

CHAPTER - II

BRITISH RULE IN INDIA AND THEIR ADMINISTRATION

After the fall of Peshwa in 1818 the whole Bombay Presidency including Peshwas former territory was administered by the Britishers. With the dawn of British rule in India as well as in the Bombay - Presidency, liberal forces of the west started reaching with the stagnant social forces of uniform administration, rule of law, and modern means of communication were irresistible forces that sufficiently pressurised the Indian society for change. Modern forces of the west were both material and scientific. Science thought modest has always succeeded against traditionalism. Indian Railways, Telegraphs and Roads succeeded in uniting India. Uniform Judicial system based on law, did not distinguish between one caste and the other in the Court of Law and the judgement. Thus though the British rule after proclaimed their intervention policy in the matter of religion. Their Western Institution of Science prove to be the tools of new civilization.

The attitude of the British rulers who had just abolished slavery in their own land, towards - these age-long sufferers in Hindustan, was quite indifferent. Frankly, theirs was an imperialistic

alien rule and their neutral role in respect of the Untouchables was in effect a negative support to the caste Hindu oppressors. The Britishers were a shrewd race. After the fall of the Mahratta empire they set about stabilising their newly acquired Empire in a manner so as to drain the people slowly, fleece them safely, and exploit them softly and methodically. Statesmanly enough, they first took up the cause of the Brahmins who had suffered tremendously by the change of Government. For enlivening their hearts the Bombay Government began to educate them in order to enable them to be useful in the service of the new Government.¹

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY & THEIR ACTIVITIES :

Thus English education that the Company Government introduced in India because the forces of awakening in the people where received it. Western education and missionary teaching had their effect upon the minds of some early social reforms. Education is an axe which cuts down slowly but surely the tree of ignorance. English education percolated among the high caste first. In 1824 the missionaries schools in Poona. But this missionary school and a few Govt. run

schools that were open to all the castes succeeded in educating some of the few lower caste men also.

MISSIONARIES :

The Christian missionaries were the first to come to India. They came here even before the European traders started pouring in.² Their flow continued till the East India Company started its trade activities in this country.³ Now the Directors of the East India Company opposed their (missionaries') activities on the ground, among others, there would interfere with Hindu religion and create difficulties for them.⁴

There was a good debate and discussion in the Parliament and outside on the question of allowing a free hand to the missionaries in the Company's territories at the time of the renewal of its charter in 1793 and finally in 1813, their right to operate in these territories was accepted.⁵

Thus ultimately the missionaries got a free hand in the evangelical, social, educational and other activities and spread a new wide and intricate covering almost all of British India as also the native states. They opened schools for boys and girls, organized churches and also delivered lectures in the streets.⁶

The missionaries believed that human character could be quickly and totally transformed by a direct assault on the mind through an educative process. Also they thought it essential to point out the defects in Indian religion and society which were responsible, according to them, for the poverty and social stagnation of India. On the practical side their activities attempted to demonstrate faithfully the Christian ethics in action. The schools, dispensaries, orphanages and leper clinics were the manifestations of this desire.⁷

In their schools the Bible was compulsorily taught. The big melas (Indian fairs) were extensively used for preaching and propagation of the gospel.⁸

Thus they constantly and laboriously tried to expose Indian society to new religious and social beliefs. They also started journals and used them as media for hammering the minds of the educated Indians by constantly highlighting the defects of the Hindu religion and way of life and generally promoting Christian ideas. 'Bombay Guardian', started in 1850-51 may be cited as an example.⁹

All this created a new intellectual climate in the whole of Bombay Presidency. There developed a hunger for education among the Indians as it opened

up new opportunities for them under the British Government. The preaching of missionaries served to stimulate a spirit of enquiry in the Indians. The missionaries challenged openly the validity of the religious philosophies of Hindus and decried the customs of widowhood celibacy, sati, child marriage, caste, idolatry and the numerous superstitions then prevailing among the Hindus.

They did not succeed, so much in eradicating these evils. It was not their objective either. However, they succeeded in making the Hindu customs look ridiculous and anachronistic. It was this challenge that made them realize the moral poverty and the cultural degradation of Hinduism in those days.¹⁰ Commenting on this George Smith wrote, "The hundred and fifty millions of caste Hindus still present to Christendom an unbroken front or very little broken, apparently. But that it is disintegrating under the combined influence of western civilization and Christian truth, its own leaders allow, and their methods of meeting the assault confess."¹¹

The net result was mass conversion of the depressed classes and the aboriginals.¹² Some of the

high caste Hindus were also attracted by Christianity and they embraced it.

So, though, apparently for the purpose of spreading the gospel of the Christian religion, it was by the Christian missionaries that the cause of general education in Maharashtra was taken up. Charles Grant (1746 - 1823), who is acclaimed as the father of modern Indian education, decided to devote his life for pursuing the Indians to get converted to Christianity and also for educating them. Grant had made certain observations regarding the Indian community which were typical of a missionary of his time. He held that the Indian society lived in utterly immoral and wretched conditions.¹³ He, therefore, suggested that the Indians should first be educated and finally converted to Christianity. The missionaries started schools, boardings and orphanages. Slowly but steadily, the missionaries, paved their way in Maharashtra. Since the missionaries entered the island of Bombay, the education got diffused even in the poorest people of Bombay and the same thing happened about in whole of India because of the missionaries. The mission schools were doing very valuable work in the modern education and their services were particularly valuable in two

fields which had been ignored by the Board of Education (established in 1840) viz. the education of women and that of the backward classes.¹⁴

Thus as Dhananjay Keer rightly states that the Christian missionaries fully exploited this situation. They took up the cause of the education of lower classes as also of the Untouchables; of course, with an ulterior motive, and began to disseminate education among them. By their tact, kindness and ready help the missionaries ingratiated themselves with the lower classes as well as with the Untouchables, so much so that a strong feeling grew upon these classes that foreigners were preferable to the Brahmins.¹⁵

INFLUENCE OF WESTERN EDUCATION :

But with the new Lords came the new Laws. It is true that before the coming of the British in India, we had our Pathshalas and Madrasas but not much could be expected from them in the field of higher learning credit must go to the Englishmen for setting up Universities, Colleges, High Schools and other Schools in the country.

It was the Charter Act of 1813 that laid down that "Out of the surplus revenues of India a sum of not less than One Lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India." Thus under the Act of 1813 education was set free in India. A new dawn broke, bringing education for a new society and for a changing civilization.

The history of the nineteenth century is the history of westernization of the world. The presence of the British in India brought about profound changes in the social and administrative conditions of the country and these in their turn reacted on the educational policy of Government.

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ignorance. English education percolated among the high caste first. In 1824 the missionaries schools in Poona. But this missionary school and a few Govt. run schools that were open to all the castes succeeded in educating some of the few lower caste men also.

The British Parliament passed the Charter Act of 1813, which was more important than that of 1793 in several respects. The Christian missionaries of England were permitted to come freely and settle in this country. This had a wholesome effect in the sense that large numbers of missionary schools and colleges were opened for the education of the Indians. But an unfortunate side of it was the fact that these missionaries soon became arrogant, and started openly condemning the Indian faiths which they termed as barbaric. This developed racial bitterness between the English and the Indians.

The provision for setting apart one lakh rupees for the development of education in India was a welcome development. It laid the foundations of the English system of education in India which threw open the inculturating gates to the progressive English literature on liberty and equality for the Indian mind.

With this the freedom of their private British merchants to come to India, the European culture began freely to be imported into India.¹⁶

The Charter Act of 1813, therefore, forms a turning point in the history of Indian education. With it, the agitation which Grant and Wilberforce carried on for nearly twenty years came to a successful conclusion, the education of the Indian people was definitely included within the duties of the Company; a comparatively large amount was annually secured for educational activities; and missionaries began to land in India in large numbers and establish English schools, thereby laying the foundation of the modern educational system.¹⁷

The period of twenty years between the two great charters of the company, viz. those of 1813 and 1833, was one of experiments in the field of Indian Education. Section 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 had only defined the objects of the educational policy, Viz. " the reivval and improvement of literature, the encouragement of the learned natives of India and the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of British territories in India."¹⁸

The question of removing their disabilities and placing them on a footing of civil equality came up for consideration before the British administrators. According to the Press Note of 1858, "All schools maintained at the sole cost of Government shall be open to all classes of its subjects without distinction shall be open to all classes of its subjects without distinction.

The question of the education of untouchables was always before the rules. It came to the fore-front by an incident in Dharwar in the old Bombay Presidency. The head of the Government School at Dharwar refused admission to an untouchable boy. The question came up before the Bombay Government for consideration. At last in 1858 Government announced that it reserved the right of refusing its support "to any partially aided school in which the benefits of education are withheld from any class of person on account of caste and race and also that all schools maintained at the cost of Government shall be open to all classes of its subjects without distinction."¹⁹

RULE OF LAW :

The British rule in India is regarded as the rule of law. One of the greatest achievements of the British in their own country was the establishment of the rule of law. This they did after a long struggle. When British institutions were introduced the rule of law was also introduced in the country. No man was to be punished except according to law. All were equal before the law. Public servants were not to enjoy any special privileges. If any person violated the law of the country, he was to be punished irrespective of his status. The same law was to apply to all.

Law is powerful instrument of social change in the hands of any Government. The British Government in India wielded this weapon also powerfully. The early laws in the social matters passed by the Britishers, made people conscious of the fact that a new era has set in. Many cruel and barbarous customs of the - Indians were checked by law and a rule of law was given to common man.

The British Government passed many social laws and especially the laws passed against injustice to lower castes :-

(a) Not admitting the untouchables in Government services.

(b) Higher castes were granted concession of not appearing in the Courts for evidence.

(c) Ill-treatment to untouchables.²⁰

In short, we can say that the British Government destroyed all the time old parasites that clung to Hindu society between 1840-1860.

After the successful establishment of her rule, the East India Company introduced three important changes which proved advantageous to the Indians in the long run. These were :-

1. Uniform administrative system based on rule of law.
2. English education, and
3. Modern means of communication.

English rule in India exhibited cultural superiority of England. Political unity of India brought about by the English necessitated them to introduce modern means of communication and a uniform pattern of education. Indians' failure earlier in mutiny against



British convinced Indians that everything was not well with them and with their tradition and hence, a movement for reform began in India. East India Company was a trading body that emerged sovereign in India and controlled trade and sources of income by making suitable laws. Indians were exploited economically.

The establishment of British rule in India brought about extensive and basic political, administrative and legal unification of the country for the first time in Indian history.

Under the British a uniform system of administration was established. The local peculiarities and the racial differences began slowly to die. The administration began to be conducted on "the principle known comprehensively as the rule of law", which applied equally to all, the Brahmins and the sudras, the muslims and the Hindus, and the Bengalis as well as the Madrasis. A regular hierarchy of courts was established in which the princes and the paupers received an equal treatment. Such a system was bound to regenerate in its fourfold strength the deep underlying fundamental unity for more profound than

that produced either by geographical isolation or political suzerainty, which already penetrated every fibre of this country.²¹

RAILWAY & MEANS OF COMMUNICATION :

Another great institute of change was the introduction of Railways in India. Lord Dalhousie (1848 - 1856) a great administrator gave an impetus to the construction of railway lines and laying of the telegraph wires. He gave contracts to the English Corporations for the purpose, giving them all the facilities and in addition guaranteeing them an interest on their investment for which the Government of India were made liable irrespective of the enormous profits which the corporations themselves might make.²²

The interests of the British industries urged the Government of the East India Company to establish railways and construct roads in India. Lord Dalhousie, who initiated a programme of wide railway construction in India, in his famous minute on Railways, unambiguously defined the economic reason behind this - construction.

If the Indian Government were to adopt a programme of railway construction, it would require capital. A part of surplus capital accumulated in British India could be loaned to the Indian Government and thus find an outlet. In addition to these economic reasons, there were political, administrative and military strategic reasons for establishing railways in India.

The lines directly constructed by the state agency between 1869 and 1880 were the Indus Valley, Punjab, Northern Rajputana, Malwa and North Bengal. The total length of state railway lines opened by the 31st December, 1880, was 2,932 miles.

Thus the British evolved in India a colossal administrative apparatus, penetrating even the remotest village. The necessity to erect and efficiently operate such an apparatus also prompted them to establish and extend railways to construct modern roads to establish the post and telegraph systems. This necessity of assembling village, towns, districts and provinces increasingly brought the places under the British rule into a single political administrative system, which also stimulated railway construction in India.

The railways were directly under the Governor General and the legislative would have n^o control over it.

Railways helped the historically progressive new economic forces to destroy the economic foundations of the old Indian society.

They helped the penetration of India by the industrial products of the modern society, thereby breaking the economic autarchy of the village. They helped to weld India into a single economic unit and also linked India with the material frame-work of the Indian nation.

The railways were of outstanding potency. By creating the conditions necessary for specialization, they revolutionised production and trade, enabled the establishment of large scale modern industries and led to the development of great ports and industrial centres. In short, railways made India a nation, a concept which was alien to the Hindus in their cultural and philosophical amalgamation.

With the growth of the railways, it became more necessary to construct feeder roads at right angles to them.²³

TELEGRAPHS :

The first telegraph line which ran from Calcutta to Agra, a distance of 800 miles, was opened in 1854 and next year, lines were working over 3,000 miles, from Calcutta to Attock, from Agra to Bombay, and from Bombay to Madras. The system has since been expanded rapidly and India is now girdled with lines - extending over more than 1,00,000 lines and dealing with seventeen million telegrams a year.²⁴ The effect of the postal and telegraph system on commercial and social life requires no exegesis.

The development of modern means of transport and communications in India prevented the full unfolding of the potential power of these means to accomplish a still closer social and economic integration and more rapid cultural advance of the Indian people. The problem of extensive and adequate expansion of those means was closely bound up with the problem of the political power in the hands of the Indian people as also with that of a rapid development of the productive forces of the Indian society through a scientific plan of economic reconstruction which would have been fully possible if society, as a whole, owned all means of production. This is the impersonal modern scientific force that helped awake man to his higher thinking.

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