



INFLUENCE AND EFFECTS OF BRITISH RULE ON INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

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Introduction

After Sixty eight years of Independence, India's democracy that too parliamentary democracy is not come out from the influence of British rule and the effects of it are still alive in different manner. While analyzing the history of independence of India an anonymous scholar said after Quit India Movement that 'Britishers left the India but they kept Britishism in India.' Many times we feel pride to say that we got our independence peacefully and we glorified it as "Political power was transferred in Peaceful manner without bloody revolution"¹. But the fact is as M. V. Pylee said, 'the attainment of independence was not end in itself but it was beginning of a new struggle, the struggle to live as an independent nation and at the same time, to establish a democracy based upon the ideals justice, liberty, equality and fraternity'². It was a great challenge for the framers of constitution to decide the nature of constitution or suitable constitution to India and Indian society. As we know India is the county of much diversity since ancient time and it is a traditional society with number of regional differences. So framing the constitution was a great challenge to the leaders.

Some of the leaders were not interested in continuation of the British legacy even after independence. But most of the leaders thought that continuation of British model was not only essential but inevitable and they justified the inclusion of provisions of the Government of India Act 1935. Dr.B. R. Ambedkar justified this inevitability as "As to the accusation that the draft constitution has reproduced a good part of the provisions of the Government India Act 1935. There is nothing to ashamed of in borrowing. It involves no plagiarism. Nobody holds any patent in the fundamental ideas of a constitution"³. Hence the constitution derived directly from the Government of India Act 1935 and act was suitably modified according to the need of that time. But till today Indian constitution is being called as 'borrowed Constitution' and situational and historical inevitabilities still continued and it is a great paradox of Indian Polity. The same statement is continued that 'Constitution of India is a result of considerable imitation and adaption rather than originality'⁴. But the effect of this imitation did not limit to the political system but spread over social and cultural life of Indians. Knowingly or unknowingly nature of imitation has become the routine habit of life. Of course this inevitable imitation might have helped us to adopt well developed state or political system, but not core of the ancient Indian civil society. With this introduction. The discussion is made on how the notion of borrowed constitution and inevitability of adopting provisions 1935 act affecting and influencing the present day parliamentary democracy and causing for the ups and downs of it.

Parliamentary Democracy of India

Before saying something about present Indian parliamentary democracy or Parliamentary form of Government of India, it is better to have a glance on Indian history. If we go through ancient history we find glimpses of developed polity in which we can see the features of representative government (for example Sabha, Sadana, Kulapathi, Vishapthi of Vedic Period). Though, there was monarchy form of Government, it never neglected democratic values. People or (Citizens) have rights to question and complain the king (if king neglected his duty).The concept of 'Rajadharma' in which one can observe cordial relation between king and people and clarity of their responsibilities. These are all features which an ideal representation government expects. Monarchical democracy of ancient India had maintained its own uniqueness.

Another important factor to note about original nature of India and Indians. This is properly pointed out by Thompson "no other country was or is as much of influence of ideals (old and new, good and bad) pertaining to politics, art, literature and science, society and economy as India. All convergent influences of the world run through this society. He also said ' the struggle between forces of the past, the present and the future in India, held less on for every other country and people. Every country should be interested in the ongoing Indian experiment.'⁵ with this background let us see the functioning of present parliamentary democracy in India.

No doubt India successfully maintained political stability without affecting the motto of unity in diversity. The secret of this success lies not in the form of government borrowed from the British model, but in the unique nature of Indian soil or Indian culture, i.e. tolerance. Basically Indians are great lovers of peace and harmony and they respect the community life and they have faith in cordial and cooperative way of life.The framers of our Constitution justified their choice of parliamentary government and their interest in following provisions of 1935 Act of Government of India by giving the reason that it will help to maintain unity and diversity and they defended their view that condition of that time was not conducive to have new form of government because most of the Indians were uneducated and innocent. But we should not forget the fact as many western scholars said, diversities are not new to India, even before British rule diversities were maintained healthily and differences were managed properly.



With these introductory words this paper attempts to emphasize the reason behind the smooth running of democracy in India is the socio-cultural effect of Indian heritage not mere the adoption parliamentary form of government borrowed from the British and it also wants to say that if the present parliament democracy is facing some problems and challenges and suffering from hindrances it is not because of complexities of the Indian society, but because of the projected complexes and complications under the rule of outsiders particularly British rule.

Problems and Hindrances of Parliamentary Democracy at Present

Though, India is facing number of internal problems and external threats, here few such problems and threats have taken as examples. India is facing contemporary problems like communalism, complexities of cast system, crisis in diversities, complications of multiparty system, emergence coalition form of government and ever ending problems of Kashmir, threat of terrorism etc.

All above mentioned problems have their root in the rule of British and in the inevitabilities created by it, of course this statement may not be accepted by all and there are differences of opinion in this regard. Among the framers of the constitution and there was no unanimous of opinion in deciding the nature of Constitution. Most of the leaders who have taken much interest and initiation in framing the constitution were highly influenced by the western culture, their way of thinking and style of administration. And few of them of the thought that it is difficult to bring change in form of government or administration immediately just after the sudden quit of Britishers from India.

Consciously or unconsciously the common men of India were adjusted with British rule or administration, they were not aware of the repercussions of transformation of power from Britishers to India. Again, even after Independence also the common citizens of the India were kept away while deciding the form of government by saying that most of them were uneducated and did not have political awareness so and so forth. Because of all these reasons the constitution of India took shape and formed under the title of Borrowed Constitution. Here how situational inevitability is causing for the problems the today and such problems are as follows..

Discarding the Village and Adoption of the Individual as it Unit”.

It is one of the important issues which affected the very original zeal of India soil. In India the nature village was like a single community so, they have been described village communities. Metcalfe a British scholar described them as little republics and almost independent of any foreign relation. They contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India.⁶

Surprisingly it was questioned criticized by the framers of constitution. Dr. Ambedkar was also not interested in notion of village communities and instead of that he gave prominence to village Panchayats. He boldly declared that ‘I am glad that the Draft constitution has discarded the village and adopted the individual of its unit.’⁷

2. Disappearance of Communitarism and Entry of Unwanted Communalism

In the course of British rule one can see the foresight of Britishers in defending their illegitimate supremacy. The Acts passed under their rule, which gave temporarily satisfaction but in long run they affected unity and community life of Indians, for instance some acts caused for the emergence of two wings in the congress moderates and extremists. Demand for Muslim League was also indirectly influenced by the instigation British rulers, very systematically they got success in dividing Indians as Hindus and Muslim and bring communal feeling among the. Even today can one see the bad affects it? Poisonous seed of communalism sowed by the British rule grew as big tree and now it has been turned as the internal problem and external challenge to India.

3. Role of Elite Class and Cultural Imbalance

It is one of the important facts to discuss how the British rule insisted the dominance of elite class (India) in political and social field. Most of the elite class people were the sincere followers or imitators’ of British culture and they thought that it was a type of prestigious matter. Later on imitation become as model for some middle class also. And this was the factor which brought cultural imbalance and affected the way of life.

4. Language and Education System

Effect of language and education are two important factors which always play very important role in the survival of any culture and sustaining the heritage. Britishers used these two factors very diligently and also intelligently to establish their empire in India. Even today British rule is continued through language and education. Of Course it may be correct to accept the respect the good things of others at some extent but one should not lose their originality and identity. To be frank, today



the English is playing its role not only as a language but as a strong means to shake the stable culture of India. As we know always there is indivisible relation and inner and inter dependent influence between culture and language.

Diversification of Diversities

Britishers intelligence can be seen in the diversification diversities of India. They appreciated and glorified the multi- culture system of India, but at the same time very systematically they diversified the zeal of unity and ideal of community life. Today some of our so called politicians are also doing a same thing just to seek and grab the power.

Thus, the effects and influences of British rule are still ruling the Indian mind, society and also state or political system. This article sampled common opinion of common people. But it should be examined critically by the academicians systematically.

Conclusion

The main intension and purpose of the framing the constitution was the reconstruction of India. As Pylee said, “the Constitution she adopted was intended to be not merely a means of establishing governmental machinery but also an effective instrument for orderly social change”.⁸ Sincere effort is being done in this regard but we could not find the satisfactory result til today and it is facing hindrances and challenges. Why it is so? Same question was asked by Dr.B.R. Ambedkar in 1949, what would happen to democratic constitution? Will she lose it? What should we do to preserve our democracy?⁹ These questions are not easy to answer yet it is duty of everyone who is interested in the preservation of Constitutional government and democracy in India to answer them.

It is the right time search and seeks the proper answer to these questions. By observing the state of democracy or machinery of government of present India a scholars expressed his ideas as such “ Ask anyone who knows and cares about India and what its great achievement has been since independence, and the answer obvious, For all the turmoil, upheavals and chaos that has taken place in an ever changing India the political assassinations, the social eruptions both positive and negative, the tension created by the enormous contracts between rich and poor, city and village the one seeing constant (Barring the emerging interlude), has been the remarkable endurance of its liberal – democratic political system. As click goes, India is the world’s greatest democracy and thus does mean something important ¹⁰.It is pointed out that the present political scenario is witnessing this paradoxical situation.

As Achin Vanaik noticed ‘from its inception , structures appropriate to modern political democracy were inserted into a socio- economic system of considerable backwardness, India after independence had comparatively well- developed state and an under developed civil society ¹¹. The question what should we do preserve our democracy is in front of us. If we are really interested to preserve it we must remember the noble sentiments expressed on the floor of consistent assembly, ‘the ideals of democratic government and republican institution were first conceived and practiced a thousand years before Christ when the people of Mithila established the world’s first part must have indeed a heart – warming effect’¹².With this warming effect and critical analysis of British rule everyone should try to develop the ability to make democracy envisaged under the constitution a success in the present situation.

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