

## Preface

Mountstuart Elphinstone who joined the British service in India in 1795, became the Governor of Bombay Presidency in 1819 and as a Governor, he had jurisdiction over the modern Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. His activities in the area which is now known as Gujarat form the thrust of the work which is proposed to be done. The period covered is from 1819 to 1827.

There are several studies which throw light on the activities of Elphinstone as the Governor of Bombay Presidency. The secondary data consist mainly of studies made by Sir. T.E. Colebrook in 1884, J.S. Cotton in 1892, Kenneth Ballhachet in 1957, R.D. Choksey in 1971 and Miss Verma in 1981. All these studies 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 of 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 frame work will be a worthwhile 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 under the following headings in this study:

1. Survey of Sources and a review of previous works on Elphinstone.
  2. Establishment of British Paramountcy in Gujarat.
  3. Agrarian and Commercial achievements.
  4. Judicial patterns at Crossroads.
  5. Cultural confrontation of East and West.
1. Survey of Sources and Review of previous works on Elphinstone

This part is devoted to high lighting the nature of the data from Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay, the Central Library of Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay, the Library of Bombay University, National Archives of India, Delhi, Peshwa Daftar - alienation Office of Poona, the Libraries in Baroda and Ahmedabad. For the first time to study Elphinstone a lot of Gujarati works also be looked into.

The work so far done also reviewed here in this section.

## 2. Establishment of British Paramountcy in Gujarat:

Until the commencement of the nineteenth century there was no increase in the territorial possessions of the Bombay Government, and consequently no alternation of the system of administration occurred. Bhurach which was captured in 1772, had to be relinquished in 1779, and was not regained until 1803. During 1759 Surat and the districts surrounding it, witnessed the introduction of certain changes which lasted until 1800 when they were supported by administrative arrangements based on the model of the district administration in Bengal. The final downfall of the Peshwa in 1818 gave the Company an enormous addition of territory, which included Kheda and Ahmedabad. In Gujarat, the great accession of territories came with the peace of 1818.

The measures taken by Elphinstone were to enforce order by a strong military force to fix all liabilities and to exact securities from the chief for the payment of tribute and the observance of their engagements in the future. These engagements included the following articles; to refer all disputes to the merchants and to accept compensation for the privilege of levying transit duties.

## 3. Agrarian and Commercial Achievements:

The experience of the East India Company with the Zamindari tenures introduced in Bengal from the times of Warren Hastings, and

the lessons drawn from these experiments had also provoked various controversy in which were being furiously discussed when Gujarat was conquered during nineteenth century.

Elphinstone framed the fundamental principle of land revenue in the Regulation of 1827. On the basis of the Regulation the new land revenue system was introduced in Gujarat. It was called the Tyotwari system of land revenue collections. This system exhibited certain special characteristics.

The transformation of all chieftains, girasdars, inamdars, talookdars, bhaddars and other into 'ryots' with proprietary rights on village lands over which they previously had only rights to collect tributes took various tennurial forms.

Elphinstone could not help increase the trade of Gujarat due to the policies imposed upon by the East India Company. It was not, however, the policy of the East India Company to foster Indian Industries. The manufacture of goods declined and the people who had exported goods to the markets of Europe in previous centuries began to import them in increasing quantities.

#### 4. Judicial patterns at Crossroads:

A great change was introduced in the pattern of Judiciary during the tenure of the Presidency of Elphinstone. As a branch of new administration, while it interlocked with executive side of the state, it also began to reform the Gujarati Society from within. Apparently Elphinstone's objective was not to make an

overall change in the system of judiciary as he wanted to assimilate both the systems, traditional Indian and Western judiciary. This system was introduced by him after a careful investigation. It was to find out in a way in keeping with the ethos of Indian Judiciary but at the same time to model it on the Western pattern of judiciary in order to provide justice with social and economic equality both in the fields of Divani and Amildari. The incorporation of the native judges and putting them in the frame work of judiciary provided the English administration an opportunity to secure the help of the experience and local headmen who had good deal of experience and influence among the native people. Further, Elphinstone's reforms kept the integrity of the traditional obligation of justice, that is Panchayat, a lowest unit in the judiciary but a significant one. The judiciary system was introduced in Gujarat at the time when the similar attempts were made in another parts of Western India. In this regard Elphinstone could be regarded as a pioneer of the modern judiciary system of Bombay Presidency.

#### 5. Cultural confrontation of East and West:

Elphinstone had always shown respect for the Indian Society. But circumstances impelled him to propose and introduce changes into the structure of the Indian society. His main task was the focus on the people when was conciliated by policies after which a further step towards reforms and improvement of the social aspects of the people was made. Elphinstone had enough liberalism of appreciating the best in Indian culture and the conservative

emphasis on the improvement coming from the whole Indian Society.

Elphinstone showed the greatest anxiety to adopt every practicable measure to improve upon the existing system. Very often he had to console his subordinates and others, who in their intensive zeal for reform were anxious to resort to mere drastic and effective measures although what he suggested were some what hasty measures. When Francis Warden advised a complete prohibition of the Practice of Sati, Elphinstone opposed the suggestion on the ground that it has so far been the practice of their Government not to interfere directly in the religion of the country and the one of which he was persuaded they owed their stability. Elphinstone advised warden to see that the women was in possession of her faculties. Elphinstone authorised capt. Bornwell to keep all the fines levied on chiefs for infanticide as well as for other offences in a fund to be distributed to children. He permitted slave trade to a certain extent. However, Elphinstone did not completely come in the way of the privileged class of people who enjoyed benefits from the slave trade.

Elphinstone laid the firm foundation of the elementary and primary educational policy of the province of Bombay. Elphinstone's own principle was that, the Government should only indirectly interfere in the policies followed by Indian Schools, by means of competitive examinations, certificates, scholarships, and prizes which were to be managed by the training of teachers of village schools. English was to be taught in Europe, though translation and composition in the vernacular schools were to be continued.

These attitudes of Elphinstone were responsible for the formation of his noted education minutes, codification of laws and the employment of Indians in the civil service. Elphinstone belonged to that set of early British Indian Administrators who evinced keen interest in things Indian and administration for the early Hindu civilization. At the same time he was also influenced by the utilitarian philosophy of Bentham and J.S. Mill. Himself an enlightened man because of his upbringing and wide learning, he brought the utilitarian idea of the happiness of the governed to India as far as his administration of Bombay Presidency is concerned. His sympathetic approach to Indians and to Indian problems is obvious in his administrative measures.

\*\*\*