CHAPTER II

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The Western imperialism reached India's shores as early as 1498, and it was not until three centuries later that British colonial rule was established over large parts of South India. ¹ The elimination of the French threat, the annihilation of the power of Mysore, Tanjore and Arcot left the British politically dominant in the peninsula exercising direct authority over much of Tamil-speaking region, Andhra, Malayalam-speaking district of Malabar, Kannada-speaking district of South Kanara all of which came to form the so called Madras Presidency. ² The imposition of British rule in South India had been preceded by an era of considerable political turmoil and violence which can only be explained in terms of fragmented nature of political power in the peninsula and perennial ambitions of the competing regional states to dominate each other. As the eighteenth century drew to a close sieges and battles raged in an ever-rising crescendo bringing in their wake chaos and devastation unprecedented even in the war-torn history of South India. The regions worst affected were Tamil Nadu and Andhra. In Tamil Nadu the rule of Mysore and Arcot was characterised by instability, imposition of illegal levies, forced labour, and the consequent impoverishment of the rural community. The impact of over a century of incessant wars led to widespread
bandity, and depopulation of certain villages. Neglect of
irrigation works caused famines in South India and one such
famine ravaged Chingleput district wholly in 1733.\textsuperscript{3} People were
over burdened with taxa of feudal nature. It was the feudal
exactions that enabled the rulers to execute the stupendous work
such as palaces, temples tanks etc. The miseries were notable
in Vellore Sellary and Cuddapah.\textsuperscript{4}

The financial policy of the British was another cause for
backwardness of the people. The Anglo Indian financial system
differed from the earlier systems in four important particulars

1. The payment of the army, police and other public
   establishments in cash,

2. The collection of land tax in money instead of particularly
   in kind,

3. The transfer of a portion of the Indian revenues to England
   for the payment of the Home charges usually styled "the
   Indian tribute".

4. The creation of a funded public debts of which the interest
   has to be paid in cash.\textsuperscript{5}

Rise in the value of money was an inevitable consequence
of the revenue and fiscal measures of the British.\textsuperscript{6} When more
land was brought under the plough and military and civil
establishments began to be paid in cash the demand for money
increased. Prices fell more and peasants became more
impoverished, but unmindful of the hardship of the people the
British administration raised their assessment rates without reference to the existing conditions. The discontentment resulted in peasant uprisings. The spirit appeared wherever the British established their supremacy, specially in Malabar, Baramahal, and Karnataka. Peasant disturbances broke out in Malabar in 1802-1803, 1812, in Pachaimalai, Muniur, Anjiur in 1796, in Palagat in 1802, in Salem in 1814. In the fourteen ryotwari districts namely Chingleput, Salem, Nadural, Nellore, North Arcot, South Arcot, Tanjore, Trichnopoly, Tirunelveli, Bellary, Cuddapah, Coimbatore, Canara and Kurnool the official list of pattahs shows that out of 10,71,588 pattahs 88,888 or more than three fourth were for amounts under 30 rupees and averaging less than 8/34 rupees. Generally in most of the places in South India the farm labourers were the worst sufferers.

The establishment of the class of zamindars notwithstanding the tensions that developed between central authority and localising forces answered the British need in enlisting the support of powerful elite groups in South India. These zamindars were strongly attached to their traditional beliefs, participated in all religious rites and festivities and patronised cultural activities. Without enlightenment and self-discipline the landed aristocracy of South India failed to live up to its ascribed rule as the natural leaders of the people and instead squandered its energies and wealth on luxury litigation and bankering for official titles and honors.
The zamindari system represented only one form of land control in South India. Far more pervasive in influence was the ryotwari system which embraced almost three fourth of the total presidency. The advocates of this system of land tenure wished to create not only a large body of independent ryots who would be shielded from the corrupt and faithless zamindars but also ensure that every riot will on his own estate be at once proprietor, farmer, and labourer at the same time. In reality however the ryotwari system achieved the contrary result of strengthening the position of the elite castes, mostly Brahmins who had long enjoyed superior tenure rights to the soil. The consequences of this policy was to deprive lower tenurial groups, who were mostly non-Brahmins and depressed classes of their customary rights to the soil and expose them to the dangers of eviction by their new land lords, and were denied the right to own land or lease it by strong ritual sanctions.

The British consciously promoted market economy ever since they established their ascendancy in the sub-continent whatever the real motivation, British attachment to the ideals of a market society where the production and distribution of goods and services would be regulated by the market mechanism lay out the heart of their decision to recognise private property, including individual ownership of land. Land holders saw their estates as potential sources of income which ought to be augmented even if it meant displacement of groups which had
long customary rights to the soil. Those with wealth invested in land and put in to the best economic use.¹⁴

A feature of the emerging market economy of India was the expansion of foreign and domestic trade. Prior to the advent of the west, Indian economy was characterised by self-sufficiency though a limited but a lucrative trade had always been conducted in some luxury items. In the 19th Century improvements in technology of production and distribution of goods had resulted in a tremendous expansion in volume of trade, especially in agricultural products. International and domestic trade began to impinge on several aspects of the economic and social life of south India particularly in those urban centres which had developed in response to expanding foreign trade. Foreign competition had especially paralysed the spinning and weaving trades, the former as a separate profession having been disappeared except in fine thread for cloths of superior texture and extreme tenuity such as could be produced by machinery. The weaver stood helpless before the gigantic array of machines and machine made cloths of mighty Manchester. The free trade principle applied to India brought about complete ruin of this class of industry in South India.¹⁵

Some of the factors which tended to retard the progress of the masses of people in south India were:


2. Uncertainty of the tenure of ryots in zamindaris.
3. The increasing dependance of ryots on professional money lenders.

4. The decay of domestic industries the absence of diversity of occupations.

5. Excessive cost of litigation.

6. Disintegration of village communities and the decay of spirit of co-operation.  

The peculiar economic conditions prevailing in South India, as a result of political change effected by the British occupation brought about a new class structure in the Society - it was the emergence of a new middle class.

1. Trading or merchant class whose ranks were filled by the brokers, commission agents, shopkeepers,

2. the rent receiving land lord created under the zamindari system,

3. Money lenders who were also traders in grain and shopkeepers,

4. White-collared professional class of lawyers, teachers, civil servants, doctors, journalists, writers and clerks who had turned out to be so due to uncertainty of gaining profit from agriculture tenancy problems and high rates of assessment in the early settlements of land in Madras presidency. Like the revenue the police establishment also was a scourge that threatened the life of the peaceable and well disposed people all over the Madras Presidency.
Corruption and bribery reigned paramount throughout the whole establishment; violence, torture and cruelty were their chief instruments for deflecting crime, implicating innocent or extorting money.  

When the British assumed political ascendancy in the South the society was as feudal and caste-ridden as it was in the days of the medieval kingdoms. The system of government and social mechanism were marked by feudalism in its worst form which reduced most of the people to the conditions of menial labourers to the feudal lords. Hindu society in South India despite linguistic and sectarian cleavages shared one feature namely that the ritually dominant group everywhere was drawn from the Brahmin caste. The Brahmins in South India asserted their supremacy on account of their control of some of the key administrative positions in rural society. The Vedic Brahmins of Tamil region enjoyed the highest status, and they were drawn exclusively from smarthas and srivaishnavas. Traditionally associated with learning and cultural activities, the Vedic Brahmins sustained themselves from revenues of landed endowments granted by ruling princes, and other Hindu patrons. As guardians of the Hindu tradition, the Brahmin elite not only formulated a moral and social code to regulate the behaviour of the society as a whole but also ensured that code was stringently observed. In the latter task the Brahmins drew upon the support of the various caste assemblies, which debated questions relating to social propriety and punished those who
departed from the accepted rules of conduct. It was a system in which no group irrespective of its position in the caste hierarchy ever challenged the major premises which ordered the overall social framework. Their consensus can largely be attributed to the pervasive influence of the idea of Karma which stressed that individual character was determined by actions of earlier lives of the soul, and their improvement in status could be achieved only through diligent performance of ritual obligations. Hence Hinduism and the caste provided a body of common beliefs and values which offset the lack of a single literary tradition or a unified political system in south India.  

The princes and priests held high positions in the political and religious establishments. The Brahmin "propounded a model of the caste system which placed them at the top and gave them the privilege of declaring the duties of other castes including the kings, closely associated with the priests and princes were the caste Hindus who served in the administrative, military and religious establishment and obtained exemption from taxation. All through, the people of lower castes were treated as untouchables and subjected to a process of merciless elimination when feudal lords had wielded the power of life and death over the hapless populace."  

Political authority and social power were, blended in the symbol of chieftancy and this combined authority was often
expressed in the most cruel way through various institution and imposts. The orthodox Hindus considered their outcaste brethren as a class of despised degraded sub human beings who had no right to claim equality with them.\textsuperscript{24} The low class people had to cultivate the fields of the land lords, to pay taxes for their huts, animals and birds to offer presents to the caste Hindus and to keep away from the temples the public streets and high caste localities.\textsuperscript{25}

The Tamil communities which were the miserable victims of social oppression in 19th century were the Maravas, the Kallars, the Padyachis, the Nadars, the Paravas, the Pallas, and the Parayars who inherited a system of inequality and injustice. The second half of the 19th Century was an era of social revolt. The educated middle class Nadars directed their trade against the Brahmins not only for their social dominance but also for their intervention in the former's family life.\textsuperscript{26} The Nadar movement of 1829 and 1859, Ezhava movement of 1896 started for civil rights. The unprivileged class as a whole under the influence of Christian missionaries and liberal western ideas started agitating for securing the simple civil rights which civilised governments permitted their citizens to enjoy.

The top drawers of the society namely the Brahmins who were liberal minded social political propagandists advocated the change and upliftment of the backward classes. "The Hindu" a Brahmin newspaper took the lead in producing new awareness of
the need for material and spiritual well being of the Paraiah class. 27 The Indian members of the Madras Legislative Council mostly Brahmins also championed the cause of low classes, their economic emancipation and educational progress. 28

The Western ways and habits that the English men represented in the country, appeared obnoxious to the Tamils. They imported their customs and promoted their sciences but neglected the local arts and languages. 29 The Christian missionaries took a pioneering interest in the promotion of education among the Tamil irrespective of caste or religion. The spread of western education had a mixed effect and upon the society. The British evolved an integrated and progressive system of instruction, 30 in the place of what was disorganised and stagnant. Secondly the system placed the advances made by the west in arts and sciences within the reach of the people. Thirdly English developed into a common language of the elite in the administration, polity, and trade. Further the system gave adequate importance to professional education. It also gave due encouragement to the study of science and technology. However the new system was not free from defects; the official encouragement given to the western education came in the way of the development of traditional system. Many of the achievements of the past came to be neglected. Besides the new education added to the gulf between the villages and backward sections of the population on the one hand and the towns and advanced sections on the other. The
English needed trained clerks to serve them and to control the population. As a result the bureaucratic traditions came to be strengthened at the expense of popular welfare. 

However the literary progress in South reveals the spread of European literature on one hand and revival of Sanskrit literature on the other. The education of the inspiration to all in spite of their varied thought. It was this development which brought literature down to earth. "The modern literature have been the hand-maid of middle class due both to its western inspiration and outlook and the cleavage between the elite and masses, as a result of widespread literacy." The progress in Sanskrit literature was due to the effects of foreign scholars who translated the various Sanskrit works and published them. As a result the glory of the ancient culture and civilisation was projected before the entire world. The growth of the religious awakening and patriotism also contributed a great deal to the revival of the Sanskrit literature. Further the educational training had instilled among the member of professional elite an appreciation of democratic values and a knowledge of the skills of effective political action.

Inevitably higher learning tended to emphasise the value of civic liberties. Equally it provided opportunities for resisting arbitrary government action and upholding the sanctity of the rule of law. The legal profession in particular came to occupy an honoured place because of its role as the guardian
of the values and rights of the society. The astuteness of the Indian lawyers in mastering the complex judicial procedures which the British had introduced in the country coupled with their knowledge of Hindu law enabled them to serve as a buffer between the government and society and to soften somewhat the excesses of centralised rule which increasingly impinged upon the everyday life of the people through proliferation of economic and social controls.34

The growth of national political consciousness was largely the creation of small class of western educated Indians congregating in the larger urban centres of India. In the South it was the professional elite which consistently espoused the cause of All India unity. The convening of the Indian National Congress demonstrated the determination of the elite to surmount the traditional barriers in language, and regions in their bid to offset the European reaction in India.

The resentment of Indian to political domination of alien rule had found expression in a number of mutinies and insurrections from time to time in different parts of the country and in South India there were the revolts in Kerala varma pazhassi Raja of Malabar 1793-1797 and 1800-1805, the Vellore mutiny (1806), the revolts of Veluthampi Dalawa of Travancore (1809), Paliat Achan of Cochin (1809), the revolts of Kattabomman and Marudu Pandian (1798-1802), the revolt of Nizuram Rauze (1794), and the revolt of Dhundia in Bednur 1799-1800), the revolt of the Kurichiyas of Wyanad (1812), and
the rebellion at Mysore (1830-31). The Polygars of South India offered a desperate resistance to the British rule and the disturbance, led by the Polygars inflicted the heaviest casualties on the British arms that ever suffered by the company. The last decade of 18th century and the first decade of the 19th century were years of turbulence; with plots and revolts which had mass support, anti British feelings, mistaken revenue policy or dissatisfaction and discontentment in the army of the loss of territory were the cause and particularly in the case like Marudu Pandian, Veluthampi the innate desire to free themselves from alien rule was the provocative factor. The revolts can definitely be taken as having resulted in awakening a political consciousness in South India.

The emergence of the Congress was the single and most important political event of the 19th century. In the eyes of the professional elite the advent of the congress had led to a marked awakening throughout the country and had transformed the Indian people from a condition of political serfdom to a condition of political energy. The Congress was believed to have stimulated the growth of enlightened patriotism in the country and helped to remove some of the barriers created by caste, language, and creed.

The professional elite recognised the importance of the Congress as an instrument in extracting concessions from the
rulers. The leaders of this elite group had accepted A.O. Hume's thesis that the British rulers needed a loyal opposition in India which would not only provide an outlet to the political ferment in the country but also would play the creative role of formulating a rational political programme capable of being implemented without fear of causing any major disruption either to the established administrative patterns or to the existing balance of political forces in the country. It was this vision of a self-governing India still a distant ideal as the 19th century drew to a close, which moved the 'Hindu' to observe as follows: 40 "The change that has come over the people during the eight short years since foundation of the congress is marvellous and the new sense of power that strengthens their hearts and success that has so far crowned their efforts will sustain them in the further exertions to develop into maturity the tender plant of political freedom."

The nationalist movement that emerged in south India with the advent of Congress bore characteristics not untypical of similar movements in colonial Asia and Africa. There was a marked bitterness about racial prejudices and inequalities, a certain antipathy towards the European a passionate attachment to the ideal of national honour and well being and unquestioned assumption that the educated elements should provide leadership to the movement. 41
A series of developments both internal and external powerfully influenced the political developments. For long the political leaders and nationalist organisation had been seeking the redressal of grievances through prayers and petitions to the British in future. As the British were not prepared to concede their demands different methods of struggle came in for consideration which included resistance to authority, boycott of foreign goods, promotion of swadeshi industries, prevention of the emigration of the workers of European plantation abroad and the revival of the Panchayats. The patriotic songs composed by nationalist poets like Bharathi excited a spirit of nationalism in the country. The partition of Bengal, ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa, heroic struggle against Ottoman imperialism, the independence of Balkan people gave a spirit of nationalism. The tour of Bipanchandrapal through Madras Presidency in 1907 enlivened the quality and expression of South Indian politics in the early 20th century.

Another influence that tended to unite educated elements in Madras Presidency was the Swadeshi and terrorist movements. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai a Vellala, formed the Swadeshi steam navigation company with office at Tuticorin a port city at the South-East tip of the province. The number of persons involved in the terrorist activity in Madras was relatively small but they worked with the Swadeshi group and were
considered responsible for the murder of district magistrate Mr. Ashe, who was involved in the harassment of the Swadeshi steam navigation company by its British competitor.\textsuperscript{43}

The nationalist press gave wide currency to the developments and they were of three categories: (1) the nationalist press which supported the freedom movement; (2) the communal press which supported the interests of the one community or the other; (3) the Anglo Indian press which supported British imperialism.\textsuperscript{44}

A picture of the general conditions prevailing in 19th century, when C.R. was born, would gain clarity with a study of the more specific conditions which moulded him. In other words, an analysis of the history and nature of C.R's immediate family and his education which contributed to his growth as a nationalist is required. Britain's presence in India seemed permanent in India in 1878, the year in which Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari was born\textsuperscript{45} in a Tamil speaking South Indian Brahmin family. According to the practices of the day, C.R. was given an English education.\textsuperscript{46} A deep faith in the tenets of Hinduism, native intellect and love for his country kindled in C.R. an interest to take immediate measures regarding the existing conditions in the socio-economic and political spheres. A nationalist thus was born from a unique amalgam of reasons and motivations. But only a closer look at the specific conditions which provoked C.R. to become what he was would give us clearer insight into the man as well as the nature of his nationalistic tendencies.
In the early half of 20th century the society was in a rut. The British invasion and influence of Christianity and Islam had corroded the average man's knowledge and faith in Hinduism. Religion became the prop for a set of empty and meaningless rituals. This in turn destabilised the roots of society because religion had always been the anchor of Hindu society. Social evils like untouchability were perpetuated in the name of religion and there was a rift between Brahmins and other communities. The former however still enjoyed a place in the higher range of society. For, they had acquired the fruits of English education and through that a place in the 'officials' of British bureaucracy; in the rural economy, the Brahmins still held the highest tenures of agricultural lands. C.R's placement in this scene was strategic for more than one reason. He was born at the centre of a situation which was typical of the source of instability in those days. C.R's father Chakravarthi Venkaturaya was the munsif of Thorapalli Village in north eastern corner of Salem District and C.R. observed the errors in the system operated. Further reformist tendencies ran deep in the family. One of C.R's ancestors Varadhachari ostracized because he performed the last rites of a wandering low caste beggar. But God himself seemed to have appeared in the form of a brahmin and proclaimed him a good soul (Nallan) which came to be the family name. C.R's father Nallan Chakravarthy Venkataraya Iyengar was a Sanskrit scholar and a true Vaishnavite. His scholarship was
so great that Hobart a professor of Sanskrit and Lord Connemara treated him as a source of clarification and rich information. An atmosphere which fostered a healthy and true knowledge of the tenets of Hinduism and brushed aside the meaningless rituals combined with English education boosted the ferment in C.R's mind.  

C.R. noted and was troubled by the economic instability. The advent and establishment of British imperialist rule made the local, indigenous Indian industry sick; unfair taxation and competition in trade from England augmented the problem. Further, the income from the agrarian side was unevenly distributed because of inefficiency which had crept into the revenue system. His concern with the problems of the day was supported by the influence and preachings of Swami Vivekananda. C.R. understood that a mere reformation of a society would not uproot the evils nor was such a reformation possible. He realised the need for a political solution to the problems of India.

C.R's career in law began in 1900. In 1904 and 1905, Japan effectively dispelled the notions of European invincibility and Asian impotence by defeating Russia. In 1905 Lord Curzon the viceroy announced that Bengal would be divided into two parts, one mainly Hindu and other with Muslim majority and C.R. was sufficiently moved by these two events to join the Congress in 1906, which marked C.R's entry into politics.
With a firm grasp of philosophy behind the Hindu culture and Hinduism C.R. was thus motivated by a set of factors to plunge into a battle for the rejuvenation of India in the socio-economic and political spheres. C.R. as it would be seen in later years was hailed as a nationalist mainly because his intentions were so well integrated. His political policies such as his stance towards Gripps proposals the Pakistan question, the non-alignment policy, nuclear armament his economic theories such as his efforts to strengthen rural agrarian economy, small scale village industry and to make India self-sufficient in all aspects, his idea on social reforms such as prohibition of liquor, untouchability, vocationalisation of education point to a single goal namely the consolidation of India as a unified strong self-supporting nation. In other words he was at once a statesman, an economist, a social reformer, an advocate of Hinduism and Hindu culture. A portrait of the status quo during the early and formative years of C.R., thus proves how much the existing conditions had shaped C.R's emergence as a nationalist. It also guides one towards the reasons which motivated C.R. in his political career and social life.
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