

CHAPTER - IISURVEY OF SOURCES AND REVIEW OF PREVIOUS WORKSON ELPHINSTONE

The Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone was born on the 6th October 1779.¹ He was the fourth son of General Lord Elphinstone, eleventh baron in the peerage of Scotland, and his mother was a daughter of Lord Ruthven. The Elphinstones take their name from a village near Tranent, in East Lothian. His childhood passed partly at Cunbernauld House and partly at Edinburgh Castle, which his father then occupied as Governor. Here he used to make friends with the French prisoners in the Castle, learning their revolutionary songs and wearing his hair long in imitation of their style. "All accounts of this early time describe him as characterised by gaiety and love of fun". In 1793 he was sent to a private school of some repute in Kensington. Here he remained for about two years until his departure for India. His ambition had been all for the army, but he was quit content with the writership on the Bengal establishment which his uncle Lord Kieth, the Director procured for him when he was only fifteen years.

The Early Career of Elphinstone:

Elphinstone sailed for India in the year 1795 at the age of sixteen. Benaras was then the frontier station

towards the North-West end an important centre of Political affairs. Elphinstone's chief was one Samuel Davis, a civil servant of repute and a Sanskrit Scholar, while Davis' brother James was at Ghazipur under the more famous scholar Clebrooke. It was here that he began his devotion to reading perhaps under the stimulus of his lifelong friend, Edward Strachey, who was likewise stationed at Benaras. Persian he also began at this time, but Greek he did not take up again seriously till much later.

In 1801, he was sent to the College at Fort William, which was started by Wellesley in 1800, to train and educate Civil Servants. But his stay there was very short, because soon on 23rd January 1801, he received his appointment as Assistant to the Resident of Poona. Here got a chance to get close to Wellesley in the battles of Asai and Gawilgad, which is likely to be one of the main reasons of Elphinstone's rapid promotions. Wellesley and Elphinstone got on well with each other. After that he was appointed as Resident at Nagapur (1804-1807). From Nagpur Elphinstone was transferred to the Court of Schindhia in 1808. Before he could even settled down with his work at Gwalior he received orders from Lord Minto, the Governor General, to lead an

Embassy to Kabul with the dual purpose of strengthening British influence in Afghanistan and of countering whatever it was that the French might be at. On his return from the Kabul Embassy, Elphinstone was appointed as Resident to the Peshwa, Bajirao Second's Court in Poona from 1811 to 1818. After that he received his appointment as Commissioner for the settlement of the Deccan in January 1818.

The Commissionership of the Deccan was, from its nature, a provisional appointment. Elphinstone hoped that he might complete his task in two years, and then fulfil his long deferred intention of visiting England. But in February 1819, he learnt that he had been selected by the court of Directors to be the Governor of Bombay Presidency. The hope of seeing his friends and relatives at home thus had to be postponed. He "dreaded the change to Bombay, with its new duties strange society, and enervating atmosphere".

10. Nevertheless, he went to his enlarged sphere of work in good heart, and with serious resolution that he would at least deserve public approval. As a diplomat and an administrator, he exercised a decisive influence upon the fate of western India, that extended over eight years from 1st November 1819 to 1st November 1827.

The Review of related literature on Elphinstone:

Elphinstone's name stands as one of the servants of East India Company's Government in Western India. During his tenure as the Resident at Peshwa's Court from 1811 to 1818 and as the Governor of Bombay Presidency, 1819 to 1827, Elphinstone whose admirable efficiency in the politics and administration of the Presidency. He was a man of practices ability and therefore his approach towards the political affairs and administration of Western India contributed a great deal in the civil administration of the Company. It was during his tenure that the process of establishment of the Company's Raj had taken a new dimension with the introduction of administrative reforms which remained the basis of English administration reforms which remained the basis of English administration in Western India. With his political diplomacy, administrative endeavour matured thoughts and understanding of local customs, Elphinstone imports a new vigour to the administrative system and pattern of judiciary and thus laid the firm foundation of the new era in the life and times of the Western Indian Society.

With widened knowledge of the early nineteenth century polity and the far reaching changes brought about in all the social life and Administration, the period of Elphinstone in Western India has attracted general historians to dig into his life and order. The first attempts are made almost after 25 years of his death. One of the earliest and perhaps the most thought provoking work was of a biographic form written by his friend Sir T.E. Colebrooke,² who was also contemporary of Elphinstone. The biographer had an opportunity to witness the developments taking place in Western India during Elphinstone's period. Besides his own knowledge, Colebrooke had, also, the opportunity to consult the personal correspondence of Elphinstone, along with the official papers, which enabled him to present an authentic account of the life and work of Elphinstone. This biography consists of eight chapters, mainly elaborating the details of Elphinstone's works - his diplomacy and administrative achievements in Western India as well as in England from 1817 to 1859 without any serious attempt to analyse his work on Western India. Although the work contains most valuable information on English politics and administration particularly in

Western India and that to in the Deccan during his period, it does not furnish much information on Gujarat which witnessed series of change in the social, economic and civil administration inclusive of judiciary contributed by Elphinstone.

The work of G.W. Forrest³ on Elphinstone drawing on almost the same sources like Colebrooke was another significant contribution to understand the career and achievements of Elphinstone. The writing of G.W. Forrest could be divided into two parts. First part deals with the early life of Elphinstone and his Embassy to Kabul. His second assignment was the Company's resident at Poona, later becoming the commissioner of Deccan and finally the Governor of Bombay before his return to London, and his later activities. The discussion and details given in the first five chapters by Forrest throw useful light on Maharashtra under the Presidency and Governorship of Elphinstone. It is the 6th chapter, that may be called second part, which contains the original minute by Elphinstone Forrest extracted this from East India Papers. These minutes are related to the English territories of Gujarat and contain information on the state of affairs, political, economic and social, under the Governorship of

Elphinstone. For this study perhaps this is the most useful part. Unfortunately, Forrest has not made any critical analysis of the information available in these minutes that may throw light on the politics and administrative changes taking place in Gujarat. However, the information pertaining to Gujarat furnish useful details for studying the life and condition of the people of Gujarat under the Governorship of Elphinstone. The present study draws a quite a bit on this useful information.

The rulers of India series also found a place for Elphinstone. J.S. Cotton,⁴ rightly ascribed his account on Elphinstone under the title of 'Elphinstone and the making of South Western India'. A short but succient account written by Cotton presents the career and works of Elphinstone in eleven chapters. Here he discusses the role and achievements of Elphinstone in the politics of Western India. The book contains a systemic account of Elphinstone's ideas and planning on the social and administrative reforms on the one hand and the educational reforms on the other. Following the same pattern as the two earlier ones to Cotton

we are indebted for his special reference to Gujarat in matter of ways.

Perhaps, the historical analysis of Elphinstone's works both as a diplomat and as an administrator began with the publication of Kenneth Ballhachet's⁵ doctoral work. Ballhachet's work was a great reference on existing literature on Elphinstone. In order to understand the social significance of politics and administration of that period in Western India. The noteworthy feature of Ballhachet's work is that he reviewed the changes in the society of Western India, both that of the Deccan and Gujarat, initiated by Elphinstone. First as Commissioner and then as the Governor he concedes the geo-political differentiation in the southern and northern parts of Western India. Keeping in view this fact, Ballhachet has given a critical analysis of the impact of administrative policies on the various social strata of the society more the Deccan and less of Gujarat.

Ballhachet tried to analyse the extent of social change took place when the British conquered the Peshwa's territories in Western India. Besides the immediate changes he analysed

which thus resulted from the over throw of the Maratha Government and the establishment of the British in its place, the different administrative methods of the British affected the social structure and social institutions of the whole country, lowering the status of the village headmen, enfeebling the vigour of the village committees, and producing many other slow, insidious and inordinate mutations.

The first part of this book deals with the time when Elphinstone was settling a provisional Government in Peshwa's Court and Deccan. When he became Governor of Bombay, Deccan was then annexed to the Bombay Presidency. In the second part of this book the prospect widens to include the whole of the territories under that Government. Even with his broadening project discussion, Gujarat is very less.

He, also had used the official records of the East India Company, in the India Office Library, together with some unofficial material preserved there, in particular some of Sir John Malcom's private correspondence. He has not referred any primary sources from India. This book has emerged from a thesis for which he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the University of London.

R.D. Choksey⁶ in his biography of Elphinstone has made a modest attempt to further the details on the life and works of Elphinstone while in India. Mainly basing his information on the records kept in the India Record Office, London, he records the account of Elphinstone's life from 1796 to 1827, his years in Indian, in a chronological manner and has classified his account in five sections containing 24 chapters. The details in these chapters are very informative and provide a good deal of discussion on Elphinstone's career, his personality and achievements as a diplomat as well as an administrator. One of the outstanding features of Choksey's work is that he elaborates his discussion theme-wise by recording the texts of the original sources which besides bestifying his own arguments, provides a mine of information for those who are interested in the study of Elphinstone's period. Unfortunately his work does not add much to our knowledge about the process of the implimentation of social and economy of Gujarat.

Recently two monographs have been published on Elphinstone they have widened the scope of researches on this period. P.K.Ghosh's⁷ 'Mountstuart Elphinstone's Embassy and Poona Affairs (1811-1818) is thematic and the author has

chosen the role of Elphinstone in Peshw's affairs which, of course, shaped the fate of the Peshwa. The book has been divided into fifteen chapters and they are further divided into sub-sections. Each chapter gives an account of Elphinstone's role in the affairs at Poona. The author, like all other historians who have written on Elphinstone, with an exception of Ballhachet, has detailed the role played by Elphinstone in bringing about the downfall of the Marathas and his success in isolating Peshwa Bajirao II from the latter's confederation and subordination. The details given by the author are useful but they are not well coordinated, so that the fresh queries on Maratha problems could be made. Since the study is concentrated on pre-governorship period of Elphinstone, the subject is wholly related to the British Maratha affairs of Poona. However, for our study it gives a good idea about the way of Elphinstone's works.

The latest study on Elphinstone is that of Miss. S.J. Verma⁸ she also deals with Elphinstone's role in the Deccan to which she calls Maharashtra. Miss S.J. Verma's Mountstuart Elphinstone in Maharashtra, views the subject in a non-traditional manner and tries to cover both the political

as well as civil aspects of Elphinstone's dealings in Maharashtra only. No doubt, the impact of Elphinstone's was more enduring in Maharashtra, as he spent 25 years out of 31 in that region, than any other areas of Western India. However, it has limitation because it deals with one side of his career. The total refined personality of Elphinstone could hardly be judged unless a similar attempt is made in the work of Elphinstone on other parts of the Bombay Presidency.

Elphinstone's Writings:

Some plea of the thought uppermost in his views then as the ways of his waibing can be had from his own writings, as Elphinstone had been writer himself. Elphinstone was a man of great literary interest. He was not only interested in Western literary works but also those of the East, especially Persian Poetry. He was familiar with the writings of Sadi, Rumi and Hafiq among others. By 1802 he started inserting Persian couplets into his journal in order to give expression to his feelings.⁹ His own literary output is by no means small, including as it did the account of the Kingdom of Kabul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary and India (1815),

the minute on Education (1823), the Rise of the British Power in the East (1887), the History of India (1841), and Territories conquered from the Peshwa (1821).

Of these 'History of India'¹⁰ won permanent place in literature. This book is divided in two parts as Hindu and Mohamadan periods. In Hindu period he endeavours to avoid, as far as possible, all legendary details and to confine himself to those authentic fragments of information, which can be gathered from still existing monuments or such indirect native sources, or the accounts of foreign visitors. The Mohamadan period is of a different character. It has authentic contemporary records. For the Hindu period Elphinstone availed himself of all the sources then at his command.

Elphinstone had prepared a report of "Territories conquered from the Peshwa" in 1821.¹¹ The treaty of 1818 had brought about a radical change in the constitution of the Maratha empire. He made very simple arrangements to administer the newly acquired territory. He got a vast amount of valuable information on the subject of Maratha

administration and government in matters pertaining to revenue, police, justice, social, economic and religious conditions, collected through the Officers. On the basis of this information Elphinstone prepared a comprehensive report which proved a most valuable compilation on the past methods of government in this province and state paper on policy to be pursued in future. The production of this report formed a fitting conclusion of two years of administrative labour and marked the commencement of a new era in Maharashtra.

Sources of Work:

This study is of regional variation and will be of great use for proper study of the Western Coast of India. Also in this study source material available in Maharashtra State Archives', Bombay, is used. The University of Bombay Library, Library of Archives and the Central Library of Royal Asiatic Society have a rare collections of old publications bearing on the period of this study. They have been also utilised in this study.

National Archives of India, Delhi, has a huge collection of Parliamentary papers and East India Affairs related to

Social Reforms and though no much could be called, on too it, nevertheless, everything of importance will be looked into.

Peshwa Daftar - allienation Office of Poona, the Libraries of Baroda, Ahmedabad and Poona also have a good collection of material related to Elphinstone's period. Number of works available in Gujarati have been consulted for the first time for the study of Elphinstone.

The Scope of Study and Conceptual Frame Work:

All these studies, as stated earlier have not made any direct and significant contribution to Elphinstone's role in the development of Gujarat. In fact, there is no coherent study of Elphinstone in Gujarat.

Many changes were brought about during the period of the administration of Elphinstone. The readings on Elphinstone suggest that an indepth study in this period is required to understand properly the process of transition taking place in this part of the Presidency. It will also provide a different perspective on regional variation. This

will help in understanding as to whether changes were due exclusively to local circumstances during this time or due to personal views of different administrators including Elphinstone. It is therefore felt that a study of Elphinstone in Bombay Gujarat from 1819 to 1827 with special emphasis on social and economic aspects, within the political framework will be a worth while contribution.

Again this study will have to be done in the colonial and pre-industrial context but in the reforming set-up in India as a whole. The attitudes and forms of the British Indian Society, the pulls and pressures often exerted on British administrators from home and elsewhere too need analysis and finally Elphinstone's mental framework has to be analysed to understand his various activities and behaviour in state and society.

Among the various aspects under which Elphinstone's activities could be studied, here are a few which desire a special attention. They are studied under the following headings in this study:

- I. Establishment of British Paramountcy in Gujarat.
- II. Agrarian and Commercial Achievements.
- III. Judicial patterns at Cross Roads.
- IV. Cultural confrontation of East and West.

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