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**ROLE OF DHARWAD IN THE SOCIO
ECONOMIC
RECONSTRUCTION OF NORTH
KARNATAKA**

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PREFACE

The Centre for Multi-disciplinary Development Research (CMDR) is a social science research institute in a moffusil area of Karnataka and is sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi. The Centre aims at undertaking analytical studies of conceptual and policy significance on the socio-economic and cultural issues using multi-disciplinary perspectives and micro level information.

As a part of its publication programme the Centre has initiated a CMDR Monograph Series and also publications based upon the research studies completed at the Centre.

We are happy to present the 16th in the monograph series of entitled "The role of Dharwad in the Socio Economic Reconstruction of North Karnataka : A Historical Perspective". This monograph has been written by Dr. Anil G. Mudbidri. This study brings out clearly the role of one of the important towns of North Karnataka in the Socio Economic Development of the Region. It presents an account the contribution of this town during the British

period from 1818 onwards was India revealing that the town where CMDR is located has played during the British a significant role in the socio economic reconstruction of North Karnataka. It also arouses thinking in the minds of the residents of Dharwad as to whether the town is planning a same role in the present period and can play a more effective role in the future. In the background of the emphasizes on bottom up approach in development, the role of the which micro region in the over all development of bigger geographical region needs to be appreciated. It is in this background that the idea of growth of Centres, district planning, decentralised decision making under the geographical senses also need to be appreciated. The monograph based upon the text of lecture delivered by Dr. Mudbidri in a symposium organised jointly by the Karnataka Historical Research Society and Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research. We are quite thankful to Dr. Mudbidri for this monograph. The Centre invites comments and suggestions from readers of this monograph.

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ROLE OF DHARWAD IN THE SOCIO ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION OF NORTH KARNATAKA

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Urbanization was one of the major issues in the programme of consolidation of the empire during the later British period. The British were urban oriented and their influence could be felt mainly in the urban context. Their influence in the hinterland was felt in the region in the proximity of the towns and cities. For extending and consolidating their authority in an alien soil and geographical territory, cities were their base of action. In India the British centred their influence first on the coastal cities and later moved to the hinterland for maintaining and integrating their authority and administrative structure and also for securing economic bases for their power. The colonial cities became the focii for the European powers to develop their economy and power and maintain a 'head link' with their mother country. This was so in all colonial countries. As Flanagan observes: "The colonial city developed as a centre of commerce and administration, rather than industrial production. It originated as a means whereby the metropolitan rulers established a base for the administration of the countryside."

In India, the British could introduce several developmental changes in the sphere

of trade, transport and communication which provided necessary administrative support. It was almost during this time that the British were themselves experiencing the fruits of industrial - urban expansion at home. The citizen India began to experience vast changes in their institutional structure as new values and interests gained ascendancy. The city became the centre of diffusion of western ways. The city, according to Kingsley Davis is where social change began in India.² It was in the urban areas that one could find specialisation, talent and organisation necessary for executing new ideas. The city became the home for the emergence of powerful mercantile class. The colonial towns and cities left a definite impress on the hinterland.

The British arrived in Dharwad in 1818 after the Treaty of Poona, which led to the abdication of the Peshwa. The British became the masters of a large territory which was once ruled by the Marathas. The area in the South came to be designated as the Southern Maratha Country, or the Dharwad Collectorate. It was only later decades of the nineteenth century that separate Districts such as Sholapur, Kaladgi (Bijapur), Karwar etc were carved out for purposes

of better administration. The most important administrative capital of the Dharwad Collectorate was the town of Dharwad. Apart from the British administrative functionaries, the town also had the representatives of 'Native' princes, such as the Vakils who represented the Chiefs of Sangi, Miraj, Gajendragad, Mudhol, etc and also the representative of the Chatrapati of Kolhapur. From this we can surmise the influence Dharwad had on the region. Thus decisions taken in Dharwad had a far reaching effect on the surrounding territory. The town became the centre of the socio economic reconstruction of the region.

The conditions which prevailed in the region before the arrival of the British were by no means encouraging. The frequent wars between the Marathas and the internecine quarrels between the various Chiefs had brought about the considerable deterioration of economic conditions. Frequent taxes had been collected to raise funds, crops had been destroyed by the last days of the Peshwa conditions of uncertainty prevailed. Trade and commerce had been severely handicapped.

It was the British who first made efforts to improve the infrastructure which was needed to strengthen the economy. Less than a decade after the arrival of the British, efforts were made to bring about improvement in communication, as sound system of administration, revenue collection

and land assessment. The trade began to show a great improvement.

The peasants who had migrated to other areas due to the uncertain conditions were encouraged to return back to their lands and cultivate them. The currency was regularised. These developments boosted trade and commerce. Agriculture was stimulated due to several measures that the British undertook. With the increase in trading activity a class of merchants became the fulcrum of the new trading ventures and assumed positions of importance in the life and activities of town.

The British as an alien power had no direct links with the peasants, and the relationship between the two was mediated through a class of landed gentry who were loyal to them and upon whom they could depend upon as a medium to transmit the innovations that they desired to introduce in the region³

One of the first measures undertaken by the British was the assessment and survey of land. They introduced the raiatwari system. The ryots who had fled to the Mysore territory due to oppression and uncertainty were induced to come back. The commencement of the survey of land was done in accordance with the authorisation of the court of Directors in 1822.⁴ The Collector Thackeray immediately began to get the land near Dharwad surveyed.

The system of communication, prior

to the arrival of the British, existed only for the transportation of the armies. There were no proper roads until then. Only pack bullocks could be used. However, the British improved the roads thereby giving a fillip to trade. Many of these roads were constructed on the appeals made by Cpt. Wingate.⁵ by the middle of the nineteenth century Dharwad was well connected even upto the western coast and had ten good lanes of traffic.

The improvement in roads and agriculture was further supported by a long period of peace and stability. Under these circumstances the British began introduce new modes of farming, improved seeds and new farming implements. Perhaps one of the most important decisions taken for giving a fillip to the local economy was the introduction of cotton and silk cultivation.

Mr. Randall, an authority on cotton, opined that the Southern Maratha Country, with its black soil, was ideal for the growth of cotton. He began to persuade the local farmers to switch over the cultivation of cotton. In 1819 he even offered rewards of 50 pagodas or a gold chain to any farmer could cultivate good quality cotton. Thackerat, the Collector of Dharwad, invited tenders to encourage the merchants to trade with Government in cotton.

The court of Directors in 1829 gave orders for growing cotton and sent Dr. Lush a scientist to conduct experiments with cotton seeds in Dharwad in 1830. Dr. Lush

conducted his experiments till 1836 and the work was later continued by Mr. Shearer, an American planter who tried out a hardy American strain quite successfully. Under these circumstances the cotton grown in the vicinity of Dharwad was harvested and even exported to Chaina. The Dharwad cotton received praise from the Cantonese merchants.⁶ The Collector Mr. A.N. Shaw also took keen interest in cotton cultivation.

In 1840, Cpt. Bayles of the Madras army, who had been sent to America, returned with ten planters who were skilled in the growth and preparation of cotton. These American planters were sent to different areas of the presidency to test the suitability of the soil.⁷ Three of these Planters were stationed in Bombay to look after the experiments in Dharwad and Khandah. Cpt. Bayles brought new seeds, agricultural implements, cotton ginsand presses. One among these planters, Mr. Mercer found after an initial survey that the soil around Dharwad was extremely suitably for the growth of American cotton.⁸ Mercer immediately proceeded to reserve 25 to 50 acres to form an experimental farm. Cotton cultivation thus began to make rapid progress. It was estimated that, after all the disadvantages, expenses etc., a clear profits of Rs. 56 per acre could be had. The Government issued orders to Mr. Barber that a further 200 acres should be released to Mr. Mercer for growing cotton. For this purpose 48 bags of American cotton seeds were sent to Dharwad. By September

1843 five Ginning houses were established for clearing cotton. By the following year the Collector was prepared to pay Rs. 300 for the purchase of New Orleans seed and distribute it to the ryots in Dharwad taluka.¹⁰ The Collector observed : “The New Orleans cottong have exceeded my sanguine expectations ... the cleaned cotton is selling higher in the Bazar than expected...”. As the cotton cultivation began to expand on a large scale, the Collector asked for an Engineer to help in setting up gins. The success of the experiment prompted the Government to send six more gins to Dharwad.

The Collector asked for permission to a Committee, consisting of the Collector, an American gentlemen and few Indians to distribute awards for those ryots who had successfully grown cotton on more than 25 acres. The rewards were to consist of Rs. 100, Rs. 70 and two of Rs. 50 each. He observed that the American cotton was much better and superior to the local variety then grown. The Collector obtained permission to start two more farms at Gadag and Saundatti which were to become centres for seed distribution.

Cotton thus became very popular in the Dharwad taluka and in other areas of Southern Maratha country. During the season commencing in 1845, 1000 acreas were sown with American cotton at Rs. 2 per acre, the rent of the land and the payment for the labour for picking was paid by the Government. As the cotton cultivation

became popular, the experimental farms were abolished. The acreage under cotton cultivation steadily grew and brought and brought prosperity to the people.

Cotton came to be exported by the merchants of Dharwad to distant Karwar and Kumta ports. It was for this reason it was found that the Dharwad farmers were more prosperous than those in the other parts of Deccan.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century different strains of cotton such a Mexican, Nanking or Khaki coloured cotton were also introduced. It was discovered that the seeds acclimatized to the Dharwad climate yielded better results in soils elsewhere in the presidency than the defect sowing of imported seeds.¹¹ Dharwad therefore, became a place for the distribution of cotton seeds, especially to Broach and Ahmedabad.¹²

The attempt to grow silk was so successful that a few packages were dispatched to England where they received fair acclaim. In 1842 nearly 400 pounds of silk was produced. It was estimated that there were 200 mulberry trees and 24,000 bushes in the taluka. The people were successful in obtaining 272 pounds, while the prisoners in the jail produced another 144 pounds during that year. After Mr. Baverm the next Collector Mr. Mackenzie took keen interest. The Dharwad silk was for some time exported to Glasgow, London and France. When making a choice for

mulberry cultivation and production of silk on a large scale the authorities decided upon Dharwad in preference to Calcutta. With this success the British introduced the tasar variety in 1876.¹⁴ However, it is to be noted that due to a variety of circumstances, the silk industry did not make much progress. This may have been primarily due to the pre occupation of the British with the cultivation of cotton. Also a major hurdle was the lack of water supply as Dharwad experienced long periods of water shortage on account of scanty monsoons. May of the mulberry imported began to dry up.

Mr. Barbar also made attempts to bring in fruit cultivation. He encouraged the inhabitants to cultivate apple trees and other vegetables not popularly known in this region. Some of the fruit trees began to yield a good crop. As an incentive he announced that those who planted 1000 fruit trees would be exempted from land tax. Thus many of the prominent citizens who had farms on the outskirts of Dharwad immediately sought permission to plant mango, chickoo black grapes and apple trees.

Under these conditions trade began to pick up considerably. The weight and measures were regularised and a uniform system was introduced all over the Southern Maratha Country. Also a Notification was issued in 1845 that the market and the Government offices in the Collectorate would remain closed on Sundays “because it was proper and desirable under a Christian

Government, that transaction of ordinary official business should be discontinued as far as possible on Sundays”.¹⁵

Prior to the arrival of the British, there were in existence several types of currencies, each of which had different value in different territories. The British introduced a common currency system thereby eliminating this confusion and the reconstruction on trade. The standard currency of the British stimulated trade.

The Dharwad market became the chief market for the produce of nearly 136 villages. More and more cultivation of land, both for garden crops and dry crops came to be taken up. Jowar, the staple crop in the taluka which was sold at 51 seers for a rupee between 1843 and 1845 in the Dharwad market. Again, it was sold at 72 seers per rupee in 1851. As more lands were cultivated the prices of many other essential commodities came down.

In 1852 the British turned their attention to yet another field which they felt needed to be encouraged. They began to identify the different types of workmanship and artifacts available in Dharwad Collectorate. The authorities felt that by exhibiting these artifacts more interest should be created among the people to encourage to purchase them. A Committee was formed to collect the artifacts. The authorities noted that : “The goldsmiths, sculptors, tailors and blacksmiths and other artists of this country are able to make very

nice and really superior articles, but they are none ready to purchase them, they do not prepare them unless they are ordered to prepare any particular article.¹⁶

The experience of the Committee formed to collect the artifacts was that the traditional artisans were not too keen on sending their exhibits to distant lands. However, the committee persuaded them to contribute to the collection being made by them and finally an exhibition was arranged in 1953 in order to create an interest among the people for the purchase of local artifact.

In the field of agriculture, the British observed that the local farmers needed to be encouraged to make more modern implements. Hence, they organised an industrial exhibition. The exhibition was proposed to be held in Dharwad on 15 September 1857 and the Government sanctioned Rs. 2,200. However, this programme was suddenly interrupted by the outbreak of the Mutiny. The authorities therefore had to again revive the plans two years later in 1859. The ultimate aim and purpose of the exhibition was started by the Collector: "As soon as so useful and attractive museum has been opened and has interested the public eye, it may be hoped that, the inhabitants of the station and the province of Dharwad would cherish what the Government authorities had commenced."

Thus the Government made efforts to introduce the use of modern mechanical

implements and kindle an interest for better and more extensive cultivation of land by the people. Since the Dharwad agriculturists and artisans were intelligent and resourceful, the authorities felt that they could be induced to try out the new agricultural implements as that they would set an example for the rest of the agriculturists in the Collectorate. It was with this intention that the authorities were finally able to hold an exhibition which led to the setting up an experimental farm nearby Dharwad in 1873.

In many 1873, Mr. E.P. Robertson the Collector asked the Government for the sanction of land for starting an experimental farm at Navalur and Lakmanhalli in the vicinity of Dharwad. The farm began with only 77 acres and was later extended to 200 acres. The Government sent Mr. Shearer as the Superintendent of the new farm was to be a model for the native agriculture.¹⁸

The experimental farm yielded a fine crop of sugarcane, a crop which the local agriculturists had attempted to row but had failed. Similarly safflower was also introduced, which was hitherto not known in the region. Many types of new vegetables were cultivated. The farm raised successfully many new crops which gave confidence for the local agriculturists and they felt encouraged to try them out on their own lands. In 1873, the farm also introduced a new type of plough which had several advantages over the wooden plough which was then popularly used. This new plough was accredited to have been invented by

the Marquis of Tweedale (a former Governor of Madras) and was sent out by him through the Secretary of State.¹⁹

By 1879 arable land in Dharwad had been cultivated instead of being kept under grasses, Now only waste lands were set aside for cattle grazing. IN 1857 the land in the vicinity of Dharwad town had been covered by thick forests with instance of jackals even entering houses. There were elephants and leopards in the forests, but by the end of the country the forest cover had given way to agricultural lands.

The American Civil War further created a fillip to cotton growth. It was reported that large sums of money began to pour into the market and people began to purchase houses and lands. The price of these commodities to rise.

The sale of cotton as the single largest commodity had brought prosperity to the region. Between 1862 and 1865 it was reported that no less than Rs. 1,17,50,000 were amassed by the growers and dealers in cotton.²⁰ The ryots gradually came to be freed from debts, and began to accumulate wealth. Traders were benefited by a sustained demand and a plentiful supply, the laboures were in constant demand the wages began to rise and there was continuous employment. Much of the produce was consumed in the Dharwad market itself and the total sale value for one day alone accounted for Rs. 49,650. The

chief articles sold were jowar, rice, wheat, gram, sweetmeats, sugar, spices and betel nuts as also cloth, gold and silver ornaments, brass vessels etc.

The Dharwad market at one time was also well known for its breed of ponies but during the later decades the breed of horses had considerably deteriorated because the best horses had been picked by British Officers. A large number of horses were taken away by the British army for the persian and Abssinian campaign. What was left was purchased for the mail cart service and only the inferior breed were sold in the market. However, the sale of horses completely stopped as the more of conveyance changed.

In 1876 a joint Stock Company was formed at Dharwad. Its chief aim was to export and import cloth of various types. It was registered under the name of "Dharwar company" and was started by a group of enterprising Dharwad traders with a capital of Rs. 11,875, divided into 475 shares of Rs. 25 each. The Company did brisk business and gradually increased its share to 1600 and advanced its capital to Rs. 40,000 by 1883.²⁵ The company began to import cloth from Bombay, Beneras, Bangalore and other distant places. It also sold imported European printed cloth. The company opened a branch in 1877, whose affairs were managed by four of the directors with an agent in each of the shops at Hubli and Dharwad.

However, a sudden blow was wrought by a severe famine of the 19th century. The famine of 1877-78 stalked the Southern Maratha Country taking a heavy toll of life. The poorer classes were the most affected. The poor had to part with whatever little gold and silver ornaments they had accumulated during better off did not feel the impact of famine immediately due to the accumulated stock in the market. It was during the second year that the severity of the famine affected all classes of people. People began to pawn not only ornaments but even clothes. Such was the severity that it is said that a pawn broker jocularly remarked to the effect that the famine should continue a little longer or visited with regularity.²³

To counter the ill effects of famine to forestall any such occurrence in future the British immediately set about constructing a railway in 1879. The railway further contributed to the stability of the region. Trade and commerce which were disrupted by severe famine was again revived. However, the aftermath of the famine was perceived in inflation and rise in the prices of commodities.

The town of Dharwad which had a branch of the Bank of Bombay opened in 1863 was closed down in 1878 as the merchants took the aid of native bankers who granted "Hinddus" for an amount up to Rs. 5,10,000 at places like Bombay, Poona, Madras, Bellary, Bangalore, Kumta and Karwar.²⁴

The result of better means of communication, contact with distant places and a proliferation of prosperous merchants brought about considerable improvement in the Dharwad market. Goods which were once sold in the old town was not sufficient for purposes of trade. A new extensive market was constructed towards the west. The Dharwad Municipality constructed the Robertson Market on the banks of the Kalgeri tank or Moti rala.

As the capacity for purchasing new commodities increased with the people, the traders began to import new articles of use. Many articles came from Bombay such as glassware, candles, lamps, carpets, utensils etc. Most traders purchased these from the Dharwad market and re-sold them in the interior and other small towns. It is said that caps from Europe wherein great demand in the local market. Other articles such as matches, kerosene, stationery, clocks, expensive liquor, cutlery and cloth were in great demand.

However, these changes also had some of its own consequences. While the upper classes benefited by the variety of articles they could buy, it had hurt the native artisans. Local manufacture being unable to compete with the superior imported articles began to suffer. Dharwad which had 78 cloth and 27 wooden looms was unable to compete with the imported cloth, as they had no buyers. In fact, the effects of imported commodities on the local produce was quite market as early as 1860s. So

much so that many indigenous industries began to suffer, such as for example, the native paper manufactures of Shahpur who were once prosperous in the 1820s were completely ruined. Such was the extent that when Sir P. Wodehouse, the Governor of Bombay visited Dharwad many of the local citizens appealed to him in a Memorandum to stem the discontentment among local artisans and revive some of the local industries as also help those who had been ruined due to a loss in their hereditary caste based industries.

Thus improvement in economy brought in its wake prosperity and misery. However, one cannot fail to notice that a general change had been brought about by improvements in agriculture, trade and commerce in the region. Dharwad being one of the chief markets of the collectorate, it cannot be denied that what happened in the entire collectorate was reflected in the economy of Dharwad and vice versa.

SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION :

The changes brought about by economic prosperity and the spread of Western education also had an impact on the life style and thinking of the people. One of the benefits of education being rational thinking and concern for others, one may perceive that the impact of education was the rise of an educated class of native gentry who began to take a keen interest in social reform. This is a trend one may see in other parts of the country too, such as for, example

the reform initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others in the nineteenth century.

In India, enforced widowhood and Sati were two of the most heinous crimes perpetrated on Indian women and social reformers had taken cognizance of it. The result was the abolition of Sati in 1829. However, the plight of widows was an issue which could not be tackled immediately due to the prevalence of traditions and customs and the strong sentiments of the people all over the country. The British had to mobilise sufficient public opinion before they could eventually pass the widow Remarriage Act towards the end of the nineteenth century.

It was specifically the educated class which took an interest in ameliorative measures in order to rid the traditional Hindu society of many of its repugnant social customs. The new elite campaigned against rituals, superstition and ignorance. They never had any doubt of the soundness of the Hindu religion. Their main aim was to transform some of the traditional values of the Indian society so as to bring it closer to modern thinking. One may perceive a distinct movement for social reform in North Karnataka during the nineteenth century with Dharwad town as its base.

The question of widow remarriage and the prohibition of infant marriages, as a logical extension of the prohibition of Sati, engaged the attention of both British officials and educated Indians. The British began to

consult many eminent Indians for their opinions. In 1837, the principal Sadar Ameen (Native Judge) of Dharwad, Parsi Venkat Rao was consulted. Parsi Venkat Rao immediately wrote back to the Government that the Government ought to take positive steps in making it possible for widows, especially virgin widows, to remarry.²⁵ Venkat Rao recounted various examples to show the miserable life led by Hindu widows who were considered inauspicious and relegated to cloistered life. The judge pointed out some cases where young widows were led astray and were forced into immoral life by unscrupulous male relatives and the harsh consequences society meted to them.

In this report submitted to the Law Commission, Parsi Venkat Rao wrote thus: "... widows are treated with contempt and scorn. The apprehension of such a state may be one reason, why so many females have offered to immolate themselves with their departed husbands... than to suffer immediate miseries with relations and friends."²⁶

Venkat Rao abhorred also the system of child marriages which he observed were the main cause of virgin widows. He felt that widow remarriage was a justifiable act and a logical measure to be taken after the prohibition of the Sati system. In his Report the Judge further observed that though widow remarriages were prevalent among the lower castes, the practice was generally not favored. He further notes: "

... I must candidly state that my most humble individual opinion is, that it would be highly desirable. Tho' a great proportion of the higher castes of Hindoos may now consider such a measure an innovation.... they may consequently oppose and be a very unwilling to express their approbation yet I think that several sensible individuals approve of the measure."²⁷ These remarks coming from an educated Indian in 1837 were indeed praiseworthy and quite revolutionary.

While forwarding the Report submitted by Parsi Venkat Rao, the British Judge Mr. Shaw observed: "..... I wish all the hindoos could see the matter in the same light, but I doubt it much..." Similarly Mr. Le Geyt, the Collector opined: "I have forwarded the original sent by this talented and respectable functionary as a Specimen of the opinion of an enlightened and well educated Brahmin and who has the real advantage of this countrymen much at heart and the good sense to perceive and advocate the true path to it." The Secretary to Law Commission again wrote to Parsi Venkat Rao seeking clarifications on some aspects of Hindu Law, inheritance, and the prevalence of widow remarriage among the poorer sections of society.

Venkat Rao's opinions were far in advance of his countrymen and this is fully brought out in the letter by Rev. Beynon, the well known educationist and missionary from Belgaum, who wrote in 1846. "Have you seen that the subject of the remarriage of widows has been proposed by a member

of the Dharma Sabha of Bengal? Some of the papers speak highly of the advancement made by the native gentleman who made the proposition. You are in advance of him. If I recollect, years ago I believe, you wrote in favour of the subject”²⁸ The topic of widow remarriage was kept alive and was still being discussed during the 1880s. Rao Bahdur Tirmalrao Inamdar, Parsi Venkat Rao’s son, who also was a Sardar Ammen, took a keen interest in this topic. The issue had once again come to the forefront due to the efforts made by B.M. Malabari, a social reformer of Bombay. The remarks written by Malabari on the subject of widow remarriage and prohibition of infant marriages was sent to Tirmalrao at Dharwad for his opinion, upon the direction the Governor - in - Council.²⁹

Tirmalrao Inamdar wrote back that infant marriages had no religious sanction. Similarly he decried the custom of enforced widowhood. He further expressed his grave doubts on whether it was in the interest of native society for a man to marry twice when the first wife was living and had no children. Tirmalrao summed the prevailing sentiments thus: “... They are fully aware of the cruelty and hardships of enforced widowhood, and privately wish the young widows might be remarried, and yet they have not the courage of openly declaring their private wishes”³⁰

Knowing that a Native Judge at Dharwad was sympathetic to social reform, many gentlemen from different parts of the country began to correspond with him. Thus

Raja Sir R. Madhavarao, Dewan Bahdur Raghunath Rao, Chanchala Rao and others from the neighboring Madras Presidency corresponded regularly with him. It may be noted that the issue was even discussed in smaller towns. One supporter from Naval Gund wrote: “Looking at the unreparable distressed condition of our widows and the atrocities perpetrated... I am inclined to offer up myself as one of the advocates...”³¹

Credit should be given to Tirmalrao for mobilising views in support of the legislation which the Bombay Government sought to introduce for widow remarriage. Local stalwarts such as Tirmalrao and others mobilised public opinion in favour of such a legislation.

Many other residents of Dharwad also took a keen interest in the subject during the later decades of the nineteenth century. An Assistant Master in the local Kanerese School wrote an article upholding the idea of widow remarriage in 1884.³²

However, the book written on this sensitive topic by Venkat Rango Katti still remains as an important document reflecting the nature of public opinion that was sought to be created by educated gentlemen. Katti was the author of Vidhawa Vapana Anachar (Maratha) or Vidhawa Mundana Anachar (Kannada) which was published in 1889. Katti was a prominent educationist and the Principal of the Dharwad Men’s Training College. He advocated quite strongly the

view that there was no religious sanctions for the tonsure of widows. Katti systematically argues that the disfigurement of widows by shaving their heads was a custom which had crept into Hindu society as a consequence of Buddhism. Katti cited various Hindu law makers to show that there was no custom of tonsure of widows during the vedic period. He even offered a reward of Rs. 500 to anyone who could prove him wrong. In this context he said; "An appeal is made to our present reformers and men of patriotic feelings to gird up their loins to put down this abominable and unauthorised custom of recent origin as early as possible."³³

Thus did various enlightened men in the nineteenth century in the Dharwad collectorate make an effort to reform Hindu society by taking up the issue of infant marriages and widow remarriage.

Perhaps, the other issue relating to Indian Society was the nature of the rigid caste system which prevailed in India. Western education enabled individuals in Indian society extricate themselves from the restrictions of caste based-culture and taboos. In fact self-betterment in India began with western education. Western education was secular by nature. It brought forth new ideas, aspirations and behavior patterns which were different from those to which the people were till then accustomed to. As the eminent sociologist G.S. Churye notes: "The British brought with them a casteless culture and a literature full of

thoughts on individual liberty."³⁴ The lower castes which had been denied the privileges of higher education saw in western education an opportunity and avenue to enhance their status.

The British were quite aware of the problems which issued out of the caste system in the India. In the field of education they were helpless as they had to be careful enough not to tamper with the customs and traditions of the people. Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay knew of the consequences of admitting low caste boys into government schools. He was also aware that the missionaries had found many intelligent boys who were willing to be educated if the opportunities were so provided. Referring to providing opportunity for educating the low caste boys elphinstone observed: "... if our system of education first took root among them ... we might find themselves at the head of a new class, superior to the rest in useful knowledge, but hated and despised by the castes to whom these new attainments would always induce us to prefer them."³⁵ He further remarked "... We must be careful how we offer any special encouragement to men of that description ..."

Many British educationists supported Elphinstone regarding the idea that western education should be first popularised among the upper castes and the task of educating the low castes should only come later. Further, the issue of low caste boys sitting along with upper caste boys

would upset the local sentiments and the British were quite aware of this fact. Yet, the British did not wish to pursue a policy of open discrimination. The Director of Public instruction, who was a British official felt that the children of the upper castes should be encouraged to take up education while at the same time, the children of the lower castes should be cautiously admitted.³⁶ He observed: “... if the children of the poor are admitted freely to Government institutions, what is there to prevent all the despised castes - the Dhers, Mhars etc., - from flocking in numbers to their walls.?”

The Government took the stand that boys of low castes could not be denied admission and in a Government Minute declared “There is no rule of Government or of the Department of Public Instructions prohibiting the admission of boys of low castes in any of the Government schools... on the contrary it has been declared, on more than one occasion and might be shown to be the avowed ultimate policy of the Government, that its schools should be open to every caste, class and creed.”³⁷

This was the broad policy laid down by the British Indian Government, but in the provinces it was difficult to implement it. The provincial officials in the Education Department cautioned that this would drive away the upper caste boys who were gradually taking to English education. It was suggested that the alternative would be to encourage educated philanthropic minded native gentlemen to start separate schools

for low caste boys. But such an offer did not come about as many saw it as further expenditure for the maintenance of schools.

However in 1856 the British Government was forced to take a stand due to an incident which took place in Dharwad. This brought about much discussion at the highest level and came to the notice of the Viceroy at Calcutta. In 1856 a Mhar boy, Vitoo bin Narayan was refused admission in the Government Marathi school at Dharwad. The boy petitioned to the Government of Bombay to intercede on his behalf to obtain for him the admission. He mentioned that he was not the first low caste boy in school, as is evident from his Petition which says: “Your Petitioner is informed that, at least in one instance, a scholar of your Petitioner is informed that, at least in one instance, a scholar of your Petitioner’s caste was instructed for many years in Government school in this very town of Dharwad. The present objection is therefore a step backwards in the wrong direction.”³⁸ Thus, from this petition it appears that it too Vitoo bin Narayan was not the first Mhar boy who was interested in getting himself educated. It also casts light on the fact that the desire to get educated among the low caste boys had been kindled as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. It also means perhaps, that the low castes had become conscious of the fact that they were being denied many privileges and that they could possibly be obtained if one fought for them.

The principle involved in the case, whether a low caste boy could be admitted or not, engaged the attention of the government for two years. The Viceroy wrote to all the Governors of the Provinces to collect facts on this matter. The entire voluminous correspondence on this matter in the National Archives shows the meticulous manner in which opinion was collected from the officials and also the upper castes on whether low caste boys could be admitted and if so what could be the repercussions.

Finally, in 1858 the Government announced that in such schools where the expenses were shared by Government and local contributors, low caste boys not be admitted, in partially aided Government schools the governor could withdraw the aid and that in Government school low caste pupils and persons of any race had the right of admission.

When the above rule implemented it did create some anxiety among upper caste boys in Dharwad. As anticipated, the upper castes did not welcome the measure. Even almost thirty years later the upper castes were not quite willing to support the decision of Government. The Dharwad writt a local newspaper in 1882 reported that the number of pupils in government schools was rapidly declining. the Director of Public Instructions was ready to close the Government School rather than deny admission to low caste boys.

In 1882 the admission of two boys belonging to the Holeya caste to the Government School created a stir in the town for four or five days. Many of the upper caste boys left the school and joined the school opened by one Lele.³⁹ However, this school was not quite good and many pupils began to return after a few days. Soon they were reconsidered to the Government rule. Eventually the native educated gentlemen had to accept the decision.

Perceiving the enthusiasm for education among the low castes, the Inspector of Education even recommended the opening of a Night School for low caste boys as many of them were otherwise engaged during day time. The Inspector of Education (Southern Division) also notified in 1881 that students belonging to Mochiyyar, Holeya, and other low castes attending schools were to be exempted from fees. In fact Hubli and Dharwad had the higher number of students of these castes.

Remarkably even girls from the lower castes began to take an interest in education. The barriers these girls had to face was quite formidable, when even girls upper castes had no freedom to acquire education. However, some low caste girls did attend schools and some of them did quite well at studies. At the prize distribution of girl's school in Dharwad in 1882, the District Judge was pleased to give monetary help to a few girls coming from the Holeya caste.⁴⁰

Dharwad had many low caste students and the Director of Public Instructions noted: "Dharwad has the largest number of these children but has no special schools or classes. This is as it should be. Every encouragement in the shape of free admission and convenient accommodation is given to these children to attend boys schools."⁴¹

Western education thus played a crucial role in the nineteenth century in India. The most profound change was in the pattern of secular education, for it created aspirations for a better society. Thus one may perceive that the advent of the British brought about several changes in the nineteenth century. All these changes may be perceived in the light of the development of agriculture, improvement in trade and commerce, the introduction of western education, and the creation of aspiration for social reform and a better society.

From the above we can confidently assume that the town of Dharwad played a very prominent role in the region of North Karnataka which was at the time called the Southern Maratha Country or the Dharwad Collectorate. It was an administrative capital, a cultural, educational and economic centre. It was a centre for social reform from where many revolutionary and reformative ideas germinated. Thus one may perceive Dharwad as a progressive town

which provided the incentive for the development for North Karnataka. However, one may perceive a gradual decline in the fortunes of the town with regard to its importance during the early decades of the twentieth century. The shifting of the Railway Headquarters of the M & M.S.M Railway, the migration of educated to better pastures, especially to Bombay, the shifting of the army from Dharwad to Belgaum, etc. These and many other developments in the socio economic sphere conspired to retard the urban development of Dharwad. Hubli as an industrial city further succeeded in eclipsing Dharwad. One may say with certainty that the achievements made in the last century have been kept up in the 20th. The tempo of progress has definitely lagged behind. The lead has been taken up by other cities in the region. In this context one may wonder whether the merger of Dharwad with Hubli in 1962 has been beneficial for its development. The full potentialities of the town as they were made use of in the last century have never been exploited during present times, though today there are more educated citizens, more schools and colleges and two Universities in the city. The starting of industrial areas near Dharwad at Belur and Kotur may to some extent rectify the economic conditions but the city needs more employment opportunities to keep back its young from migrating.

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