

Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha Role in Structural Reforms

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Dr. Sinha from the very beginning was opposed to the dyarchy system introduced in 1919 through Montague Chelmsford Reforms. Mainly, there were two reasons for the opposition:

firstly, it would not be practicable; and secondly, it would prove futile in achieving the object from the administrative and political aspects. The author of the new system, Mr. Curtis, created it in such a way that the provincial administration has been split into the 'Reserved' and the 'Transferred'. The former was responsible for law and order, finance, land revenue, justice, irrigation, jail, recruitment, etc. while the latter was responsible for departments like education, industries, and excise departments, etc.

Sinha also forwarded a note of suggestion when the opinion was being circulated of the functioning of the dyarchy for the first three years i.e., 1921-23 of their operation. he had also authored a paper titled 'Dyarchy in Theory and Practice' wherein he had highlighted the fact that the demerits of Dyarchy outnumber the merits of it. He also had the opportunity of expressing his views with regard to Indian Constitutional reforms on the invitation of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and submitted a detailed memorandum on it.

His views on federation were salutary wherein he concluded that "It should be definitely provided that the representatives of Indian States in the Federal Legislature shall not take part in purely British Indian matters, but only in those relating to the affairs of the country as a whole. Fundamental rights must be laid down in the statute itself, and not in the proclamation or any other document."¹

With regard to the ordinance making power he stated that the power vested in the Governor-General should be meticulously allocated and Governors should not be conferred the same power. Ordinance

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repealing power has also to be specifically mentioned.

He was also in the favour of shifting of powers of the Secretary of State in respect of the Public services to the Governor-General assisted by a Public service Commission. The change he recommended was that the Governor-General should be given the power to recruit members of the offices of the Government of India, and in the hands of the Governors in respect of offices under the Provincial Governments.²

Dr. Sinha was a staunch supporter of the principle of Joint responsibility in the cabinet as according to him, it would lead to the evolution of the party system. The other reason he mentioned was that under the existing dyarchy system, the Governor could easily overrule the opinion of individual ministers.

He wanted to achieve if not a full measure of self-government, at least a fair measure of it. By this he meant that the governor being constitutional head should act solely upon the advice of the Ministry; and in the Central Government, except for two departments which might be reserved for some time, the Governor-General also should follow the advice of ministers. This was, in his view, a fair measure of self-government which India wanted at that time.³

Regarding the Joint Electorate, and Communal Award is given by the British Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay Macdonald) in 1932 he has said that this is a defective method for the exercise of a system of a franchise in force, which would inevitably lead to dividing the people into religious, racial and economic division amongst the people in the country.

In this regard, he was also of the opinion that no political reform would be of any value, which tends to further deepen the existing religious, racial, and economic divide. Any step of perpetuating and aggravating these noxious differences. He said that "a serious effort should now be made to so devise the system of a franchise that it may enable the various castes, sub-castes, ranks, selection, classes, and communities to exercise their electoral right not as small groups or circles, bringing to bear upon it narrow mental outlook, but as citizens of a great commonwealth actuated by a strong patriotic impulse to live and work as Indians, in the larger interest of the country, as a whole."⁴

Further, "the system of the franchise should be so devised that it may help to weld various castes, sub-castes, classes ranks, sections, and communities into one homogenous whole so far as the work of

administration is concerned, and the extent to which it will so help the coalescence of the Indian people into one National should be regarded as the true test of the success of the new system.”²⁵

Therefore, mere representation in the legislatures to the various existing divisions or groups, without any attempt to bring about their fusion for administrative and legislative purposes will not prove fruitful in the long run.

Thus, Dr. Sinha criticized the Ramsay MacDonald Award and opined that “Judged, therefore, from the nationalist standpoint, the award is obviously as bad it could be, while from the communalist point of view it must be declared to be an almost ideal award conceivable.”

(Foot notes)

¹ A Selection From the Speeches and Writings of Sachchidanand Sinha, Op. Cit., 1942, PP. 153-154.

² Ibid., P. 156.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., P. 157.

⁵ Ibid., P. 157.
