

INEVITABILITY OF THE CONQUEST OF SINDH BY THE BRITISH IN 1843

**BY
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The last decade of 18th century and the first half of the 19th centuries witnessed a political triangle in Asia. The Russians started their expansion to the South in Central Asia, while the British though still in Calcutta, but clearly fore-saw that the whole India, soon was to form a part of their vast Empire. They saw Russia, a powerful country of Europe, with vast room for expansion into Asia.

The Ottoman Empire of the Medieval-age pattern by then had become stagnant and its survival was at the mercy and convenience of the other European powers. Persia was weak and internally divided. India was politically divided into small Khanates.

The British plan was therefore, to meet Russia preferably at the Sir Darya and failing which, at the Oxus river, although at one time they were content that the border should be on the Indus, as was one time accepted by Delhi-Sultanate with Mangols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the latter Mughals had settled with Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali. Subsequently, the British realized that the Indus would be too brittle and delicate a line to content the Russians.

Little was realized (outside the British Government's secret files), what was in making, on the international scene. Captain W.J. Eastwick, in his speeches in the British Parliament in favor of the defeated Amirs of Sindh, spoke for 15 continues years, for which Sindians in general were grateful to him and have all along quoted him as champion of their cause. But what was on the Government records, was hardly known to Captain William J. Eastwick and his brother Edward Hobbhouse the author of "Dry Leaves from the young Egypt", a political agent in Sindh, at the time of its conquest.

Lord Ellenborough as Chairman, Board of East India Company, had recommended to the Prime Minister the conquest of Sindh as early as 1830, thirteen years before he himself, as the Governor General of India, had authorized Charles Napier to do so. These thirteen intervening years were simply part of the big game, a matter of waiting and finding more justification.

Had the British not been thrown out from Afghanistan by a revolt led by Akbar Khan, they probably would have converted Sindh into one of the many Indians States under the British Paramouncy, but the set-back in Afghanistan meant, that they must push their frontiers to Khyber and Chamman Passes immediately. The conquest of Sindh and later on of the Punjab and subjugation of Baluchistan, was thus a direct out-come of the British having been up-rooted from Afghanistan and there was no justification in waiting any longer.

The expansion of the British in India and the Russians in Central Asia which created conditions for the conquest of Sindh, is given below, in a chronological order, in

- 1) 1757 AD
British conquer Bengal.
- 2) 1764 AD
Oudh and Mughal Emperor at the British disposal.
- 3) 1765 AD
Diwani or Bengal, Bihar and Orissa granted to the British.
- 4) 1775 AD
Benaras and Gazipur surrendered to the British.
- 5) 1760-1783 AD
In 1783 British were in possession of Bihar, Bengal, Benaras, Madras and Bombay.
- 6) 1791 AD
British were alarmed at expansion of Russia and feared that it may replace the Turkish Empire in Asia.
- 7) 1796-1797 AD
Shah Zaman invaded certain parts of N.W.F.P., with the intention of extending his domain to all areas held by his grand father, Ahmed Shah Abdali.
- 8) 1798 AD
British added Sri-Lanka (Ceylon), Malabar, Dindigul, Baramahal.
- 9) 1798-1809 AD
The immediate danger to the British was Neoleon of France and his flirtations with Muslim rulers of Persia, Mysore and else-where in the South Asia, and also with Sindh through Persia.
- 10) 1798-1809 AD
Neoleon's attack on Egypt, made invasion of India by a European power including Russia, a practical possibility. Further confirmation came in 1800-1 from the Shah of Iran, who communicated to the Governor General of India, through the latter's emissary that in the event of Russian occupation of Iran, there would be long term consequences for India.
- 11) 1799 AD
Part of Tipu's Mysore, from Goa to Cannanore and South Mysore, become British.
- 12) 1799-1805 AD

Carnatic, Kutch, Gorakhpur, the Upper and the Lower Ganges –Jamuna –Doab, became British. Broach and areas north of it also became British.

- 13) 1801 AD
British came to know of Emperor Paul's (of Russia) preparations for expedition on India.
- 14) 1803 AD
Trans-Caucasia divided among Russia (Georgia). Ottomans (Western 20%) and vassals of Iranian Qajars.
- 15) 1803-1804 AD
Russians took Mingrelia from Ottomans.
- 16) 1803-1806 AD
Russians took Azerbaijan from Qajars of Iran.
- 17) 1808-1916 AD
Elphinstone's visit to Afghanistan (1801) and Henry Pottinger's travels in Baluchistan (1810), further aroused interest in areas beyond the Indus and the Sutlej and possibility of what Russians may do there.
- 18) 1813 AD
Treaty of Gulistan after the defeat of Persian Army by Russians. Iran relinquished all its territorial claims in Caucasus and withdrew its warships from the Caspian Sea.
- 19) 1814 AD
British signed a mutual defense pact with Qajars of Iran, promising military and financial aid in case of a foreign power attacked Persia.
- 20) 1815-1818 AD
Maratha States became British protectorates. Kutch, Kathiawar and Rajasthan states accept British Paramouncy.
- 21) 1820-1830 AD
Russians push eastwards almost to Afghanistan frontier.
- 22) 1826 AD
Bharatpur falls to British.
- 23) 1826 AD
Iran tried to recover part of Caucasus from Russians under British advice, but was defeated.
- 24) 1826 AD
Some areas of Bhonsle of Nagpur annexed.

- 25) 1827-28 AD
Russians took northern Armenia from Qajars of Iran, making the British to realize, how helpless were their allies, close to Russian borders.
- 26) 1828 AD
Treaty of Turkmachal gave Russian full control over the South Caucasus. The Persians paid indemnity of £ 15 millions, gave extra territorial rights and commercial concessions to Russia.
- 27) 1829 AD
Lord Ellinborough, on becoming President of Board of Directors of the East India Company, and after reading Evan's book on the designs of Russians (London 1828), became convinced that by conquest of or by influence on Iran, Russians would secure road to the Indus. He was in favor of occupying Sindh, Lahore and Kabul as soon as Russian troops move against Khiva. He suggested the exploration of Indus. British trade with Central Asia was to be promoted and British agents were to keep an eye on Russian activities.
- 28) 1830 AD
Annexation of Aachar by the British.
- 29) 1831-1832 AD
Muhammad Ali of Egypt made a bid to wrest control of Syria from Sultan or Turkey and even defeated the latter's army at Konya in the heart of Turkey. The Sultan was saved only by Russian ships and troops. Turkey became a virtual satellite of the Russians.
- 30) 1832 AD
British became convinced that by capture of Khiva, the Russians would nearly be in command of navigation of the rivers, which lead down to the very frontier of Indian Empire.
- 31) 1833-1841 AD
Russian interest now was to preserve and control the Ottoman Empire as defensive barrier for Russia, against the powerful maritime states of France and Great Britain. The Sultan did not trust the Russians and British succeeded in disrupting Russian plans for an exclusive alliance with Turks. This done, British turned to Sindh, Punjab, Afghanistan. Ellinborough in 1835 suggested that each of the above three states should be made to feel that their security depended on the British support. It was at this juncture that British stopped Ranjit Singh's invasion of Sindh in 1835-1836 and also of Afghanistan. This also resulted in treaties with Amirs of Sindh by Pottinger, Burnes mission to Kabul, failing which, treaty with Shah Shuja, a deposed Afghanistan King, in exile in Ranjit Singh's territory was supported to become ruler of Afghanistan.
- 32) 1834 AD
Annexation of Ceorg by the British.

- 33) 1835 AD
Annexation of jaintia by the British. Sikh states east of Sutlej accept British paramouncy.
- 34) 1839 AD
Deposition of Raja of Sitara by British.
- 35) 1839 AD
With Ranjit Singh's death in the Punjab started the period of instability and Sikhs no longer were an important power to deal with. Amirs were weak and in no position to stop British Army of the Indus, on way to Afghanistan. The fate of Sindh and Punjab stood decided and only effectual annexation remained. The British reinstated Shah Shuja, but two years later were defeated and repulsed. This was an evidence how difficult it was to control and distant country far from base, without actually conquering it. But British had actually demonstrated their striking capacity to the ruler of Kabul, as well as convincing the Shah of Persia, who no longer attempted to capture Heart from Afghanistan to make it a gate way for Russians to move on India.
- 36) 1839-1840 AD
Shah Shuja installed as puppet king of Afghanistan.
- 37) 1839-1843 AD
The British demonstration of Striking power in Afghanistan produced cool and calculated reaction among Nichol-I Czar of Russia and his officials, as they no longer had any intention of expansion beyond the Oxus River bordering Afghanistan. Conquest of Sindh was partly show-down of what British would attempt against Russian's crossing the Oxus.
- 38) 1841 AD
British defeated and expelled from Afghanistan.
- 39) 1843 AD
Conquest of Sindh.
- 40) 1844-1845 AD
Battle with Sibi-Kachhi and Mari tribes to push frontiers towards Chaman.
- 41) 1845 AD
British purchased Danish possessions in India.
- 42) 1845 AD
The First Sikh War and defeat of Sikhs.
- 43) 1848-1849 AD
Sitara annexed by the British.

- 44) 1849 AD
Sambalpur annexed by the British.
- 45) 1849 AD
Conquest of the Punjab and annexation.
- 46) 1853 AD
Secession of Berar by Nizam of the British.
- 47) 1854 AD
Annexation of Jhansi by British.
- 48) 1855 AD
Treaty with Dost Muhammad of Afghanistan.
- 49) 1856 AD
Annexation of Oudh.
- 50) 1865 AD
Tashkent conquered by Russia.
- 51) 1868 AD
Annual grant to Rs.5 lac to Sher Ali Amir of Afghanistan and reducing him as a puppet king by the British.
- 52) 1868 AD
Uzbek Khanates i.e., Bukhara and Samarkand annexed by Russia.
- 53) 1873 AD
Khiva annexed by Russia.
- 54) 1875 AD
Khokand (Khawaqd) acquired by Russia.
- 55) 1876 AD
Treat of Kalat making it a princely state and annexation of districts bordering Afghanistan.
- 56) 1878 AD
Flight of Sher Ali.
- 57) 1879 AD
Abdication of Yakub of Afghanistan.
- 58) 1880 AD

Abdul-Rehman installed as puppet king of Afghanistan now reduced to a satellite state of the British.

- 59) 1884 AD
Marv taken by Russia.
- 60) 1886 AD
Annexation of Burma by the British.
- 61) 1887 AD
Marv divided between Qajar and Russia.
- 62) 1895 AD
Pamir territory acquired by Russia.
- 63) 1900 AD
British expedition to Tibet, results in heavy British influence in that country.

The British treaties and engagement with Sindh between 1799 and 1837 AD.

The international situation mentioned above had so developed between 1791 AD, and 1839 AD, that the British were concerned with not only of their own interests in the South Asia, but their other colonies and British Islands. They made treaties with Sindh and also sent following missions to the Amirs:-

- i) Crowe's Mission to Sindh, May to August 1799 Ad, and again in 1800 AD, to watch Zeman Shah's influence and French intrigues, under the cover of establishing a trade factory, which was done, but the factory at Thatta was to be closed down in 1800 under the orders of Amirs, who were threatened with invasion from Shah Zaman, if Amirs failed to expel the British.
- ii) In 1809 AD, an emergency mission under Seton was sent and assigned to deter Amirs from coming under French influence, through Qajars of Iran. Under this treaty the British were to help Amirs against any claim or threat of Afghanistan. This treaty was not ratified by the Government of India as Neopoleon's defeats no longer necessitated such cooperation from Amirs and British also wanted the doors to remain open for any negotiations with Afghanistan, in view of Russian's push towards Central Asia.
- iii) Sadlier's Mission to Sindh and the treaty of 1821 was necessitated by a genuine grievance on the part of the British, namely Jasmi pirates on Sindh coast caused damaging to British ships since 1910 and 1819 AD, and Khosa banditti or Nagar Parkar raiding Kutch, with had become a British protectorate since 1817 AD. Both parties honored this Treaty. The Sadlier Mission, however, probed deep into Sindh's political situation, when he observed: "Amirs have no one minister;

each has his separate information, who offers their opinion without regard for their master's interest”.

- iv) In 1830 AD, with Ellinborough as President of East India Company, in his Minutes, suggested that Sindh was to be conquered. Burnes came to Hyderabad (Sindh), via the river Indus, from where he went up to Lahore, surveying the Indus and settlements along its banks, collecting enormous information of historical, geographical and strategically value. This was followed by Pottinger's visit and separate Treaties with Amirs of Hyderabad and Khairpur in 1832 AD, allowing the British commercial ships free passage to the Indus. The important aspect of the treaties was that the ruling houses of Mirs were divided and from here onwards they were dealt with individually by the British.
- v) By the 1834 AD, treaty Amirs were forced to accept British envoys in Sindh, though agreement for establishment of a permanent agent was delayed until 1838.
- vi) In 1836 AD, British intervened and stopped Ranjit Singh of the Punjab from invading Sindh in return for posting of British troops at their capital, to be paid by Amirs, posting of British official at Shikarpur, to be the medium of communication between Amir and Sikhs and withdrawal of Amirs and Sikh envoys from their respective capitals. One fourth of Shikarpur was succeeded to meet expenses of the British agent. Posting of permanent British agents in Hyderabad was agreed in 1838 AD. By this time, two main objectives of the British, the survey of the Indus river and the establishment of permanent Residency in Sindh, had been achieved. Sindh virtually had become a vassal state under the British Paramouncy.

It may be mentioned that after 1831 AD, the British policies save Sindh from being usurped by Sikhs under Ranjit Singh. This strategy was necessary, so that Ranjit Singh does not become too strong to challenge the British at any time and besides British were to have Sindh any way, so why to give it to the Sikhs? The British thus helped in lingering on the Talpur Rule over Sindh for more than one decade at least.

'Dry Leaves of young Egypt' by Captain Edward Hobbhouse Eastwick, brother of Eastwick, the member of the parliament was not the only oen to protest against the British conquest of Sindh. James Outram, John Jacob, Pottinger and Buist were four others, who supported the Talpur cause. Captain William J. Eastwick was influenced by his brother. However, one of them had access to the British Government files in London.

Whether conquest of Sindh was justified from the Sindhian point of view or their British supporters; it was definitely justified from the view point of the British Empire. It had to take place some day and probably it was the most appropriate time. Had the British not annexed the Punjab and Sindh and waited longer, the Russians perhaps would have done it. International forces, not realized locally, had already been at work for more than half a century.

Technological Gap.

The Technological gap which started with the development of ships fitted with guns by the Portuguese and Spanish in the late 15th century and also with the development of hand guns gave Europeans a great advantage over the other nations. The age of Renaissance, which started in Europe in the 15th century was to lead to the freedom of thought and scientific thinking, and this type of thinking was not so developing in the East. Modern science and its applications too were developing in Europe from 16th century onwards. This gave Europeans advantages which were not at all perceived in the East.

Another major development was the break-through in the development of power, by use of energy in the fossil fuels; a lead which has continuously increased the economic and scientific gap day after day in the past two centuries, leaving the East behind. A few instances of technological advances until the British conquest of Sindh in 1843 AD were:-

1776 James Watt invented steam Engine. Each engine of 20 horse power working for eight hours was doing work of 160 men in a single shift. Steam engine could, if needed, work round the clock, to replace 500 men, and the amount spent on its fuel was much below the salaries of a fraction of the displaced labor. Thus, it became cheap to produce articles in factories fitted with this power. The East was overnight turned into importer of the machine-made foreign goods.

1783 Balloon was successfully flown by heat energy of hot air in Paris, France.

1800 Volta, in Italy, invented battery, thereby producing electrical energy by chemical process.

1804 Invention of a locomotive by use of steam engine led to the development of railways.

1807 Robert Fulton, an English man, built the first commercial passenger steam boat.

1821 Natural gas was developed and marketed near Fredonia (N.Y) in USA.

1829 An American named Joseph Henry, invented electric generator.

1837 Invention of reaper, by McCormick; steam shovel by Otis and telegraph by Morse were major contributions to farm mechanization, earth moving and communication technologies.

1843 Rail roads already expanding resulted in cheap handling of freight as well as passengers. By the time of the conquest of Sindh, England already was the leading country in technology in the world; a justification in-itself for control of the world economy.

Secret Surveys.

Yet another development necessitated by the plans to conquer more territories in India, was secret surveys and maps of other states. Surveys of the seas and the coasts as guide for seamen, goes back to the Greek times, but secretly producing maps of other States was started by the Portuguese and the Spanish in the 16th century. These were done mostly by triangulation and guess work, but detailed and actual measurement of land leading to the preparation of maps was started by the British soon after 1760 AD.

For places like Sindh, where the British had less access, an ingenious device, like a wheel and with revolution counter (like Milo-meter in a car) was devised. Some times it was to form a part of a wheel-barrow, on which was fitted a magnetic compass and it also carried some baggage of the officers. The distances could be measured with the help of wheel with a certain amount of accuracy and direction was shown by compass as it changed en-route. The man pushing the wheel-barrow, had to keep a log at each change of direction of the route. With the help of such a simple device the British were able to carryout a large number of surveys of Sindh.

Some note-worthy of these are:-

YEAR AD	OFFICIAL	R O U T E
1808	Seton	Mandavi to Hyderabad.
1808	Pottinger	Karachi to Thatta.
1815	Todd	Jaisalmir to Rohri.
1827 1829 1831	Masoon	Various routes from Karachi, Thano Bula Khan, Jhangara, Kambar and Uthal to Baluchistan.
1828	James Burnes	Bhooj to Hyderabad.
1829	Alexander Burnes	Nagar Parker, Rann of Kutch, Eastern mouth of the Indus.
1931	Del Hoste	Bhooj to Khairpur via Hyderabad and thence to Matiari, Hala, Sakrand, Nawabshah, Daur and Kot Lalu to Khairpur, returning via Larkana, Mehar, Kakar, Dadu and Sehwan, then along the Indus upto Hyderabad, and finally to Bhooj.
1832 1833	Alexander Burnes	From the mouth of the Indus to Lahore via the Indus. This was the most important survey of all, thus far under taken.
1836	Carless	Hyderabad to the Indus mouth, via the river and the whole Sindh Cost. He had already surveyed the Sindh Coast in 1817.
1838	N. Campbell	Hajamree, a mouth of the Indus to Hyderabad via Charo.

1839 1840	Quarter Master of Bombay Army's staff, accompanying Indus Army to Afghanistan.	Hajamree to Sehwan. Hajamree to Soanmiani. Karachi to Sehwan and Sehwan to Jhal via the Indus, as well as different land routes. Rohri to Jhal and Rohri to Bolan Pass.
1839	Margary	Karachi to Sehwan.
1839	John Jacob	Hyderabad to Nagar Parkar.
1839 1840	N. Campbell	Sehwan to Shikarpur.
1839 1840	Nott (Brig.)	The Punjab to Shikarpur via the river Indus and via Daharki-Ghotki and Sukkur route.
1839 1840	John Keenee	Karachi-Gharo to Shikarpur via the Western hills.
1839 1840	N. Campbell	Shikarpur to Kabul, via Bolan Pass.
1840	P.I.C. Messuer	Hyderabad to Barmir in Rajasthan.
1840	P.I.C. Mensuer	Gharo Creek.
1841	John Jacob	Deesa in Kutch, to Luhree in Kachi district of Baluchistan, via Nagar Parkar, Wagha-Bazar, and through Thar to Rohri, Again from there to Luhree via Khangarh.
1843 January	John Jacob	Umerkot to Barmir.

From these and many sources of other minor surveys, were prepared many maps of routes, as well as those of the whole Sindh. A map produced just after the conquest of Sindh in 1844 without any new surveys, appears to be almost like the modern map of Sindh, with the Indus, routes and towns and majority of them accurately placed, as on the modern maps.

This technological gap had left the unsuspecting Sindhi rulers, ignorant and helpless, before the already well established masters of the South Asia.

Heliograph a predecessor of telegraph for sending messages by flickering of lamp light at night and reflecting of sun's light by minors was already in operation between Sindh coast and Calcutta before 1843 AD and it was this heliograph which conveyed the message of Napier to Ellinborough PECCAVI, i.e., I have sinned, meaning there by having acquired 'Sind' or committed 'Sin'. Spelling of Sindh.

Sindh was spelled differently since 18th century. It was written as Scindy up to end of 18th century. From 1809 it became Scind. Delhoste wrote it as Sinde, a spelling which was followed up to 1850 when it turned in Scindh on all government records. The cumbersome spelling changed to Sindh in 1860, a correct version of the Sindhi spoken word, but too difficult for the British officials to pronounce and therefore by about 1880 they re-wrote it as Sind, a spelling which was standardized by the Hunter's Imperial Gazetteer of India in 1884. Eastwick had not used all the three different spellings, as

current in his times; neither had his publishers taken notice of it. The most sympathetic speeches in favor of returning Sind to Talpur Amirs was printed by Smith Elder, London 1863. It contains the following speeches of W.J. Eastwick:-

- (a) A speech delivered at the Court of Proprietors of the East India Stock, on 26th January, 1844, known as 'The Amir of Sind'.
- (b) A speech delivered at Court of Proprietors of East India Stock, on 23rd March, 1853, known as 'The Sindh Question'.
- (c) A speech delivered on the occasion of the Banquet at Manchester to Sir H. Pottinger, 'East India Company Services'.
- (d) A speech delivered at the Court of Proprietors of East India Stock on 3rd June 1858. 'Sir James Outram's Services'.
- (e) A speech delivered at the Court of Proprietors of the East India Stock on 25th August 1858. 'Sir John Lawrence's Services'.
- (f) A speech delivered at an Adjourned special Court of Proprietors of the East India Stock, held at the India House on 20th January 1858.

All these writings formed part of papers put up before the Parliament on 'Sindh Affairs'.

The subject was such debated and discussed over past 140 years and for further information the reader may refer to:-

- (i) Lambrick, H.T. (1952), 'Charles Napier and Sind', Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- (ii) Huttenback, R.A., (1962), 'British Relations with Sind, 1799-1843. A Dissection of Imperialism', Los Angeles, USA.
- (iii) Therani, Kala, (1973), 'British Political Missions to Sind', New Delhi.
- (iv) Duarte, Ardian (Dr.), (1976), 'British Relations with Sind', Karachi.

Original work of James Outram, 'The Conquest of Sind': A commentary, is also readily available in a reprint. 'Dry Leaves from Young Egypt' gives conditions in Sindh as also Appeals of Talpurs to the Queen of England.