

The Modal Mysore state influenced by the British Administration

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ABSTRACT

Among the Princely States of pre- independent India, Mysore was one of the most important ones in area, population and resources. It was called a model state in view of the efficiency of administration, benevolence of the rulers and the prevailing liberal political institutions. Here an attempt is made to assess the British impact on the administration of Mysore in the nineteenth century. The study is based on Proceedings of the Government of Mysore, Reports on the Administration, contemporary works, besides a number of secondary sources. However, the study confines to the nineteenth century and specially relates to general administration and judiciary. The restored government organized the revenue and finance systems successfully. It helped the people to get peace. It was during this period that the British introduced a number of administrative changes and laid the foundation of a progressive system of administration and as such as State felt the impact of the British rule on a large scale. The Commissioners took the place of the Ruler and made themselves the focus from which all orders emanated. The task entrusted to the Commission was not to inaugurate a new system but to reform flagrant abuses in the old, to liberate trade and commerce to secure the people In their just rights against the gross tyranny and shameful extortion of a host of unscrupulous officials In every department, to purify and regulate the administration of justice, and to develop the resources of the country.

Key Words: British, Mysore, pre- independent, liberal political, foundation, reform flagrant.

Introduction

Among the Princely States of pre- independent India, Mysore was one of the most important ones in area, population and resources. It was called a model state in view of the efficiency of administration, benevolence of the rulers and the prevailing liberal political institutions. That was largely the result of the British impact on the State in various walks of life. British impact was greater on the State as it was directly held by them for half a century, during which time they laid the foundation of the administrative system. Here an attempt is made to assess the British impact on the administration of Mysore in the nineteenth century. The study is based on Proceedings of the Government of Mysore, Reports on the Administration, contemporary works, besides a number of secondary sources. However, the study confines to the nineteenth century and specially relates to general administration and judiciary.

1) Background

The British after their decisive victory over Tipu Sultan occupied the entire kingdom of Mysore. Purnaiah, formerly the finance minister of Tipu, suggested the restoration of the kingdom to one of Tipu's family members. However, for obvious reasons, the Governor-General. Lord Wellesley, resolved to restore a portion of the territory to a descendant of the ancient royal house of Mysore instead of Tipu's family member. He held that the establishment of a central and separate power in the ancient territories of Mysore was the best expedient for reconciling the interests of all parties.¹ Under the Subsidiary Treaty, the British East India Company bound themselves to maintain a force for the protection of the State of Mysore.

The civil government was divided into three departments, viz (1) Treasury and Finance (i)Revenue, and (ii) Miscellaneous. The military consisted of cavalry and infantry. There was also the Candachar of Establishment of Peons concerned with civil and military functions.² The restored government organized the revenue and finance systems successfully. It helped the people to get peace. A survey of the State was carried out by Colin Mackenzie who prepared the first accurate map of Mysore in 1808.³ Due to disturbances in some parts of Mysore State which arose from a combination of causes, some of which were beyond the control of the Maharaja's government, the administration of the State was taken over by the Governor-General In 1831.⁴ It was a hasty decision on the part of the Governor-General misguided by the prejudiced views of Le authorities at Madras. Mysore Under the Commissioner

For the next fifty years Mysore State was ruled directly by the Governor General through the Commissioner. It was during this period that the British introduced a number of administrative

changes and laid the foundation of a progressive system of administration and as such as State felt the impact of the British rule on a large scale. The Commissioners took the place of the Ruler and made themselves the focus from which all orders emanated.⁵ They introduced various reforms with the intention to reduce expenditure and to give effect to the objects for which the Commission was established. The task entrusted to the Commission was not to inaugurate a new system but to reform flagrant abuses in the old, to liberate trade and commerce to secure the people in their just rights against the gross tyranny and shameful extortion of a host of unscrupulous officials. In every department, to purify and regulate the administration of justice, and to develop the resources of the country.⁶

2) General Administration

For convenience of study, the administration of Mysore by the British may be divided into two periods. The first period is called Non-Regulation Period from 1831 to 1861 and Mark Cubbon was the Commissioner for a long time of the period. The second period is known as the Regulation Period from 1862 to 1881 when Bowring played an important role as the Commissioner. The British Commission was organized in 1834 and the six Foudardars were constituted into four divisions, each under a European Superintendent with Revenue and Judicial powers. As heads of civil government, the European Superintendents conducted revenue, magisterial and certain judicial duties. Respecting all customs and institutions of the State, the Superintendents were in charge of all civil and criminal matters. They were assisted by Amildars.

Cubbon's Services (1834-61)

Mark Cubbon administered the State well on the lines of benevolent despotism and secured peace and order. He remedied the defects of the land revenue and provided for easy installments, abolishing payment in kind. A Judicial Commission was appointed and the departments of Education and Public Works were started. Cubbon was responsible for great improvements in Mysore State without substantially changing the native system of administration. Finances had been improved and Mysore had been opened out with roads.⁷ Till 1854 all accounts were kept in Caneroi pagodas and the old system of calculation was abandoned and a new one based on the Company's currency in terms of rupees was started from 1855. They also started the publication of the annual report of the administration in 1856.

During Cubbon's time Mysore was a Non- Regulation Province- "a province to which the old Regulations and Acts in force in the Regulation Provinces had not yet been extended, in which fewer officers were employed, and in which executive and judicial functions were to a great extent exercised

by the same persons.⁸ As His Highness the Maharaja said, Cubbon was responsible for great importance in Mysore without changing the native system of administration. He laid the foundations of an efficient system of administration. His work was praised by villagers and officials, high and low in Mysore.⁹

Changes by the New Commissioner

In spite of the fact that the considerable progress had been achieved during Cubbon's regime in improving the finances and communications, yet it was far below the standard of the adjoining British provinces in many other matters. With the object of carrying the people with government changes with a spirit of Innovation were introduced with extreme care, and interests of the State were materially advanced. The new Commissioner, Bowring, with his long period of experience in the provinces, felt the need for a change and attempted to introduce a system of administration in conformity with the spirit of the times in place of a patriarchal system. Hence, the year 1862-63 "had been specially marked by a gradual reorganisation and an extension of the agency for conducting the administration."¹⁰

Regulation system replaced the Non- Regulation one. Bowring held that time had come for modifying the patriarchal system, i.e. the concentration of all authority in the hands of one man. He also felt the need for uniformity of practice in different divisions and to reduce their size to make them more efficient. To remedy the latter the State was divided into eight districts, each under a Deputy Superintendent, the districts being grouped into three divisions, each under the charge of a superintendent. To set right the former, the action of all was guided and controlled by laws and regulations Introduced with general effect throughout the State. In revenue matters the business was classified, rules of procedure were laid down and a uniform set of returns and registers were adopted. Though a semblance of the old order was retained, it was "with different superiors to be accountable to In different matters and with their action governed by set laws and regulations, the influence of departments was felt even in themselves" ¹¹

Departmental Reforms

The designation of Superintendent was changed to that of Commissioner through all the grades in 1873, the head of the administration having been already called Chief Commissioner in 1869.¹² Bowring's administration was mainly noted for the large number of departmental reforms introduced by him which gave the government a modern colour. He also established a department of account, a department of lands, a new police system and a larger educational agency. The effect of the improvements was to increase the superior grade officers who were mostly Europeans."¹³ Sweeping

changes were effected in the financial system. Budget system of audit and accounts was introduced and surplus money was spent on public works. As the main source of income was land revenue, attention was focused on regulating it on the basis of measurement. Land survey was started, forests and channels were conserved. Roads were laid, education was extended, municipalities were established and Jails were reformed.

In fact the two Commissioners. Bowring and Meade, both aimed at "raising the standard of administration in Mysore to that prevailing in British India" and they spent the surplus money on irrigation, on employment of a large number of Europeans, on the formation of new departments and on promotion to native officers.¹⁴

Changes in the Revenue System

In previous years, the system of farming the revenue to the highest bidders had been introduced and there were many evils of arbitrary assessment, over-rating the products of lands and forced sale of government grains. Once the British took over the administration, they abolished the sharti and Introduced the ryotwarl system. The ryotwari 'was liberalized in all its details and vigilantly superintended In its working, with higher views'. The money rents were lowered in all cases and the payments were made easy by system of exacting the kists before the crops were gathered and instead collecting it in agreed instalments.¹⁵ It was beneficial to the ryot as it helped him to make the payment after harvest and saved him from periodical examination of their crops by officials. Batayl system of cultivation was also in practice and attempts were made to convert the government share into a money assessment.

So far as the revenue administration was concerned, the Superintendents controlled the Amildars by checking all collections and disbursements made by them In revenue matters. The unit of administration was the taluk and "the Amildar was the Keystone of the arch... What the superintendent was in the division, an Amildar was within the taluk- a judge, a magistrate and a collector".¹⁶ Ryotwarl system was followed and lands were classified as Kushki, Tarl and Bagayat. The Amildars were helped by a number of officials. The Patel as headman of the village had police duties. The Shanubhag was the registrar or accountant and was the agent between the ryot and the sarkar. He was to keep 'a detailed account of demand, collection and balance of every Individual in the village'.¹⁷ The Shanubhag become the main agent In every arrangement between the ryot and the government and "it was to him and to his books that the ryot and the Government alike looked for the record of their respective rights".¹⁸ The Shekdar assisted the Amildars by supervising the village officials in the hobli. Patels assisted the Shekdars to carry the orders of the Amildars into effect. "What the Shekdar

was to the Shanubhag of his nobll, the Amildar in his revenue capacity was to the Shekdars of his taluk"¹⁹

Janabandi Circuits

The Superintendent was at once collector, magistrate and judge and had a laborious job. The Superintendent proceeded on his Jamabandi circuits soon after the month of November as was practicable. The Pattas, with a description of the land held and the amount of tax to be paid, were distributed to the ryots by the superintendents at Jamabandi. The details were read over to each ryot as he was called to receive his pattah. Even the kists or installments of the ryot were entered as they were paid. Such an action brought every tax-payer into personal contact with the superintendent and offered him an opportunity to seek redress for any grievance, and It was the chief advantage of the ryotwart system.

These Jamabandi circuits were also useful because of the superintendent caused an examination of village accounts of Shanubhag with that of Taluk cutcherry: all disputes referred to him were settled immediately. The superintendents were to take care of the welfare of the ryots by arranging repairs of tanks ensuring proper assessments during harvest time. Thus the Jamabandi circuits were very useful to bring about contact between higher officials and the ryots ensuring confidence, faith and mutual understanding. Still the land revenue system was Imperfect and there was vast scope for manoeuvring by the Shanughab. The Commissioner felt the urgent need for a regular land revenue survey and it was started in 1862. They adopted the Bombay revenue system.

3). Judiciary

When the British assumed the administration of Mysore in 1831, the judiciary consisted of five types of courts, and they generally combined civil and criminal jurisdictions. They were: (1) the Amildar's Courts, (ii)Town Munsiff's Courts, (ii)Principal Sudder Munsif's Courts, (iv)Huzur Adalat, and (v)the Court of the Commissioner. The decision was always written. The Principal Sudder Munsiff's Courts and the Courts of European Superintendents were courts of original jurisdiction and appeal. Appeals from them were referred to Superintendents of Divisions or to the Huzur Adalat. The superintendents exercised control over the Munsifs. The Huzur Adalat consisting of three Indian judges and the court of the Commissioner were only courts of appeal. From the decisions of the Superintendents and the Adalat, the Commissioner heard appeals directly or through feryad. In cases of landed property an appeal decision was deemed final.

The Judiciary was reformed and an improved system was established under the new set-up. Six types of courts starting with the Amildar's courts and ending with the Commissioner's court were established. Huzur Adalat court with three Indian judges heard appeals from subordinate courts. The Commissioner's court heard appeals from the decisions of Superintendents and of Huzur Adalat. Thus they were courts of appeal only. This patriarchal system of judicial administration continued till 1856 when judiciary was separated from the executive at least at the highest court. The judicial powers of the Commissioners were transferred to a separate officer called the Judicial Commissioner. The judicial system was reorganized in 1862-63 and it consisted of:

- (1) the Judicial Commissioner who held the powers of the Chief Court,
- (2) the Superintendent of Division
- (3) the Deputy Superintendents,
- (4) the Assistant Superintendents, and
- (5) Amildars.

Changes in the Judicial System

The Judicial Commissioner was, hereafter, in charge of political, police and Jail administration. The remaining officials exercised control over civil, criminal and revenue departments. The Hazur Adalat and Sudder Munsiff's courts were abolished. Two Small Cause Courts were established. The Deputy Superintendent In charge of the district tried all suits, and appeals over his decisions were heard by the Superintendent. A simple code of rules was compiled to aid Amildars in the decision of civil suits. The code was compiled from the Punjab rules and from the Civil Procedure Code. The Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure defined the offences and the punishments to be awarded. The system of fees was abolished and stamp rules were introduced. From 1866 appeals from the Judicial Assistants were heard by the Commissioners instead of the Deputy Superintendents. The more important decisions relating to dispensing of equal Justice were taken in 1867 when it was decided that " (1) no decree should ever be passed on appeal without giving the parties an opportunity of appearing on an appointed day; (2) that the decision should invariably be written by the Judge. The rights of parties to appear by Counsel was also recognized from the year 1867.²⁰ As an important first step towards the separation of Judicial and executive functions, the Judicial Assistant was appointed in 1869 relieving the Assistant Superintendent of their civil work. The appointment of the Munsifs in 1874-75 relieved the Amildars of civil Jurisdiction. The executive officers were relieved of all civil work and the district judges were appointed in place of

Commissioners. Finally, the Judicial department was separated from the Revenue and it consisted of the Judicial Commissioner, the District and Sessions Judge, the Subordinate Judge and the Munsiff.

Administration of Criminal Justice In the early years of British rule the same Judges administered both civil and criminal Justice. The Amildar was the head of the police. In his revenue and magisterial duties he had under him Shekdars, Killedars, Talwars, Hoblidars, Duffedars and kandachar officials. Killedars and Hoblidars were police officials. The Amildars could fine up to Rs.7 or Imprison a person for fourteen days in criminal cases. The Sadar Munsiff heard appeals and could fine up to Rs.15 and imprison for two years. The Superintendent had the power to fine up to Rs.30 or imprison for seven years In criminal matters and was a court of civil appeal from the decrees of the Munsiffs. The Huzur Adalat consisting of three Indian Judges could impose higher punishment but its decision was open to revision by the Commissioner.²¹ The Sadar Munsiffs had no original jurisdiction in criminal matters and referred them to the Superintendent who had the power to review all cases Inquired into by the Amildars or decided by the Munsiffs. Such cases which involved capital punishment were referred to the Commissioner who could pass death sentence subject to confirmation by the Supreme Government. Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes were introduced in 1862-63. Deputy Superintendents were named as District Magistrates, and the powers of Session Judges were exercised by the Superintendents of divisions and the Judicial Commissioner's court was the highest court of reference, revision and appeal. At the time of Rendition, Civil and Sessions Judged were appointed with exclusive powers."²²

Thus the half century of British administration of Mysore introduced a constitutional fabric of government ensuring liberty of speech, security of life and property, together with Impartial justice. Agriculturists and traders were profited by revenue reforms and development of communications. However, the Panchayat system was discarded and it was a retrograde measure."²³

Conclusion

Unlike many other States, Mysore was directly under the British rule for half a century and its impact was considerable. In the nineteenth century the administration in most of the States was similar to medieval feudal despotism and was very backward with all power and authority concentrated in the hands of the ruler who did not care for the people under his charge. The administration in them was not properly organized. But in Mysore due to the efforts and devotion to duty of a few British officers, and effective fabric of administrative system was established, various departments were organized and regulated. By the time of Rendition in 1881 the State of Mysore was well organized and administered fairly efficiently.

However, they had reduced the importance of the Panchayat system which was a retrograde step and had lavishly spent on liberal salaries of the European officials. Barring these, Mysore owes a debt of gratitude to the British officials who served it. More than in any other State the British impact on Mysore was greater; and if at a later stage. Mysore administration was praised by many, the credit should go to the British for having laid a sound foundation of the administrative system on which the later rulers raised the superstructure.

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