State’s role in the reconstruction of India’s Mineral Policy

The Geological Societies in India have been organizing late symposia for formulating a national mineral policy for India. The trend of discussions which have been operated so far discloses a strong feeling for nationalization and conservation of India’s mineral resources for her own needs. If nationalization were to mean that the Central Government should hold the mineral rights throughout India and own all the mines, several complications are bound to arise. But if it suggests that the return has been largely benefited by their enterprises; but it is questionable whether the return it has got is quite proportionate to the total drain of its mineral wealth Indian capitalists have fought shy in the past of risking their funds in mining, and the few who have ventured on these lines have generally concentrated their attention on raising only the minerals which can be readily exported without any further treatment or elaborate processing.

Among her mineral possessions, India can list, in all about a hundred or so of different types, which may serve for various industrial purposes. It would not pay to export, in their raw condition, many of these which may be classed as common minerals. They may be used advantageously in some one or the other of the several local mineral industries to which each would be found best suited. Among the minerals of international importance which would be required in the world’s essential industries, India may possess a dozen including her high grade iron ores, bauxite, manganese ores, chromite, mica, monazite, ilmenite and a few others. Excepting iron ores and bauxite, India has been exporting the others, till now, in unrestricted quantities; and it is highly doubtful whether we have these minerals in such super-abundance—far in excess of our requirements—as to continue to share them for long, as common raw materials, with other countries.

India, in its present stage of industrial development, may not be conceded to be standing in need of a large share of the minerals of international importance; but the country’s growing requirements necessitate the setting up—not at some distant future but immediately—of several essential industries which would require them as their raw material. In any consideration for an international mineral policy India cannot stand in isolation, and we do not mean either that she should do so and play the dog in the manger role in respect of her mineral resources. The Government of India, the Provinces, and the States, should endeavour to take an accurate stock of their mineral resources—as suggested above—and decide upon the various mineral industries which each could advantageously set up, so that when the time comes—which may not be far distant—for any considerations of international sharing of resources of essential minerals, India may have her plans ready and show the world her own need for most of the minerals which she possesses and for a few more which she has not got.

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