

Chapter Five

**ISMA'IL PĀSHĀ'S AMBITIOUS PROGRAMMES TO
BRING EGYPT CLOSER TO EUROPE AND ITS
EFFECTS ON EGYPTIAN SOCIETY.**

Egypt's vigorous life under Muhammad 'Alī, shrank to narrow dimensions after he died in 1849. She was reduced to a modest share of independence. The progress made during his time in the different fields of life came to a point of stagnation for want of his able successors.

During the period between Muhammad 'Alī and Isma'īl reigned three successive Pashas:

Ibrahīm Pāshā (1789 - 1848).

Ibrahīm Pāshā reigned for a mere six months. Ibrahīm, the successor of Muḥammad 'Alī was a distinguished soldier and a man of great courage. He was one of the most attractive figures of his time, brave, upright, clever, just and had flashed through Egypt like a shining meteor. Having proved himself in Syria not only a first-rate soldier but an able administrator, his coming to power was full of promises but he only reigned two months. His memory is untarnished and his name ever pronounced with pride and veneration. (1) He played an important part in the history of Egypt at the time of Muḥammad 'Alī. He has been called the mailed arm of his father, and as a matter of fact the successes of his father's policy would have been impossible

(1) Baron De Malortie: Egypt: Native Rulers and Foreign Interference, p.69

without his military achievements. (1)

ʿAbbās I (d.1854).

ʿAbbās who succeeded Muḥammad ʿAlī as Viceroy proved himself no better than an Oriental despot of the medieval time. He was particularly suspicious of western cultural ties with Egypt. (2) Grandson of Muḥammad ʿAlī reversed the process of reforms undertaken during the preceding period. He considered as dangerous and blameworthy the previous innovations and they should be abandoned for the best. Consequently most of the schools opened by Muḥammad ʿAlī were closed, as well as the factories, workshops and sanitary institutions. Aggressive policies were curtailed and the army was halved. He had no interest in continuing the policies

(1) Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.II, First edition, under Ibrahim Pasha.

(2) Earl of Cromer: Modern Egypt, Vol.p.18.

and works of his predecessors. He suspected and disliked his half-brothers and brother to intensely as to compel them to leave the country for Istanbul and European capitals for the duration of his reign. He tried to change the law regarding the succession to the Egyptian viceregal throne so that his own son Ilhami Pasha would succeed him. As a result of his policies he was murdered in 1854.

Sa'īd Pāshā (d.1863)

Sa'īd (1) who succeeded 'Abbās was a bold, frank, fearless and reckless man, fond of foreign society and "speaking French like a Parisian". (2) One day when his old tutor Koenig Bey, implored him to reopen the schools closed by Abbas, Sa id replied, "why open the

(1) Youngest son of Muḥammad 'Alī, Sa'īd was Viceroy of Egypt from 1854 to 1863.

(2) Edwin de Leon: The Khedive's Egypt, p.85

eyes of the people, they will only be more difficult to rule." (1) "It was Sa'id, "says Cromer, "who first invited European adventurers to prey on Egypt." (2)

Isma'il Pasha (1863-79).

The Khedive Isma'il ruled Egypt from 1863 to 1879. He was the grandson of Muhammad 'Ali, and the grandfather of Faruq, the last of that dynasty to rule.

Isma'il (1830-93), carried out an ambitious programme to bring the country closer to Europe. During his reign came the "second wave of Occidentalism." (3) with the increase of modern education, growth of a communication with Europe, development of

(1) Baren de Malertie: Egypt: Native Rulers and Foreign Interference, p.69

(2) Cromer: Modern Egypt, p.21, Vol.I

(3) Gibb: Contemporary Arabic Literature, p.748

publishing and the press, and the forming of literary and other learned societies, the gates of Egypt were opened to the tide of European ideas and systems had become the ideal models for the progressive reforms. (1)

After becoming Khedive of Egypt, the ambitious Isma'īl set about restoring the country's political independence. (2) Consequently prosperity returned. The individual began to enjoy a fair degree of freedom. Schools which had been closed reopened; mission which had been stopped

(1) Dr. Shawqī Dāif: al-Adab al 'Arabi al-Mu'asir, p.15.

(2) During the period between Muhammad 'Alī and Isma'īl Pāshā, there were no public men, there was no public spirit, the bureaucracy was servile and corrupt. The people specially the agricultural classes were subjected to every kind of injustice and oppression and were not only without the means of redress but were completely ignorant of political rights, even the more enlightened elements in the population were politically ignorant.

Dodwell: The Founder of Egypt, p.343
London 1931.

restarted, and the printing press was set in motion again (1)

The achievement of the reign of Isma'īl can be summed up in three sentences: great projects, great results, and great expenditures. "On his accession he found nothing but the ruins of Muhammad 'Alī's work, everything had to be commenced afresh and new life infused into the great undertakings of the founder of his dynasty." (2)

Educated himself in Europe and deeply impressed with the necessity of educating the masses in order to prepare Egypt for other reforms, Isma'īl, unlike Muhammad 'Alī who had founded schools chiefly to supply his want of officers and officials, worked to educate to see Egypt as a part of Europe. (3)

(1) Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat: Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī, pp. 417-18.

(2) 'Umar al-Dasūqī: Fī 'l Adab al-Hadīth Vol. I, p. 69.

(3) 'Umar al-Dasūqī: Fī 'l Adab al-Hadīth, p. 69

Isma'īl was deeply fond of European ways of life. He was seen most active in leading the way for his subjects to acquire western manners and habits of life. European dress was adopted in his period by the educated Egyptians in the professions and government services.

Isma'īl Pāshā was a man of ability. Realizing the importance of western civilization, he wished to turn his country into some European land and proved himself to be a ruler such as Egypt had scarcely seen since the Arab conquest. (1)

Although it is true that Isma'īl in person was much to blame for the situation of bankruptcy created in the country, it can also not be ignored that he was surrounded by

(1) Ibid., p.69. "My country is no longer in Africa, it is in Europe". Isma'īl is reported to have said to one of the members of the European control commission.*

* Vitikiotis: The Modern History of Egypt, p.74

flattering Europeans having one thing in common that is bright ideas on spending Isma'īl's money in such a way as to transfer it from his pocket to theirs.

However, Isma'īl tried his best to establish the economic conditions of his country on a sound basis. "The Suez canal was opened, and Egypt regained her former important position between the East and the West." (1) The most spectacular achievements of the Khedive lay in the development of communications. He extended the railway system throughout Egypt, rationalized and reorganized the collection of customs and the postal service in 1865 and placed their administration under the control of English officials. In Sudan he introduced telegraphs in 1866 and a short railway in 1875.

(1) Dr. Shawwī Daif: al-Adab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir fi Misr, p.15

The land was cultivated, canals (1) were dug, irrigation was so organized that agriculture prospered. (2) The governmental instrument was reformed upon the economic side. Egypt became once and for all safe from the perils of poverty and starvation to which she had hitherto been subjected. Personal freedom was enlarged and soon it was guaranteed by law and the constitution. The inhabitant of Egypt was set free to live as he liked, to learn as he chose, to express his views on different subjects as he himself decided; nothing restrained his freedom but the law of the land.

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- (1) Of these the largest was the Ibrahimiyya Canal, leaving the Nile at Assiut in upper Egypt and thus bringing wider areas of that part of the country under cultivation.
- (2) A leading farmer himself, and owner of a large part of the arable lands of Egypt, he managed by personal action, initiative, and an imaginative programme to render Egypt one of the leading producers in the world and the essential one for the provision of the European cotton industry.*

* Vitkietis: The Modern History of Egypt,
p.83

In Egypt could be found a liberty unknown in the Ottoman lands. Many Syrians emigrated to Egypt in search not only of wealth but also of mental and political freedom. (1) Thus was brought about a great revival in science, literature, and politics. Although the last days of Isma'īl saw Egypt passing through a series of political and financial crises, effecting her revival in both science and art for the time being, the renaissance was always gaining strength. Mental progress was neither stopped nor recoiled. While the revival^{ism} sometimes slackened in speed; it nevertheless continued, fast or slow, until the last war came. (2) As a result of that war and the declaration of Egypt's Independence which followed, the renaissance gained further impetus.

(1) Umar al Dasūqī: Fi'l Adab al-Hadīth,
Vol.I, p.70.

(2) Dr.Taha Husain: article Modern Egypt,
published in "Islam Today", edited
by A.J.Arberry and Ron Landau.

Isma'īl secured the services of a number of able specialists such as Dor Bey, Cloty Bey, Rogers Bey and some alternative ministers to further the cause of renaissance in Egypt. (1)

The names of Sharīf Pāshā, (2) Nuber Pāshā, (3) Miād Pāshā (4) and Alī Pāshā Mubarak (5) may be mentioned as foremost among those who contributed to further the cause of education in the masses.

Isma'īl was a man of ideas, with extensive schemes of reform. He encouraged education, established the first schools in

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- (1) Baron de Malortie: op.cit., p.98
 - (2) 1823-87, an Egyptian statesman in the reign of Isma'īl. He sincerely endeavoured to make Egypt a constitutional state under the Khedive dynasty.
 - (3) 1825-99, a statesman who played the most prominent part in Egyptian politics in the nineteenth century.
 - (4) 1835-1911, a statesman; he was discovered by Isma'īl who made him one of his ministers.
 - (5) 1823-93, a statesman and man of letter. To him is due the establishment of printing offices and the printing of text-books, of Dar al-'Ulūm, a teacher's training college and Khedivial library (1870).

Egypt for girls (1), the polytechnic for the training of military officers and the medical college. On his accession there were only 185 public schools but during his reign the number rose to 4,817. (2) "Fully to relate all that the Khedive has done for education would require a volume instead of a chapter," remarked the contemporary writer, de Leon.(3)

In accordance with the statistics published in 1870, there were 40,000 public gratuitously taught, fed, and clothed, in addition to a small pay.

here is a list of schools of different

- (1) Isma'īl was the first ruler in Egypt to bring the education of girls under government supervision and eventually integrate it with the general state school system.
- (2) Encyclopaedia of Islam, first edition, Vol.II, under Isma'īl Pasha.
- (3) Edwin de Leon: The Khedive's Egypt, p.271

branches of knowledge.

School of Law	50 pupils
School of Medicine ^Q ar al- ^C Aini	75 pupils
School of Polytechnic	60 pupils
School of Chemistry	25 -
Veterinary School	50 -
School of Midwifery	40 -
Arts et Metiers Bulaq	100 -
School of Observatory	4 -
School of Infantry (Abbasiyya	500 -
School of Cavalry	100 -
School of Artillery	100 -
School of Engineering	30 -
A Staff College	20 -
School of Navy Alexandria	40 -

In addition to the above, the government used to keep abroad, 100 pupils at the military school, Paris, besides 40 civilians - 50 at Turin, and 3 in England.

There were further, important primary schools at Cairo, Alexandria, Damenhur, Tanta,

Zagazig, Mansura, Jiza, Banisuaif, Madinat at Fayyum, Minya, Sayuf etc. These schools were all attached to mosques, about half of them kept by the mosques themselves with a very trifling school fee.

During the reign of Isma'īl, historian Baron de Malortie writes: "Education is voluntary and in fact it need not be made compulsory now that the people seem as eager to learn as they were disinclined to it in Muḥammad 'Alī's days." "We don't want schools, nor do we want pupils." said an Egyptian minister to the author, "for both we have more than we require, but what we want is method and school-masters; and to form this class of men is the great object of the present day." (1)

The leading idea of Isma'īl's organic law was to ensure all over the country the

(1) Baron de Malortie: op. cit., p.99

same kind of instruction and a solidarity of teaching limiting it in the primary schools to the rudiments of reading and writing. It aimed at creating no confessional difference and maintained an absolute tolerance among the various elements of the society.

In higher schools, all the branches of knowledge were to be taught including languages, the choice of which was generally left to the pupils, though they were obliged to learn at least one besides Arabic and Turkish. (1) This law with its forty articles had largely placed the educational reforms on a solid ground, yet the paucity of funds on one side and the dearth of men on the other had hampered the progress one might have otherwise expected. Possibly there might have been some flaw in the system. The State had

(1) Until 1917, the official language of Egypt was Turkish.

undertaken too much upon itself. Even free schooling had its own drawbacks. Over and above, the children were frequently clothed, had as a rule one meal a day, and received a small amount in all public schools as monthly attendance-fee.

If thus the entire care of educating their wards was taken out of the hands of those guardians who had the means to contribute towards the expenses of schooling, the consequence of such steps was too obvious. The parents naturally took no interest in the matter. However, considering the backward state of the fallah, it might have been difficult to burden him with school fees. He was too poor to pay the expenses of education. If compelled, he would have kept his children uneducated at home. It may thus be concluded that the expansion of education was in his view more necessary than money considerations.

For all these various schemes, Isma'il had

borrowed and squandered money recklessly both for public purposes and personal ostentation. As a result by 1876 the debt of Egypt to foreign financiers had risen to nearly one hundred million pounds and the country grew so impoverished that its ordinary resources were no longer sufficient for the most urgent needs of the administration:

In this connection de Maleritie relates: "The system introduced by Isma'il of primary schools, preparatory schools, and special schools, answers all purposes. It does in the beginning overburden the children with useless and lumbering matter, and only those who really wish to push forward need avail themselves of the preparatory schools, whilst the students of the special schools, if educated at the expense of the State, are obliged to serve their country, not gratuitously however, for a number of years corresponding to the time they have spent at school; the best pupils being as a rule

selected for the polytechnical and medical classes, whilst the 'fruits secs' are invariably to be found in the military schools." (1)

In the preparatory schools the boys were mostly boarders as invariably in the higher classes. Harem education was largely discouraged as it perpetuated a parallel outmoded system of education creating a distinctive class in the Society. So to induce the upper classes to send their boys into the public schools, the Khedive himself set the example.

An insurmountable difficulty was the scarcity of European teachers possessing the sufficient knowledge of Arabic as lectures through interpreters were unsatisfactory. As for the native teachers, though kind and national in outlook, they lacked method, and seemed to lay stress on learning by heart the books which they taught. To make their pupils

(1) Baron de Malortie: *op.cit.*, p.101

understand the genius of foreign languages was probably beyond their strength.

The process was purely mechanical.

"I have seen a boy who knew a book by heart without being able to grasp the meaning of a single sentence," de Malortie states, "However, it helps them," he continues, "In learning languages, and it is marvellous in what a short time they master the rudiments of English, French, or German. They also have great aptitude for drawing and unequalled initiative powers." (1)

In addition to the schools mentioned above in the chapter, there were a number of independent establishments either belonging to mosques or endowed by bequests. And there were also some denominational schools established by the various nationalities. Among all the native institutions, al-Azhar University enjoyed a unique position. More

(1) Ibid., p.103

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than a thousand students were on its roll. The lectures delivered at the University were admirable as they satisfied a particular type of thirst of knowledge, but at the same time the emphasis was especially laid on memorising the traditional religious knowledge without applying the critical faculty of mind.

al-Azhar University (1), deserves here a special mention for the great and constant impact which it has been making upon the religious, intellectual, social and political life of the country. In the period of Isma'il, al-Azhar remained a dormant institution as it obstinately refused to see the dawn of modern knowledge on the horizon of Egypt. The only

(1) al-Azhar University, the highly renowned seat of theological learning in the world of Islam, was built in 970 A.D. during the reign of the fourth of the Fatimide Caliphs. For centuries the curricula of al-Azhar remained practically unchanged. The conditions of entrance were that candidates must be between ten and sixteen years of age, they should be able to read and write well, and to repeat the whole of the Qur'an from memory.

thing which was making some progress at al-Azhar in those days was the study of the classical Arabic language. Yet the influence of this traditional university was still felt on the religious and intellectual life of the country. The courses at al-Azhar University varied from a minimum of forty years up to lifetime. Notwithstanding its merits and demerits al-Azhar university stood outside the purview of the present regime. There was no occasion for the government to interfere in its organisation.

However, the zeal to acquire traditional religious learning among the people may be corroborated by the narration of de Malortie

in 1880. He writes: "Most of the students are kept at the expense of religious bodies some at that of their villages, and but few have private means. However, I heard of two young men who had not the needful to pay for their daily pittance of rice and bread, so one of them assisted at the lectures, while the *other*

broke stones on the road; in the evening his mate repeated to him the day's lesson, and thus alternately one always earned the needful for both, whilst the other crammed learning for two." (1)

The Khedive will always be remembered in the educational history of Egypt for his ^{removal of} workable contribution to female education. He founded in 1873 the first girls' school to further the cause of women's education (2) Adopting the policy of educating women he dealt a direct blow at the harem system as well as at slavery. One school of that type was started under the patronage and at the expense of the third Princess. Its main

(1) Baron de Malartie; op.cit., p.104

(2) He established the first school for girls in 1873. In the third year of its establishment, the number of girl students rose to 400. They were fed and clothed.

(Umar al-Dasūqī; Fi'l-Adab al-Hadīth, Vol.I, p.71.

purpose was to train the female children of the fallah to domestic duties, with a view to replace slave girls with these educated and free girls in the palace of Khedive. The slavery became a great nuisance in the Khedive's own words.

This idea was in reality to create a class of female servants orderly and trained. It aimed at improving the mind of the woman, preparing her for a taste of order, cleanliness and comfort. Once accustomed to more civilized ways of life it could be anticipated that the girl would greatly improve the mud hovel of the fallah. In other words, women trained to a more refined and orderly mode of living would indirectly make the fallah conscious of leading a better life in the villages.

Commencing with the lower classes of the society Isma'īl gradually hoped, to expand the orbit of female education. The

education of the women of the middle and upper classes made them intellectually equal to men. With this process he contemplated gradual abolition of harem life.

Now it is sufficient to say that Isma'il cultured the fields of education for the future. These fields yielded fruits (1) for the coming generation in the shape of modern civilized life.

While treating the subject of public instruction, it may also be mentioned that the library at Cairo, (2) owes its existence in its present form to Isma'il. He enriched it by collecting a large number of previous manuscript and documents of the early times of Arabic writing on leather, stone and bark scattered all over the country. The

(1) Dr. Shawqī Daif: al-Adab al-ʿArabi al-Muʿasir, p.15

(2) Dār al-Kutub, or National Egyptian Library (al-Maktaba al-Khidīyya). It possesses some 300,000 volumes in Arabic and occidental languages. Concise Encyclopaedia of Arabic Civilization, p.328

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collection became unrivalled. Some of the persian specimens in the library were rare. Isma'il purchased the collection of books and manuscripts of Muṣṭafā Pāshā Fādil (after his brother's death) for about 40,000 pounds and presented it most generously to the National Library. (1)

Isma'īl also encouraged men of letters and offered them suitable jobs. Rifā'a al-Tahtāwī, a famous writer of the last century, returned to Egypt from France. Sa'id Pāshā appointed him director of the Military School for a very brief period. The school for some reason was closed and Rifā'a found himself unemployed. In the reign of Isma'īl in 1863, the School was reopened and al-Tahtāwī again was appointed the Director of the Translation Office. (2)

(1) Umar al-Dasūqī: Fī 'l Adab al-Hadīth, Vol.I, p.73.

(2) Tahtāwī's students translated in all more than two thousand works into Arabic and Turkish.

Cibb: Studies on the Civilization of Islam p.248.

In 1970, he became the editor in chief of
 the educational review Rawdat al-Mudarris. (1)
 He died in 1873. (2)

(1) Fortnightly, it was founded by 'Ali Pasha Mubarak in 1868. Dr. Khalil Sabat: article al Tab'a al-'Arabiyya in Dairat Ma'arif al Sha'b", No.58, 1951

(2) Dr. Shawqi Daif: al-Adab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir, p.34