

CONTRIBUTION OF THE BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL TO INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CENTRAL INDIA

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Abstract: The first British ship 'Hectar' touched the coast of India at Surat, more than 400 years ago in A.D. sixteen hundred. They remained in India for more than 350 years till the country became independent in the year 1947. Initially, they came as traders and subsequently rose to the status of the ruling class in the subcontinent. This was all due to the outstanding contribution of the British Colonial Administrative Personnel to the Colonial Administration in India.

The present paper attempts to highlight the contribution of the various British Administrative Personnel who happened to serve in India during the British rule. This paper specifically deals with the contribution made by the British Administrative Personnel with regard to Central India.

It was a unique feature with the British Administration in India that before entering any area, they wanted to have detailed information about the country and its people whom they had to administer. Most of the British officers of the Indian Civil Service, belonged to the higher aristocratic stratum of the British Society. They were all well-educated and had a flare for intellectual pursuits alongside their normal administrative duties. At times, their reports and accounts, are pieces of literature and poetry.

The picturesque tribal areas of this subcontinent, luxuriant forests, tribal virtues, their dancing, their songs and laughter, their zest, zeal and joyous life, their delight and distress, their sufferings and privations, this all taken together, attracted the British Colonial Administrative officers to reduce their empirical impressions in black and white. Consequently, such a venture had been instrumental in producing a lot of material on tribal way of life which ultimately paved the way for efficient governance at the hands of the Raj.

Keywords: Colonial Administrative Personnel; the tribal way of life; efficient governance; role of administrators; systematic and coordinated efforts; ethnological accounts; aboriginal problems; the Central Provinces.

INTRODUCTION

The history of the East India Company in India had been quite interesting. It displays inter-alia, how the traders slowly and steadily adopted the role of administrators in this vast sub-continent. Apparently, the Company Bahadur, might have thought that there were comparatively more benefits and wealth in being involved in the local administration, besides their simple trading. The first British ship namely 'Hectar' happened to touch the coast of the Indian soil at Surat, almost more than 400 years back in A.D.1600.

Prior to the year 1915, it was recommended to the then Government of India, by Sir Herbert Riseley, for the preparation of an ethnological account of the

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inhabitants of each of the principal provinces of India. The work relating to the Central Provinces was entrusted to Mr. R.V. Russell of the Indian Civil Service, in addition to his normal official duties. It was prescribed that a separate and detailed account should be written in respect of each of the principal tribes and castes, on the lines adopted by Sir Herbert Riseley while writing, 'Tribes and Castes of Bengal'. Such ethnological accounts were intended primarily to serve the purpose of reference material for the officers of the Government who may be interested in knowing something about the culture and customs of the people amongst whom they were posted to serve and work.

When Russell started preparing such ethnological account, there were not many ethnological works on the people of the Central Provinces. For the preparation of such ethnological account and for the sake of assistance he referred to C. Grant's 'Central Provinces Gazetteer of 1871', Rev. Stephen Hislop's 'Notes on the Aboriginal Tribes of Central Provinces', Colonel Bloomfield's 'Notes on the Baigas', Sir Charles Elliott's 'Hoshangabad Settlement Report', Sir Reginald Craddock's 'Nagpur Settlement Report', Col. Ward's 'Mandla Settlement Report', Colonel Lucie Smith's 'Chanda Settlement Report', Mr. G.W. Gayer's 'Lectures on Criminal Tribes', Mr. C.W. Montgomerie's 'Chhindwara Settlement Report', Mr. C.E. Low's 'Balaghat District Gazetteer', Mr. E.J. Kitt's Berar Census Report of 1881, and the Central Provinces Reports of Mr. T. Drysdale, Sir Benjamin Robertson and Mr. J.T. Marten.

Mr. W. Crooke of the Indian Civil Service (retired), had been able to give valuable advice and help to Mr. Russell during the preparation of the ethnological account relating to the Central Provinces of India. Another Administrative personnel Rai Bahadur Hiralal of Katni, who was then Extra Assistant Commissioner and assistant to Russell for several years while taking the census of 1901 and preparing the District Gazetteers of the Central Provinces; had also rendered considerable help. He had collected a large part of the original information contained in this great historical work which comprised four volumes of valuable information on the 'Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India'.

Mr. Pyarelal Mishra, barrister, Chhindwara, was the ethnographic clerk to Russell for some years. Mr. Mishra and Munshi Kanhya Lal, of the Education Department and Mr. Aduram Chandhvi, Tahsildar, gave considerable help in making the enquiries on different castes and tribes. Other persons who helped Russell were Rai Bahadur Panda Baijnath, Diwan of the Patna and Bastar States, Babu Kali Prasad Mukerjee, pleader Saugor, Mr. Jeorakhan Lal, Deputy Inspector of Schools and Mr. Gokul Prasad. These people also rendered much help for the collection of material for the four volumes of 'The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India'.

Amongst other British Colonial Administrative Personnel, European officers viz., Messers. C.E. Low, C.W. Montgomerie, A.B. Napier (a ward in the Jubbulpore town was named as 'Napier Town' after him), A.E. Nelson, A.K. Smith, R.H. Crosthwaite and H.F. Hallifax of the Indian Civil Service, rendered a lot of assistance to Mr. Russell. Lt. Col. W.D. Sutherland, I.M.S., Surgeon-Major Mitchell of Bastar, and Mr. D. Chisholm also provided a great deal of help to Mr. Russell. Mr. Russell had also expressed his gratitude to the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces and Berar, Sir Benjamin Robertson (a college in Jubbulpore town was named after him as Robertson College'), for the liberal allotment made by the Administration for the publication of the four volumes of 'Castes and Tribes of the Central Provinces of India'.

The Monumental Contribution of Russell & others:

The territory of the Central Provinces and Berar had an area of 1,31,000 square miles, situated in the centre of the great Indian Peninsula, between latitudes 17° 47' and 24° 27' north, and longitudes 76° and 84° east, and occupied about 7.3 percent of the total area of the British India. This territory, on the western tract included Hindi-speaking districts of Saugor, Damoh, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Hoshangabad, Nimar, and Betul.

The eastern tract included Raipur, Bilaspur, and Durg districts and adjacent feudatory states. This country was known as 'Chhattisgarh'. The Marathi-speaking districts of Amraoti, Akola, Buldhana and Yeotmal of Berar, and Nagpur, Bhandara, Wardha and Chanda districts of the Nagpur plain also formed a part of this territory. Tribal districts of Mandla, Seoni, Chhindwara, Balaghat, States of Sarguja, Jashpur, Udaipur, Korea, Chang Bhakar, Bastar and Kanker were also a part of this territory. Oriya speaking Sambalpur district and Sarangarh, Bamra, Rairakhol, Sonpur, Patna and Kalahandi feudatory states, with the exception of Sarangarh, no longer formed a part of the Central Provinces as these were all transferred to Bengal in 1905, and subsequently to the new province of Bihar and Orissa. This area was however, included in the ethnographic survey for some years and was often referred to in the text by Mr. Russell.

The monumental work done by Russell and Hiralal was published under the caption, 'Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India' in four volumes in the year 1915. Russell has become immortal, as a road-cross in the midst of Jubbulpore town was named after him as 'Russell Chowk', which is still there in the town.

The administrators and researchers even today refer to these volumes whenever there is any need of information relating to the castes and tribes of Central India.

The British Colonial Administrative Personnel had to face very unfavourable circumstances in Central India. There was Maratha uprising and the General of the Peshwa viz., Bhonsale (Nagpur), Scindia (Gwalior) and Holkar (Indore) were very active in this area. They all supported tacitly, the armies of Pindaries and Thugs

operating in Central India. It had become an arena of plunder. The Central Provinces was constituted as a separate unit in the year 1861 from the territories which were taken from the Peshwa in 1861 and the Maratha State of Nagpur which in the year 1853 was taken over by the British on account of failure of heirs.

In part I, Vol. I of the 'Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India', Mr. Russell had given an introductory essay on caste, articles on the religions and sects of the people of the Central Provinces, glossary of minor castes and other articles, synonyms, sub-castes, titles and names of exogamous sects or clans. In part II, volumes II, III & IV, he included descriptive articles on the principal castes and tribes of the Central Provinces.

Besides Russell, another colonial administrative personnel, Mr. W.V. Grigson, of the Indian Civil Service, contributed a lot in the field of studying the 'Aboriginal problem in the Central Provinces and Berar'. The British Govt. was quite alive to the problems of the aboriginal tribes of the Central Provinces and Berar as they had appointed Mr. Grigson, an officer of the Indian Civil Service, as Aboriginal Tribes Enquiry Officer in the year 1940. The provincial govt. of the Central Provinces and Berar, had under consideration, the measures necessary to improve the lot of the aboriginal tribes in the province.

The then Govt. of the Central Provinces considered that the whole question of aboriginal problem should form the subject-matter of a systematic and co-ordinated enquiry to be conducted by a special officer. Mr. Grigson worked from 1940 to 1942 in the above capacity. And during the course of his tenure in the office, he toured extensively in the districts of Mandla, Chhindwara, Betul and Balaghat. He submitted two reports on the aboriginal condition in Mandla and Balaghat districts. Besides, he had also submitted a separate report (not published) on the Chhindwara Jagirs.

The final report on 'The Aboriginal problem in the Central Provinces and Berar', was submitted by Mr. Grigson in the year 1942, which dealt with specifically, the aboriginal problems in Saugor, Jubbulpore, Mandla, Hoshangabad, Nimar, Betul, Chhindwara, Wardha, Nagpur, Chanda, Bhandara, Balaghat, Raipur, Bilaspur and Durg districts of the Central Province.

In this historical work, Mr. Grigson high-lighted the problems of the contemporary tribal communities of these districts and made suitable recommendations to the planners and administrators to solve their problems. The then Govt. of the Central Provinces and Berar, had attached much importance to this report and many of the recommendations made therein, were translated into action.

Mr. Grigson had acknowledged, amongst other, the contribution made by certain administrative personnel of the Indian Civil Service viz., Messers. E.S. Hyde, Deputy Commissioner of Mandla, J.K. Atal, Deputy Commissioner of Saugor and R.C.V.P. Naronha (the Academy of Administration in Madhya Pradesh was named after him

as 'RCVP Naronha Academy of Administration'), Assistant Commissioner, Saugor. Significantly, Mr. Grigson had further mentioned in his report on the 'Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar' that the younger members of his own service, had taken a lot of interest. Admirable papers on conditions amongst the aboriginals in the Amraoti district, were contributed by Messers. J.K. Sullivan, I.C.S., F.P. Mainprice, I.C.S., and J.K. Atal, I.C.S. Additionally, Mr. R.C.V.P. Naronha, I.C.S., had sent an interesting account of the aboriginals in Saugor district, and collaborated with Mr. K.B. Lall, I.C.S., and produced a good report on the conditions of the aboriginals in the Mahasamund Zamindaris of Raipur district. Mr. A.M. Jafri, Extra Assistant Commissioner, had submitted a very useful report to Mr. Grigson on the conditions of the aboriginals in Satgarh Zamindaris. Mr. J.D. Kerawala, Extra Assistant Commissioner had also submitted a similar report on the conditions of the aboriginals in the Ahiri Zamindaris.

Mr. Grigson had further stated that these various reports submitted by the above mentioned administrative personnel, contain material which was of permanent value and might well be printed, atleast in part. Mr. Grigson, in his report had mentioned the names of various administrative personnel of the Forest Department, who rendered valuable help by way of providing useful information, viz., Mr. C.M. Harlow, C.I.E., I.F.S., Chief Conservator, Mr. H.C.B. Jollye, I.F.S., Conservator, Western Circle, and Mr. V.K. Maitland, M.C., I.F.S., Conservator, Eastern Circle. All divisional officers of the forest department had sent extremely useful replies upon questions relating to forest, to the questionnaires administered by Mr. Grigson during the course of his enquiries into the aboriginal problem.

To investigate into the labour conditions in coal mines of the Central Provinces, a separate investigation by Mr. A. Hughes, I.C.S., from Bengal and Mr. G.L. Watson, I.C.S., from the Central Provinces, was ordered by the British Government, though this term of reference was also included in the terms of reference of Mr. Grigson's enquiry into the aboriginal problem in the Central Provinces and Berar.

The effect upon the aboriginal tribes, with regard to the administration and management of private forests in the Central Provinces, was thoroughly investigated and closely studied. The question of 'grazing' and 'nistar' in the Zamindari forests had been exhaustively surveyed. Mr. H.S. Kamath, I.C.S., had submitted a very useful report in this behalf in the year 1941 (later on he retired as the Chief Secretary Govt. of Madhya Pradesh). His complete report was printed under the caption 'Grazing and Nistar in the Central Provinces, Estates, the Report of an Enquiry by H.S. Kamath, I.C.S.' (Nagpur Govt. Printing, 1941).

A very useful report on the Administration of the Central Provinces up to August 1862 had been prepared by Mr. R. Temple (Nagpur, 1923, reprint of the first provincial administration report). A classic report for the Satgarh estates and for protection of headmen and gaontias, was prepared by C.V. Wills, I.C.S., under the

caption 'Bilaspur Zamindaris Settlement Report 1912'. Mr. C.G.Chenevix-Trench, I.C.S. had prepared 'Grammar of Gondi as Spoken in the Betul district

(Madras Govt. Press, 1919, two volumes). Another book on 'Grammar of Maria Gondi Language' was prepared by Mr. A.N. Mitchell, I.C.S.(Jagdalpur, Bastar State Press, 1942). This was the only good book on the grammar of Maria Gondi.

Sir Wilfred Grigson was also appointed as administrator Bastar state by Sir Montagu Butler, K.C.S.I., C.B., C.I.E. C.V.O., C.B.E., who was for nine years, Governor of the Central Provinces and in Political charge of the Central Provinces States. Mr. R.A. Wilson, who was the chief secretary then, to the Government of the Central Provinces, had suggested Mr. Grigson to study the Marias of Bastar. Dr. J.H. Hutton, C.I.E., I.C.S., and the last Census Commissioner of India (1930), (and who later on became Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Cambridge), had taken the trouble to read the manuscript on 'The Maria Gonds of Bastar', prepared by Mr. Grigson. And he had contributed an interesting introduction to Grigson's outstanding work on 'The Maria Gonds of Bastar'. Mr. Grigson's interest in the 'Gonds' was stimulated by his early discussions with Mr. C.G. Chenevix-Trench, I.C.S., C.I.E., who was then serving in the Central Provinces Commission. He was the author of a fascinating Gondi grammar and other contributions which vividly describe the Indian aboriginal.

Mr. Grigson calls Russell and Hiralal's 'Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India', "the mine of ethnological treasure" by which he was benefitted to a large extent by arousing his interest in the 'Gonds'. Although he did not agree with the twin-authors in many respects, on the material they produced on the Maria Gonds of Bastar. Mr. Grigson remained in Bastar as administrator for four years from 1927 to 1931. During this tenure, he was in constant touch with the 'Maria' and studied their way of life very intimately. As Administrator of Bastar state, he made various enquiries to know the grievances of the tribal people, especially with regard to the introduction of criminal, civil and revenue laws framed for the British Indian districts.

Mr. Grigson, while writing a foreword to Verrier Elwin's book, 'Maria Murder and Suicide', had clearly made a policy statement, as far as the aboriginals were concerned, saying:

"The programme of any wise administration for these areas should be not only to enable the tribesman to hold his own in the world without losing his way of life, his virtues, his dancing, his songs and his laughter, but also, once he had been secured freedom from fear, from want, and from interference, to make his own special contribution to the free India that is to be.....".

Another British Colonial Administrative Personnel Mr. E.A. De Brett, I.C.S., Political agent at Raipur, made an outstanding contribution by way of studying the people of the fourteen Feudatory states of Chhattisgarh. Thus, he produced a very

useful document under the caption 'Chhattisgarh Feudatory States' in the year 1909. In order to prepare this document, material was supplied by the Feudatory Chiefs of ten states viz., Bastar, Kanker, Surguja, Raigarh, Jashpur, Sakti, Khairagarh, Kawardha, Korea and Chang Bhakar. As regards the four remaining states viz., Udaipur, Sarangarh, Nandgaon, Chhuikhadan, information was provided by the Superintendents-in-Charge of these states.

Major-General Sir John Malcohm produced a classic document about Central India, in two volumes under the caption 'A Memoir of Central India, including Malwa'. This work contains valuable information about the people of Central India and Malwa region.

Another immensely valuable and voluminous classic of India under the caption 'Annals and antiquities of Rajasthan on the Central and Western Rajpoot states of India' and its republication was brought out in 1914 in the name of Lieut. Col. James Tod, late Political Agent to the Western Rajpoot states. This work is in two volumes. Vol. I contains 631 pages whereas Vol. II runs into 637 pages. Both the volumes contain detailed information about the Rajpoot states of Central and Western India. The republication is dedicated to the Maharaja Rana of Jhalawar, the heir of Zalim Singh the Great. Mr. Douglas Sladen while writing the foreword of this republication in 1914, mentioned, "Zalim Singh the Great, the Indian Machiavelle, the Rajpoot prince who practically saved the British Power in India, nearly a hundred years ago...."

The original publication of the first volume was dedicated by Col. James Tod to George the Fourth in the year 1829.

Another masterpiece contribution to the history of the British Colonial Administration in Central India, was made by the 'Brave Policeman', Col. Sleeman. His contribution cannot be forgotten. He was made in charge for the suppression and eradication of the 'Thuggee' system from Central India. Before carrying his operations, he made very deep studies of the 'Thuggee' system in Central India, their language of communication and their genealogies. He got the Thug leader Ameer Ali arrested and put him in jail at Saugor Fort where later on Mr. Meadows Tylor collected bio-graphical material from Ameer Ali and produced a masterpiece biography under the caption 'Confessions of a Thug'. Col. (Sir) Sleeman was so popular in Central India that the British administration named a railway station near Jubbulpore as 'Sleemanabad', in order to commemorate his contribution to the British Colonial Administration in Central India.

No such deep studies of the people were ever made in the independent India, since the British left this land. Whenever there is any problem about any tribe or caste in India, we often refer to the reports and studies made by the British Colonial Administrative Personnel. They all, who happened to produce such historical reports, have become immortal in the history of the British Colonial Administration in India.

They were the people who remained on this land for more than 350 years. The British Colonial Administrative Personnel were not only interested in making their own fortunes, but had an intellectual approach towards giving good governance to the people also. They gave a definite administrative and legal frame-work to this country.

It was a unique feature with the British Administration in India that before entering any area they wanted to have detailed information about the country and its people whom they had to administer. Most of the British officers of the Indian Civil Service belonged to the higher aristocratic stratum of the British Society. They were all well-educated and had a flare for intellectual pursuits alongside their normal administrative duties. At times, their reports and accounts are pieces of literature and poetry. The picturesque tribal areas of this sub-continent, luxuriant forests, tribal virtues, their dancing, their songs and laughter, their zest, zeal and joyous life, their delight and distress, their sufferings and privations, this all taken together attracted the British Colonial Administrative Officers to reduce their empirical impressions in black and white. Consequently, such a venture had been instrumental in producing a lot of material on tribal way of life which ultimately paved the way for efficient governance at the hands of the Raj.

The British Colonial Administrative Personnel played a key role as advisers, researchers and administrators, as far as tribal affairs were concerned. More so, the colonial administrators working in tribal areas also happened to influence the debates preceding the drafting of the Government of India Bill, 1935, and argued in favour of the total exclusion of the tribal areas from the ambit of constitutional reforms.

Categorically speaking, Anthropology is said to be a child of colonialism, a historical and empirical experience that sensitized the local administration to the problems and needs of the tribal communities. Anthropologists generally played an important role in the formulation of colonial policies on tribal areas.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between anthropology and administration is indispensable. You could always administer the people and the area in a better way if you have basic information about the country and its people. Groping in the dark with little learning is no good governance. Thus, anthropology in this country developed as a part and parcel of the colonial administrative system which delivered meaningful goods. Mr. K.S. Singh of the Indian Administrative Service, while making his presidential address at Bhubaneswar in 1977 on 'Colonial Transformation of the Tribal Society in Middle India', had very rightly observed, "On the one hand anthropology has been labelled as a child of imperialism while on the other it has been stated that anthropology is not a "bastard of imperialism but the legitimate child of enlightenment".

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