in antiquity and literature

A champion with great outlook and thinking, the Maharaja had the great propensity in reviving the past history and literature. Therefore, he was very much inclined to follow the instance of Maharaja Dharma Manikya who had reigned in the period from 1431-1462 A. D. Dharma Manikya's court was graced by two great scholars named Banerjwara and Sukreswara who were engaged to compose the "*Rajmala*" * the chronicle of Tripura dynasty. So, endowed with great propensity to foster the heritage, Radha Kishore proved to be a worthy scion of his versatile forefathers by embarking upon the proper cultivation of knowledge.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

The famous scholar Pandit Chandroday Vidyabinode the then editor of the weekly "*Hitabadi*" was engaged by the Maharaja to re-edit the original "*Rajmala*", the chronicle of the Royal line. The Pandit undertook the noble job with great devotion and zeal and completed it in 1902 in 4 volumes. But the work of publication could not be completed. Only a few copies were printed for the use of the Royal family which were kept in the palace library. Being conscious of reviving the old heritage, the Maharaja paid a visit to the old palace and the temples of Udaypur, an ancient capital of the State, in 1903. After the visit to the old capital and witnessing the relics an idea of compilation of a work occurred to the mind of the Maharaja. Then the Maharaja entrusted the task to Pandit Chandroday Vidyabinod. The Pandit compiled *Sila-Lipi-Sangraha* (collection of stone inscriptions). The compilation is of a historical importance and a laborious task as well. The book was published in 1905 and was recognized as a work of great value. The author had to take great pains in the compilation of the book as he had to travel throughout the length and breadth of the State and of the Zamindaries and in jungles and caves to trace the works of art and architecture of the distant past.

In 1907 Pandit Chandroday Vidyabinod also — reedited and published *Brihannaradiya Puran*, a devotional literature from the manuscript in verses at the instance of Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya.

Radha Kishore Manikya : a connoisseur of Tagore literature

Like his father Bir Chandra Manikya, Radha Kishore Manikya was a great connoisseur of Bengali poetry and literature. The Maharaja was critical as well as watchful of the modern trend of Bengali literature. When he was given a copy of a book of poems '*KAHINI*' (anecdote) by Tagore, the Maharaja was highly gratified and in the language of high appreciation the Maharaja wrote to Tagore with the following :-

"My dear Rabi Babu, you are thoroughly proficient in upholding the solemnity of the poems. It is so natural to you as

Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya & Tagore

to say. I am greatly delighted for the blend of solemnity as well as delicacy of your poems. Frankly speaking the books of poems written by modern versifiers dealing with puranic topics do not keep to that poetic quality in terms of solemnity and delicacy. On the other hand, yours ones are totally free from all those shortcomings. I do believe that if solemnity and delicacy are maintained the book of poems will be embellished with literary flavour and gracefulness."**

The colourful as well as creative life of the Maharaja ended at the age of only 53 when he met with a serious motor accident in the city of Banaras on 12 March, 1909. The Maharaja had been staying at the Nandeswar Kuthi of His Highness, the *Maharaja* of Banaras.

** The quotation is from the Bengali letter written to Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Maharaja Radhakishore's Letters to Tagore

(1)

God is Good

My Dear Rabi Babu,

I am in receipt of your kind letter. I am very much happy to know your desire to be in Darjeeling. After a long time I am now free from the troublesome house hold burden. Now I long for a time to repose. If we can live together in Darjeeling our sojourn will be replete with great delight amidst the sublimity of the lofty Himalayas coupled with our music and poetical deal. Do please bring some books and writing exercise books. I am also bringing the same. Be that as it may now let me wait for the grant of leave from your devoted housewife. In case if you slip off from my company Mahim may encroach upon our journey. I have decided to start on Monday the 2nd instant, expecting to reach Kustia at 10.30 p.m. from there we can start together. The rented house will be sufficient to accommodate us all.

Well, by the by, the news of reprinting of "*Bangadarshan*" of Bankim Chandra is very heartening. It is more good news that the writers of repute are zealous and enthusiastic for it. I wish, you take the responsibility of editing the same very soon without demur and let me know what help I can extend for the purpose. I am ready to take all possible responsibility. I have learnt that you had to face unpleasant talk with Mrs. Chaudhurani. It is also learnt that the unpleasantness came to pass due to me. Do please remember that she is our go-between. There is nothing impossible to end our friendship if the go-between is irritated. I abstain from sending Mahim as per request from the political agent. It is all good as I have got the time to consult the matter

Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya & Tagore

with you. Here is an oft-repeated hailstorm. As a result of which the vicinity of my residence is strewn with bricks, brick-dust, rubbish and mud causing me great annoyance. We are so so. Hope you are all well in body and mind.

14th Baisakh 1311 Tripura Era.

Affectionately yours.

Sree Radha Kishore Varma

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

(2)

God is Good

My Dear Rabi Babu,

I was very much pre-occupied with the wedding ceremony of my son Jubaraj Birendra Kishore. Now I am almost free from all; due to your son's ailments your inability to be present on the said occasion really gave me much unhappiness.

Any way, I am now free from anxiety at the news of your son's recovery.

In the meantime I had chalked out a plan to take rest in a solitary woodland in course of hunting, but due to occurrence of heavy hailstorms I had to retreat completely being wet. That is why I could not write to you for a long time. Such a big size of hailstorm I have never seen before. Some of them were weighing about a quarter of a seer.

I am very glad to receive your gift of a cloth for my daughter-in-law which is well-suited to her. It is given to her as your token of blessings to her.

Mahim (Col. Mahim Chandra Dev Barman), (high official of royal court and ADC to the Maharaja and a close friend of Tagore) is thinking out a plan to go to you. What about your opinion in this regard. I am also thinking to send him to your midst. But, I am, to some extent, concerned lest he creates some troubles to you. And at the same time I feel amused at the thought of enjoying the company of any harmless troublesome person you know as mine that Mahim is such a type of man who is a master joker having the art of creating ambience of both gloom and happiness.

If I receive a letter from your end, I shall tell him to get prepared with his so called *PANCH HATIA* (five equipments). Mahim Chandra had the hobby of carrying the five equipments

Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya & Tagore

wherever he used to go as being a royal councillor and also high army official such as gun and camera, etc.

Now the climate of Agartala is quite comfortable, no spell of spring-heat. How is there's? No more today, wishing to have good news from your end.

Yours faithfully,
Sri Radhakishore Varma

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

(3)

God is Good

My Dear Rabi Babu

I am in receipt of your successive two letters. The first letter together with the '*Kahini*' (anecdote) enthused me enormously and I am reading the "*Kahini*" with great avidity. Till now I could have read only half of the book. As the state-census is ensuing and besides, the serious book of yours can hardly be grasped and enjoyed if it is not read with profound attention. To say the truth, it is my nature to read a serious book with a serious mind. I do not find any reason to gratify the friend for the sake of friendship. In point of fact you are thoroughly proficient in maintaining the sublimity of the poems, I shall say it is so natural to you. I am highly delighted apprehending the happy blend of sublimity and delicacy of your book of poems. The application of your idea and language in the characters of the poem are inextricably wedded to each other. Frankly speaking, the books of poems written by modern versifiers dealing with puranic topics do not keep to that poetic quality in terms of solemnity and delicacy. On the contrary, yours ones are totally free from the so called short comings. I do believe that if solemnity and delicacy are maintained the book of poems will be embellished with literary flavour and gracefulness.

Mahim will very soon abide by your order. Here I have enjoyed his sweet company for several days—now he is ready to give you the sweet company there. He has got some equipments such as camera and gun and others—these are his companions and without which he cannot move elsewhere. Sometimes I am afraid lest he attempts to use the gun like the

Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya & Tagore

fair complexioned English soldier. It is better not to allow him to use the gun. Sometime I happen to hear about his literary pursuits. But he never discloses to me. I wanted to see his works but he is reluctant to show me on many excuses. Will you try it again? So far I have heard that he cannot wield his pen unless he is haunted by yakshas. The wretched Mahim is about to ruin without having good company. Now frequent occurrence of rain and storm is being experienced here. This year perhaps the rain god will come by the horse. The result is unknown. But the mangoes are being destroyed. So there is no chance of relishing sauce this year. It is a matter of chagrin.

We are all well—hope you are also.

I am in great anxiety for the news that plague has broken out in Calcutta.

No more today, 1309 B. S. 21st Chaitra.

Faithfully yours,
Sri Radhakishore Varma

3

Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya and Tagore

Birendra Kishore was Radhakishore's Son.

Rabindranath Tagore was greatly shocked following the sad and untimely demise (on 12.3.1909) of Radhakishore Manikya who had been a great and never-failing friend of Tagore. Jubaraj Birendra Kishore succeeded his father Radha Kishore Manikya on 13 March 1909 at the age of 25. Birendra Kishore Manikya inherited myriad attributes from his versatile grandfather and father, Birchandra Manikya and Radha Kishore respectively. Birendra Kishore Manikya was the greatest painter in the royal line of Tripura. He used to delve into the painting in his studio. His remarkable paintings are :- 'Jhulan' (swinging), Tapaswi (Hermit) and Muralidhari Sree Krishna (flute-playing Lord Krishna). Maharaja was also adept in clay-modelling. While referring to the myriad faculties of the Maharaja, the author of the '*PROGRESSIVE TRIPURA*', Mr. A. C. Bhattacharyya appraised in the following words : "He was a great philosopher, a poet and a thinker; and found great pleasure in the cultivation and culture of the fine arts. He was a first class artist and an expert painter and used to delve into the charms and beauties of nature which found expression on canvas through his brush. He also used to take great pleasure in clay modelling and carried the art to such perfection that he himself used to undertake the painting and decoration of the family deities before the annual Durga Puja festival".¹ Munificence was one of the shining features of Birendra Kishore. He was a stern follower of his father in this respect. Birendra Kishore lavishly extended financial assistance to all-round development of Viswa Bharati School of Gurudev Tagore, a great friend of his father.

1. A. C. Bhattacharyya : *Progressive Tripura*, PP. 63-64, grant of Rs. 5,000/- for the construction of a hospital there. He also promised to offer a further sum of Rs. 5,000.²

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

“He continued the yearly grant sanctioned by his father for Tagore’s school at Santiniketan and in addition, sanctioned an ad-hoc amount of money.

It will be fairly well to mention here that the four modern rulers of Manikya dynasty had life-long close and cordial relationship with Tagore. Birendra Kishore was the third ruling prince. He was grandson of Birchandra Manikya, a modern Vikramaditya designate, through whom Rabindranath Tagore had the acquaintance with the royal family of Tripura. Birendra Kishore was a great connoisseur of music and painting like his grandfather Bir Chandra Manikya. It is learnt from the palace-sources that Birendra Kishore was an expert in Sitar recital and a few ‘ragas’ were recorded by the Gramophone Company of Calcutta; but those records could not be made public due to reluctance of the Maharaja. During the reign of Radha Kishore Manikya the heirapparent Birendra Kishore had the rare occasion to come close to Tagore. Even when he became the ruler of the State, Birendra Kishore could not become a close intimate with Tagore. The reason may be assigned to the fact that Birendra Kishore’s younger brother, Brajendra Kishore had close intimacy with Tagore. Brajendra Kishore had the occasion to meet Tagore and by dint of his rare kind of character, was able to win over the heart of Tagore. Brajendra Kishore was fortunate enough to have been affectionately loved by the kind hearted Mrinalini Devi, the worthy wife of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore; she would look upon Brajendra as her son Rathindranath. Brajendra Kishore and Rathindranath were of the same age. It is very interesting to refer that Mrinalani Devi would serve boy Brajendra Kishore with delicious menus prepared by herself. When Birendra Kishore, elder brother of Brajendra Kishore, ascended the throne, the well wisher Gurudev Tagore remained anxious all the time at the thought of the problems of the state administration. Gurudev Tagore had been always alert lest the state administration encountered any adverse situation. In case of coming up such adverse situation in running the state administration, indomitable mental strength is necessary to counter it.

Tagore always felt inclined to embolden Brajendra Kishore to stand by the side of his ruling prince elder brother Birendra Kishore. Tagore not only gave good counsel and constructive advices to Brajendra Kishore but also reminded him to build up

Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya & Tagore

an ideal and moral character as a model of a Hindu King which is essential for upholding an ideal Hindu Kingdom. At the thought of indispensability of Brajendra Kishore's support and assistance in the royal administration, Brajendra Kishore had to join as the Prime Minister of the state to stand by his brother ruling prince Birendra Kishore Manikya. After Brajendra Kishore's joining in the state administration, Gurudev Tagore wrote to Brajendra Kishore the following valuable letter :- "Now my advice towards you that the kingly incumbency that has fallen upon your elder brother is very onerous; so, your duty is to stand by his side wholeheartedly for a good turn of your brother, the Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya. If you are able to establish a welfare state, it will be good for all. So far I feel there are many foes around your throne. So, it is the need of the hour to protect your King tactfully from the clutches of insincere friendship; now, you are the only closest aid and relative. I do hope that you will be able to maintain an inseparable reciprocal bond. It is a must to resist the exterior enmity. I have a doubt that your enemy will be trying to break away your inseparable bond. So, I pray to the Almighty so that He bestows upon you the benediction which will strengthen your ability to uphold the spirit of your honesty and truthfulness."

From the above letters from Gurudev Rabindranath, it is easily understandable how much Birendra Kishore Manikya was affectionately loved by Rabindranath, the true friend of Radha Kishore Manikya, father of the present Maharaja. The gratitude of Tagore towards Radha Kishore Manikya and Bir Chandra Manikya, the father and grandfather of Birendra Kishore Manikya, knew no bounds. It is more evident from the following letter written to Brajendra Kishore :- "Dear Brajendra Kishore, I am greatly indebted to your father⁴ and Grandfather⁵ for their ineffable love and affection for me and for this very reason I cannot remain indifferent to the matter relating to the welfare activities of your state. Despite living far away from your State, I shall always wish for the well-being of your State. When I shall see that your throne is well-reputed and the deity

2. Dr. Ramanimohan Sarma : *Political History of Tripura* P.181

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

of the kingdom is glorified and your state treasury in well-off, your public are happy, peace pervades over the state free from corruption and your throne is well guarded, then I shall think my hopes and aspiration are fulfilled. This is only my blessings to you. May God permit you to remain strong in sorrow and happiness, keeping you in steadiness in your sacred duties.”³ Prince Brajendra Kishore, the younger brother of Birendra Kishore Manikya, was widely known as Lalu Karta whom Gurudev Tagore fondly called ‘Lalu’. One important reference, required to be mentioned here, is that though a good number letters written to Brajendra Kishore by Gurudev Tagore, had been incorporated in the commemorative volume of “*Rabindranath and Tripura*”, only two unpublished letters were found to be incorporated in the said volume. It can be presumed that the compilers of the commemorative volume could not collect the letters written by Gurudev Tagore or otherwise it can be presumed that perhaps the Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya did not handover to anyone or the letters had not been preserved in the state archives. Anyway, though Gurudev Tagore and Birendra Kishore were not close to each other, but profound love and respect grew between the two throughout their life.

Birendra Kishore was always attentive towards all round development of Gurudev’s Ashram school at Santiniketan and extended financial assistance without fail. The Maharaja also would give scholarship to the students of Agartala to enable them to prosecute study at Santiniketan School.

The writer of the present work had been able to collect two unpublished letters written to Birendra Kishore by Gurudev Rabindranath which were published in the book *Rabindranath and Tripura*.

3. An instructive letter from Tagore to Brajendra Kishore continued letter written to Brajendra Kishore Letters to Brajendra Kishore by Rabindranath The letters are from personal collection of Dwijendra Chandra Datta (1901-1977)

Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya & Tagore

(1)

‘God is Good’

Respected Maharaj,

I am greatly shocked at the news of sad demise of ‘Nabin Karta. I pray to the Almighty for the mental peace of grief-stricken family members of the deceased. I shall be highly obliged if the Maharaja is kind enough to pay a visit to our school. 13th Magh, 1326 B. E.

With best wishes from
Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

(2)

‘God is Good’

Respected Maharaja,

I am very glad for your kind sending of Buddhimanta Singh to our Ashram School. Our boys are very enthusiastic in learning dance from him. Girl students of our school are also evincing interest to learn Manipuri dance and handicraft works. So, if your Highness is kind enough to send the wife of Buddhimanta Singh, we shall be highly benefitted. So if the womenfolk from enlightened families of the country come forward to take up the job of weaving and the allied crafts, it is well and good for our society. Meanwhile, we have engaged a weaver from Assam for giving lesson for weaving by handlooms. But the work is seen inferior to the Manipuri works as I happened to see in Shilhet. By this time I have initiated a proposal to Buddhimanta. He is willing to engage his wife in teaching weaving and handicraft works at Santiniketan. I am therefore waiting eagerly for both kind consent and order from the Maharaja.

No more today,
May God bless you,
19th Magh, 1326 B. E.

With best wishes from
Rabindranath Tagore

Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya & Tagore

Our learned readers may observe that Birendra Kishore Manikya was the son of Radhakishore Manikya who was a great friend of Tagore and so far difference of age between Birendra Kishore and Tagore was like father and son but yet Tagore would do great honour to Birendra Kishore, as if they were of the same age. The reason is that though Birendra Kishore was the son of Tagore's friend Radha Kishore Manikya, Tagore would treat Birendra Kishore as an honourable one only because of the fact that Birendra Kishore was the king of the State. Therefore, Tagore did not forget to treat Maharaja differentially. Here we come across a lofty sense of reverence of Tagore towards the dignified person regardless of age. We know that Tagore had been called the "King of literature" by Radha Kishore Manikya, thereby showing royal honour to Tagore. The reverence showed by Tagore while writing letters to the royal dignitaries may be taken as the valuable documents in the realm of letter literature. The glory that had been achieved by the rulers of Tripura, none of the rulers of India happened to get it. We have already come to know that Birendra Kishore Manikya was endowed with myriad qualities like his grandfather and father, Birchandra and Radhakishore respectively. So, the present Maharaja was very much concerned" about the healthy growth of education and culture. Himself being a votary of education, he wanted to reorganize the prevalent system of education. And accordingly he sent Mr. Somendra Chandra Deb Barman (eldest son of Colonel Mahim Chandra Deb Barman), a state scholar of Tagore's International University at Bolpur. With Rabindranath Tagore, Mr. Somendra Chandra went to America. Mr. Somendra Deb Barman joined the renowned University of Harvard from which he took his M. A. degree and carried on further studies in pedagogy and child's psychology. On his return, he was placed in charge of the Educational Department of the State and rendered valuable services with great credit and success.

Himself gifted with a fine literary taste, Birendra Kishore Manikya followed the old tradition of patronizing learning. Prince Mahendra Chandra Dev Barman was entrusted with the task of re-editing the *Rajmala*. It is said that the prince started working

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

with the help of Pandit Gopal Chandra Kavya-Vyakaranatirtha. But their works were interrupted due to some other reason. The reason was that a scholar of Calcutta, Pandit Amulya Charan Vidyabhushan gave some valuable suggestions with regard to re-editing of the *Rajmala*. The Vidyabhushan was associated with the Vangiya Sahitya Parishad; the Maharaja naturally accepted the proposal and entrusted him the editorial responsibility of the valuable work. But fortune disfavoured him. His work proved a failure for some reasons. Finally, Kaliprasanna Sen, *Vidyabhushan*, the editor of '*Sri Rajmala*' was engaged for the work of re-editing '*Sri Rajmala*'. Mr. Sen was also engaged for re-editing and publishing certain rare manuscripts of the Vaisnava literature and completed his celebrated work, '*Gita-Chandrodaya*' by Ghanashyam Das, a contemporary poet of eminence. "A great personality, Birendra Kishore Manikya was endowed with courtesy, kindness, generosity, a fine sense of justice, a fine literary taste and calm and peaceful temperament. He showed mercy to Ibrahim Ali, a convict who was condemned to death, by giving order of acquittal in his favour. The Maharaja was a religious minded man and had profound respect for Radha and Krishna, a fact demonstrated by his coin with the expression "*Radhakrishnapada*". The great personality died at the age of 40 in A. D. 1923."⁴

4. Nabin Kishore Dev Barman, a prince of Tripura

An abstract from Dr. Ramanimohan Sarma : *Political History of Tripura*

4

Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya and Tagore

The last ruling prince of the Manikya dynasty, Panchasri Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, K. C. S. I., ascended the throne on the death (on 13.8.1923) of his father Birendra Kishore Manikya at the age of 15 only. The new Maharaja was a minor; so the administration of the State was entrusted to a council of administration; it afforded time to the Maharaja to complete his education.

The council of administration was inaugurated on the 9th December 1923, which consisted of :-

Srila Sriyut Marajkumar Nabadvip Chandra	President
Sriyut Ray Jyotish Chandra Sen	Vice-President
Srila Sriyut Maharajkumar Brajendra Kishore	Member
Sriyut Thakur Pratap Chandra Ray	Member

The council existed for four years.

The administrative training of the young Maharaja commenced during the year 1924 under the supervision of the guardian tutor, Lt. O. C. Pulley. The young Maharaja also attended a course of military training in 1925. Possessed of a sharp and acute intellect, a brilliant memory and a receptive mind, the young Maharaja picked up things very quickly and received an all-round education within an incredibly short period of time.

The Investiture and Installation ceremony of Bir Bikram Manikya :

The investiture ceremony of his Highness took place on his 20th birth day, on 19 August, 1927, while the shastric ceremony of Rajyabhishek or installation followed on 29 January, 1928. Both evoked unique enthusiasm. The Investiture Durbar was largely attended by the distinguished guests including His Excellency the Governor of Bengal. The installation ceremony of the

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Maharaja of Tripura is of purely Brahmanical in nature. It is a religious ceremony performed according to the orthodox rites of the Hindu Shastras, regularly observed by the ancient princes of this celebrated Lunar Dynasty; and on this auspicious occasion also the religious injunctions were scrupulously observed. And this evoked widespread admiration for the Maharaja as the function is linked with a past hallowed with tradition.

29 January, 1928, will remain a memorable day in the history of Tripura. The sound of conch-shells and ringing of bells in the temples, recital of Vedic hymns in the temples and prayers in the mosques added a solemn serenity. The Maharaja emerged at the palace gate and ascended the Chaturdula in front of the Ujjayanta palace and was taken in a huge procession.

Referring to the procession '*The Statesman*' wrote—"The procession from the Ujjayanta palace to the pandal, defied description. Huge elephants richly caparisoned, carrying Howdas that sparkled with gems worth a King's ransom, participated. The bejeweled Chaturdola borne by a score of scarletclad bearers in which the Maharaja journeyed to the pandal glittered with thousand gems and the dress worn by the Maharaja conveyed subtle suggestion of illimitable wealth. The whole epitomized wealth and splendour of the East".

Bir Bikrama was an enlightened and benevolent ruler who did his best for all-round development of the State. The princely State witnessed an era of progress under him, whose reign may be looked upon as a landmark in the history of Tripura. Endowed with aesthetic sense, the Maharaja devoted himself to the task of beautifying the capital city, Agartala, the metropolis of Tripura. Within a short time Agartala became a beautiful town with stately buildings, commendable roads, fascinating parks and gardens. The commercial hub of the city was planned and constructed in such a way that the rows of columns standing on the veranda appear to be the fore-front of any fort. It is needless to say that the Maharaja himself sketched the planning. No doubt, he was a good planner. But sorry to say that this engineering feat is now non-existent. Nirmal, a magnificent palace in the middle of the lake named 'Rudra Sagar' at Melaghar of Sonamura Sub-Division

Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya & Tagore

was constructed during his regime in May 1938. The versatile Bir Bikram was endowed with myriad propensities towards creative faculties. He was an inborn architect having extraordinary capacity to plan the sketch of beautiful building and town-planning. Being a great patron of learning the Maharaja made a plan to establish not only a college but also a rural University. The site for Maharaja Bir Bikram College was selected by him. The site is a hillock flanked by breath-taking natural beauty dotted with three lakes around the hillock. Believing in the catholicity of religions the Maharaja patronized the establishment of Mosques and Buddhist Monastery in the state. The “Venuban Vihara” the famous Buddhist monastery of Agartala, Kunjaban area, is a glowing instance of it. The Maharaja appointed Aryya Mitra Vikshu, a scholar & Buddhist Monk, in Venubana Vihara.

Despite being an advocate of western education, the Maharaja did hardly minimize the importance of Indian pattern of education. Under his patronization, Tols, Madrasas, Moktabs received enhanced grants with the objective of a healthy spread of education in the State. Himself being a literary man with facilepen, he followed his predecessors in patronizing learning. He took interest in the re-editing of the *Rajmala* (State chronicle). He also evinced interest in the publication of local literary journals and periodicals including ‘*Rabi*’ and ‘*Jagaran*’ (a quarterly journal and a monthly journal respectively). The Maharaja was a poet and dramatist. He composed few poems in Brajabuli dialect like his great grandfather Bir Chandra Manikya. His well-known historical drama ‘*Jayabati*’ was staged at Agartala and highly appreciated by the audience and literary circles. Some of his songs, versified by himself, rank to high literary merit.

The Maharaja had great reputation as a great patron of classical music. Being a great connoisseur of music, he used to invite the champion celebrities of the musical world. So, the galaxy of musicians from all over the country used to come to Agartala at the instance of the Maharaja. He not only invited the great musicians but also would arrange functions in his darbar hall for vocal and instrumental recital, where he attended to enjoy the recital.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

The Maharaja was a man of pleasant personality. He was very kind to the subjects and easily approachable to all and sundry. He was very social, polite, affable, sweet, calm and temperate by nature. He was a humourist, good conversationist and word-spinner, witty and expert in chit-chat and titbit. He was a great patron of scholars and genius. The most remarkable and epoch making event in his life is that the Maharaja had done a fitting honour to Rabindranath Tagore with the title of "*Bharat-Bhaskar*" (The Sun of India).

Having a religious bent of mind, the Maharaja was a votary of Radha and Krishna. This is proved by his coins with the expression of "*Radhakrishnapada*". The famous Uma-Maheswara temple and the Benu Bana Bihara Buddhist monastery were built by his active initiation. He patronized Saivism, Saktism and Buddhism. In this way he exhibited a spirit of toleration and respect for other religious faiths.

Remarkable events of Birbikram's life as ruling a Prince : European Tour.

Versatile Bir Bikram Manikya was a man of inquisitiveness; and naturally his unquenchable thirst for knowledge impelled him to go on European tour. Bir Bikram was the first among the royal line of Tripura to break the ground by taking such a bold step. So, accompanied by a host of dignitaries, the Maharaja started for Calcutta where he stayed for a few days prior to sailing. He left Calcutta on January 26 and sailed from Bombay on the 2nd February 1930. During his short stay in Bombay, the Bengalee residents met him at their club and presented him with an address. His Excellency the Governor of Bombay also invited him twice. While on Europe he visited several places. He met Musolini, the Fascist leader of Italy and the great Austrian born Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945). Bir Bikram's style of conversation and pleasant personality and handsome appearance positively impressed Hitler. In the course of conversation, Hitler curiously asked about the Kingdom of the Maharaja and on receiving reply Hitler quickly pointed out the location of Tripura in the Map of India putting up in the wall. He made aware the Maharaja of the existence of petroleum in Tripura.

World Tour

In 1938 Maharaja Bir Bikram made a world tour before the commencement of the second world war. While on U. S. A. tour, Bir Bikram had the rare and immemorable occasions to hold meeting with the President Franklin Roosevelt of the U. S. A. In the Oval Room of the White House in Washington. The Roosevelt treated him as an honourable guest. The wide tours all over Europe and America enabled him to gain firsthand knowledge of thoughts and ideas of the modern world.

The Riag Unrest of 1942-1943

The Reang unrest of 1942-43 led by Ratan Mani, was one of the most important episodes in the regin of Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya. This was partly a socio-religious movement led by Ratan Mani and partly an anti-feudal movement, a protest against the existing feudal pattern of the society which was oppressive in nature.

Second World War

The Second World War broke out in September, 1939. The Maharaja of Tripura gave full support and cooperation to the British Government. The Maharaja had to donate a fabulous amount to the war fund. The Maharaja sent the infantry towards Burma War front led by R. K. Dev. Barman, as Commander-in-Chief. The versatile Maharaja died on 17th May 1947. Before his death, he decided to accede Tripura to the Indian Union.

Bir Bikram's Life Style (Daily-Life)

Bir Bikram was an exceptional royal celebrity of the Manikya dynasty. The very stamina and earnestness for work and action are boundless. So it is very interesting to observe the Maharaja how he used to live his daily life. He never passed a single moment uselessly. He was an early riser and used to ride to the cantonment every morning to supervise the military parade as he was well-equipped with the practical knowledge of military training. Returning at about 9.30 A. M., the Maharaja would take hurried bath and a simple break-fast and attened the daily durbur

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

punctually at 11 A. M. He would quickly dispose of heaps of papers with numerous complicated matters. He would never pass any paper with superficial observation. Thus he would attend the office every day for 5 to 6 hours. In the afternoon the Maharaja would take tea and light tiffin with the officers of his personal staff. The Maharaja then would take very slow drive along the principal streets of the town and of suburbs. He used to employ his daily evening drive to useful purposes. Sometimes he would get down and inspect some new road or building under construction; sometimes he would call the State Engineer or other department heads. Next morning, he used to discuss with them the things that came to his notice the previous evening.

Bir Bikram's Literary Pursuits

The energetic Maharaja was always an icon of indefatigable workers. On return from office duty, he was generally found employed in literary pursuits. Like some of his renowned predecessors, he had developed a special aptitude for literature. He was endowed with capability of wielding a facile pen and equally efficient as a composer of prose and poetry. He was also in possession of dramatic talents. The historical drama '*Joyabati*' written by him was successfully staged at Agartala and evoked universal admiration. He was also capable of writing prose, poetry and music which could have found a suitable place in the domain of Bengali literature, but like his great grandfather Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya, though a few of them were seen through press, his compositions were confined to the members of the Raj family and to some privileged people of the State".

A literateur himself, the Maharaja naturally took keen interest in the re-editing of the '*Rajmala*' and its research department. He has, therefore, separated the '*Rajmala*' reediting Department from the General Administration and has placed it under the charge of his Private Secretary. He also took a good deal of interest in the publication of '*Ravi*', an illustrated quarterly journal and '*Jagaran*', a monthly, both published from the State capital. The Maharaja would also encourage other papers and journals of Tripura and afforded all possible facilities to them.

Inaugural Address by Bir Bikram on the Occasion of Tripura's Industrial Products Exhibition, 1940

Respected President of the Exhibition Committee, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very much thankful to the members of the Exhibition Committee and others for inviting me to inaugurate the industrial exhibition of Tripura on the occasion of seventieth birth anniversary of Abinash Chandra Sen, the President of the Tripura Hitosadhini.

Respected Abinash Chandra Sen is one of the gifted sons of Tripura. His career of life is full of myriad activities as well as instructive. He is very much popular to all sections of people for his versatile welfare activities of the society. It is needless to say that the members of the Tripura Hitosadhani Sabha has given fitting tribute to Mr. Sen by way of observation of the birth celebration of Mr. Sen. I pray to the Almighty for his long life as well as good name and fame in the years to come.

Dear friends, you have already become aware of the bright prospective of the industrial sector of the State of Tripura from his well-thoughtout and instructive address. The natural wealth of Tripura is boundless. If it is not properly used, the wealth is of no use. In the olden days, the people of Tripura had been able to flourish the state by way of proper use of the natural wealth. As an evidence you might have known the reference about it in the ancient historical chronicles like *Rajmala*, *Tripura Buranji* and *Brihat Banga* etc. I am very optimistic about getting back the golden days of the past when the State flourished in various fields of industries. Today the state of Tripura has earned much name and fame in trade, and commerce, such as tea and medicinal properties. The trend of industrial development will gain the

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

tempo of furtherance if the mass people come forward to do the business instead of running after merely clerical profession.

Today I am very much proud of thinking that the exhibition of Tripura's industrial products is being held in the champion cosmopolitan city of the country like Calcutta. In this connection, my sincere appeal to the people of Tripura is that the exhibition should not be turned into a mere place of whiling away entertainment.

My fervent appeal to you all, to please deeply think about what we had in the past, what we are having now, and what will be in future.

No more to-day. Now, I like to request Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta to conduct the meeting under his chairmanship.

Today, in the Spring time I am praying to the Almighty for His blessings; and with cherishing the hope of flourishing of Cottage and Labour industries of the state, I have inaugurated the exhibition. Let the blessings of the Almighty be showered upon the people of the country.

Royal Proclamation for Celebration of Tagore's Eightieth Birth Anniversary at Agartala, 1941

It is decided that the princely State of Tripura will celebrate the eightieth birth anniversary of Gurudev Tagore. And in this connection, for the successful implementation of the programme, an executive committee has been formed with the following dignitaries of the princely administration :-

1. Mahamanyabar Prince Brajendra Kishore Dev Barman.
2. Uzir Thakur Kamal Krishna Deb Barman.
3. Srijutt Satya Ranjan Bose, B. A.
4. Srijut Debendra Kumar Chatterjee, M. A. B. L.
5. Srijut Bhupendra Chandra Chakraborti, M. A.

By Order

Captain His Highness Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya
Bahadur, K. C. S. I.

Agartala, dt. 22nd *Chaitra* 1350 Tripura Era; 1347 Bengali Era
(corresponding to 1941 A. D.)

State Mourning on the Death of Gurudev Tagore, 1941 Tripura State Gazette

Memo No.1*

It is being notified with aggrieved and heavy heart that the immortal poet of the world, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore has left for his heavenly abode on 22nd *Sravana* in 1351 Tripura Era (corresponding to 1941 A. D.) on Thursday at 12.10 A. M. in Calcutta. In honour of his departed soul and also to show respect and reverence, the Maharaja has passed order to keep close all offices, courts and educational institutions.

Therefore, all offices, courts and schools will remain closed on the morrow, Sunday, the 25th *Sravana*. Further, it is to be informed that the offices, courts and schools of all sub-divisions will remain closed the same day if the order is received in the morning and in case the order is received in the afternoon all offices will remain closed the next day.

Sree Tribenikanta Gupta,
Secretary, Council of Ministers,
14/4/51, Tripura Era.

Sree Rana Bodhajung,
President, Council of Ministers,
9/8/41 A. D.

During the regime of the Maharajas, Wednesday was observed as holiday

Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya & Tagore

Condolence letter from Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose on the sad demise of Bir Bikram Manikya on 17.5.1947

1, Woodburn Park
Calcutta, May 29, 1947

The Military Secretary to
His Highness the Maharaja of Tripura

Dear Sir,

I was deeply grieved to learn of the sad and untimely death of His Highness Manikya, Sir Bir Bikram Kishore Deb Barman Bahadur of Tripura. By his death, Tripur state has lost a wise and sagacious ruler and I a personal friend for whom I had the highest esteem and admiration. During the last famine in Bengal and during communal disturbances, he gave food and shelter to thousands of Bengalees and his name became a household word in Bengal. I shall feel thankful if you will kindly convey my sincerest condolences to the members of the bereaved Raj family.

Yours sincerely,
SARAT CHANDRA BOSE

5

Prince Brajendra Kishore and Tagore

Brajendra Kishore was Maharaj Radhakishore's son and Maharaj Birendra Kishore's younger brother.

While we talk about Prince Brajendra Kishore a flood of memories flashes upon our eyes. The memories are of myriad nature relating to sweet relationship between Brajendra Kishore and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. The bond of the said relationship was long drawn, lasting as long as Gurudev Tagore was alive. It is needless to say that the two were like father and son. Being the son of the Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya, the great friend of Tagore, Brajendra Kishore from his very childhood had the opportunity to be in the contact of Gurudev Tagore. And we are happy to expose that the prince Brajendra was born to the Maharaja being destined to lead the exceptional life under the benign care of a great man like Rabindranath Tagore. Blessed and endowed with rare quality of mental faculty, the prince from the infancy felt inclined to keep off himself from the pomp and grandeur of the princely life-style. He was a model of simple living and plain thinking with a bent of religious and spiritual life-style. Having been observed by Gurudev Rabindranath, the Prince was drawn by the poet with great caress and affection. Brajendra Kishore in his reminiscence beautifully exposed that the moment he (the prince) saw Rabindranath Tagore, he became spell-bound and his inner-self was greatly impressed by the naturally majestic aristocracy of the poet's personality. In his ripe age Brajendra Kishore recollected thus :- "I was 12 or 14 years of age when I happened to meet him for the first time. His charming and majestic physical appearance seemed to me to be of such super-human dignity as we seldom come across. It is beyond my capacity to describe that dignity. As for me, I have got no reservation in expressing that being a son of a Maharaja, I have a great disliking for the princely style of living. The royal life-style

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

seemed to me absolutely inept and I had a longing for getting out of the four walls of the royal house. Such a thinking is no doubt a divine boon to me. One day when the favourable hour arose to face Gurudev, I candidly expressed my desire before Gurudev soliciting his favour for accepting me as a member of the Tagore family of Jorasanko in Calcutta. At that time, I was so occupied by such an obsession that I forgot my identity as a son of the Maharaja. The obsession made me forget that a good deal of predicaments may stand in the way of my cherished desire. However, by the grace of the Almighty, Gurudev Tagore gladly entertained my childish demand.

Thenceforward a new chapter dawned in my life as I was able to win the mighty mind of Gurudev. He showed on me as much love and affection as he did on Rathindranath, the eldest son of the poet. The love and affection that I have enjoyed throughout my life from Gurudev, did never wane a bit. I bid consider that I have been destined to be favoured by a greatman like Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

The exceptional way of thinking of juvenile Brajendra Kishore moved and fascinated the poet and the poet became more keen to take all responsibilities of Brajendra Kishore including his upbringing and training. Therefore, the poet took decision to admit Brajendra Kishore and Rathindranath ('Lalu' and 'Rathi') who were of same age. The poet used to call them with their pet name in his newly started Ashram school. The school was planned on the model of a monastery residential school established in the hermitage of the saints of the ancient India. And accordingly the poet picked up young Brajendra Kishore with them when the poet with his family started for 'Silaidaha' estate to stay at the bungalow of the estate. (now in Bangladesh); they started on a boat journey along the river Padma which was a favourite one for the poet. The river Padma is a central theme of many lyrics and folk songs of Bengal.

The boat journey along the Padma River was described by Brajendra Kishore in the following way :-

"After reaching Silaidaha the youngsters became frolicsome on the sand-bank of the Padma. One day all of us went to the

Prince Brajendra Kishore & Tagore

sand-bank and letting us play by ourselves, the poet took seat alone on the sands. The youngsters at intervals marked that the poet was deeply engrossed in profound thought. The reflection of the last rays of the retiring sun on the water formed a unique genre of glowing silhouette. When the evening came down, the games and sports of the youngsters also came to an end. The colour of the twilight also was about to get bedimmed. The youngsters became restless and wanted to return home. But the poet was deeply sunk into the meditative mood. And when the poet awoke from meditation—evening set in—the hungry youngsters began to draw near the poet. The poet hurriedly returned home with all. It was unique kind of experience and realization. The care and caress of Gurudev's ideal housewife, Mrinalini Devi, can never be forgotten. Her motherly instinct was so soft & sweet that even in my old age I can not distinguish her from my own mother. Mrinalini Devi was an expert cook and could prepare a great variety of palatable dishes for us. She would look upon me as her son.

Interestingly speaking, the poet also had great fancy to instruct and prepare various items and sometimes used to give instruction in the process of preparation to his wife.

So, all these memories got imprinted permanently in the psychic world of Brajendra Kishore. This is true specially due to Mrinalini Devi's motherly love which was unique and unforgettable.

The adage "man proposes God disposes" proved to be a cruel reality in the life of optimist Brajendra Kishore, as his intense desire and longing for taking admission to the Ashram School of Gurudev Tagore could not be translated into reality due to opposition of the British Government. The Britishers did always cast an evil eye on Tagore's Ashram School which was taken by them to be a hobnobbing den of the patriots. The deprivation of such a rare opportunity posed to be a great shock to juvenile Brajendra Kishore. And with a view to deriving consolation and mental peace, Brajendra Kishore kept writing letters to Gurudev Tagore. By this time Brajendra Kishore was admitted to a club school run by the British at Comilla. On receiving the news,

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Gurudev Tagore was greatly shocked mentally. The poet instantly wrote a strongly worded letter.

“Dear Brajendra Kishore never forget that these alien people do never cherish good for our country. The very rude and contemptible behaviour of the English towards native people is becoming unbearable; we are, as if, an object of repulsion as well as neglect; it is humiliating on our part if we go in for hobnobbing with the English like a clown. There is nothing to be compared with a shameful attempt for an insulted nation like us to seek favour from these arrogant and impolite outlandish people like the English”.

Now due to adverse situation created by the British ruler in the matter of giving proper education to Brajendra Kishore, Maharaja Birendra Kishore, elder brother of Brajendra Kishore, chalked out a plan. The Maharaja decided that education and training for Brajendra Kishore will be given in the palace. Accordingly, in consultation with Tagore, the Maharaja appointed Sree Mokshada Kumar Bose as private tutor for Brajendra Kishore and other princes. The newly appointed private tutor Mr. Bose could realize the aptitude of young Brajendra Kishore and accordingly Mr. Bose started imparting lessons. Notwithstanding detachment from Gurudev Rabindranath, young Brajendra Kishore was not at all deprived of the message of blessings and inspiration from Gurudev.

The currents of thought that coursed through the creative and reflective mind of Rabindranath, were a source inspiration for Brajendra Kishore. The poet was always very careful about Brajendra Kishore’s real education as well as his spiritual bent of mind, so that he can have a strong base in his mind to support an ideal of Kshatriyahood. The poet was in the habit of writing letters to Brajendra Kishore frequently to remind him how young Brajendra Kishore would be able to conduct his life. The poet did never omit to mention specially the duties of both the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. In this way, the poet would always train the tender mind of Brajendra Kishore.

In one of his letters the poet advised him thus :- “Dear Brajendra Kishore, never forget that you are a Kshatriya. Never

Prince Brajendra Kishore & Tagore

let your valour and sense of reverence be obscured by any teaching course and social association. It is a sheer surrender of one's self-respect, if he or she suffers from inferiority complex as a result of the teaching of the foreigners. It is undesirable, if our mind becomes a slave to Europe due to English education. It is equally so, if we do not keep up our prestige and self-confidence. Our imitation of English dress, food habit and liking for luxury in dress outfits should not overpower our sense of self-identity. It is the duty of the Kshatriya to protect the country and the nation from the course of outlandish domination. It is also the sacred duty of the Kshatriya to be alert against the inroads of injustice, oppression, profanity and immoral practice which sap the vitals of an ideal society. There is nothing to be compared to the pure and lofty vow, if you can reject fear, ignore death, embrace sorrow and keep up self-respect. I do hope that you will venture to embark upon the duty to establish the ideal of the Kshatriya that ancient India had. If you take the responsibility, you must keep the flame of valour kindling in the deep recess of your heart. You know very well that the great heroes of the *Mahabharata* viz. Bhim, Arjun and Karna were the models of the true Kshatriya. Take this ideal to follow. The main essence of the *Mahabharata* had been mixed up with some worthless stream of facts in course of time and ages. If you can isolate the good of the epic, you will be able to extract the attributes of the real Kshatriya. I firmly believe that the *Mahabharata* is the best book of poetry of the world."

Having been fed by the poet's perennial inspiration, Brajendra Kishore gradually felt inclined to follow the ideal of the true Kshatriya. By this time, he convinced his father Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya about his admission in the course of cadet corps run by the British Government. Brajendra Kishore did not forget to let the poet know about his aim.

Unfortunately Brajendra Kishore could not persecute the course due to temperamental maladjustment of Brajendra Kishore to the English style and manners.

Taking leave of the cadet corps at Meerat, Brajendra Kishore devoted himself to the job of imparting proper education to other princes. Being an adept in handicrafts, he had already taken

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

necessary steps to rejuvenate the old handicraft institute. He took active initiation to set up a residential boarding for the princes known as Kumar Boarding at Agartala, In 1913 A. D. Maharaja Birendra Kishore, elder brother of Brajendra Kishore, felt the need of an able Minister for running the Princely administration. And hence the Maharaja sent his younger brother Brajendra Kishore to Calcutta to meet Mr. Ramani Mohan Chatterjee, a relative of the poet, who was Deputy Chairman of Calcutta Municipality. The purpose was to request Mr. Chatterjee to accept the post of the Minister of the princely State of Tripura. But Mr. Chatterjee could not comply with the request as he has already been appointed the Deputy Chairman of Calcutta Municipality. Afterwards, Rabindranath Tagore, accompanied by Brajendra Kishore went to meet Mr. K. G. Gupta, a retired high official from the princely state of Baroda. Mr. Gupta too expressed his inability to accept the proposal. From the above mentioned facts, the intensity of the poet's concern for the welfare of the State of Tripura can easily be gauged.

Consequent upon the non-availability of the Minister from outside, the Maharaja Birendra Kishore decided to appoint his brother to the post of the Minister. But Brajendra Kishore took much time to decide as to whether it will be proper to accept the offer cogitating that there might come to pass a family unpleasantness, if as Minister, the younger brother happened to disagree with the Maharaja in doing right things in the administration.

The faltering mental condition of Brajendra Kishore on the eve of his joining as a Minister of the State, Gurudev Tagore became very anxious and worried. So the poet could not but write to Brajendra Kishore :-

“— Dear Brajendra Kishore, it is your duty to embed confidence and fidelity in the mind of the people about your administration. Equally it is very pertinent to create favourable situation, so that the people should have full loyalty towards your administrative law and order. You should also ensure that the law you frame for the interest of the common people is not violated even by the King”.

Prince Brajendra Kishore & Tagore

The poet also felt hopeful of Brajendra Kishore's success in the matter of running the princely administration. At the same time he was optimistic that under the active and able administration of Brajendra Kishore the princely State would flourish and prosper as he was a man of dynamic outlook having capability to mobilize, explore and utilize the dormant potentials of both human and natural resources that the state of Tripura abounds in. The joining of Brajendra Kishore as a Minister did not let the poet live peacefully. He became extremely anxious for his affectionate 'Lalu' lest the latter faces and suffers from troubles in doing his duty.

And in the end, the apprehension that the poet surmised, came to pass as Brajendra Kishore could not complete his incumbency as the Minister for the period of two years. Brajendra Kishore had to tender resignation due to some unpleasant controversy in running administration. When the news of his resignation reached the poet, he got a tremendous mental shock.

In 1332 B. S. (1925 A. D.) the poet set out on a tour in East Bengal. On reaching Comilla via Dhaka, the poet sent a message to Brajendra Kishore asking him to meet at Comilla. But Brajendra Kishore kept requesting the poet to visit Agartala. Out of love and great affection the poet could not ignore his Lalu's solicitation. The poet reached Agartala on 10th *Falgun* at night. At that time, the poet stayed at Kunjaban Palace nestled in the bosom of green vegetation. The Golveranda (round-shaped portico) to the east of the palace was quite a favourite place of the poet. For the poet a cosy armed chair was placed on the spacious floor of the portico. Therein he enjoyed his meditative and creative moments to his heart's content. Situated on a panoramic charming hillock the Kunjaban palace was surrounded by leafy groves of green trees and creepers and its quietness was embellished with idyllic grandeur supplemented by restling wind and sweet note of the wild birds and fragrance of countless flowers wafted by the gentle south wind. The poet enjoyed the sylvan setting of the palace. When in the morning, the Sun slowly crept into visibility through the undulating green hills of the eastern horizon, the poet got engrossed in deep thought. The sight of such a rare kind

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

of sunrise and sunset would render endless delight to the poet. During that time the poet composed five songs of spring-tide. The poet's mind responded fully to the scent and songs of the captivating woodland.

In the evening of the same day the poet attended a unique performance of Manipuri Rasa Nritya (Rasa dance) based on the legend of Radha and Lord Krishna at the residence of Brajendra Kishore. The graceful artistry of Manipuri Rasa dance greatly charmed the poet and he instantly expressed his keen desire to introduce the dance in Santiniketan. He requested Brajendra Kishore to provide a Manipuri dance teacher. And at the instance of the poet, Brajendra Kishore took decision to send his family dance teacher Naba Kumar Singh. A famous exponent of Manipuri dance in the country, Naba Kumar Singh, to his great credit, applied his style of Manipuri dance in the *gharana* of Shantiniketan dance recital. And subsequently he proved his great skill in choreographing of 'Natir Puja'. It was he who introduced dances in a new form and style in Tagore's 'Natir Puja'.

After a lapse of a few days on that occasion, the poet was invited by the Government of Italy to visit the country. Then the poet had his mind to take Brajendra Kishore along with him in the tour. Hence, he pressed Brajendra Kishore to meet. In the meanwhile Brajendra Kishore had already joined as the Prime Minister of the State during the regime of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, the nephew of Brajendra Kishore. On being pressed by the poet Brajendra Kishore took leave from the office to get prepared for the tour with the poet. On the stipulated date they started for journey by an Italian ship. It was the regime of Mussolini. Among the companions of the poet were Rathindranath, Pratima Devi, Gopal Ghosh (ex-student of Ashram School) and Brajendra Kishore. After Italy, they went to England. During that visit, Brajendra Kishore had the occasion to meet some great personalities of the west.

On return from the foreign tour, Brajendra Kishore would frequently visit Gurudev Rabindranath for his blessing. Brajendra Kishore's last meet with the poet was in the year 1940 at

Prince Brajendra Kishore & Tagore

Kalimpong. At that time, the poet was indisposed. And he requested Brajendra Kishore to stay with him for a few days. But Brajendra Kishore was not able to comply with that request, because the ailing Maharani was with him. The failure of Brajendra Kishore to comply with the request of Gurudev caused great mental agony to Rabindranath in the last few days of his life.

The following extracts from Rabindranath Tagore's memoir about Brajendra Kishore will be enjoyable to the readers.

... "Brajendra Kishore came close to me when he was a boy. By his conduct and manners, he has endeared himself to me as one of my own flesh and blood. He has been in the habit of keeping regular contact with me since his boyhood. It is highly gratifying to me to note that it has been to some purpose. I do not know if I have done any good to the State of Tripura. If only, I have been successful in giving Brajendra Kishore a strength of character by initiating him in the ways of duty, I would then feel glory in the satisfaction that through him I have done a permanent good to the State of Tripura. On this occasion, I give him my heartiest blessings. This day the old memories have cast on my mind a shadow of gloom. The only delight I have is that I meet Brajendra Kishore here. I have come here, despite my failing health and pressure of work, because the request came from him. So, on this day in spring when the woodlands of Tripura have sent out invitations to their floral feast through their courier of the south wind, I have come here as a friend of his father to accept from him the wreath which his father and grandfather used to keep ready for this beloved guest of theirs."

I wish him well-being and with that I pray that the excellence of his character brings more and more welfare to the State of Tripura."**

** An abstract from reply to an address of welcome to the poet by Kishore Sahitya Samaj 27, 1925

Brajendra Kishore's article : *রবীন্দ্র সান্নিধ্যে* is a historic-social document. It has been published in : Swapan Sengupta (edi.) : *Tripura Prasanga* : PP. 135-147

6

Ramendra Kishore and Tagore

Ramendra Kishore (1913-1974), better known as 'Nani Karta', was born at Agartala in the direct line of Tripura Ruling Dynasty as the first son of Maharaj-Kumar Brajendra Kishore Dev Varman and Rani Lilabati Debi, princess of Dholepur. Ramendra Kishore had his early education at Santiniketan, where he was kept under personal care of Rabindranath Tagore. After a stay of a couple of years there, Ramendra Kishore was sent to St. Graygory School at Dhaka (now Bangladesh), from where he passed the Matriculation Examination. Thereafter, he again got admitted into Visva Bharati and passed the Intermediate Examination therefrom. Late Indira Gandhi was his contemporary alumnus of Santiniketan. Finally, he studied in the Mayo College (Prince College) at Ajmir and graduated from the same college with creditable proficiency in English language and literature. His academic record was of sustained brilliance. R. K. Dev Varma was married to Maharaj Kumari Ila Devi of Cooch Bihar. Ila Devi was the elder sister of Maharani Gayatri Devi, former M. P. from Jaypur of Rajasthan. Tagore's transmission of benedictory letters and presentation of books of poems on their wedding deserve special mention here. Leaving the college, R. K. Dev Varma joined Tripura Administration as Military Secretary, to Maharaj Bir Bikram Manikya. Prior to joining as Military Secretary he was elected the Chairman of Agartala Municipality and served for over a year.

On 23 May, 1939 he accompanied Maharaj Bir Bikram in world tour when he had the rare occasion of attending the meeting held between the Maharaj and the President, Franklin Roosevelt of the U. S. A. in the oval room of the White House in

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Washington. He also came in contact with many prominent world leaders at that time. In 1941 Ramendra Kishore joined the Indian Army and subsequently was commissioned as an Officer in Rajputana Rifles of the Indian Army. Later in 1942 he was selected to organise a Commando Force, later known as 'V-Force', first Commando Unit of Indian soldiers. The Unit was formed with the Tripuris and Gorkhas who were specially trained in jungle warfare and was deployed to resist the advancing Japanese force in Arakan front.

Ramendra Kishore was made second in command of the force, but virtually, he was the leader of the force as other British Officers were not able to communicate with Indian soldiers in native languages. It may be noted here that the V-Force was treated as a part of the British Army and was paid in sterling and their ration came from England unlike that of an Indian Army Unit. The British Officers also came directly from other British Commando Forces from England.

After the end of the World War II, R. K. Dev Varma voluntarily retired from the Indian Army in 1946.

In the middle of 1947 after the sudden and premature death (17.5.1947) of Maharaj Bir Biram Manikya, the fate of Tripura was in great danger. R. K. Dev Varma, accompanied his father, Lalu Karta, the the Chief Minister, as Secretary to Delhi to finalise Tripura's merger. It was an occasion of meeting many Indian leaders, namely Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel and others.

On his return to Agartala from Delhi, he smelt an offensive odour of conspiracy by some influential persons including the Dewan of the State to undo the accession of Tripura to the Indian Union. Meanwhile, the conspirators were trying to merge the State with erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). But R. K. Dev Varma very tactfully brought the situation under control by organising a mass movement in the Capital, Agartala. The Dewan, one of the conspirators, was ultimately forced to leave the State. In this move, he was supported by the Regent Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi. A few local leaders also rushed

Ramendra Kishore & Tagore

to New Delhi and to Shillong. S. M. Ghosh and Shyamaprasad wrote letters to Sardar Patel; Patel immediately took action. *

In 1948, the Government of India sent Sri A. B. Chatterji, I. C. S., as Dewan of Tripura. R. K. Dev Varma was appointed Home Secretary at the instance of Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel, the then Union Home Minister. Besides this work as a Home Secretary, R. K. Dev Varma served the Government of Tripura in various capacities as Home Secretary, Education Secretary and Development Commissioner. He was also given the post of Chief Secretary for the period of one year in 1954. During the visit of the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the year 1952, R. K. Dev Varma was in charge of all functions and ceremonies. The first Development Block of Tripura at Jirania, 19 KM away from Agartala, was inaugurated by the Prime Minister.

R. K. Dev Varma was respected and loved by the people of every walk of life of the State. He enjoyed high appreciation and admiration during his service-life by all officials for quick perception of important matters of administration. R. K. Dev Varma is still remembered by the people for his fair dealings and benevolence. Above all, R. K. Dev Varma was a good humourist and well conversationist.

R. K. Dev Varma was a first rate connoisseur of music, fine arts and literature. Tagore's humanitarian outlook greatly influenced him. He used to read Wordsworth (1770-1850), Keats (1795-1821), Arnold (1822-1888) and Eliot (1888-1965). R. K. Dev Varma travelled widely in U. S. A. and many European countries. His tall, handsome physique matched with his aristocracy, education, experience and mellowness.

Source : Composed on the basis of a personal interview with P. K. Dev Varman, younger brother of R. K. Dev Varma.

* J. Gan Chaudhuri : *A constitutional history of Tripura*, PP. 307-314

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

কুমার রমেন্দ্রকিশোর-এর সহিত কোচবিহারের রাজকুমারী ইলা-এর শুভ পরিণয়
উপলক্ষে আশীর্বাদ, ১২ জুন ১৯৩৬

কল্যাণীয়া শ্রীমতী ইলা !

তোমরা যুগল প্রেমে রচিতেছ যে-আশ্রয় খানি।
আমি কবি, তারপরে দিনু মোর আশীর্বাদ খানি।।
মিলন সুন্দর হোক, সংসারের বাধা হোক দূর।
জীবন যাত্রার পথ, হোক শুভ, হোক অবন্দুর।।

শান্তিনিকেতন

১২ জুন, ১৯৩৬

আশীর্বাদক

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

Epilogue

The world poet Rabindranath Tagore had life-long relationship with the royal family of Tripura. He visited the capital town Agartala for seven times with the cordial invitation of the Maharajas. His acquaintance with this royal family commenced during the regime of Bir Chandra Manikya; the young poet wrote a maiden letter with reference to the past acquaintance with the royal family of Tripura during the time of the grandfather of Tagore, prince Dwarakanath Tagore (1794-1846) with whom Maharaja Krishna Kishore Manikya (1830-1849) had the occasion to be acquainted. There is a reference in the royal chronicle '*Rajmala*' that the Maharaja Krishna Kishore, beset with political turmoil, perplexed with family feuds, and finding no way out by any means, had to go to Calcutta to meet Dwarkanath who solved the problems of the Maharaja. Thus, the Maharaja had been able to continue to rule the State.

Tagore was in the know of this reference of their past acquaintance; therefore, while writing a letter to Bir Chandra Manikya for the first time, he (Tagore) wrote to Bir Chandra Manikya :- "I venture to write to your Highness because I have heard that your royal family and our family are old acquaintances. I wish your Highness could call up those old memories".

In reply to the above letter Maharaja Bir Chandra delightfully replied in the following :-

Accomplished Sir,

"I am immensely delighted to receive your letter. It is your desire, you say, to remind me of the old relations between our two families. Those happy relations have not faded out of my memory. I trust, you will write to me at your leisure amiable letters like this".

Thus the historic and everlasting relationship began between the two outstanding dignified families, Manikya royal family and Tagore's family of Jorasanko in Calcutta.

We have already earlier mentioned that Tagore visited Agartala (capital town of Tripura, a royal seat as well) for seven times during the period from 1900 to 1926. The reign of Bir

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Chandra Manikya spanned for the period from 1862 to 1896 A. D. Though young poet Rabindranath Tagore had many occasions to meet the Maharaj, young Rabindranath did never visit Agartala during the time of Bir Chandra Manikya. The places wherein Bir Chandra and young Rabindranath met together were in the house of Tripura royal family in Calcutta and in Darjeeling. Whenever Bir Chandra Manikya had the occasion to be in Calcutta he would invite the young poet to the royal residence. At the time when Bir Chandra Manikya spent his days in Darjeeling for recovery of health, he did not forget to invite the young poet to accompany him to enjoy the moments in the retreat amidst the romantic Himayan landscape.

After Bir Chandra Manikya's regime, Radha Kishore Manikya became the king. The regime of Radha Kishore Manikya had been shortened by the cruel destiny following his sad demise due to motor accident in the city of Banaras in the year 1909. The Maharaja ascended the throne in 1896; so, his period of reign lasted only for about 15 years. Rabindranath Tagore visited Agartala for the first time at the invitation of the Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya, on the occasion of Sri Panchami festival. In his honour, the spring festival was specially held at Kunjaban.

The same year the poet went to Darjeeling at the call of the Maharaja Radha Kishore; they passed a few days there and discussed about administrative problems of the State and raising funds for Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose for his lecture tours overseas, to which the Maharaja donated Rs. 15,000/- from his privy purse. The whole amount was made over to the poet for transmission to Acharya Bose with the understanding that the donation be kept secret during the life-time of the Maharaja. On December 16 in the same year Maharaja was greatly done honour by Bharat Sangit Samaj at the residence of Satyendranath Tagore, I. C. S., a brother of the poet. The drama *Visarjan* was staged on the occasion with the poet himself in the main role (as Raghupati).

In 1901 the poet passed a few days at Darjeeling with the Maharaja early in May.

Ramendra Kishore & Tagore

In 1904 Maharaja Radha Kishore visited Santiniketan sometime during the year as the guest of the poet. The Maharaja donated all valuable laboratory equipments of the defunct Government College at Agartala to the newly-founded Brahma Vidyalaya at Santiniketan which formed the nucleus of Visva Bharati University later on. The Maharaja graciously donated Rs. 5,000/- for the foundation of this Vidyalaya and an annual grant of Rs. 1,000/- was sanctioned for its maintenance by the Maharaja which the school and later the Visva Bharati enjoyed for nearly half a century.

In 1905 the poet came to Agartala for the third time in the month of *Ashar*, 1312 B. S. During this visit, he presided over a Tripura literary conference held at Agartala and read out his thought provoking treatise on native States entitled "*Desiya Rajya*".

Four months after, he again came to Agartala (fourth visit) accompanied by the Maharaja of Natore. It was the time when Ramani Mohan Chatterjee (a relative of Tagore), an eminent educationist and collector of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation to take over the charge in Tripura as Minister being nominated by the poet.

In 1906 the poet halted at Agartala in the month of April on route to Barisal in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) where he was to preside over a literary conference held on the occasion of the Bengal Provincial conference in the month of Chaitra.

On 12 March, 1909 Radha Kishore Manikya died in a motor-accident while journeying from Benaras to Sarnath

In 1913 a meeting was organized at Agartala to felicitate the poet after he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

After a long lapse of about one decade the poet visited Agartala in the year 1919. The poet was on the way to Calcutta from Shillong via Sylhet when he visited Agartala for the sixth time at the invitation of the Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya, the son of the poet's most intimate friend Radha Kishore Manikya. This time the poet stayed at Kunjaban Bungalow. The Maharaja sent Buddhimanta Singh, an expert in Manipuri dance and handicrafts, to Santiniketan to teach Manipuri dance there.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

In 1926 the poet visited Agartala on 10 *Falgun*, 1332 B. S. for the seventh time being invited by Maharaj-Kumar Brajendra Kishore. This was his last visit to Tripura. The poet arrived at Agartala after his tour to Dacca, Mymensing and Comilla. He stayed at Kunjaban Palace, now the Governor House. The poet was introduced to the new King Bir Bikram Manikya by the uncle Maharaj-Kumar Brajendra kishore at his residence on the occasion of Rasa dance festival arranged for the poet. The poet was accorded a warmth welcome by 'Kishore Sahitya Samaj' on Falgun 12, 1332 B.S. in Umakanta Academy hall. This was the last visit to Agartala by the poet. The poet composed five songs during his stay at Agartala. He left Agartala for Calcutta on Falgun 14, 1332 B. S. A renowned exponent of Manipuri dance, Thakur Naba Kumar Singh was sent from Tripura to teach Manipuri dance in Visva Bharati at Santiniketan. Earlier, Sree Singh was a private dance tutor of Maharaj Kumar Brajendra Kishore.

In August, 1927 the investiture ceremony of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya took place at Agartala Ujjayanta Palace. The same year the renowned artist of Tripura, Thakur Dharendra Krishna Deb Barman accompanied the poet in his far East tour.

In 1929, Dharendra Kishore was selected as one of the four artists of India engaged for the interior decoration (fresco painting) of the newly built India House in London.

In 1931 on the occasion of the poet's seventieth birth anniversary, Maharaja Bir Bikram inaugurated Tagore's artwork at Town Hall, Calcutta on 9 *Paus*, 1332 B. S.

On 7 January, 1939 Bir Bikram visited Santiniketan at the special invitation of the poet. The Maharaja was given warm reception by the Ashramites in the famous Amra Kunja (Mango-grove). The poet addressed the gathering referring to his long and intimate association with Tripura. *Chandalika*, a dance-drama written by the poet, was staged on the occasion in honour of the Maharaja. The Maharaja promised to donate Rs. 20,000/- for the extension of the Sangit Bhavan (College of Music of Visva Bharati University) at Santiniketan.

Ramendra Kishore & Tagore

In 1940 queen-mother Prabhavati Devi accompanied by Brajendra Kishore went to Kalimpong and met the poet.

In 1940 Maharaja Bir Bikram took initiative to celebrate the eightieth birth anniversary of the poet at Agartala. At the same time in a bid to do great honour to the poet with the honorific title '*Bharat Bhaskar*' (The Sun of India) special Darbar at Ujjayanta Palace was held. Bhupendra Chakraborty, a special emissary of the Tripura Darbar, was sent to Santiniketan to convey the honour. The poet accepted the title and addressed a gathering on that occasion.

In 1941, June the 18th Bir Bikram presided over the poet's birth anniversary organized by Puri Banga Bhasa Sahitya Parishad and Puri Sangit Sammilani during his stay at Puri in Orissa.

On 22 *Sravana*, 1348 B. S. the poet breathed his last. The sad news was received by the Maharaja when on his way to Bangalore from Bombay after attending the conference of the Rulers of Indian States. He immediately sent a telegraphic message to Agartala to close all the Government Offices and schools of Tripura to mourn the great loss.

7

Chronology of Events from 1839 to 1947

- 1839 Birth of Birchandra.
- 1856 Birth of Radhakishore.
- 1861 Birth of Rabindranath.
- 1862 Maharaja Birchandra Manikya ascended the throne of Tripura on the death of his brother, Isanchandra Manikya (1849-1862).
- 1864 Birth of Thakur Mahim Chandra.
- 1881 Tagore's poetical work '*Bhagna Hridaya*' (Broken Heart) was published. The poet was only twenty years of age at that time.
- 1882 Maharani Bhanumati Devi of Tripura died; the griefstricken Maharaja found his emotions reflected in the poems of '*Bhagna Hridaya*'. Deeply impressed by these, he sent Radharaman Ghosh, his private secretary, to the poet's Jorasanko home in Calcutta to invest him with the distinction of being the best poet.
- 1883 Birth of Birendra Kishore.
- 1885 Tagore began writing '*Rajarshi*' (The Sage King), a historical novel, (published in 1886) based upon a historical account of the reign of Maharaja Govinda

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Manikya, who ruled over Tripura from 1660-1661 and again from 1667-1673 A. D.

- 1890 '*Visarjan*' (Sacrifice), a drama based on the first part of the novel *Rajarshi*, was published. The Maharaja had already developed a strong liking for the poet. Whenever he had the occasion to visit Calcutta, he would invariably invite the poet to his camp and pass the time in interesting discourses on literature, and music.
- 1894 Maharaja Birchandra went to Kurseong and being invited, the poet accompanied him. They passed the leisurely hours of those days talking over various subjects, viz. philosophy, art, photography, Vaishnava literature etc.
- 1896 Birth of Somendra Chandra, son of Mahim Colonel. In early 1896 Maharaj Bir Chandra purchased a plot of land in Calcutta. The poet became the guest of the Maharaja at Kurseong again in October 1896. The Maharaja was not keeping in good health; but ill health could not deter their discussions. Unfortunately, the illness of the Maharaja took a serious turn and for treatment he had to be shifted to Calcutta where he died on 11 December, 1896. The prince Radha Kishore Manikya succeeded on 12.12.1896.
- 1897 Radha Kishore Manikya's installation was held in March. Though Maharaja Radha Kishore had the occasion to meet the poet earlier when he was the Yuvaraj, their acquaintance had not yet ripened into intimacy. Both of them soon fell into correspondence with each other and gradually became very friendly, so much so that though never directly involved in the affairs of the royal court,

Chronology of Events from 1839 to 1947

Tagore began to help the Maharaja often by giving him good advice about State affairs and introducing the court officials to the distinguished personalities in Calcutta. On several occasions, he introduced the Maharaja to the leading and scholarly personalities of Bengal. Terrible earthquake on 12.6.1897

- 1898 Tagore sent to the Maharaja, as a gift of the homeland, some length of fine white silk he had collected from the weaving centre at Rajashahi then run by the renowned historian Akshoy Kumar Maitra. Around this date, Tagore introduced the Maharaja of Tripura to Maharshi Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Maharaja Jatindramohan Tagore, Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), the Maharaja of Darbhanga, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Sir Taraknath Palit, Ananda Mohan Bose, Mahatma Sisir Kumar Ghosh, Dwijendranath, Satyendranath, Abanindranath, Gaganendranath of the Tagore family and many other eminent people of Bengal.
- 1899 Maharaja Radha Kishore invited the poet to stay with him during his visit to Darjeeling towards the middle of the year, which, however, could not be materialized.
- 1900 The Maharaja met Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose towards the end of the year and promised to pay Rs. 10,000/- to the fund raised by the poet for establishing a laboratory for Acharya Bose's researches. Tagore visited Agartala, the capital of Tripura, for the first time, at the invitation of the Maharaja, on the occasion of Sri Panchami festival, early next year. In his honour, the Spring festival was specially held at Kunjaban.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Tagore was very anxious to help his friend, the Maharaja, out of the vicious atmosphere created by some influential officers of the royal court. He offered his useful advice to the Maharaja and other princes with whom he was closely associated. A few months later, the poet dedicated his poetical work '*Kahini*' (anecdotes) to Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya. The poet went to Darjeeling at the call of the Maharaja, passed a few days there and they discussed among many other things, administrative problems of the State and the problem of raising funds for Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose for his lecture tours overseas to which the Maharaja donated Rs. 15,000/- from his privy purse. The whole amount was made over to the poet for transmission to Acharya Bose, with the understanding that this generous act should not be disclosed at least during the lifetime of the Maharaja. On 16 December 1900 a meeting was organized by Bharat Sangit Samaj at the residence of Satyendranath Tagore, a brother of the poet, to accord a reception to Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya in Calcutta. The drama '*Visharjan*' was staged on the occasion with the poet himself in the main role (as Raghupati).

The poet passed a few days at Darjeeling with the Maharaja early in May. He came to Agartala for the second time in October/November of the year.

Maharaja Radha Kishore visited Santiniketan sometime during the year as the guest of the poet. He gave away all the valuable laboratory equipments of the defunct government college at Agartala to the newly-founded Brahma Vidyalaya at Santiniketan which formed the nucleus of Visva Bharati University later on. It may also be mentioned that the Maharaja of Tripura graciously

Chronology of Events from 1839 to 1947

donated Rs. 5,000/- for the foundation of this Vidyalaya and an annual grant of Rs. 1,000/- was sanctioned for its maintenance by the ruler of Tripura, which the school and later the Visva Bharati enjoyed for nearly half a century.

- 1905 The poet came to Agartala for the third time in the month of *Ashar* 1312 B. S. During this visit he presided over Tripura Literary Conference held at Agartala and read out his thought—provoking treatise on Native states entitled *Desiya Rajya*.

Four months after, he again came to Agartala (fourth visit) accompanied by the Maharaja of Natore. It was the time when Ramani Mahan Chatterjee, an eminent educationist and Collector of Calcutta Municipal Corporation, took over charge in Tripura as Minister, being nominated by the poet.

- 1906 In April, 1906 the poet halted at Agartala en route to Barisal in East Bengal, where he was to preside over a literary conference held on the occasion of Bengal Provincial Conference in the month of *Chaitra*. The annual budget proposal of Tripura for the following year was at the time lying before the Maharaja for sanction. The Maharaja availed himself of the opportunity of consulting the poet about the budget proposal. Rabindranath offered his sound advice on the basic principles of a ruler's place in his government and suggested some material changes which were accepted by the Maharaja. This was his fifth visit.

- 1908 Birth of Bir Bikram.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

- 1909 Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya died in an accident on 12 March, 1909 at Benaras. The crown-prince Birendra Kishore succeeded him.
- 1913 A meeting was organized at Agartala to felicitate the poet after he was awarded the Nobel Prize.
- 1914-1918 First World War.
- 1919 On his way to Calcutta from Shillong via Sylhet the poet visited Agartala for the sixth time at the invitation of the Maharaja. He stayed at the Kunjaban Palace this time. He visited Umakanta Academy, a High English School. The poet had long discussions with the Maharaja on music, fine arts etc. The Maharaja donated Rs. 5,000/- and promised to pay another sum of Rs. 5,000/- for the construction of a hospital at Santiniketan. The Maharaja sent prince Buddhimanta Singh, an expert, to Santiniketan to teach Manipuri dance there.
- 1923 Maharaja Birendra Kishore died on 13 August, 1923 and Yuvaraja Bir Bikram Kishore succeeded his father at the age of fourteen. Death of Colonel Mahim Chandra.
- 1926 The poet came to Agartala on 10 *Falgun*, 1332 B. S. for the seventh time at the invitation of Maharaj-Kumar Brojendra Kishore, after his tour to Dacca-Mymensing-Comilla and stayed at the Kunjaban palace. The poet was introduced to Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya by Maharaj-Kumar Brojendra Kishore at his residence on the occasion of Rasa dance festival arranged for the poet. A meeting was organized by Kishore Sahitya Samaj at Agartala on 12

Chronology of Events from 1839 to 1947

Falgun, 1332 B. S. in Umakanta Academy hall to accord a welcome to the poet. This was the poet's last visit to Agartala. He composed five songs during his stay here. He left Agartala for Calcutta on 14 *Falgun*, 1332 B. S. The renowned exponent of Manipuri dance, Thakur Naba Kumar Singh was sent from Tripura to teach Manipuri dance in Visva Bharati at Santiniketan.

Maharaj-Kumar Brojendra Kishore of Tripura accompanied the poet during his tour of Europe, sailing from Bombay on 15 May 1926.

- 1927 The investiture ceremony of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya took place at Agartala in August. The renowned artist of Tripura, Thakur Dhirendrakrishna Deb Barman accompanied the poet in his Far East tour.
- 1929 Dhirendrakrishna was selected as one of the four artists of India engaged for the interior decoration (fresco painting) of the newly-built India House in London.
- 1931 The exhibition of Tagore's artwork and the fair organized on the occasion of the poet's seventieth birth anniversary, were inaugurated at Town Hall, Calcutta, by Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya on 9 *Paus*, 1338 B. S.
- 1939 The Maharaja visited Santiniketan on 7 January, 1939 at the special invitation of the poet. The ashramites of Santiniketan accorded a warm welcome to the Maharaja in the famous mangrove. The poet addressed the gathering referring to his long and intimate association with Tripura. '*Chandalika*', a dance-drama written by the poet, was staged on the occasion. The Maharaja promised of his own accord to donate Rs. 20,000/- for the

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

extension of Sangit Bhawan (college of music of Visva Bharati University) at Santiniketan. Death of Somendra Chandra, M. A. (Harvard) on 12 January 1939. 2nd World War started.

1940 The queen-mother Probbabati Devi accompanied by Maharaj-Kumar Brojendra Kishore went to Kalimpong and met the poet.

1941 At the instance of the Maharaja, the eightieth birth anniversary of the poet was observed at Agartala with due solemnity. At a special Darbar held at Ujjayanta Palace, the Maharaja of Tripura conferred the title '*Bharat Bhashkar*' (the Sun of India) on the poet.

Bhupendra Chakravarti, a special emissary of the Tripura Darbar, was sent to Santiniketan to convey the honour. The poet accepted the title and addressed the gathering on that occasion.

The Maharaja presided over the Rabindra birth anniversary organized by Puri Banga Bhasa Sahitya Parisad and Puri Sangit Sammilani on 18 June 1941. The poet breathed his last on 22 *Sravana*, 1348 B. S. When the sad news was broken to the Maharaja, he was on his way to Bangalore from Bombay after attending the conference of Rulers of Indian States. He immediately sent a telegraphic message to Agartala to close all the Government offices and schools of Tripura to mourn the loss.

1942 Surrender of Germany.

1947 Death of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore on 17.05.1947 & succession of Maharaj Kirit Bikram Kishore.

1949 Tripura's merger agreement was signed on 09.09.1949.

8

Bibliography

- Baneswar & Sukreswar
Bhattacharya, A. C.
Bhattacharya, C. V.
- Bir Bikram, Maharaj
Chaudhuri, A. C.
- Chaudhuri, Bikach
- Chaudhuri, D. K. (Edi)
- Datta & Bandopadhyay
- Deb Barman, Colonel M. C.
Deb Barman, S.
Deb Barman, S.
Deb Barman, S.
- Deb Barman, S.
- Deb Barman, S.
- Gan Chaudhuri, J.
- Raj Ratnakaram*
Progressive Tripura
Silalipi Samgraha; B. C. Library,
Agartala, 1905; 2nd Edition, by
Education Department, Agartala,
1968
- Jayabati*
Swadhin Tripura : Census Report,
1901, Agartala, 1906
- Rabindra Sannidhe Tripura, Tripura*
Darpan, Agartala, 1987/2001
- Administration Report of the Political*
Agency, Hill Tipperah, TTCRI,
Agartala, 1996
- Rajgi Tripurar Sarkari Bangla*,
Education Department, Agartala,
1976
- Deshiya Rajya*, 1334 T. E.
A look into Tripura
Rabindranath Tagore and Tripura
Tripurar Raj Bangsha O Rabindra-
nath
Kabi Guru Rabindranather Priya Rajgi
Tripura
Tripurar Sahitya Gagane Surjya-nath
Rabindranath
A constitutional history of Tripura,
Parul Prakashani, Agartala, 2004

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura

Government of Tripura	<i>Reports on Administration of Tripura State, Agartala</i>
Kaviraj, Prof. C. (Tr)	<i>Tagore's letter to Maharaj Bir Chandra Manikya</i>
Ramganga, D.	<i>Krishnamala</i> , edited by Maharaj Kumar Sahadev Bikram Kishore & J. Gan-Chaudhuri
Sarma, Dr. R. M.	<i>Political History of Tripura</i> , Puthi patra, Calcutta
Sen, Dr. D. C.	<i>Folk Literature of Bengal.</i> <i>Banga-bhasa-O-Sahitya</i>
Sen. K. P. (edi)	<i>Sri Rajmala</i> , in 4 volumes, Rajmala Karyalaya, Agartala, 1926, 1927, 1931
Sen, K. P.	<i>Pancha Manikya</i> , Rajmala Karyalaya, Agartala, 1941
Thakur, R. N.	<i>Bhagna Hriday</i>
Thakur, R. N.	<i>Rajarshi</i>
Thakur, R. N.	<i>Bisarjan</i>
Thakur, R. N.	<i>Kahini</i>
Thakur, R. N.	<i>Jiban Smriti</i>
Sengupta, S (edi)	<i>Tripura Prasanga</i> , PRT, Government of Tripura, Agartala 1975

9

Illustrations



Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya

Reproduced from an oil painting preserved in the Palace.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura



Rabindranath Tagore



Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya
Reproduced from an oil painting preserved in the Palace.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura



Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya
Reproduced from an oil painting preserved in the Palace.



HERMIT

*Reproduced from the original painting of Maharaja Birendra
Kishore Manikya.*

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura



JHOOLAN

*Reproduced from the original painting of Maharaja Birendra
Kishore Manikya.*



Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur
Reproduced from the original painting preserved in the Palace.

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura



His Highness the *Maharaja* Manikya
Bahadur at the age of 15 years



Tagore with *Maharaja* Bir Bikram Manikya

Tagore and Four Manikya Princes of Tripura



Prince Brajendra Kishore



Lt. Col. O. C. Pulley

*Formerly guardian tutor to His Highness the Maharaja, at
present Chief Staff Officer*



Ujjayanta Rajprasad, Palaeo



978-93-86707-26-0

ISBN : 978-93-86707-26-0

Price : Rs. 100/-