



DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN PRINCELY MYSORE PRISONS

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INTRODUCTION:

The modern prison system which was developed in Europe, spread across the lands where the Western colonies were setup. India also has no exception to this generalisation. The State of Mysore in South India was ruled by the Wodeyars dynasty from the 1399 to 1947, with an interregnum of two Muslim rulers and the British Commissioners. During the commissioners rule foundation was laid for systematic administration. Prison administration too gained their attention. Here an effort is being made to understand the development of education system for the prisoners in Mysore jails.

Prison education is also known as inmate education and correctional education, is a broad term that encompasses number of educational activities occurring inside a prism. These educational activities include both vocational trains and academic education. The goal of such activities is to prepare the prisoner for success outside of prison and to enhance the rehabilitative aspects of prison.

Prisoners education offered inside prisons are typically provided and managed by the prison system in which they reside. Funding for the prisoners are provided through official correctional department budgets, private organization and the prison or their facilities.

Prison education can also undo some of the damages occurred during their stay in the prison. It can awaken senses numbered and release creativity and that is both therapeutic and rehabilitative. With good skills and education, released prisoners have a better chance at moving on with their lives despite their criminal record.

The prison population is a body of those persons who have been condemned as unfit to enjoy freedom in a civilized society. From the day of conviction a programme follows for turning the prisoners into better citizens who, after release, are excepted to live an honest, peaceful and social life. This transformation can be achieved only through education. Education tends "to quicken the intellect, inspire self respect, excite to higher aims and afford a healthful substitute for low and vicious amusements". That is why it has come to be recognized that education is of "primary importance in prisons, and should be carried to the utmost extent consistent with the other purposes of such institutions".

Education is the heart and soul of the correctional process. It brings about "sublimation of the anti social instinct" in a criminal by slowly moulding his knowledge, character and behaviour. It helps the offender in his ultimate resettlement in society. The Report of the Jail

Code Revision Committee (1972-73) very pertinently observes: "As reformatory treatment of criminals has been accepted as the best means of protecting society we have to bring about this reformation through a consistently humane process. And what process is more humane than the one that opens the dark recesses of a criminal's soul and admits into it, perhaps for the first time, the light of knowledge and reason? Centuries of bitter experience tells the civilized man of today that society cannot be adequately protected only by inflicting retributory and deterrent punishment on an offender against it. It is essential, therefore, that we should seriously provide for the training and education of every criminal and endeavour seriously to develop in him a sense of self confidence and personal responsibility".

Ignorance is one of the main factors in the causation of crime, and experience in most countries warrants the inference that the wave of crime tends to recede as education advance.

It has been noted that large number of prisoners in Mysore were illiterates. This implies that illiteracy and ignorance were also partly responsible for crime. Most of the criminals were no doubt aware of the fact that crime was committed but unaware of the consequences. Education is one of the means by which the criminals may be released from the chains of ignorance and hereby reformed.

In December 1866, a school master was engaged for the instruction of the boys at Rs. 20 per month. At the Beginning of 1867, Doctor Henderson commenced the instruction of the adult prisoners. He first formed a class of those prisoners, who already knew how to read Canarese. His intension was to distribute these convicts as monitors to different barracks, and the education of one barrack began. Later on the other convicts who could read were distributed to different barracks, forming the pupils into classes of 15 each under a separate instruction. The hour of instruction is from 5 PM (after the men had their dinner) till lock-up time 6 o'clock. Prisoners thoroughly appreciated the effort, even the old men took to letters and their progress was more rapid than that of adult Europeans would have been under similar circumstances.

The gregarious habits of the native also assist in rendering the task of sitting round a board in small flocks of 15, and called out the names of the letters after the instructor did, and there is even a certain amount of emulation between different classes. The only men who were exempted from instruction were the short term prisoners, the old and the infirm, the bad characters and thugs. In the early stages it was intended only to master the alphabets, so some of the prisoners may be induced to continue their studies after their release. Mr. S.T. Heard, Surgeon and Officiating Superintendent of Bangalore Central Prison recorded an experience. One day a thug, during the weekly inspection, said that he had a complaint to make, "you give books" he said, "to all those other men and let them read in the evening, but you don't give us any, any why is this?" After the Superintendent remarked that, "you are too old to learn," he replied that he could read, and if books are given, he will read for others. Accordingly the Superintendent gave directions to fulfil his wish.

Another convict was accused of stealing a piece of paper which he and made into a book in which he wrote down his letters, and read them at odd times. On the enquiry and punishment, he begged for mercy and said that he had been a fool and knew nothing, but was trying to learn to read and get some sense. These two incidents show us that he convicts were interested in learning the letters.

The boys made very fair progress in the studies. But education of women was not commenced till 8th September 1868, and at the close of the year only 11 of them knew the letters. In the month of October 1867, all the native Catholic Christians were placed in a

separate barrack, and Reverend A. de Kerezout gave them religious instruction. Their number was 18.

A paid teacher appointed in 1868 in the Bangalore Central Jail to teach the inmates. Inmates were taught Kanarese, Hindustani and English. There was no paid teacher in Mysore and Shimogga Jails. In Shimogga a convict competent to teach was employed to instruct. Convicts showed little or no aptitude for learning. Therefore the government has ordered in 1892 that education should be limited to juvenile convicts, unless adults show aptitude.

Arrangements existed in the Central Jail, Bangalore for giving the convicted criminal a reformatory course of prison discipline according to the latest principles. The experiment though in every way well conducted, is rather expensive, and may perhaps after all not prove so effectual under a system which groups together every kind of criminals of all social positions and classes.

Education has for some years been introduced with good effect. In 1880 there was a daily average of 921 prisoners under instruction. Of the 1281 prisoners released during the years, who were under instruction in the jail, 1007 were unable to read and write when they entered, but when they left the number so unable was only 587.

Much was done in the Central Jail at Bangalore and to a small extent in the Mysore Jail towards educating the convicts, especially those of youthful age. The juveniles in the Central Jail, Bangalore, had separate quarters like those of women, the boys were taught reading and writing and were made to do light work in the garden attached to their ward. A Hindustani class was opened in the Mysore Jail in 1881. Since June 1893, no instructions were given to the adult convicts. Juveniles were taught Kannada and English on a moderate scale by a literate convict. In 1923 a whole time teacher for teaching adult convicts was sanctioned by the government.

With a view to improve the social and moral condition of convicts in the Jails at Bangalore and Mysore, arrangements were made for instructing them on religious and moral subjects. The inmates of lock-ups were not brought under instruction, as their stay was very short. At the close of the year 1910-11, the local theosophical society, the Ramakrishna mission and the Central Muhammadan Association of Bangalore came forward to deliver discourses on religious and moral subjects. Similar arrangements were made in the Mysore Jails with the sanction of the government in 1912.

With the sanction of the Government in 1912, during the year 1913-14, books were allowed into the barracks and some selected prisoners read them to the rest for an hour or two before the bedtime. Since then the prisoners were allowed to use books during leisure hours. The Jails at Bangalore and Mysore were given libraries. In 1922, these libraries were improved to encourage convicts reading suitable books on religion and morals. A portion of the school time allotted for juveniles is devoted to the recital of hymns. In 1923 a whole time teacher for teaching adult convicts was sanctioned by the Government.

Regarding education in the Central Jail, Bangalore, not much progress was made to impart education for long term convicts, but as an experiment by making use of the prisoner monitors to instruct in elementary knowledge. Out of the 5318 prisoners in the jails and lock-ups, 885 prisoners were instructed 774 learned to read or write a little, and 111 to read and write well. It is to be observed that no female prisoner was received in any of the jails who could read or write nor were in any of the jails who could read and write.

There was a paid teacher in the Bangalore Central Jail to give instructions to convicts. A large number were taught Kannada and a few were taught Hindustani and English.

The Mysore Jail Manual is completely silent on the topic of the education of the prisoners. No doubt that some arrangement for teaching in both the Bangalore and Mysore Jails, but they are neither adequate nor systematic.

There was a standing rule in British Indian Prisons, as per the recommendations of the Indian Jail Committee, that the hours devoted to education shall be so arranged as not to interfere with jail labour. The practice in English Prisons is to hold the classes in the evenings, when labour is over for the day. But it was impossible in Indian jails due to improper lighting. The classes were held usually in the morning hours. In the Mysore state jails the class hours were from 7-30 to 10 in the morning for prisoners below 21 years and from 1-30 to 3-30 in the afternoon for the older ones.

The arrangement made to impart religious and moral instruction worked satisfactorily. In addition to four instructors during the year, two more were newly appointed, to instruct Ligaayat and Brahmin prisoners in the central Jail, Bangalore. Every Sunday afternoon was devoted to Bhajanas or Harikathas.

By 1926 there were two schools attached to Bangalore Central Jail, one for teaching Kannada and other for teaching Urdu. In Kannada school 30 convicts finished their course and there were 49 pupils at the end of 1928. With regard to the establishment of Reformatory School for the Juvenile prisoners planning was underway.

Report of the committee on prison reforms in Mysore, 1941 recommended to :-

- Make education compulsory, irrespective of age.
- Those who desire education beyond alimentary stage should be given the necessary books and any other assistance.
- Supervision and advice may be taken from Department of Public Instruction.
- Prisoners should be permitted to have books of unobjectionable character.
- Jail libraries should get grants from the Government.
- For the outside news radio may be made available to prisoners.
- Prison library should be kept in the same block of building where educational classes are held.

The Committee on Prison Reforms in Mysore, also stressed on the following ; the prison library should be provided with more books and periodicals in vernacular and in English. The content of the books should be on general knowledge, popular science, religion, history, fiction and literature. The careful selection books is of very important is insisted. It felt that, there are complaints related to dumping of more religious oriented books in jail libraries. Apart from educating the prisoners, the authorities also provided vocational training in various trades. This helped the prisoners to lead a honourable life post release from prison.

CONCLUSION:

Modern prison system took a concrete shape during the Commissioners rule in Princely Mysore during the last half of the 19th Century. Various reforms were introduced in reforming the inmates in the prisons. Educating a convict goes a long way in reforming the disturbed sole. The Wodeyars continued the legacy of the commissioners prison reforms and earned title Model State.

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