



Testing administrative skills –the pragmatic evolution of Mysore Civil Service Exams

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Abstract

The civil service exams were the contribution of British administrative strategy. Enabling the Indians to support their organizational stratum the British introduced the competitive exams. Initially the exams were conducted at the all India level in London but later they were shifted to India. This paper looks at the evolution of Civil service process in princely state of Mysore & the present state of Karnataka owes a lot to the Administrative reforms of stalwart administrators such as Mark Cubbon ,Bowring ,Sheshadri Iyer, Rangacharlu , Vishweshwariah & others towards strengthening the Civil service department . There were several modifications in the pattern of the exams the syllabi the theoretical learning & skill projected. The Indian Civil service evolved as a reflection of all India Civil Service exams in British Indian provinces. This paper looks at the gradual transformation of the Colonial changes into making Indian civil service one of the grander parts of Indian administration.

Key words: Administration , British Rule, Civil service, Establishment ,Indian civil service.

Introduction

The ICS was called the 'heaven born service' during the Raj days. It was started in 1855 and the first batch joined in 1856. The British Parliament had acknowledged in 1833 that Indians must be admitted to the higher posts of service. Though the first exam for ICS was held in 1855 in London, not a single Indian, pejoratively called natives then, was there to take the exam because either Indians did not possess the required education and grooming or did not have enough means to travel to London which also included the expenses for boarding and lodging. The first Indian to be dismissed from the ICS was Surendranath Banerjee, who cleared

the ICS examination in 1869 but was barred from joining owing to a dispute over his exact age. He again cleared the exam in 1871 and was posted as assistant magistrate in 'Sylhet', but was dismissed for a minor offence. The first Indian to stand first in one of two parts of ICS exam held in 1904 was Gurusaday Dutt of Bengal (Sharma, Malti. *Indianization of the civil services in British India, 1858-1935* (2001)

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By 19th century it was officially known as the imperial Civil Service, It was the privileged higher administrative service during British rule. During 1858 and 1947 it became an integral part of the Colonial raj . Its members were appointed under Section XXXII of the Government of India Act, 1935, enacted by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. (Ramesh Kumar Arora and Rajni Goyal, *Indian public administration: institutions and issues* (1995). From 1858, after the demise of the East India Company's rule in India, the British civil service took on its administrative responsibilities. The change in governance came about due to the Indian Rebellion of 1857, which came close to toppling British rule in the country.

The competitive examination for entry to the civil service was combined for the Diplomatic, Home government, the Indian, and the Colonial Services. Candidates must be aged between 21 and 24, which gave everyone three chances for entry. The total marks possible in the examination were 1,900. Successful candidates underwent one or two year's probation in England, according to whether they had taken the London or the Indian examination. This period was spent at the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, or the School of Oriental Studies in London, where a candidate studied the law and institutions of India, including criminal law and the Law of

Evidence, which together gave knowledge of the revenue system, as well as reading Indian history and learning the language of the Province to which they had been assigned¹.(Simon Epstein, 'District Officers in Decline: pp 493-518)

By 1920, there were five methods of entry into the higher civil service: firstly, the open competitive examinations in London; secondly, separate competitive examinations in India; thirdly, nomination in India to satisfy provincial and communal representation; fourthly, promotion from the Provincial Civil Service and lastly, appointments from the bar. There were two exclusive groups of civil servants during the formative stage of direct British rule in India. The higher employees who entered into covenants with the Company came to be known as "covenanted" servants, whereas those not signing such agreements came to be known as "uncovenanted". The latter group generally filled the lower positions. This distinction between the covenanted and the uncovenanted virtually came to an end with the constitution of the Imperial Civil Service of India based on the recommendations of the Public Service Commission, 1886-87, though the phrase covenanted continued to be used of anyone in a salaried position with a long term contract². The name Imperial Civil Service was changed to Civil Service of India. However, the term Indian Civil Service (ICS) persisted. The



acronym ICS continued to be used to denote the covenanted civil servants

A third group, the Statutory Civil Service which functioned in the second half of the nineteenth century was disbanded by the beginning of the 1890s. To this group were recruited young men from respectable and affluent Indian families³. This service was replaced by the provincial civil services, which was constituted on the basis of the recommendations of the Aitchison Commission. It consisted of two cadres, the Provincial Civil Service and the Subordinate Civil Service. Further developments took place as a result of the application of the scheme of cadre organization to the administrative departments. Thus, for example, the departments of Forest and Public Works had both imperial and provincial branches. The basic pattern of the cadre system in the civil service was thus established following the recommendations of the Aitchison Commission. In 1912, the Islington Commission was appointed to propose reforms, but its report could be published only in 1917, by which time its recommendations had become outdated on account of the First World War and Edwin Montagu's August Declaration (presented to the House of Commons on 20 August 1917) that in response to local demand the government wished to extend the representation of the native Indian population in the ICS.

By 1934, the system of administration in India had come to consist of seven All India Services and five Central Departments, all under the control of the Secretary of State for India, and three Central Departments under joint Provincial and Imperial control. The ICS and the Indian Police Service were in the 'transferred field', that is, the authority for the control of these services and for making appointments was transferred from the Secretary of State to the provincial governments⁴. It seems relevant to mention that the All India and class I central services were designated as Central Superior Services as early as 1924 in the Lee Commission's report.

1. Mysore civil Service was introduced by Mark Cubbon in 1834
2. Entire state administrated by one commissioner
3. Supt assisted supported by Amildars
4. Faujdars looked after military Dewan looked after civil
5. L B Bowring brought new changes in 1862
6. 4 divisions sub divided to 8 under deputy superintendant
7. Defined principles on pay & promotion
8. Madras regulations were applied

Besides, Indian society was superstitious and crossing oceans was



considered a bad omen, especially among Hindus. Initially, the ICS was an all-white affair, but the elder brother of Rabindranath Tagore, Satyendranath Tagore, became the first Indian to qualify the ICS in 1863. Satyendranath was allotted Bombay Presidency Cadre and retired after more than 30 years of service. By 1871, only four Indians had joined the service. By 1883, the total number of Indian ICS were 12 and in 1915, exactly 60 years after the first competitive examination of ICS, only 63 Indians had joined the ICS. Most Indian ICS aspirants took loans to go abroad. In the late 1890s, the philanthropist JN Tata set up a scholarship/loan fund for Indians to study abroad, which included as a condition that they give the ICS exam (by 1924, over a third of all Indian ICS officers were Tata scholars).

Conclusion

the ICS officers' grip over the administrative machinery and knowledge of law made their reputation and gave life to their domination over their sphere of activity. But authority and mystique percolated downwards. The glamour and the dazzle came fully buttressed by moral authority. The habit of command flowed from prestige, not the other way round.

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