
Reminiscing the History of Indian Civil Service and the Related Challenges

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***Abstract:** Indian Civil Service can be termed as the steel-frame of the British administration in India. This system was the soul of British administration in India and effectively performed the work of policy-making and its execution. In the beginning East India Company was solely commercial in nature and hardly thought of acquiring the reins of administration of the country. It was in the middle of the eighteenth century that the anarchical political conditions prevalent in India motivated them to raise their stature from a commercial trading company to that of a ruling political authority. With all its demerits and fissures, ICS laid the foundation for the present infrastructure of Union Public Service Commission. It is true that the main objective behind establishment of all Political, Social, Economic and Educational infrastructure in India was consolidation of British Rule in India but there were also some Governors, some social reformers and a handful of British Civil Servants who genuinely felt for India, worked for the eradication of social evils, aided the National Movement and wished for an Independent India such as- Michael Carritt and Dennis Kincaid. Also, there were few who studied Indian texts, manipulated it in their own ways and greased it with the vitriolic emotions of hatred. This work is a compilation of all such narratives which will help to understand the type of presumptions and understanding British Civil Servants kept for India.*

***Keywords:** Board of Directors ,British,Civil Service, East India Company, Merchants etc.*

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Introduction

Indian Civil Service can be termed as the steel-frame of the British administration in India. This system was the soul of British administration in India and effectively performed the work of policy-making and its execution. In order to understand the journey of Indian Civil Service, one needs to understand the rise of English East India Company in India firstly as a trading institution and secondly as an administrator for around two hundred years. It was in the year 1600 that Queen Elizabeth of England granted merchants of England with the title of The Governor and Merchants of London trading into the East Indies and allowed them to pursue their trading activities and manage their own affairs in the east without much interference by the Empress. In due course of time, these Merchants began to enjoy various privileges granted to them by the Queen in the form of various Charters and Acts of Parliament. In the year 1698, a new company by the name, 'The English Company trading to the East Indies' came into existence. After much contemplation it was agreed upon to merge both the trading companies within the time span of seven years. Thus, after amalgamation, the new title which was given to the company was, "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies." In the year 1833, the same company acquired its shorter name as 'The East India Company.' Initially the servants of the company were appointed at the position of apprentices or writers, as they were called during that time. These appointments were made only upon their request or an appeal to join the company. These writers or apprentices were usually appointed at the tender age of sixteen or seventeen years. No one can deny the fact that with passage of time Nepotism crept up into the system and lucrative positions were given to friends and relatives of the Directors. In due course of time, service in company became the monopoly of certain families only. For general candidates, the mode of appointment was little tedious. They were required to write a petition in their own handwriting and had to attach evidence of age and testimonials of his qualifications along with it before final submission to the court. After final selection the writers were required to sign certain agreements and conditions and had to deposit certain amount of money as part of the security. Different grades of Company servants had to deposit different amount of security money. The appointments at all the posts were subject to the consent of Director only and no any competitive exams or interviews were conducted to facilitate appointments of capable candidates. Also, till the time of Lord Wellesley there were no such provisions for systematic training of the company servants working in various colonies acquired by the British. The reason behind this negligence was the raw commercial character of the company which failed to realise the importance of proper training needed for effective administration.

Thus, the Board of Directors began to realise the importance of a proper training institution for Company's servants. It was with the initiatives of Lord Wellesley that a plan was chalked out to lay the foundation of an institution dedicated in providing training to the covenanted servants of the company. Till that time, the only skill needed to be a part of the company service was the knowledge of book-keeping, accountancy and a good hand-writing. However, the situation changed in the middle of the Eighteenth century when an institution named Christ Hospital based in London started training courses for Company servants.

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The Charter of Elizabeth was passed around 1600, which empowered the company to form a congregation at any place and can local courts. They were also allowed to make general laws, rules and regulations for the smooth working of their commercial infrastructure and to cater to the needs of the pervading situation. The reason behind the conduction of courts and creation of all such judicial paraphernalia was the general dislike among the servants of the company for the crude laws of Indian subcontinent. British were of the opinion that wherever there will be an Englishman there will be a proper administration of Justice, development of English courts of justice and forms of law. Wheeler commented that, in the beginning East India Company was solely commercial in nature and hardly thought of acquiring the reins of administration of the country. It was in the middle of the eighteenth century that the anarchical political conditions prevalent in India motivated them to raise their stature from a commercial trading company to that of a ruling political authority. British took monopoly of the internal trade of the country and ruined the entire set-up of domestic industries thriving in India. The period of Robert Clive in Bengal was that of strict discipline and proper code of conduct was maintained by the British officers. Clive's departure in 1760 was followed by a state of anarchy in Bengal which was termed as a period of stark darkness.

The second term of Robert Clive as the Governor of Bengal proved to be a turning point. He arrived on 3rd May, 1765 and in a short span of time the inefficiency of existing administration reflected before his eyes. He appointed a special committee which consisted of five members in order to bring about a radical change in the face of administration. It was declared after the meeting that Nawab of Bengal is incapable of managing the important affairs of the state, and from now onwards revenue administration will be looked after by the Company and Nawab would be responsible for criminal administration only. This declaration was followed by granting of Dewani rights to the company by Mughal Emperor Shah Alam on 12th August, 1765. The most horrible repercussion of this decision was the formation of dual or double government in Bengal which continued till 1772. The next step taken by Clive to consolidate company's rule over India was establishing monopoly on the inland trade of salt, betel nut and tobacco. It was decided that all salt, betel nut and tobacco produced in and imported to Bengal will be purchased by the company and would be shifted to other regions where they will be sold by company's agents to country traders. The only objective behind this prompt action was to increase the trading interests of the company and reap maximum profit on Indian soil. Thus, it can be said that the foundation stone of Civil Service was laid down during the period of Warren Hastings and was further.

The only objective behind this prompt action was to increase the trading interests of the company and reap maximum profit on Indian soil. Thus, it can be said that the foundation stone of Civil Service was laid down during the period of Warren Hastings and was further systematised by Lord Cornwallis. Later to grant more powers to this bureaucratic entity of British administration in India several laws and bills were issued such as. Fox Bill and Pitt's India Act of 1784, which set up a permanent Board of Commissioners to keep an eye on the proper administration of the country and the company. In the year 1787, company rule took the reins of district administration in its own hands and started appointing district collectors to

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carry forward efficient administration of the districts. The company appointed district collectors played multiple roles of revenue collectors, civil Judge and Magistrate and thus became the supreme local representatives of British administration in their respective areas of jurisdiction. Sufficient Salaries and other perks were offered to them in order to avoid the practice of corruption. By 1790, Cornwallis reorganised the Police establishment of India for effective enforcement of laws. Additional duties were given to District Magistrates to supervise the work of Police and report to them immediately in-case of any mishap. Cornwallis Code of 1793, in which he issued a series of forty-eight Regulations played an important role in strengthening the roots of British Civil Service in India. In the words of W.S. Seton Karr, Cornwallis Code whether for Police, Revenue, Civil Justice, Criminal, Salary Payment, Land Reforms and many such, not only created a systematic apparatus for administration but formulated safeguards against fissures in administration and deliverance of Justice. Thus, he was the real founder of Civil Service in India.

Another important turning point came with Lord Wellesley who realised the need for establishing a training School for Civil Servants to facilitate meticulous functioning of the British Civil Service. Before the foundation of Fort William College was laid down, some munshis called Indian language Coaches by the British were appointed to help British Civil Servants in learning the local dialect. Knowledge of local language became unavoidable for British officials as without its knowledge it was almost impossible to discharge the revenue and judicial duties at district levels. But, British officials were not satisfied with the quality of services offered by local Munshis. Thus, on 24th November 1800 Fort William College came into existence and classes in Arabic, Persian and Hindustani began. The first teacher who was appointed as the Professor of Hindustani was Mr John Gilchrest. He also was the author of a Hindustani dictionary which he used to teach his European students. Wellesley issued a notification on 21st December, 1798 announcing that no civil servant will allowed to be admitted to the service unless he has passed an examination in the laws and regulations and Indigenous languages. The notification also mentioned the languages which were necessary to get appointed at different posts. Persian and Hindustani was recommended for the office of Judge or Registrar, Bengali was made compulsory for the post of Revenue Collector or Commercial Resident or Salt agent in the Province of Bengal and Orissa and many such. Wellesley ideas and initiatives structuralised the entire machinery of British Civil Service. His foresightedness helped the Company to strengthen its hold on Indian masses.

Features of British Indian Civil Service

It is quite important to understand the special features of Indian Civil Service in order to get a clear picture of the state of affairs. The foremost feature of ICS which was based on different types of business i.e. Commercial, Revenue, Judicial and Political was the existence of areas of Regulation and Non-Regulation. Presidency of Bengal, Madras and Bombay were under the parameter of Regulated areas in which there was a regular and elaborate system of laws which were passed by the Governor-General in council. Apart from the three main presidencies, other conquered areas were kept under the category of Non-regulated and were

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governed by executive officers. These officers, who were called as Deputy Commissioners in place of Collectors and conducted administration through simple rules and regulations which suited the local conditions. The second important characteristic of ICS was its two branches called as- Covenanted and Uncovenanted. Covenanted Services were for British Civil Servants who were appointed by the English East India Company. The Uncovenanted was for the associates who were appointed in great numbers out of need. These associates generally included officers from military services. But with the territorial expansion of British Sovereignty, a dire need for more officers were felt and Indians were also provided with opportunities to be a part of ICS. These officers were recruited in the departments of Judiciary, Revenue, Salt and Opium on the positions of Deputy Magistrates, Deputy Collectors, Munsifs, Sadar Amins, Deputy Opium Agents and Assistant Salt Agents. Another important characteristic of ICS was increased entry of Indians into administration. Also, Company records suggest that majority of uncovenanted posts were held by Indians. The most advantageous result of this inclusion was introduction of Western Education in India. In order to educate Indians and prepare them to attain the status of white-collared nerds British Government deliberately adopted a policy of educating the native population. A sum of around one lakh was spent on the revival and improvement of regional literature. Also, much impetus was given to promote scientific temperament among Indians. A silver lining over the cloud of Imperialism hanging on Indian Sky was some of the Enlightened Civil Servants who looked at India not with gruesome eyes of a colonialist but kept a sympathetic attitude towards the social, economic, political and cultural evils lingering in the country. Some names are as follows; Mountstuart Elphinstone, Sir Thomas Munro, Sir John Malcolm, Sir Charles Metcalf and many more. They worked in India with a liberal attitude and were greatly influenced by Edmund Burke's idea of Traditional Conservatism. Hence, they intended not only to rule India but also to ameliorate the living conditions of Indians. It was Lord Wellesley and William Bentinck who believed that prosperity, unity and self-respect of the People of India must be the goal of British dominion in India. Lord Hastings too quoted that, some day time would come when British Government would wish to abandon the Indian Territory and would let the people of India breathe in the air of freedom. Sir Thomas Munro has stated that Britain should look upon India not only as its temporary possession rather they must aim to educate the natives to give up their superstitious beliefs and prejudices. Britain must try to impart enlightenment among the people so that one day they could become enough capable of establishing their own governance. Mountstuart Elphinstone also stressed on the amelioration of education system in India in order to facilitate progress and abolition of social evils.

The second important phase in ICS began with Indian members getting recruited at high positions. These Indians sometimes belonged to the affluent families of Indian Nationalists. Hence, it is quite conspicuous to note that they were continuously pushed into the dilemma of enforcing harsh laws and restrictions on those who were fighting for the liberation of their own country. The civil servants were allowed to impose monetary fines on the villages which were involved in damaging government properties or were providing assistance to Congress or Revolutionaries secretly. They could also pass detention orders against political offenders,

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cancel arms licences of suspicious men, grant licenses to those who helped Police, granting compensation to those who have incurred financial or physical losses at the hands of Revolutionaries, camping and touring the affected villages and organising troop marches were some of the responsibilities Indian Civil Servants were provided with. These civil servants played an important role during the three great national level agitation that took place during British rule i.e. Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement. It was during Civil Disobedience Movement, ICS officers propagated anti-Congress feelings among the common folk through articles in newspapers, speeches in schools and formation of aman sabhas. Aman Sabhas were the peace committees which used to issue aman sabha bulletins containing anti- Gandhi and anti-Congress literary contributions. The Indian members of the ICS has also played an important role in formulation of government policies against active nationalists. During Civil Disobedience Movement, they have played an important role in executing harsher responses against the activities conducted by the Nationalists. Post-Independence many memoirs were published in which Indian Civil Servants working under the British rule expressed their embarrassment of using power against the Nationalists. Some of them felt guilty and some of them were of the view that they were only offering their duty. However, there were various contradictions also. British Government always safeguarded the interests of Indian members of ICS, all decisions were made after having an intense discussion by them and ICS was always termed by the British as a neutral and apolitical body. Some questions have been answered while discussing the nature of second phase of ICS but some pertinent questions still trouble the faculties of mind that if ICS officers were neutral and innocent then why some of them were embarrassed and guilty of using power against Indians and were given important posts after India gained Independence?

The Indian Civil Service not only represented a genre of English men officially dressed to suppress the Indian demand for freedom but it also included a class of Indians under the service of the raj and charged with the duty of securing its dominance over India. They were the ones who were given the duties of maintaining law and order during the political turmoil of civil disobedience movement, taking under custody nationalist leaders and motivating British administration among the Indian masses. Few nationalist leaders and historians believed that the policies and regulations formulated by the British were greatly affected by the political ideologies and ambitions of these men who liked themselves to be called as ruler andn't Indian Civil Servants. And with all its political, executive and judicial influence and powers, Indian Civil Service was considered as the Indianized British Raj. Popular INC leaders never favoured the Indian gentry of ICS and used to term them neither Indian, nor Civil nor Servants. However, the saddest part of the story was the continuation of the service of the same lot of civil servants who once used to work for British to be recruited under the Prime Ministership of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. Post-Independence, some of these civil servants either with the intention of presenting their clean image or unintentionally published their memoirs reflecting their difficulties and mental tussle to maintain a balance between their professional duty as a civil servant under British and nationalist commitments. They were often nounced as the trained servants of Imperialism.

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Conclusion

A clear picture of the British administrators and their behaviour with the Indian Civil Servants can be produced after analysing the experiences of Indian ICS Officers under British. After scrutinizing the memoirs, autobiographies, diary entries, it can be reported that some family connection was there in between the Indian members of ICS and the national movement. B.K Nehru was Jawaharlal Nehru's nephew. NB Banerjee was the grandson of Womesh Banerjee, Badruddin Tyabji was the grandson of a famous nationalist lawyer. Some historians have presented varied notions of Nationalism floating in the air of India. They have stated that many people believed that an elaborated participation of Indians in Governance was also a part of the nationalist agenda even if it meant working under the British. In order to construct an authentic picture of the original scene one need to analyse different reports and regulations issued by British Government concerning the duties and responsibilities of both Indian and British Civil Servants. There is no denying of the fact that Indian Civil Servants were just performing their duties to retain their government job but the presence of emotion of embarrassment found in the memoirs of many of them may suggest a contradictory fact. However, no one can deny the fact that ICS was one of the best present India was left with after the departure of British. With all its demerits and fissures, ICS laid the foundation for the present infrastructure of Union Public Service Commission. It is true that the main objective behind establishment of all Political, Social, Economic and Educational infrastructure in India was consolidation of British Rule in India but there were also some Governors, some social reformers and a handful of British Civil Servants who genuinely felt for India, worked for the eradication of social evils, aided the National Movement and wished for an Independent India such as- Michael Carritt and Dennis Kincaid. Also, there were few who studied Indian texts, manipulated it in their own ways and greased it with the vitriolic emotions of hatred. This work is a compilation of all such narratives which will help to understand the type of presumptions and understanding British Civil Servants kept for India.

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