

THE PERIOD OF INTERVENTION IN BANKI

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INTRODUCTION

After the British occupation of Orissa in 1803, it was stung by grievous wounds of Maladministration and completely neglected in the administrative set up of Bengal Presidency. After the occupation of Khurda, Ghumsar and Sambalpur, the Britishers extended their sphere of influence to the tributary States or feudatory States. Among them, Banki belonged to the Cuttack States, which was a princely State during British Raj. Among nineteen Cuttack States, Banki came under direct administration owing to the misconduct on the part of the ruler. Banki was placed under the supervision of the Commissioner of Cuttack in his capacity as Superintendent of Tributary Mahals.

After the creation of the office of the Commissioner in 1818, Robert Ker was appointed as first commissioner under new regulation. From the period of Edward Impay up to the Commissionership of Robert Hunter i.e. from 1814 to 1839 or during the second phase of British administration, the Britisher followed the policy of Non-intervention, but as the period of Robert Ker was an age of conflicts, crisis, murder, homicide and heinous offences, he was succeeded by AJM Mills as the Commissioner and Superintendent. The tenure of Mills was characterized by the policy of intervention.

During the Commissionership of AJM Mills, the Raja of Banki couldn't remain in good locks for longtime. There are many causes for dis-satisfaction of Mills on the activities of Raja of Banki. Firstly, the judicial administration in the State of Banki was far from satisfactory. Secondly, in Banki, there prevailed the personal rule of the king. The cases were generally decided according to the sweet will of the king and not according to the laws. Thirdly various codes of law were not enforced in the state of Banki. Fourthly a lot of discrimination was practiced in the judicial sphere. For the same crime some were punished lightly and some others, heavily. Finally, there also prevailed widespread corruption in the ranks of police and administrative machinery.

Under the above circumstances, the Government of Bengal did not pass any specific or defined rules for the administration of Banki at that time. The court of Directors also observed that in the present rude state of Banki it would be inadvisable to bring them under the jurisdiction of regular

courts of justice. Such a measure they stated “would provide neither peace nor the protection of inhabitants. They however, wanted to give considerable discretion to the Superintendent whose object should be not to weaken the influence of Rajas, but to interfere with their authority for the prevention of cruelty oppression and crimes of an aggravated nature.(1) Thus the door of British intervention in the internal affairs of feudatory states opened. Intervention being the settled policy of company’s Government. AJM Mills made it’s drastic application as a solution to the problem of misgovernment or disloyalty in two cases like Banki and Angul. Except these two states in other cases, as Mills observed to avoid unnecessary interference and promote an amicable adjustment of disputes.

The Raja of Banki during the Superintendent of AJM Mills became a ruler of reckless Character. The Raja considered himself as “EK RAT” or sole ruler who crossed all the boundaries of injustice. The subjects of Banki suffered from untold miseries due to cruel and vindictive character of the king. He was also seriously condemned due to highway robberies and frequent Murder which occurred in the limits of Banki. The tributary Mahal’s accused the Paikraj as well as the king for dokaity in their locality. Similarly, AJM mills instituted an inquiry to the Raja of Banki Jagannath Srichanda about the murder of Raghunath Paramguru and his family. Finally, Mills found the Raja guilty of murder. He pointed that chiefs were not suppose to have the power of life and death and that they were considered amenable not only when they committed Murder, but when guilty of cruelty.(2) He also wanted to inflict a severe and exemplary punishment to warn other Rajas not to do such type of mistake in future. Mills also got the evidence because the barkndezes being taken by Jayadev Mahapatra to the place of murder of three men found some long locks of human hair. Some rags, a curry stone which bore the marks of a sword being sharpened on it. Millas also found at the place of Murder 10 to 12 yard square, which bore the people having been Slain there (3).

For an imperial inquiry, he made recommendations to the British Government that the Killah of Banki be forthwith attached a managed by officers of the Government that the Raja be summoned to Cuttack.to face the trail in the court of Superintendent of Tributary Mahals. However the Raja of Banki was summoned to Cuttack by a parwana of November 8, 1839 in which he was asked to comply with orders for his own benefit. He was also promised to be shown no indignity while in attendance. On Nov-29, he came to Cuttack where he was permitted to take a residence under perfect surveillance (4). On December 09, 1839 a trustworthy Zamindar named Doorga Prasanna Dobebe was sent to arrest the persons connected with the Murder of Raghunath Paramaguru and his son and start inquiry. The paik Rameswar Singh was arrested and confesed his role played with Murder. The Raja didn’t like to appear in trial and his Mukhtyar attended the court on his behalf. After the completion of the trial, AJM Mill submitted his report in Feb, 20, 1840.

After submission of report by Mills, all the prisoner - witness admitted their guilt in the respective Murders. Further, all of them also prayed for Pardon as being the servant of Raja they dared not to disobey the Raja's command. Mills reported "the rude and ignorant Paikas consider it no crime to kill a man if ordered by a superior to do so and disclosed many things they knew about the cruel Murders. According to Mills, the Paikas were an ignorant and barbarous race unacquainted with the laws and customs and look on their Rajas will as supreme.(5) However punishment was awarded to some of them including the Raja.

After the conclusion of the trial, Mills recommended the Government that "the Raja be banished from Killah Banki and imprisoned like the Ranee of Dhenkanal as a state prisoner for life. The Killah be forfeited to Government subject to the claim of Balabhadra Bhramarabara, which is now under adjudication before the Saddar Diwani Adalat and the killah which is managed at present by a Tahasildar be continued as such until the case in Sadar Diwani Adalat decided.(6) The Government also conformed the sentences on April 11,1840. The Government in its order of April 14, 1840, confirmed the confiscation of Banki as recommended.(7) Accordingly the Raja was kept in close confinement in a hired building at Tulsipur in Cuttack town. The Magistrate of Cuttack was instructed to see that the Raja was not allowed to leave the house, not to have intercourse between him except with recognised attendants. The Magistrate was further instructed to permit the Raja to keep all the Movable Property he had at Cuttack except the elephants, horses and insignia at Rajuti, which belonged to the Killah.(8).

It was on August 14, 1840 that Biscoe, the judge of the Sadar Dawani Adalat had dismissed the appeal. Balabhadra Bhramarabara on the ground shown by Henry Ricketts. (9) The Raja of Banki had no natural children to claim any legitimate title to the Raja (10). He was empowered to hear and dispose of all case of civil, criminal and financial nature. The Deputy Collector, Ram Prasad Rai was appointed against the post and he worked under the Collector of Cuttack. The Raja was banished from Killah Banki and imprisoned as a State Prisoner for life. Further the Killah of Banki was forfeited. The recommendations of Mills were confirmed by the Government on April, 11, 1840. By the Government order of April 14, 1840, the confiscation of Banki Estate was confirmed. Latter, Banki was declared a permanently Government Estate to be managed by the Tahasildar under the Collector of Cuttack.(11) Mills thereafter submitted an account of the Sadar jamma and expenses to be incurred for the establishment and pensions for the maintenance of the Raja in prison and for the support of his Ranis. The expenses recommended by Mills were confirmed by the Government order of November, 6, 1840.(12)

CONCLUSION

Thus, the confiscation of Banki marketed a new phase in the Government's policy towards the feudatory states. While allowing the Raja of Banki to rule as they pleased the British authorities

were not hesitant to confiscate the State of Banki when it was found guilty of serious charges. On the other hand, the events of Banki shows that the conduct of the deposed Raja was too oppressive all through his rule and he got the just retribution for the savage and brutal murder, he caused to be committed.

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