

A Critical Analysis of the Permanent Settlement by Lord Cornwallis

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Abstract: Current article is an experience-based criticism of the 'Permanent Settlement'. Some infirmity prevalent in society become cancer, are induced by historical event. Historical studies include the analysis of such events. The 'Permanent Settlement' of 1793 A.D. was such a socio-economic law, which left deep impact on Indian society. Huge population of India was bereaved of the land ownership whereas a small group was made the owner of the land. Land was the main source of income in the contemporary time. The new law imposed a minor group over our society with a tendency to control all resources of the nation. On the other hand, it developed a major group of population to accept deprivation as their only fortune. It was an effort to convert the society favorable for the colonial rule. Unfortunately, we could not struggle to stop this conversion as this was given support on the name of religion and history. The biggest achievement of the effort was successful imposition of a parasite group. We are today living in the society dreamed first and seeded by the colonial rulers of 18th to 20th century. We gained political independence after 1947. Neither our freedom fighters showed any desire to reform the society, nor the political leadership showed any desire after independence. The major group which was denied of the land rights are still struggling as the so-called land reforms are never implemented. The real cause is that the new class founded by the colonial rulers controls all the resources of the nation and are ruling India after 1947, in the same fashion as a colony has to be ruled.

Background: The history of India exposed with the invent of Indus Valley Civilization. But nothing has been gained from this invention for the period falling after 2500 B.C. The Moghuls were ruling a big region of India in 17th century C.E., when European traders started trading with South-East Asia. There was a trade war between contemporary European powers in Indian subcontinent also. The British East India Company was successful. Excited by their success, the British East India Company eyed to the empire of Moghuls which consistently declining due to weakness of the successors of Aurangzeb. Several tribes that were also hoping to rule and extract from local people started to form new estates. British East India Company took the advantage and captured the whole subcontinent into one political unit. Soon, the East India Company became the new ruler. They started to rebuild the social structure of the subcontinent suitable for long-term political stability.

Materials and Methods: The sources are various historical texts and diaries written by different authors. The method is historical method of research which includes descriptive and analytical approach to examine and explain the event. To conclude the results of the phenomenon.

Conclusion: It was British who revised the Indian society into a society ideal for a colonial rule. It was British effort that developed an elite class who ruled India after Independence and don't have any desire to revert it as it would hurt their interests.

Key Word: British India, Hindu, landlords, Culture in Sanskrit Literature, Colonial society, Elite groups, Parasite.

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I. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT BY LORD CORNWALLIS

It is well stated and understood that East India Company of England had primary objectives of trade and commerce with Indian subcontinent. The government of England was benefitted by the profits of the company. The company was authorized with extraordinary rights to do trade with east Indies and was liable to pay regular fees to the government of England. It was equipped with several other facilities including its own army etc. It engaged in trade war with other European companies that were operating from India in order to dominate over the trade routes in India. Initial successes in war increased their ambitions and they started to influence the local rulers that were impressed by their new and more efficient war equipment and strategy. The local rulers started to hire their army to face more powerful political rivals¹ across Indian subcontinent. It

opened new sources for the employees of the company which started to earn more money in the form of fees and awards.

The company's employees started to gain maximum for personal purposes. Their salaries were insufficient to meet their demands. They also started side business for their personal benefits on the cost of the company's business. This started to throw company in deficits. The company became so poor that it failed to pay its instalments to the government after 1768. Usually, it was the government of England that depended on company for any kind of monetary need. But now company asked for loan to the government of England. On one hand the territories of the company in India were expanding, on the other hand company was getting bankrupt. It was on this stage Robert Clive, who has gained a reputed position in the company's administration, became active. No doubt, the company was hope for thousands of English natives which were living in depression and whose family members joined the company services to earn bread for their families. Closing of East India Company would have affected thousands of poor families in England. Robert Clive was one of them. Company was looking to find new resources to overcome deficits. It was difficult for thousands of the Englishmen to earn a bread in the existing conditions of England.

It was Robert Clive who is supposed to have dreamed of gaining control over political leadership in company's favor. He found Bengal as the most suitable province for the purpose as Bengal was the thriving province of the subcontinent. The major source of the income of Bengal was land revenue². But the industry and commerce of the province were also booming. Though Robert Clive was given the task to create pressure on Siraj-Ud-Doula for concessions in 1757 A.D., but was warned against engaging into war with the young Nawab of Bengal. Council at Madras was well aware of the adverse effects of any dispute with the young Nawab of Bengal. After gaining initial success Robert Clive decided to go for attaining his plans. He not only defeated Nawab but also fought battle of Buxar to gain revenue rights of Bengal and Northern Circars. The battle of Buxar was farsighted task of Robert Clive which expected unexpected gains as the battle involved not only the Grand Vizir but the existing Moghul Emperor of India. Whole province of Bengal, which included Bihar and regions of Orissa were now politically under complete grip of the company. This was achieved by the efforts of Robert Clive, who was neither from the feudal class, nor was a servant of British Crown.

The government of England now was up to take over the charge as the political power which was under the hands of a British company. The parliament of England was running a democracy in the country but was under control of the members, who were landlords. It directed Warren Hastings to take over charge of the whole government. The Parliament of England was filled with aristocrats. They were running a peculiar kind of democracy which still have a king and queen. Democracy is a government where sovereignty rests in the people where as a monarchy is the form of a government where sovereignty rests with the king. It was the socio-political structure of England that made them to get attracted towards Indian subcontinent, to rule over newly acquired land and people living in it. They are now in condition to take over the charge of ruling huge Indian province of Bengal, that was much bigger than England, both, in size and resources.

It would be beneficial to know the initial history of English island. The indigenous tribes³ of the island were subdued by the immigrated German-Saxons-Angles-Jutes. Together, known as Anglo-Saxons, who were English speaking people. Though Anglo-Saxons occupied the south-east region but were successful to spread a culture that could make them the masters of the whole island. They started their new language English, as the language of the island. Everything in the island became English, even the name of the island. The event happened in the beginning of fifth century and continued up to the end of sixth century of the Christian era. They were with an experience of successfully becoming dominant and elite in the island by spreading a special culture.

Beware of the fact, that people of India didn't know, before English colonial historians wrote their history, what has happened in 4th century after Christian era. It was English colonial rulers who intend to make us know, what happened with Indians in their history, even before the start of the Christian era. They told the people of India that they have been ruled over, always by a tribe that came from outside, defeated them many times, and ruled over them. Why, these colonial rulers wanted them to know this fact, is well understood. While writing our history they completely ignored the indigenous tribes, as they did in their own country? Their own story has the real cause. They introduced the theory of immigration of the Aryans⁴, to attract a group of Indians towards them, who knew that they were also outsiders. The English gained the local support by convincing them, "You are outsiders, so are we; let's rule over them". Though it seems so simple but really difficult to accept when a long time has passed reading a fabricated history over 100 years, from early childhood. The people of Hindi speaking belt of Northern India strongly believe that Hindi, which is merely 150-year-old language, is their mother tongue. Indians believe that Sanskrit is the mother of all Indian regional languages, though the history of Sanskrit could not be traced before 5th century of Christian era. It reflects how our society has been designed culturally.

Now, let's come back to our original issue. Soon after getting political power the colonial minded Englishmen started to dream of ruling one more class, the Indians of the East. So, they started to interfere in the

matter of company. Person like Edmond Burke spoke in Parliament that the workers of the company were unfit to run civil administration. Whole parliament stood for taking control of the administration of East India Company which had Bengal under their hands. As they believe that they were only people that can rule but the company was run by common Englishmen⁵. The political power of the company in Indian subcontinent was attained by efforts of the common Englishmen like Robert Clive, Warren Hastings etc. who were considered useless by the laws of their own country. Such unwanted talents rejected in their own nation had to find bread in distant subcontinents where none of the aristocratic class was ready to live for earning bread. The unwanted talent of Britain became wealthy and started to live a life equivalent to higher classes of England, it was frustrating. They felt insulted so started to abuse them by calling them the 'Nawabs'. It was mere frustration that reflected out in their behavior.

The Parliament made acts of 1773 and 1784, to take control of the company. They validated their actions by different kind of verbal debates. But the fact was that the aristocracy did not want to allow the people of non-Aristocratic origin to rule anywhere in the world as they may return and start to dream for the same in their own country. Intends had started to precipitate as the so called 'Nawabs' had started to make lobbies in the parliament. They started to take advantages as the rich classes of the British society used to do. They bribe the members of the Parliament to take their favors. Such malpractices were endemic in the nature of British system. Even the higher posts of military were purchased by the members of the feudal families. Titles were purchased. It was in 1786 when first landlord, Lord Cornwallis was sent to Bengal to implant a feudal system in the interests of making the subcontinent suitable for aristocratic rule, a little similar to that of England but useful to govern from distance⁶. Bipan Chandra has described it as dictatorship from distance.⁷

Cornwallis hastened to draft 'Permanent Settlement' and implemented it in 1790 which was readily accepted by Boards in London, and became rule in 1793 A.D. East India Company was a joint stock company. Rich and high-class families had invested in it. They were dominating the governing bodies of the company. Even after so many disputes about the ownership rules, Lord Cornwallis decided to impose a revised class of feudal lords in the existing society of the regions of Bengal and Northern Circars. Even John Shore wasn't in favor to impose it in hurry. It was implemented for ten years only. But the members of the governing bodies were in so haste that they recommended it make permanent in just three years. Most of the historians believed that it was not drafted in haste to fulfil the desires of their English aristocracy, but was fully examined, researched and was based on the pre-existing revenue collecting system that prevalent from Moghul period. Some Indian historians even stamped their researches as genuine by describing the Moghul revenue system in much resonance to the system that was adopted by Lord Cornwallis. Lord Cornwallis made the Indian term *Jamindars* the land owners though it was opposed by scholars like Charles Grant, Philip Francis etc. Even Warren Hastings was not sure about the land ownership⁸ by the land revenue collectors of the time of the Moghul period. Administrators like Munroe or even Warren Hastings hesitated to implement it in hurry. Munroe even refused to adopt 'Permanent Settlement' in Bombay presidency. Munroe had described the 'Permanent Settlement' would give birth to a class, 'Parasite'.

Lord Cornwallis seeded a new society in the atmosphere of Indian subcontinent that would be ideal for future to rule. His provisions empowered a class with full control of the resources whereas denied the majority, which was his target to be ruled in future. It was in resonance with the provision as appears in the honey bee society where every body works for the Queen. The fundamental structure of English society was based on capitalism. Landlords own the land but the people cultivate and produce grains for them. Labors are required in big numbers so are subjects for the kings. Kings used to extract taxes from these subjects to lead a luxurious lifestyle. Kings kept soldiers, sometimes paid and sometimes on the basis of being of same tribe, to make extortions. This army becomes the required force for people to pay respect and fear to the king. Land lords are nothing but dinky form of kingship. Land lords originated as the kings decentralized their authority. English historians believed that India has a history of feudalism but it is difficult to find the causes of the spread of feudalism in Indian subcontinent. Feudalism became powerful in England due to various revolutions, took place in Europe. Kingship found better option as feudalism than being overthrown by agitated people.

Lord Cornwallis believed in superiority of races. He never accepted Indian talent may be equal to that of Europeans. The trend started with new emerged class of landlords in the Indian society also. Initially, company administration was intended to educate the people of Bengal. Warren Hastings started 'Madarasa Aliya', but soon their policy of reshaping and redesigning the society started. The policy of transforming the society was embedded in the act of 1773. It established Supreme Court, though primarily for Englishmen living in the area where company enjoyed political control. But soon, the institution started to redesign and explain the social laws. It is amazing to know that the Company administration believed that 'Persian' was not the language of the people, it was imported from Persia by the ruling Moghuls, but advised that Sanskrit was the basic language of the indigenous people. It is noteworthy that even Sanskrit was not spoken in the subcontinent. The process of imposing a desired culture had been started with the implement of Regulating Act. It was *Manusmriti* which was translated into English by Jones and Schelgel in 1776. They adopted the provisions of *Mansmriti* in

their newly imposed legal system with falsifying that original culture mentioned in the texts written in Sanskrit. It was Cornwallis who established the first Sanskrit College in Benaras.

The biggest rivals of Europeans were the followers of Islam, who called them 'Kafir'. They demolished the Byzantine Empire and occupied prestigious Constantinople. Constantinople was centre of Christian affluence. It was the center of trade and commerce and route to Asia. It was overtaken by Mehmet II after a siege of 57 days on 29 May of 1453 A.D. The event obliterated the future of prosperous trade of Europeans that flourished with Asia. The trade of spices was taken over by the mighty Arabs. They blocked the land and sea routes for the trade to Europeans. When Europeans first reached the Indian coast, they faced strong opposition by Arabs, who were followers of Islam. Indian subcontinent was ruled by the followers of Islam and even the courts were also following the social rules as described by the scholars of Islam. It is worth mentioning that the biggest threat were the followers of Islam for the East India Company, if they dream of ruling the people inhabiting the Indian subcontinent. They started to target the culture and authority to rule of the followers of Islam. After wards the members of Indian National Congress adopted the same principle, they also attacked on the legality of Englishmen's authority to rule over Indians. The principle was easy to be explained and justifiable to redesigned society of colonial India.

Historians were given task of preparing such a course for teaching, which could make people feel as if the Islamic rulers were very rude and barbaric who took the help of sword to convert Hindus⁹ into Islam. To achieve their success English people coined the word 'Hindu'¹⁰. Explained the definition of the word and used it successfully against the authority of Muslim rulers to rule over them. The Christian missionaries started to convert Indians in to Christianity by means of financial support so that the same formulae couldn't be applied on them. The assertion, that Islamic rulers converted Indians to Islam by force was myth or the fact can be understood by the example of tribal revolts. The tribals that revolted at first against the new regime could hardly be declared Muslims¹¹. Why Muslim crusaders left them unconverted. Who were the people helping Muslim invaders to defeat pre-existing kingships? The fact is that even the Christian missionaries were active in the tribal regions but tribals never attacked over them, they attacked over the signs of English government. It included the new characters that were introduced by the English rule. They included the landlords, the Bankers, police etc. They all were part of the new culture which was originated by the colonial system.

The primary objective of the English people was to create a class which could be raised as the majority. They targeted language and spread the fact that Persian was not people's language. Then they targeted the Islamic laws of courts. They started to educate people as they could easily transmit it into people. First, they came with Sanskrit and afterwards with Urdu and subsequently replaced it with Hindi to counter the raising voices of Muslims. They established Sanskrit College at Pune to take advantage of Chitapavana Brahmins¹², which believed themselves as the overlord of the subcontinent. Contemporary officers of company during 1857 A.D. blamed Muslims for resurrections, and found their strategy working well when the mutineers found divided between the supporters of Peshwas and Moghuls. The biggest success was new class of landlords that strongly favored the English rule and their institutions. It was this class of landlords was dreamed in the 'Permanent Settlement' drafted for the purpose.

Cornwallis's 'Permanent Settlement' didn't consider the class, which was actually cropper and tith the fields. These were the farmers who made the land arable, cultivate and produce crop. It raises the question, what the actual intention of Lord Cornwallis was? Even the texts of Sanskrit approve that the land belongs to them who make them arable. Kautilya, though a disputed writer maintains this fact. But we know that Kautilya was discovered only when Manusmriti (The laws of the first Man) was on the hot target of opposition. Cornwallis knew the fact that the majority of people used as producers. Whereas the minority of the population enjoy luxuries only if the resources are under their control. Only a single person installs a production unit but labors are countless. Labors live a life of hardships whereas the family members of the capitalist lead a luxurious life. Similarly, a landlord enjoys luxury without shedding a drop of sweat. Landlords and capitalists play important role in helping the king to maintain His grip over the majority people who work hard to earn livelihood. The king takes share of their earnings. Feudal system is much similar to capitalism. England was the capitalist giant of the era.

II. CONCLUSION

Therefore, the objectives of the 'Permanent settlement' were primarily to revise and redesign the class of landlords in favor of the rulers. Other was to convert the society of the subcontinent in to a society which could easily be governed by dictators. It was necessary to start schools to blend the minds of people according to desired shapes. The results were out during first resurrection when old landlords revolted but new stood strongly in the favor of the company rule. Historians may be busy to examine the causes or results of the resurrection of 1857 A.D. but colonialists would have been satisfied with the way it happened. They found it suitable time to declare India as the new state of British empire. Queen Victoria took over as the queen of India also. The process continued and after 1885 A.D., Indians also started to participate equally.

As a result of such transformation India holds a society ideal for rule by aristocrats. Most the political leaders, who wish to rule in India first learn how to impress the people of Indian society. Once they obtain the political power, start to live like the kings, as they live in their empires. The earlier politicians, knew the facts and hence, at the time of the transfer of power converted their whole political party into an army of dedicated workers similar to that of the kings. The dedicated workers work without pay in expectation of getting more, once their leader captures the political power.

REFERENCES & NOTES

¹India was already inhabited by several social and ethnic groups fighting to rule over people to take taxes for fulfilment of their needs to lead a luxurious lifestyle. India itself was a battle ground between various groups always engaged in wars. These conditions of political instability have been already mentioned by Marshman in his book and has appreciated the Englishmen for bringing peace in the subcontinent which could never remain united under one political leadership.

² It is also noteworthy, that England has a feudal structure where land ownership was regarded as the symbol of social status. The landlords were controlling the whole resources of the country. These lands were of the indigenous people which disappeared after immigration of new English speaking Anlo-Saxons.

³ The indigenous tribes are termed as the Celts or Britons.

⁴ The theory started to gain shape much before Max Mueller who redescribed in 1859. It was J. G. Roads and Mr. Pot, who maintained that Aryans originated in Bactria, as early as 1820. Max Mueller targeted Indian subcontinent and redefined the 'Aryan Theory'. Max Mueller's reassertion supported the intentions of English aristocracy, who have just faced an aggressive revolt of Indian aristocracy.

⁵ Highly learned persons like Sir John Shore had to accept the title of 'Baron' to join as Governor-General of the Bengal Province. Shore was a great critique of the feudal mindset of the government of Britain.

⁶ The act of 1861 was termed as 'Ruled from distance' by Charles Wood who presented the bill in the British Parliament.

⁷*Bipan Chandra*, India's Struggle for Independence ed. By Bipan Chandra, 1989, Penguin, p:113.

⁸ Prof. S. Nurul Hassan & Tapan Roy Chaudhury.

⁹The word Hindu was at first used in religious references by a Christian friar Sebastiao Manrique in 1649. Refer to *Lorenzen David N* in "Who Invented Hinduism", Yoda Press, 2006; p.15

¹⁰The custom of distinguishing between Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs has been a modern phenomenon. For reference see *Julius J. Lipner's* "Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices", IInd Edition, Routledge, 2009; p. 17-18 and *Leslie Orr's* "Donors, Devotees, Daughters of God", OUP, 2014, p.25-26,204.

¹¹ Nor they were Hindus. The contemporary English historians found them different from Hindus. Refer to page nos. 2-3 of *The History of India-1* by *Marshman J.C.* published from London in 1869 A.D.

¹²They are the community that ruled as Peshwas by usurping the sovereignty of the great Maratha sovereign Shivaji. They became de-facto leader of the Maratha confederacy in the beginning of the 18th century. They never fought any war but used Maratha Generals as their army to plunder the territories. They believed to have immigrated from the region falling around Caspian Ocean. At the time of the start of Company rule, they were so powerful that even the Moghul Emperor sought their protection.