



Meaning And Process Of Political Modernisation In Manipur (During The Colonial Period)

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to examine and evaluate political Modernization process in Manipur in the context of rapidly transforming Indian political system in particular and the ever increasing process of democratization and globalization in the world in general. Modernization forms one of the most prominent phenomenon of the contemporary world touching every aspect of human civilization. As such describing the present era as the era of modernization will not be wrong. Every nook and corner of the world is experiencing the influence of modernization. It spread from one country to another. In this regards, the countries of the world can be categorized into two I.e. developed, developing. In this whole dynamic political modernization form an inseparable part, the central point of the whole modernization process.

Key Words: Historical experience and process of Political modernization in the state.

Introduction

In fact, political modernization is a process of change from traditional to modern ways of political practices with new principals in the societies. The study emphasized the basic principles of political modernization which are applicable to Manipur. In order to understand the process of the advent of political modernization in the political system of Manipur the present study tried to trace the whole political background of the state.

The analysis has also taken into consideration on the traditional Manipuri society as a whole without ignoring both the hill and valley. The study also highlights some theories and concepts about how transformation process is going on in Manipur. Ultimately emphasis has been given in analyzing the participation of the masses as actors in the political system, with their beliefs, attitudes and emotions collectively forming an important dimension.

At the same time, the word political modernization a significant aspect of modernization is widely used with the vague meaning and idea in the context of political realm. In this regards, the study attempt to discover the meaning, concept and process what actually troupe in the social science.

1. Meaning of Political Modernisation

Now, before we proceed with the different aspects associated with the subject matter an understanding of the basic concept of political modernisation is a much. The concept itself is ever evolving and a new area of political economy and a hot area of academic discourse. As such there is always a debate going on among the scholars about the concept of political modernisation and political development. Some scholars claimed that both the concept is synonymous. But, it is absolutely not right as

political modernisation is a different aspect though both the concepts are interdependent to each other.¹ However, some scholars clearly defined the meaning of political modernisation as different from political development. Scholars who attempted to define the meaning of political modernization include Almond and Powell, Claude E Welch Jr, Karl Deutches, Benjamin Schwartz, Edward Shills, Robert Ward, Cyril Black, Lucian Pye, S.P Huntington etc.

Huntington described it as “a multi-faceted process involving changes in all areas of human thought and activity and relief from the traditionalist.”²

Benjamin Schwartz describes political modernisation as the systematic sustained and powerful application of human energies to the rational controls of mans physical and social environment for various human purpose

Karl Deutches has defined political modernisation in terms of participation by the people and increased political decentralisation.

Robert Ward defined, “political modernisation as the movement towards a modern society characterised by its far reaching ability to control or influence the physical and social circumstances of its environment and by a value system which is fundamentally optimistic about the desirability and consequences of this ability”.

Claude E. Welch Jr, suggest political modernisation as “the process based upon the rational utilisation of resources and aimed at the establishment of a modern societies.”³

Levy regard the society as more or less modernised “to the extent that its members use inanimate sources of power and or use of tools to multiply the effect of their efforts”. W.W. Rustow identifies a modern society with a “rapidly widening control over nature through closer cooperation among men”.

Sinai writes that a modern society is “a society based on advanced technology and the spirit of science, one having a rational view of life, a secular approach to social relations, a feeling for justices in public affairs and above all else, on the acceptance in the political realm of the belief that the prime unit of the polity should be the nation state”. (Singh and Sharma, 2007).

The overall process of modernisation refers to change in all institutional spheres of a society resulting from man’s expanding knowledge of the control over his environment.(Black,1976).Political modernisation refers to those processes of differentiation of political structure and secularisation of political culture which enhance the capability, the effectiveness and efficiency of performance of a society’s political systems.(Almond and Powel,1976).

Thus, from all these scholarly views what could be deduced is that political modernisation refers to the changes in political culture and political institutions and also refers to the case of political transformation as occurred in European countries particularly in modern period and then reoccurred in other countries of the world in recent times. In the political sphere, this transformation may be expressed as a syndrome as suggested by Lucian Pye. This syndrome may include:

- a) General attitude towards equality that allows equality of opportunity to participate in politics and compete for government office.
- b) Capacity of a political system to formulate policies and to have them carried out.

Differentiation and specialisation of political system The overall process of modernisation refers to change in all institutional spheres of a society resulting from man’s expanding knowledge of the control over his environment.⁴ Political modernisation refers to those processes of differentiation of political

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- c) General attitude towards equality that allows equality of opportunity to participate in politics and compete for government office.
- d) Capacity of a political system to formulate policies and to have them carried out.
- e) Differentiation and specialization of political system functions, though not at the expenses of their overall integrations.

f) Functions, though not at the expenses of their overall integrations. As mentioned, the concept of political modernisation is a particular aspect of multi-faceted modernisation process. It studies the process of change in different aspects of society viz., social, political, economic and culture etc. Political modernisation involves a revolutionary attitude and always struggle for a change from old to new. The important question here is that what is the actual concept of political modernization? The concept is ambiguous one to define but it may be described as a system "wherein a change in socio-economic variables is seen to be producing a deterministic change in the politics of a country. In other words, political change accruing out of changes in the social structure and economic development is referred to as political modernisation. It is deeply concerned with the bringing about a desired change in people's perception and equal to the changes in socio-economic structures." (Sharma, 1983)

In this regard, Samuel P. Huntington elaborates it further. He is of the view that political modernisation is a movement from a traditional to a modern polity and further defined it as the political aspects and political effects of social, economic and cultural modernisation.⁵ According to him it involves three things: (i) Political modernisation involve rationalisation of authority which means replacement of a large number of traditional, religious, familial, and ethnic political authorities by a single, secular national political authority. (ii) It means differentiation of new political functions and growth of specified political structures to perform those functions. (iii) Further, it implies increased participation in politics by socio-political groups like political parties, interest groups, caste associations etc. (Huntington 1996) another observation is given by Eienstadt that political modernisation is continuous spread of modern form of political organisation and process. This process is more ubiquitous and general than that of economic development. Still, many scholars accept that political modernisation involve the study about the general process of change in a society or state. Supplementing more concisely to it were the views of Lucian Pye and other likeminded scholars. According to them, the syndrome of political modernisation includes: (i) a general inclination towards equality which allows participation in politics and competition for government office; (ii) the capacity of a political system to formulate policies and to have them carried out; (iii) differentiation and specialisation of political functions, though not at the expense of their overall integration and (iv) the secularisation of the political process, to separation of politics from religious aims and influence. (Pye 1996) Using C.H Dodd's definition we may say, that the concepts of political modernisation and political development embrace one or more of the following notions : (i) Political change necessary for the achievements of a specific objective like liberal democracy, constitutional monarchy, (ii) a general process of change in the political system which is seen to comprise the expansion and centralisation and the differentiation and specialisation of political functions and structure, (iii)

increased popular participation in politics, (iv) a political system's capacity to solve problems, (v) the ability to learn better and better how to perform political functions.(Dodd,1972). Thus, political modernisation means rationalised authority, differentiated political structures and mass participation.

Another observation is that the concept of the political modernisation covers the studying of moods of people, values of political system and working of institutions as well as the social mobilisation and economic development. Political modernisation finds its highest symbolisation in the democratic associations with elective leadership and fully enfranchised membership and in the accepted sense of the term assumes universality of a political consensus based on political individualism or citizenship role. (Singh,1978)It is clear that the effect of modernity is to be evidenced in each and every aspect of the social system. Eienstadt has analysed these effects of process of modernisation in a very elaborate manner which are as follows:

“In economic sphere modernity implies a very high level of technology.

In ecological field modernisation is characterised by an advanced degree of urbanisation.

Then, there is the increasing size of organisational units both in economic and political field. Modernity implies increasing complexity and differentiation of all types of organisation.

At last in the political field modernisation is characterised by the continual spread of political power to wider groups in society; ultimately to all adult citizens. Modern societies are some sense of democratic. And these developments have been very closely related to the expansion of media of communication.”(Sharma 1982)

1.2 Dimension of Political Modernisation

Its clear that Samuel P. Huntington and S.P Verma did pioneering work in the development of the concept of political modernisation and political development. Indeed, Huntington elaborates various dimensions of political modernisation viz;

- i. At the intellectual level, it involves a tremendous expansion of man's knowledge about his environment and the diffusion of knowledge throughout the society, through increased in literacy, mass communication and education.
- ii. Demographically, it implies a change in the pattern of life a marked increase in health and life expectancy, greater occupational and geographically mobility and shift of population from rural to urban areas.
- iii. At the social level, modernisation has a tendency to replace the focus of individual's loyalty from family and other primary groups to voluntarily organised secondary associations.
- iv. At the psychological level, modernisation involves a fundamental shift in values, attitudes and expectations.
- v. Finally, in the sphere of economics, subsistence agriculture is replaced by market agricultural; agriculture itself declines in comparison to commerce, industry and other non-widened as this activity gets more and more centralized at the national level.

All these views of Huntington were supported by S.P.Verma. He clarified that political modernisation is a complex concept which have several dimensions. The principal dimensions are urbanisation, industrialisation, secularisation, democratisations, education and media participation.⁶

The above ideas were further substantiated by Eisenstadt in his book “Modernisation Protest and Change” which described the characteristics of modernisation in the following ways :(Eisenstadt, 1969)

(i) **Social Mobilisation:** It is a key issue. Karl-Deutsch use this term to refer to the socio-demographic aspects of modernisation. He describes the process by which major clusters of social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded and broken, and people became available for new patterns of socialism and behaviors'.The indices of social mobilisation are:

- a) Exposure to aspects of modern life such as machinery and massmedia.
- b) Change from agriculture occupation.
- c) Change of residence and moving towards urbanisation.
- d) Literacy and the growth of per capita income.

(ii) **Social Differentiation:** This characteristic implies the specialisation of institutional structures and recruitment based on universal achievement criteria and separation between the different roles held by an individual and the disposal of rules.

(iii) **Economic Changes:** The change is with reference to technology and developmentof secondary and tertiary occupations, and mass consumption.⁷

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(iii) Economic Changes: The change is with reference to technology and development of secondary and tertiary occupations, and mass consumption.

(iv) Political Changes: This aspect is inclusive of the following:

- a) The extension of the territorial scope and the intensification of the power of the centre.
- b) The continued spread of potential power to wider groups.
- c) Populastic and democratic politics and participation.
- d) Interest oriented politics.
- e) Political institutions such as political parties and pressure groups.

It will hence be analysed on the basis of the above views related with political modernisation which may be applicable in the context of Manipur in the following chapters.

1.3 Political modernization process in Manipur

And when it comes to the emergence of the concept and process of political modernisation, it has its own history of evolution. It has been taking place in human society since the 15th century which began with the renaissance of Italy. Eisenstadt also refers that political modernisation started from the Western Europe in 17th century. Then, 19th century was the era of spreading ideas of modernisation among the countries of Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and Africa. And 20th and 21st centuries were the era of quest for modernisation in the newly emerging countries or developing countries of Asia and Africa. These developing countries evolving towards changes have been termed as emerging nations, new developing countries, transitional societies, third world, and modernising politics. Therefore, these countries are interested in political changes in order to bring about changes in social, economic, and industrial fields which are known as modernisation. It is true that this trend of modern spirit awakened in the 15th century during the renaissance of Western Europe.

As far as the Indian renaissance is concerned, it may be said to begin with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the herald of modernisation in India.⁸ He introduced Brahmo Samaj which was the foremost socio-religious reforms in India. Thereafter, various reform movements like Arya Samaj, Ram Krishna Mission, Theosophical Society, Ahamadiya movement and Aligarh movement were started in some parts of India. Then, the establishment of political party like Congress in 1885 was one of the beginning stages of spreading ideas in a wide area about the political modernisation concept in India. It mobilised the people of India to participate in the socio, political, economic and cultural modernisation of India and worked against the feudal system of colonialism. This phenomenon spread far and wide.

Subsequently, in the context of Manipur, the concept and process of political modernisation emerged from the encounter with western colonizers, particularly with the advent of the British. The ideas of political modernisation started expanding in Manipur after the establishment of modern educational institution in 1885 by the British Political Agent, Sir James Johnstone. (Roy, 1999). This institution helps the breeding and enlightenment of the very sense of political modernisation among the people of Manipur following which in the 30s a group of intellectual elites emerged in the state. These intellectual elites understood the changing world scenario touching the areas of socio-political, economic, culture, development of science and technology, and administrative purpose as an impact of colonialism.

Gradually, these intellectuals started to build up a movement against the social, political and economic injustice carried out by the native ruler and the feudal system which was imposed by the British authority to the Manipuri people. Meanwhile, Indian national movement was strongly going on against the British regime under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The impact of Indian national movement reached Manipur too. A synergy was established between the increasing consciousness of the intellectual elites and the spreading national movement. Popular leaders like Hijam Irabot and others of the hills and valley came out and worked for the state. Consequently, these intellectuals along with the Maharaja of Manipur formed a socio-religious organization, the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha in 1934. It was converted into a political organisation in 1938. It became the first political organisation in Manipur. (Binarani 1995). This organisation started social mobilisation and spread political consciousness among the people of Manipur. When the Second Nupi-Lan occurred, this organisation gave moral and physical support to the Manipuri women folk. The same organisation also demanded for a responsible government. It tried for the amalgamation of the hills and valley administration and the introduction of universal Adult Franchise. (Singh 1974). The supporters of this organisation were against the feudal system of the British regime. Further, the conversion of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha as a political party led to the formation of various political parties and other organisations like PrajaSammelan, Manipur KrishakSammelan, Manipur Youth League, Manipur Students' Federation etc. A joint meeting was held in 1940 by the representatives of all the political parties. In the said meeting, they formed a new political party which was known as PrajaSangha Party (PSP).

The PrajaSangha Party started to take more active role in the socio-political awakening of the state. The fundamental objectives of the party were the attainment of independence of Manipur, immediate abolition of the feudal system in Manipur and establishment of a responsible government. Another important landmark in the history of modern political system was the formation of Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) on 4 October 1946. This newly formed political party submitted a separate memorandum to His Highness, the Maharaja of Manipur on 1 November 1946. The most important point of the demand was to establish a Legislative Assembly in Manipur based on democratic principle. The Maharaja also acknowledged the changing political scenario of India and thought that Manipur also has the necessity to have a modern political system. Consequently, on 12 December 1946, Maharaja issued a royal order to form a constitution drafting committee to draft a new constitution. Henceforth, the constitution drafting process was started. Meanwhile, an interim government was established on 1 July 1947. The former Manipur State Durbar was abolished in the same year and renamed as Manipur State Council. (Singh 2022)

Meanwhile the framing of the constitution was finalised on 26 July 1947. The new constitution was formalised under the "Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947". Under the provisions of this constitution, the First Assembly Election of the state was held in 1948 through Universal Adult Franchise and at the same time, paved the way for a Constitutional monarchy. (Kamei, 2005) The whole development was worthwhile to be mentioned as it acts as a stepping stone for a changeover from a system of colonial political setup to a new trend of political modernization process in Manipur.

Conclusion

At the same time as modernization theory assumes, the process of modernization emancipates society and individuals from their traditional bonds and replaces them with the modern bonds, such as citizenship, nationality or ethnicity. Thus, modernization homogenises the society as it transforms individuals to resemble each other, not in terms of their identity, but in their subjection to modernity. Same is true with political modernization. Thus it is concluded that Manipur experience under the British and then its merge to the Indian Union has inevitably transformed the society and achieved relative

success in changing the traditional forms ostensibly modern ones. And as such the political dynamics of the state could at least trend the so call generally accepted grids related with the process of political modernization of a society. Only more time, a multidimensional approach and the right synergy are the need of the hour to take Manipur closer to some form of acceptable system of political modernization for which every stakeholder need to be equally responsible to the process.

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