

BRITISH RULE AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA (1757-1935)

Sanikommu Venkateswarlu

*Research Scholar, Dept. of Ancient History and Archaeology, Acharya Nagarjuna University,
Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur-522510.*

INTRODUCTION:

The intention of this paper is not so much to give a historical account of the past as to show how the British nation stands, and what there is for it to do in India now. On the one side we hear orators cry, "Crush! By the sword the empire was won, and by, the sword it must be held." On the other, we hear men cry, in the name of holy freedom, "Retire: India for the Indians! Stand aside, and let the people of the country work out their own destiny!" Meantime, while politicians are debating, sometimes wisely, sometimes foolishly, thousands of workers are busy with their daily tasks, "living and dying, spending their" strength and health and the prime of their life in heavy toils, noted by few and soon forgotten. To some are allotted the rifle and cannon, sword and lance. They stand on guard that their brethren may do their peaceful tasks in peace. To some it is given to curb oppressors, robbers, and evildoers; to prevent riots; to protect the honest and peaceful in the enjoyment of their own. To some it is given to judge between man and man, upholding the law. Some let in light by spreading knowledge; or cause wealth to spring up by opening communications, manufactures, or mines. On every side, in offices under Government, and still more in private enterprise, British workers are to be seen in India, doing various kinds of work, all busy. Are they doing good? Are they doing as much good as they might do? As a humble worker in the field, the writer thinks he has a few practical suggestions to offer, which, if there is anything in them, might guide all this throbbing energy into more profitable channels, and get more good out of the stream of life-blood, that most precious of her gifts, which Britain pours out on her great dependency., These suggestions are more especially directed to the work of the

Government, which suffers from two troubles

DEVELOPMENTAL WORKS OF BRITISH INDIA:

"No similar works in other countries approach in magnitude the irrigation works of India, and no public works of nobler activity have ever been undertaken in the world."

"When in 1844, I first went from Calcutta to the present Agra province, I was carried about a thousand miles in a palanquin on men's shoulders, and it took some three weeks to toil through a journey which is now accomplished in twenty-four hours." - SIR JOHN STRACHEY.

The Public Works Department occupies a very prominent place in the history of Indian administration. This is not so much the case in England, where the railways are in the hands of private companies, the making and upkeep of roads and bridges regulated by the County Councils and Municipalities, and public buildings erected by private firms. The State only retains supervisory powers, which are carried out by inspectors acting in the service of the departments of State concerned. In India things have been different. In the past the people were poor and lacking in co-operation. In consequence, the means of communication were slight, there was little or no effort made to conserve the water and railways were few.

It was during the rule of Lord Dalhousie that Government began to realize that the management of public works was a part of its responsibilities.

In the Public Works Department there are three grades, known as the Imperial, Provincial, and Subordinate Services. In the former are the Chief, Superintending, Executive, and Assistant Engineers. In 1871, the Royal Indian Engineering College at Cooper's Hill, in England, was founded, the students of which were trained for the Railways, Public Works, Forests, and Engineering Departments in India. The College was closed in 1906, and the Public Works Officers are now appointed by the Secretary of State. The Provincial and Subordinate Services are recruited in India from those who have been trained in the Engineering Colleges at Roorkee, Poona, Madras, and Sibpur.

Towards the middle of last century the Government of India began to see the necessity of supporting the construction and maintenance of rail-ways. Contracts, therefore, were entered into with certain companies in England for that purpose. Government granted the land free of charge and guaranteed the payment of interest at five per cent.; whatever profits there might be over and above that amount were to be shared between Government and the Company; Government had the right of buying up the railway at a fixed rate after the lapse of twenty-five years; and it also had the means of supervision over the management and working of the line. The companies concerned were the Great Indian Peninsula, the Madras, the Southern India, the East Indian, the Bombay, Baroda, and Central India, the Eastern Bengal, and what are now called the North-Western State Railway, and the Oudh and Rohilkhand. Undoubtedly the work done by these companies was of immense value to the country, but for many reasons the

financial results were unsatisfactory. The cost of construction proved more than was anticipated, there was a good deal of unnecessary extravagance, the supervision was faulty, and, above all, the Mutiny threw everything into disorder for a time. In 1870, Government instituted a scheme by which the State should take in hand the construction of railways, and a fixed sum was allocated for a certain period of years. The new scheme, however, did not prove a success. Progress was painfully slow, and eventually the old guarantee system was again adopted, with certain alterations, which were to the advantage of Government. During the last forty years many companies have taken a share in the development of Indian railways under these conditions, and more and more money has been borrowed by the Government in the interests of the railways. The manner of raising these loans will be explained in the next chapter. Government has retained its right to buy up these lines thus guaranteed or assisted at the termination of a fixed period of time, and this is being done in many instances.

Much criticism has been levelled at the railway policy of the Government of India. Undoubtedly in the early days the contracts erred on the side of leniency, and there was also a certain laxity in supervision and some extravagance. The mere fact, however, that since the beginning of this century almost every year the railway budget, after deduction has been made for the payment of debt and working expenses, shows a profit, gives evidence of much wisdom and business-like capacity in the management of the railways. And, in addition, the examination of the balance-sheet is not the only test. In every country, and especially in one of vast distances such as India, the railways have increased very largely the wealth of the people. Lines also which could not possibly hope for satisfactory returns have been built in sparsely populated districts with the sole object of improving the means of transit, and of increasing the resources of those parts. Other lines, especially in the north-west, have been constructed primarily for military purposes, and from these losses must be anticipated. Above all, the great part played by railways in the prevention of famine is so important.

REFERENCES:

- Iyengar, Sundararaja S “Land Tenures in the Madras Presidency”, The Modern Printing and Works, Madras, 1916.
- Karashima, Noboru (ed.), “Concise History of South India”, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014.
- Love, Henry Dansion “Vestiges of Old Madras (1640-1800), Vol-I, III Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1996.

Macleane C.D (ed.), “Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency”, Vols.I, Government of Madras, Madras, 1893.

Madhavan, Chithra “History and Culture of Tamilnadu”, Vol-I, D.K. Print World, New Delhi, 2007.

Manikkam.V “Kongu Nadu”, Makkal Veliyeedu, Chennai, 2001. Mudaliyar, Chandra “State and Religious Endowements in Madras”, Madras, 1976.

Powell, Bedan B.H “The Land System of British India”, Vol – I, Crown Publications, Reprint, New Delhi, 1988.

Punit A.E “Social System in Rural India”, Sterling Publications, New Delhi, 1978.

Rajayyan.K “Rise and fall of the Poligars of Tamilnadu”, University of Madras, Madras, 1974.

Raju, Sarada. A “Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency 1800-1850”, University of Madras, Madras, 1941.

Rothermund, Dietmar “Economic History of India from Pre-Colonial Times to 1986”, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1988. Sayana, V.V “The Agrarian Problems of Madras Province”, Madras, 1949.

Sharma, Raghav Sharan (ed.), “India’s War of Independence through Kisan Documents”, Manohar Publications, Part I& III, New Delhi, 2014.

Srinivasaraghavaiyangar S “Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency during the Last Forty years of British Administration”, Asian Educational Service, Reprint, New Delhi, 1988