Cries and Crises as Gleaned from the Epigraphic Records of India

Dr. Shyamalkanti Chakravarti

Introduction

India can boast of her epigraphical wealth flourishing on rocks, boulders, walls of temples, besides copperplates; which by a modest estimate amounts to be little over one hundred thousands as noticed in the annual reports on Indian epigraphy. Referring to their qualitative value James Burgess almost a century and a quarter years ago wrote :

> Indian inscriptions, more so even those of any country, are the real archives of the annals of its ancient history, the contemporaneous witness of the events of the men whose deeds they handed down and their authenticity renders them most valuable and deserving of careful record [Burgess, 1892].

However, in the West, the study of inscriptions is a part of history; in India, epigraphy until recently fell within the discipline of archaeology since inscriptions are often discovered in the course of archaeological excavations and explorations. Nevertheless, these inscriptions are considered as ancillary data which historic archaeology can be garnished with, in the reconstruction of the lifestyle of the people.

Like almost all other nations, Indian people had experienced from time immemorial, many crises caused by their natural calamities or socio-political upheavals in the state. *Crises* as we see now, is the situation at a certain stage of development of a given society, when the things are at the brink of collapse. The epigraphic records of the country passed on to us from the third century BC occasionally reflect such grave socio-economic conditions. Here again we intend to interpret the word *cry* as a voice of agony and protest in relation to a given situation of the society. Therefore, our purport would be for the once, to cull and collect relevant epigraphic materials and finally analyse these data of the past in relevance to our contemporary society.

Crises due to natural calamity

The flood figures in the Vedic literature, among providential calamities *(daivapidanam)* of the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya—a politico-economic treatise of the fourth century BC and among the *ityayah* of the great epic the *Mahābhārata* (V.60.17) quoted from the *Purāṇas* as forerunner of famine. Inscriptional evidence of famine stricken localities in India, however, antedates those of flood affected. A stone plaque inscription

of the time of Aśoka, the great Maurya emperor (273-232 BC) refers to some disquiet moments when the frown of fortune brought about a famine at a place in the northern part of Bengal. A fragmentary piece of buff colour limestone engraved in Brāhmī character of the Maurya period, discovered by one Bodu Fakir at Mahasthangarh in Bagura district (now Bangladesh) in the year 1931, records an order of a Maurya prince to a high functionary *(mahāmātra)* of Puṇḍranagara stating that help and assistance should be provided to the famine stricken *samvaṅgīya* people or the *sadvargika* clan with a loan of cash and corn. The inscription further goes to clarify the outbreak of distress during emergency. The nature of calamity was assumed to be due to three disturbances *viz.,* disaster due to water, fire or birds *(dagatiyaiyake...ikasi suatiyayikasi).*

The record, now preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata gives an interesting picture of the measures taken by the State to battle famine at the early date and shows a deep sympathy expressed by the issuing authority for the welfare of the subject which prompted some scholars to suggest that the order was issued by none else than Aśoka. [Chakravarti, 1977].

The *Arthaśāstra,* a contemporary book on polity, prescribes provisions for famine relief and wants the king to advance cash, corn and cattle to the cultivator (V. 2f.). The king, according to this prescription should favour by giving gratis seeds and food to the affected. He should also carry out work in forts and on dams with a distribution of food to people in distress. *(durbhikṣe rājā bhaktopagrahaṁ kṛtyanugrahaṁ kuryāt durgasetukarma vā).* Again, as a precautionary measure, the king had to earmark half the store collected by him for an insurance fund against public calamities. *(ardham apartham jānādānamsthāpayet)* [II.15]. The Mahāsthānagarh inscription has referred to a granary and treasury *(koṭhagale kosam)* which are to be replenished as and when the outbreak of emergency is tided over by the lapse of time.

Another contemporary document, the Sohgaura bronze inscription records an order of the *mahāmātras* of Śrāvastī to the effect that certain storehouses *(koṭhagalani)* at Sriman and Vamsagrama village are to be opened to cultivators in seasons of distress [Sircar, 1965]. This document is unique in the sense that it bears an engraving of the three-storied storehouses set up for fighting famine in the Maurya age. The record till lost from the Asiatic Society, Kolkata was unearthed at Sohgaura village in the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh and was first noticed in 1894.

The earliest famine cry echoed in the *Ṛgveda* reflects a patriarchal society with primitive methods and irrigation afflicted by periodical droughts. In the early Buddhist

literature and epics, famine evoked awesome attention of people as a supernatural element. With the clearance of forests, increase of population and rise of class divisions, famine became a major agrarian problem before the dawn of Christian era. By careful diagnosis of the causes of famine and injury to crops, people began to explore specifics and to apply preventive and remedial measures. The inscribed records under study shed light to when agricultural policy and particularly famine insurance were formulated for the first time in Indian history. Thus, it is cleare that the ancients suffered under the crises but fought gamely against the arch peril of food crops. Again ideas of tax remission and advance of loans which did not occur to the modern Indian government till 1880, throve with the ancient Indian economists earlier than the Christian epoch; and so was the case of famine insurance scheme fund that was taken up by the government as late as the beginning of the twentieth century [*Reports of Indian Famine Commisison*, 1880 & 1900]

However, in place of the old acceptance of fate and contentment with one's condition there came a rebellious stir in the land during the late medieval India. The *Sannyāsī* rebellion of 1767-1880 finds its root to the famine of 1770 locally called *chiyattarer manvantar!* The basic thoughts about famine, however, remains the same—the governments are dolling out relief, advance and loans to minimize the sufferings of afflicted people. Improved methods of agriculture and communication system have added relief to the problem. The post independence Government of India has been doing its best to achieve freedom from hunger although the tragedy of some recent crises in food still causing concern.

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,* the most important production in the whole range of Vedic literature, the earliest reference to flood and its devastation is available. Some writers suppose the story to have originated in an exceptional overflowing of the river Gaṅgā. The story of a *Fish and a Man (manumatsyakathā)* contains some points of resemblance and contrast to other deluge stories of the world. The story not only relates to a crisis that befalls on man due to natural calmity but herein underlies a statement—*matsya eva matsyaṁ gilati* (even fish devours fish) the seed of a future political truth that reflects a conditin of the society when anarchy is the rule of the day. We shall have to return to this point later while dealing with a political crises. In the proto-historic age, flood in India posed tremendous problem to human civilization, the glaring example being the devastation of the Harappan culture in the northwestern sector of Indian subcontinent during the first millennium BC.

The earliest inscriptional evidence of such catstrophe is met in 150 AD when people in despair of having a dam rebuilt, which caused an enormous breach, were loudly lamenting to the authorities *(punaḥ setubandha nairasyāt hāhā bhūteṣu prajāsu).* It was then the Saka prince Rudradāman who undertook the reconstruction in the teeth of ministerial opposition with a large outlay of capital and furnished the lake with the dam, well-planned conduits, drains, and means to guard against foul matter. *(Jātena kṛtrimeṇa setubandhenopannaṁ supratibhita praṇālī parivaha midhavidhānam).* It is interesting to note that this large dam with a dimension of 420 × 420 × 75 cubits was constructed by Chandragupta Maurya and later reconstructed by his grandson Aśoka in the third century BC. Again, when the dams were broken because of heavy rainfall around 458 AD, during the reign of Skandagupta, his governor Chakrapālita repaired the breach spending a large sum of money. The inscriptions that refer to this early battle against flood for a period of eight hundred years or more are still found on a rock of Girnar hills near Junagarh in Kathiawar (Sircar, 1965].

Public protest and agony

From the classical period of Indian history, let us turn towards the medieval epoch in search of some socio-political issues. With the fall of the Guptas and subsequent rise of the rigional powers in various parts of India, a comparatively complex society began to emerge. Though the process of social evolution and economic progress went on with the modification and adjustments, it appears now that social and economic forces are more powerful than the political forces. Because of socio-cultural changes, sporadic voices of suppressed humanity, though feeble was going to be heard. The holding of cultivable land, which was regarded as bedrock of Indian economy now passes gradually from the royal ownership to village assembly. A post Gupta record, the Faridpur copperplate of the time of Dharmāditya bears testimony to this statement. In the *Harṣacarita,* a seventh century biographical prose romance by Bāṇabhaṭṭa we find that the labourers were grumbling loud to say—the labour is ours but when time of payment comes, some other rascal will appear.' *(kleśo asmākam phalakāle anya eva vīraḥ samupsathāsyanta iti).* The age of frustration sets in the society coupled with political strife and disequilibrium. A careful study of the epigraphic records and the literary compositions in the eighth century, that Bengal had sunk into political impotence for several decades, until the creation of a strong government restored her to normal life. The country was plunged into a condition of lawlessness and anarchy termed in ancient texts as *mātsyanyāya,* the rule of fish, which provokes big fish

swallowing the smaller ones. We have shown earlier that this term was derived from its nucleus in the phrase *matsya eva matsyaṁ gilati* occuring first in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,* which found its elaboration in two great epics of India—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata (matsya iva narāḥ nityaṁ bhakṣyanti parasparam—Rāmāyaṇa,* 2.67.31) and *(jāle matsyāniva hiṁsyuḥ durbalān balavattaraḥ—Mahābhārata* 12,13.30).

This condition of political instability, a crises that had engulfed Bengal, could only be overome when people enmasse got themselves involved in the political scene. Thus, people at large took the reins of power to elect a representative of their own as the king of Bengal, as evidenced by a pass^ge in the Khalimpur Copperplate of Dharmāpala *(mātsyanyāyam apohituṁ prakṛtibhiḥ lakṣmyā karaṁ grahīto śrī-gopālaḥ).* This had perhaps become the fashion of the age because around the same time as the Kashakudi Coppeplate records that Nandivarman II Pallavamalla (730-796) was chosen by the subjects to rule Kanchi as its king. Even in Assam, king Brahmapāla was elected by his people to take hold of the kingdom at Pragiyotishpur [Sen, 1942].

Another social institution which was lauded by the classical and early medieval writers, such as *satī* or burning of widow on the same pyre with a deceased husband; as also slavery were practiced indiscriminately in the society. These, however, were paradoxically gaining some apathy in the late medieval age. The self-immolaion of the widows represents a grim picture of the Indian society, which was accentuated during five centuries preceding the one we live in. Apart from the references in literary traditions like the *Mahābhārata, Purāṇas* and Dharmasastras *or* legal texts, this rite of concremation, as early as the third century AD finds its place in the epigraphic documents of the Indian subcontinent, the earliest example being an inscribed earthen pot from Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. Scholars have sufficient reasons to justify the pot to be a relic urn used for preserving together the ashes and bones of husband and wife with the words *Āyāmani* and *Pustikā* inscribed on it [Sircar 1969]. Three centuries later a full account of the rite was mentioned on a stone inscripton found from Eran in Madhya Pradesh. It recorded the death of one Goparājā, a chieftain of the Guptas, who fought the battle, gallantly at the place where the inscription was installed. His devoted, attached, beloved and beauteous' wife accompanied him on the funeral pyre. Although epigraphically recorded and sustantiated by literary documents, it is held that the practice was not generally popular in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods [Rath, 1964]. However, this rite got a new lease of life during the troubled days of medieval period. It has been refered to in the important foreign accounts during the three successive

centuries from the begining of the fifteenth century. The rite was an apanage of rank but fosterd and spread by priestly influence. The main home of the rite was mostly the Gangetic valley, the Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat and in South India, strictly the Branmanical kingdom of Vijaynagar and also in Madura [Thompson 1926].

Widow burning in Bengal, as evidenced by the epigraphic records though conspicuously very few, has its upper limit in the tenth century, but subsequently as exposed a huge conflagrations in the early decade of the yester century. Indian Museum, Kolkata acquired a terracotta plaque recording a case of *satī,* dated in Bengal era 1206, corresponding to 1800 AD [Chakravarti, 1976]. This is very interesting, since three years after in 1803, Dr. William Carey, a zealous missionary of Serampore made an unofficial survey of the occurrences of *satī* within thirty miles of Calcutta and recorded four hundred and thirty cases within a year [Ward, 1820]. Official attempts, however, to obtain an annual record of the widows thus burnt alive in Bengal Presidency started as late as 1815. The statistics showed a horrifying rise in the number every year, maximum being attained in 1818 until its official abolition in 1829 by the Regulation No. XVII, promulgated by William Bentinck, then Governor General in India. In November 1818, Rammohan Roy published the first anti-*satī* tract entitled *'The Conference between an Advocate for and Opponent of the Practice of Burning Windows alive' (sahamaraṇ viṣaye pravartak nivartak samvād).* Next year it was followed by the second tract on the subject. But for his strong advocacy against the institution of *satī,* the Government could not have taken the courage to abolish this inhuman practice. Further, turning back to epigraphic data, we observe that thousands of *satī* and hero stones have been reported from other parts of India, but in Bengal, as customary, often nothing remains to indicate the place of concremation but a venerated patch of ground without any stone inscribed on it. Many a sad note on *satīs* of Bengal thus lost, literally written in sands.

We shall now examine a few inscribed materials with important social bearings, belonging to a period ranging between the fourteenth and mid seventeenth century, chosen from south India and elsewhere.

The increased activities of various artisan groups, guilds, and corporate bodies in the Gupta period and after, had found place in inscriptions. The accentuated importance of craft-guild was also reflected in later law books. In the biographical literature ascribed to a king of seventh century AD it was stated that Harṣavardhaṅa of Thāneśvar, on the eve of his daughter's marriage sought cooperation so that troops of

troubadours, companies of leather workers, and other skilled artisans from different regins crowded his palace.

In medieval India, artisans living in groups tried to establish their right when occasion demanded. As against some social injustice nad willful inability of the administration to take measures against social evil, a section of people of the artisan caste was compelled to resort to a sort of 'chisel down strike' that ocntinued for six months. A Coperplate document of 1335 AD mentions this socio-political clash when a Pathan chief from Ratnagiri kidnapped a five year old girl of artisan community. *[South Indian Inscriptions, Volume 3, Part I No. 1240].* The people stopped production for six months. Ultimately, being apprised of this 'strike' the king ordered his military chief to get hold of the Pathan and to release the girl. However, the army chief could not succeed in spite of his several attempts while certain Balamutti Nayakka afterwards invaded the Pathan and brought the girl back to her community. Kidnapping is a crime punishable from ancient time in India as a enjoined by the *Nāradasmṛti,* a legal literature, as the following : 'The punishment for stealing a woman confiscation of entire wealth; and for a maiden the punishment is coropral one' [Das, 1977]. Nevertheless, this fourteenth century elopement of the girl provoked a mass protest mobilizing the group of artisans as well as the people of the seventy-four *ganas* in the reign of Thirumalai Nayakka, when the men in authority did not heed their formal appeals.

This understanding and mutual feeling amidst different communities, otherwise segregated by caste and creed conflict, broght nearer two groups of peasantry in Tamilnadu to join a common protest against big landholders. Before we examine the inscriptions in questin it would be useful to look back at land control process of the area under our survey. Towards the close of Chola rule, private land owning became prevalent. This was evident from the inscriptions dealing with transfer of land between individuals or between individuals and temple authorities. In contrast, in early Chola times, land transfers of private nature were scarcely recorded except in the case of land sale by the Brāhmaṇas in ther *brahmadeya* villages. As a consequence, some people who accumulated large amount of land, eventually flourished as big landlords. Counterbalancing this, some people again lost possession of their lands and were compelled to be relegated to the position of tenants or landless cultivators. This indicates the emergence of a new agrarian order in the lower Cauvery valley during the thirteenth century, which seems to have ushered in changes in the relation of many communities in the locality. Another interesting phenomenon can be observed from a new epigraphic

records of the period. People, who earned much wealth through ownership of the highly productive land elsewhere, began to purchase land on the other side of the river Cauvery for further investments.

On the other hand, in the later stage of the Chola rule, members of influential class were sponsoring their own brethern to acquire lands, thus creating confusion amongst poor people of the locality. This was a matter of great concern and the situation necessitated a royal order to protect the interest of those who had been gradually deprived of their hereditary right of possession, known from insciption as *kani* holdings [Karashima, 1980]. The situation as enumerated above further aggravated in the shape of people's protest against various social disorders. According to an inscription datable to AD 1429, of which two copies were discovered at two different places in Tiruchirapalli district, viz., Aduturai in Perambalur taluk [*Annual Report, Epigraphy,* 1913, No. 34] and Kilpaluvur in Aryyalur taluk [*Annual Report, Epigraphy*, 1926, No. 253] the *Valangai* i.e., the right hand group and the *Idangai,* i.e., the left hand group of peasantry, decided unaminously that they should not submit to any outsider even if the *Pradani* (the local Vijayanagar governor), the *Vanniya* (military people) or the *Ibitatakkarar* (holders of official tenures) forced them or even if the Brāhmaṇas and the *Vellag,* (big landholders) tried to oppress them in collision with government officers.

The reason behind this strong decision was that these people were opposing introduction of a new measuring rod to their entire disadvantage. It was considered an open revolt by the lower peasantry against the landlords and the government. This peasant revolt, the first of its kind in Tamil land was not confined to a small area. In the same year, different stages of the same incident are mentioned in many places in the neighbouring South Arcot and Thanjavur district covering an area of three thousand square kilometers. Accroding to other inscriptional sources, the artisan and merchant castes also joined the revolt. Of late, another version of *Valangai-Idangai* inscription has been discovered at Asur in Perambalur taluk of Tiruchirapalli district relating to peasant-artisan revolt of 1429 AD. It concerns the resolution passed by two groups of Venbarnadu. [Karashima, 1985].

A medieval religious institution and the members of the town municipality spearheaded a different kind of public protest against the political authority of coastal Karnataka. The inscription is in the form of a Copperplate charter, which refers to an agreement made by Chikkaraja Wodeya, the Chauta ruler of Puttige with the municipal members and the pontiff of a Jaina monastery, Abhinava Charukirti Pandita Deva of

Mudabidre, during the rule of Virabhadra Nayakka of Keladi. It is said that being annoyed by a number of regular raids, looting and seizure of property by the people of the aggressive Chauta ruler of the Jaina religious men and trading community all the people of the town deserted the city ad thus taking resort to non-cooperation with the ruling class. Alerted by this innovative agitation, the Chauta king came forward himself to sign a pact in 1640 AD, which stated—'We will restore all the property carried away by our people, we will not force labour, no arrest and imprisonment for you, no more stealinging houses in your town....should not demand loans on the basis of authority, should not impose free service in the kitchen, the people of the palace should not instigate quarrels by discord... The atrocities and excess of the ruler came to an end when the pact was negotiated. The Copperplate charter was handed over to the pontiff Abhinava Charukirti Pandita Deva, eight municipal members, and all Jaina merchants of four mercantile guild of Mudabidre.

We shall now try to visualize the other socio-economic problems and maladies of the age such as slavery, untouchability and dowry as gleaned from the epigrahic records.

The valuation placed upon a labour is a significant element in the ideoloy dominating any period, for it reflects the social structure as well as the social values. The system of labour in India was characterized by utilization of all kind of labours that were fmailiar in the ancient times—paid labour, forced labour as well as slavery. In general, the standard of living of the labourers was poor, heir social status low and they had to depend upon the whims of the employer. Slavery was accepted as a part of the general labour system in the ancient world. Even Aśoka, the great patron of Buddhism and supporter of *ahiṁsā,* only asked his people to grant kind and proper treatment to slaves and hired servnts (Rock edict IX). The *Arthaśāstra* classifies five kinds of slavery of which *ātmavikrayin* (who sales himself) is noteworthy since we have come across a late medieval stone inscription of the time of Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor. This gives an account of how Gopa, a *cāṇḍāla* by birth and an inhabitant of the village of Dhamrai in Dhaka (now Bangladesh) sold his self along with his wife, son and daughter to Ramjivan Maulik for ruppes nine only in order to free himself from debt [Sircar, 1965]. This record is dated in 1666 Ad. We have a similar incident from the same village as late as 1804 AD as evidenced by a paper document called *razinama* or a deed of willful slavery.

In south India, an inscribed data revealed, even women on the demise of her

husband inherited the slaveas proerty. Two inscriptions of Rājādhirāja-II dated 1177 AD found at Tirukarugavur and Achchalapuramin of Thanjavur district seem to be very revealing. Clear inscriptional references to slavery in Tiruchirapalli district come from two Vijayanagar records dated 1374 and 1389 AD respectively. The one refers to presentaiton by a non-Brāhmaṇa landlord of his *vellala* and *pulaive* slaves to one of his wives and son. The other inscription mentions of the sale of some vellala slaves by their Brahmana master. The differnce between the *vellala* and the *pulaive* slaves lies in the fact that the former may be touchable and the latter untouchable. Epigraphical documents referred to above correspond to a literary work of the twelfth century AD the *Periyapuranam* that depict the labourer as slaves of their masters, [Subbarayalu, 1980].

Epigraphy is very late in recording instances of untouchability in any part of India, thogh the existence is known from tradition and literature for a long time. The inscription of Rajendra Chola (1012-1042 AD) from Bahur in Pondicherry refers to the exclusion of the inhabitants of *tindachheri* (the quartrs of the untouchables) from participation in the public works like desilting the tank of the locality and other agricultural operations along with workers of other castes. [*Annual Report, Epigraphy*, 1976-77, No. B-198].

Our last epigraphic evidence dealing with yet another socio-economic factor is on dowry system in medieval Tamilnadu. It appears that this convention was causing concern in the society. It is stated that four of the *pañcadrāviḍa* community of Brāhmaṇas viz., Kannadiga, Tamidha, Telungu and Latas residing in Padaibidu town of north Arcot district of Tamilnadu, had to enter into a pact that no Brāhmaṇa should from that year (1347 *śaka* = 1426 AD) be allowed to take money as dowry from the bridegroom's side nor any groom can part with any money to bride's father. This *dharmasaṁsthāpanapatram* was issued by a local self-government called *panchayet* during the reign of Virapratapadeva Raya, the Vijayanagar king [Hultzsch, 1880].

Contemporaneousness of the issues under study

From the foregoing analysis, it is apparent that the epigraphic evidences record no strong protest against such social evils as that of self-immolation by Indian wives. Was it because of the patriarchal nature of the society, which was dominated by men only? Alternatively, was it because that custom of *satī* was prevalent among the higher castes of the society who played a prominent role in dictating the social rule? Incidentally, it has been observed that the Malabarese of South India, consisting mostly

of tribal population, living in a matriarchal society committed very few, nay—hardly any widow burning. [Thospson, 1926]. On the contrary, the scriptural evidence, which was the major guiding factor in respect of attitude towards women in the upper caste society reflect women in a position of absolute dominance by men—almost as their personal property as that of cow or gold. Even the birth of a daughter in a family was considered as a source of misery and as such was most unwelcome.

Contrary to this, India's awakening in modern age started with the social movement against the basic evil of widow burning or *satī,* accelerated by the reformist movement of Rammohan Roy. This was the begining of a new evaluation of women's place in the Indian society. The movement that started in the abolution of *satī* finally turned into a major reformist movement of the nineteenth century India, the keyword of which was emancipation of women. The process is still on. The enactment of laws conferring right to remarriage of the widows in the pre-independence period and right to the ancestral property to women and right of civil marriages in the Indian society in the post independence ear sow that the issue is till not dead. In the fifteenth century inscribed materials from Tamilnadu, we have seen a very heartening example of movement against dowry. It is not clear, however, that the movement had a wide base nor there were any other corroboration from literary tradiiton and historical accounts whatsoever, On the other hand, this socio-religious evil which had gradually aggravated the society and ultimately passed on to modern India as legacy, is still a major hindrance to social progress. The solitary evidence in the epigraphic record has found an echo in the enactment of anti-dowry bills by the government of India. What was then in the nature of social contract is now a legally enforceable act by the republic government. Notwithstanding the force and the gravity of the law, it remains yet to be seen as to how the message of this regulation permeate into the present soceity of India and with what repercussions?

Besides these burning issues of changing attitude of the soceity to women folk, the other compulsions that come to us from the past records are the questions of ownership of land and that of untouchability. It is needless ot mention that nearly seventy percent of Indian population still lives on land only. Though the issues of untouchability has a religeous stigma, it is in the final analysis entwined with the problem of ownership of land. Most of the so-called untouchables are the tillers of land and persons lording over them are from higher castes of the soceity. The inscribed records of Tamil land have laready revealed a few interesting trends. Persons of wealth,

agriculturists or otherwise affluent were bringing in more and more land under their individual ownership, pushing women the marginal landholders to the status of landless labourers. The trend of feudalistic land holding system as further accentuated by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. We have, in the inscriptios of the Cholas, noticed a protest against his trend in the form of passive resistance. Now for all practical purposes, the protest is channelised through the political parties under parliamentary framewok or through stray methods sporadically challenging the basic validity of the present set of rulers. To whom land will belong—this is the question handed over to modern India by the past. India stands at crossroads. An answer to this burning question would decide her future.

References

Burgess, James - (1892), *Epigraphia Indica,* Vol. I

Chakravarti, Shyamalkanti - (1977), *A descriptive catalogue of Prakrit and Sanskrit inscriptions in the Indian Museum,* p.3.
(1973), Sati in Bengal epigraphy in Jornal of the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, Vol. 2.

Das, Sukla - (1997), *Crime and punishment in ancient India.* p. 59.

Hultzsch, E - (1880), *Sough Indian Inscriptions,* Vol. I, p. 82-84.

Krashima, Noboru - (1980), *Studies in socio-cultural chane in rural villages in Tiruchirapalli, district, Tamilnadu, India,* No. I p.12.
(1985) *President's address, XI Annual Congress, Epigraphical Society of India* p. 7.

Rath, A.K. - (1964), *Sati in ancient India from inscriptional sources* in Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society, Vol : XIX, Pts 3-4, 1964, pp. 81-82.

Sircar, D.C. - 1965), *Select inscriptions* Vol. I, pp. 82, 175, 307; Vol. II (1983) p. 677.
(1949), *Nanduru earthen pot inscription* in the Journal of Andhra Historical Society Vol. XIX, pp. 203-207.

Sen, Benoychandra - (1942), Some *historical aspects of the inscriptions of Benal,* p. 292.

Subbarayalu, Y - (1980), *The peasantry of the Tiruchirapalli district from the 13th to 17th centuries* in Studies in socio-cultural change in rural villages in Tiruchirapalli district, Tamilnadu, India.

Thompson, Edward - (1926), *Suttee - a historical and philosophical enequiry into the Hindu rite of widow burning* p. 29.

Ward William - (1820), *A view of the history, literature and religion of the Hindos,* Book III, Section XXVII, p. 114.