Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

District Administration in the Nilgiris is one of the important institutional legacies, bequeathed by the British to the hill station. The realisation of revenue and the Maintenance of law and order were the dominant concern of the British Regime.

Britishers have introduced new Schemes of assessment and settlement of land revenue. The Bhurty System, Ayan-grass and grazing pattern, ayan-disements and the Waste land rules were the new methods of assessment, and revenue collections were implemented to the natives by the Britishers. Those schemes of revenue administration were in practice till the ryotwari system was introduced in the hill station. This system was gradually extended to the villages. This revenue settlement was introduced by Sir Thomas Manroe in the year 1870 in Madras and it was the mainstay of the Government. It was collected as a share of the produce but share was not fixed. Today the term "land revenue" refers to the basic assessment on land and includes the Local cess and Local cess surcharge.
The assessed waste lands belonging to Government whenever available were assigned to agriculturists. Who were willing to cultivate them. The Ryotwari and Janmam Schemes were abolished by the Act 24 of 1969. Bhoodan scheme of revenue systems were came into action (particularly in Gudalur Taluk) instead. Until 1830 the Niligiris formed part of Coimbatore District. But in 1863 the Nilgiris was bifurcated from the Jurisdiction of the Coimbatore District Court, and was placed under a separate civil sessions set up at Ootacamund. In 1868 it was constituted as a separate district and was placed under a Judicial commissioner. Both civil and criminal courts were established. Though the traditional panchayat system was in practice to have uniformity, the civil procedure, code the Indian penal code and the criminal procedure code were enforced. A small case court was replaced by the Subordinate Judge court in 1862. The Sadr Faujdari Adalat were replaced by the High court. A sabordinate Judge court had been functioning at Ooty since 1868. An efficient police system was necessitated for the judicial organisation and also for maintaining law and order in the district. Hence prisons and jails were opened in the year 1862. Judicial administration in the village courts was under the control of the munsif or the village magistrate. Village bench courts were constituted. There are sub-courts at Ootacamund, Coonoor and Gudalur to deal with the cases in their own areas.

Largely because of their physical remoteness, hill stations became highly prized in the second half of the nineteenth century as headquarters for the imperial
government. Thus Ootacamund became a summer Headquarter of the governors of Madras presidency. The affairs of the towns were administered by the Ootacamund and Coonoor Municipalities, which worked under the district administration. Sanitation of the market and the town was maintained under the supervision of the respective officers. Medical institutions were properly administered. In education, the Nilgiris stood second in the Madras presidency. Many changes accrued in the development of School education. The ideological commitment of the British education was to develope educational institutions modelled after English Public Schools. Municipality and its School administration were provisioned by the local fund. Planning schemes for the town were prepared in a constructive manner. The Local Board Act of 1884 had provisions for the construction of unions. The post of the Registrar general was also created to supervise the administration of Panchayats. The geographical isolation of the Nilgiris affected by the British administration added a clear psychological distinction to the life-style of the natives. Each part of the town resembled an English sylvan Village, with churches, schools, market at its centre, a pedestrian wall for evening strolls and a medley of charming cottages bordered with flowers and exotic plants.

The British administrative pattern and behaviour penetrated in the municipal town with an emphasis on etiquette and an enthusiasm for parties, picnics and other entertainments that lubricated the wheels of social interaction.
Road and transport system in the Nilgiris was a gift of the Britishers. The government and the provisional administrators took interest and paid great attention to build roads in the hill station. The individuals also showed personal interest in the construction of the roads. Waste lands were treated as common lands and were used for road construction. The expenditure for the road was absorbed by the Board of revenue and it was provided in the provincial budget. The hilly nature of the district made it imperative that the bridle paths and foot paths were formed to provide communication between towns and villages (hamlets also).

When the commander of the pioneer corps, constructed the first road in the Nilgiris, he argued that the region was the ideal location, in which officials could retire, soldiers could recuperate and merchants and farmers could prosper. The pioneers urged the authorities to grant tracts of land to planters, thereby indirectly hinting at the future promise of coffee and tea as commercial crops. A short lived rubber plantation was another European enterprise on the hills which demanded a considerable administrative role from them. The Nilgiris was the first place in the Indian sub-continent to be proudly introduced with the eucalyptus species. Eucalyptus Globulus popularly known as the blue gum were planted in the Nilgiris in 1856. There was a complaint on the Nilgiris that the "Only permanent Europeans who could conveniently have rendered any service to the
public by encouraging agriculture...... have it so much more profitable to build houses to let to invalids.

Horticultural Society was formed in 1847 and a committee was constituted to look after the public gardens. The Nilgiri Agricultural Society was another important agency to give an impetus to horticulture and agriculture in the hill. From the inception of this Society in 1860, the conduct of the Flower show in the Government Botanical Garden Ootacamund and the Fruit show in the Sim's Park Coonoor, became the highlights of the activities of the Society. The British were delighted to discover that many of the flowers, fruits and Vegetables popular in Britain, flourished in the cool mountain climate. Ploughs and farm tools were brought by orders from the Arsenol in Madras. Every house had its garden, varandas were bowery with trailers and creepers and fruit trees were aplenty.

Individuals as well as the forest management made detailed studies of the sholas grasslands and wildlife. Reserved forests were guarded against shooting and fishing, and were protected from fire. In 1852 a British forester and six Indian assistants were appointed to patrol the Nilgir Woodlands and prevent over cutting. By the end of the century the hill station was enriched by belts of protected forests administered by the forest department.
The growth of tourism in the mid nineteenth century propelled the ethnographic curiosity. A popular activity among the new comers to the hill station was an excursion to view the local inhabitants in their exotic costumes, customs and habits.

The communication system was converted from cart to motor or railway and these improvements in transportation inevitably led to an increase in visitors and residents.

The Nilgiris is the smallest hill station and proudly boasts of clubs, a library and the organized sport activities. Which however create a charisma around the hills for the immigrants to merge with its social fabric. The British administration tackled the settlement problems by developing welfare schemes and implementing democratic decentralization and thereby converting the whole district into a compact revenue block. Today the Nilgiris resembles very much a rising English Watering Place. Thus the British administration in the Nilgiris has even assumed greater significance in the light of the growing emphasis on development of planning and the implementation of welfare and improved programmes through a process of democratic decentralization.

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