



Modern Indian Political Thought & The Colonial Context and Conception of Colonial Rule

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Abstract : The beginning of the 19th century, the procedure of colonization of India was complete. Henceforth, the foremost concern of colonial rulers was the consolidation of the gains, i.e., the maintenance of colonial rule. For this they needed supporters from in the middle of the subjected which could be achieved only by cultural and ideological hegemony. The making of a class of landlords and the educated urban middle class, mainly of who were absorbed by colonial administrative system and other colonial organizations, were steps to meet the needs of British Colonialism. The colonial education and other cultural undertakings geared towards the establishment of ideological hegemony. This was the social and ideological context in which the political thought throughout the early colonial rule urbanized. A dissimilar conception of colonial rule also urbanized throughout the course of the nineteenth century. It was based on an appreciation of the traditional organizations and practices.

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Rammohan Roy sharp critique of several degrading features of Indian society was almost certainly what made him appreciate the advantages of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation like the British. Keshab Chandra Sen too held that British rule which appeared at a time of grave social and moral crisis was a divine dispensation and not a mere accident. God willed it so. He even held that the temporal sovereign was God's representative and sedition, so, was not only a political offence but a sin against God.

Rabindranath Tagore, Dada Bhai Nauroji, G.K. Gokhale, M.G. Ranade, as well as CR Das and Moti Lal Nehru-all spoke, in varying degrees of the benefits that British rule had brought to



India. Said Gokhale in 1905: "The country enjoys now uninterrupted peace and order....". Nauroji noted that no educated native will prefer any other rule to English rule.

The Colonial Context and Conception of Colonial Rule

In the face of colonial repression and use, this conception of colonial rule i.e. of the British rule being beneficial, could not last for extensive. The colonial rule was looked upon as an unnecessary evil and by the beginning of 20th century, anti-colonialism became integral to political thinking. Here we shall present the broad outlines of dissimilar streams in the anti-colonial thought in 20th century. Despite the appreciation for sure English values and organizations, all the stream of anti-colonial nationalist thought commonly held that colonial rule was dehumanizing and exploitative. In information, the roots of nationalist conception of colonial rule could be traced in the liberal custom of 19th century. Nauroji had laid the blame of 'material treatment it received at the hands of British rulers.' Gokhale blamed the British rule for 'steady dwarfing of a race in consequence of it's exclusion from power' which he measured an 'enormous evil.' The 20th century liberals, without refuting the 'civilizing' role of colonial rule, pleaded for the transfer of power.

The agenda for future nationalist conceptions of colonial rule was set by Tilak. The decade of 1920s was the decade of radicalization of anticolonial thinking. A part of the educated youth, critical of Gandhi's thoughts and ways, sought to advance the understanding of British and to evolve new ways of political thrash about. The revolutionary nationalists appeared out of this trend.

Another trend was represented by the Socialist and Communists. The Communist Party of India came into subsistence with the inspiration and help of Communist International. Its conception of colonial rule has based on Lenin's theory of imperialism as the highest level of capitalism and Marx's articles on India in New York Tribue (1853). M.N. Roy's India in Transition and Rajni Palme Dutt's India Today, both stressed the integration of' Indian possessions and economy with the British colonial economy to use India's raw materials. M.N. Roy, official ideologue of the



Indian Communists in 1920s, accentuated the linking of anti-colonialism with the campaign against world capitalism. The procedure of radicalization of Congress led to the emergence of radical nationalism in the shape of Congress Socialist Party in 1934. The Congress socialist thinkers, particularly Jaya Prakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev, made an effort to synthesize socialism with nationalism and to press socialism in the service of nationalism, i.e. in the anti-colonial thrash about.

Renaissance and Social Reform

The Indian Renaissance and Social Reform movement challenged ageold traditions and customs which bound the Indian people in chains of servitude and bondage. The burning questions of caste-oppression, child marriage, Sati and so on became the focal point of several a reform movements. Attacks on idolatry and superstition were also a significant characteristic of these reforms.

Rational Critique of Religion and Society

We have seen above that the early thinkers of contemporary India were pre-occupied mainly with social and religious issues. The political questions were paid little or no attention. Rammohan Roy's first published job, Tuffatul- Muwahihhidin is a rational critique of religious systems in common and the role of vested interests in religion. Rammohan in his later writings exposed the irrationality of Hindu religious rituals and dogmas, and social evils such as sati, child marriage etc. He measured religious reform mainly essential for both social reform and political modernization. Therefore, the beginning of contemporary Indian thinking is marked by a critique of the existing social order. This critique was accepted forward by successors with a view to create a 'contemporary' society.

Religious Revivalism

Religious revivalism was a trend within the reform movements which sought to reform religion, but differed in one significant respect. It sought to reform by an appeal to the past-the Golden Age, a; it were. It sought to restore the glory of ancient religion. Mainly emerging from within the womb of Hindu Society, they tried to dexterously combine pristine religious purity with



several contemporary values like individual liberty and democracy. In the middle of the major religious reform movements of 19th century India, like Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission, it was the latter two that really represented this appeal to the past. The Arya Samaj with its slogan of 'Back to the Vedas' and the Ramakrishna Mission with its effort to resurrect vedantic Hinduism, however considerably dissimilar in their approaches to religion had the similar essential purpose of reforming religion in conditions with changing times. They sought to set up to some degree, the freedom of individual, break the stranglehold of Brahminism and reform the caste system which had birth as its solid determinant of status.

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