

# India's Princely States

People, princes and colonialism

*Edited by*

**Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati**

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This book reassesses the place of the Indian princely states within the history of South Asia and weaves together hitherto uncharted areas. It employs a multi-disciplinary approach and critiques some of the received paradigms of conventional historiography about Princely India, leading the reader into new realms of discussion such as literary constructions, aspects of political economy and legitimacy, military collaborations, gender issues, peasant movements, health policies and the mechanisms for controlling and integrating the states. The contributors focus on a range of states in different regions and base their analyses on hitherto unused or underused archival sources.

The collection will appeal to scholars of South Asia and students of transnational histories, cultural and racial studies, international politics, economic history and social history of health and medicine.

**Waltraud Ernst** is Professor in the History of Medicine at Oxford Brookes University, UK. She has published widely on the history of mental illness in South Asia. Her publications include *Mad Tales from the Raj* (1991); *Race, Science and Medicine* (co-edited with B.J. Harris, 1999); *Plural Medicine, Tradition and Modernity* (ed., 2002) and *The Normal and the Abnormal* (ed., 2006). She is currently completing a book on 'Mental Illness and Colonialism' and is engaged in a collaborative research project on 'Colonial Medicine and Indigenous Health Practices in Southern and Eastern Princely States of India, c.1880–1960'.

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First published 2007  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2007.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to [www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk).”

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,  
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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available from  
the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*  
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-93380-X Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0-415-41541-1 (hbk)  
ISBN10: 0-203-93380-X (ebk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-41541-5 (hbk)  
ISBN13: 978-0-203-93380-0 (ebk)

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# Contributors

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# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the British Academy and the Wellcome Trust for funding the International Research Symposium on the ‘The Indian Princely States’, held at the University of Southampton (8–10 July 2005), which forms the basis of this collection. The contributors to the volume stood by with patience and extended their full cooperation, which we deeply appreciate. We would also like to thank Ian Talbott, I. Thirumali, Jane Buckingham, Benjamin Cohen, Caroline Keen, Ingrid Sankey and Manu Bhagavan for their participation. Ruth Biddiss, Indrani Sen and Prasun Chatterjee have been of invaluable help in the copy-editing process, and Dorothea Schaefer and Tom Bates at Routledge were a welcome source of encouragement.



# 1 People, princes and colonialism

*Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati*

## **On the margins of the history of South Asia**

In recent years, the Indian princely states have become a focus of attention among historians of South Asia. This is to be welcomed as the vast areas that were not painted pink on the maps of the British Empire had hitherto been located at the margins of the historiography of the subcontinent. Yet the Indian states were by no means negligible in terms of size and political and military presence. They comprised two-fifths of south Asia's territory and about one-fifth of its population at the time when the British Crown took over the control of the remaining provinces from the English East India Company in 1858. Each area of the subcontinent had, of course, its own history of regional and cultural diversity and interaction with the expanding British Empire. It would therefore be inappropriate to generalize about the ways the rulers of the over 500 or so Indian states and the colonial power negotiated the boundaries between 'princely' and colonial rule. For example, western and southern areas were riven with conflicts during the period of British expansion. These were due not least to competition over the established opium trade routes along the western coast, the presence and territorial and trading interests of other European powers (such as the Dutch, French and Portuguese) and the military challenges posed by some formidable rulers (such as Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan and the Marathas) and principalities in the wake of declining Mughal power and the resulting decentralization. Similarly, in the north, Sikh power strongholds created problems for the British. In the east, by comparison, well-organized opposition to the British was negligible, apart from Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) and resistance in the hill tracts.

In addition to military engagements and treaties, policies such as 'subsidiary alliance' and the 'doctrine of lapse' were applied by the British in varied, tailor-made ways in most Indian states from the time of Wellesley and Dalhousie. The exceptions were Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, where colonial hegemony had been established during the late eighteenth century. The varied nature of these states and their different positions in the wider scheme of political governance on the subcontinent has been



neglected even in the most outspoken and conceptually astute branches of south Asian studies, such as post-modern, post-colonial, literary and subaltern studies.

The few studies that have been published from the late nineteenth century onwards were in the main relatively self-contained histories of specific states that came to occupy their own niche in the historiography. Meeting the same fate as later writing, they were but barely integrated into the grand sweep of modern south Asian history. A temporary upsurge in the historiography of the Indian states began following Independence in 1947, due to debates about their role in the process of decolonization and the accession of most of them to the Indian Union. Apart from discussion of the contested status of Jammu and Kashmir, hardly anything has been written on those states, which, like Las Bela in 1948, acceded to or were located in Pakistan. Yet, some of these states were maintained until the mid-1950s and early 1970s, as in the cases of the western and northern frontier states. A lacuna therefore continues to exist in the historiography, which may be due also to a politically and historically flawed equation of the princely states with Indian states. This precariously sensitive issue needs to be addressed in future writing.

Indian nationalist historiography tended to celebrate the success of the freedom struggle that had led to the merger of the princely states with the Indian Union. Yet, one of the contentious issues was whether the accession constituted a side-effect of the process of decolonization and the political manoeuvrings at the top (including leaders of the Congress, like Patel) or whether it was due to the struggles of the states' peoples that reinforced the process of decolonization in the states and thereby created the conditions for political negotiations. V.P. Menon set the trend, subscribing to the former position. The writings of frontline communist activists such as P. Sundarayya and M.A. Rasul point at the alternative position, namely that the struggles in the 1946–47 period in fact created the basis for the Congress to work out the 'integration' with the princes and the retreating colonial power.<sup>1</sup>

A persistently popular tradition of historical and literary writings focuses on the Indian states in a number of reductionist ways, portraying them variously as relics of former Oriental despotism and feudalism, as vestiges of a golden age, or as mere adjuncts to British colonial governmentality. Although these flawed mono-dimensional portrayals of Indian states and their rulers have rightly been criticized and sidelined in recent decades, some of the Orientalist, romanticized and Euro-focused tropes they are based on continue to inveigle themselves in often-insidious ways into current scholarship. A more nuanced and sophisticated assessment that avoids essentialist stereotyping and undue generalizations is clearly called for. Furthermore, if the history of the Indian states is to be more adequately integrated with existing scholarship on south Asia in general, it needs to address more than nationalist endeavours and the states' roles in the political and economic policies and rhetorical designs of British colonialism. Rather,

social, political and economic developments in the Indian states require analysis both on their own terms and at the same time in relation to colonial governance and resistance in British India. A multi-dimensional approach that is focused on the varied conditions in specific states as well as cognisant of inter-state relationships and interactions with colonial governmentalities is important in two ways. First, it leads to a more sophisticated assessment of the Indian states, on their own terms, as well as in relation to regional and global politics. Second, it enables debates on the nature of hegemonic, colonial rule in south Asia to move beyond their narrowly 'British India'-focused canvas. The fact that south Asia is made up of a multitude of different cultural formations, that the Indian states as well as the provinces under British control were heterogeneous political, economic and social constellations, and that, therefore, insights derived from the assessment of circumstances in one particular location cannot necessarily be applied indiscriminately to other places, has hitherto been more often honoured in the breach than in the observance and requires critical attention.

### **Colonial hegemony and princely autonomy**

Just as British administrators applied different policy regimes in the various northern and southern provinces, so did Indian rulers who had to adjust their policies to local, communal idiosyncrasies and the demands of different social groups. Moreover, just as the Indian rulers negotiated with the British different kinds of allegiances that fitted with their various other regional treaties and political agreements, so did the British have to accede to different kinds of 'indirect rule'. An important issue that needs to be considered in the context of such heterogeneity is the extent to which the Indian states were autonomous and sovereign entities. In recent writing in particular it has been suggested that, far from being mere puppet regimes, some of them maintained considerable autonomy and preserved existing social formations or modified them to fit in better with new political ideas, economic rationales and changing communal allegiances – sometimes to the better, sometimes to the worse for the peasantry on whose labour the states depended. This approach could be seen as an attempt to challenge earlier, hegemonic accounts that depicted the princes as at best mere decorative stooges of British imperial power, and to recover their agency as active subjects.<sup>2</sup> Because of its seemingly anti-hegemonic stance, this argument may sound persuasive within the context of current historical writing.

However, we need to consider that once the British had implemented the treaty system and introduced changes in land ownership and revenue collection based on Western ideas of private property, Indian rulers' freedom of action in the political and economic spheres became increasingly constrained by the dictates of British colonial governance. Although a policy of 'non-interference' was advocated, this was more a matter

of colonial rhetoric that fitted in with the less explicitly aggressive and militaristic tone of governance following the Rebellion of 1857. The rhetoric of ‘non-interference’ marked in fact a ‘hegemonic shift’, with emphasis now being put on measures that appeared less interventionist, yet had important structural consequences in the political as well as economic spheres. For example, as Metcalfe has shown, direct relations between Crown and the Indian states continued in the post 1858 period, when the Crown took over India. Thus, what we see is that loyalty was secured through honours, titles, money and territories distributed lavishly in a series of viceregal *darbars* and the like.<sup>3</sup> This drive included the setting up of special educational facilities from the 1870s, such as Rajkumar College at Rajkot and Rajpur, Mayo College at Ajmer, Aitchison College at Lahore and Daly College at Indore, which assured a supply of loyal followers for the British, once the Western-educated Indian elites in British India became all too closely involved in anti-imperialist politics. To prevent the isolation of Indian rulers and any possible striving toward independence, the princes were integrated into British government institutions such as the Imperial Legislative Council (from 1861) and the Chamber of Princes – a consultative cum advisory body that was set up in 1921 to counter increasing anti-British sentiments.<sup>4</sup>

Each of these various measures can be seen as part and parcel of a hegemonic strategy that encouraged Indian rulers to conceive of themselves, against the odds of their actual political impotence, as potent heads of independent states.<sup>5</sup> Even if some of them happened to have been consummate politicians, the British shift from control through direct military action to policies of ‘subsidiary alliance’, the ‘doctrine of lapse’, and control by means of hegemonic incorporation from 1858 onwards, explains why some Indian rulers looked at themselves – or, in current parlance, ‘imagined’ themselves – as ‘independent’ and ‘autonomous’. Historians who suggest that the British recognized the princes as their ‘equals’ and stress their ‘autonomy’ and ‘independence’ may have unwittingly become, in an endeavour to rescue the princes from hegemonic accounts of history, victims of colonial ideology themselves.<sup>6</sup>

The emphasis on autonomy may have its origin also in the focus on the periods immediately before and after Independence and Partition, when some of the Indian rulers eventually did try to achieve what had been denied to them earlier by the British.<sup>7</sup> They had woken up to the opportunity, arguably in some cases with encouragement by the retreating colonial power, eventually to become truly independent and autonomous. As we know, the rulers’ high-level political manoeuvres to this end were unsuccessful – occasioning major political movements in some cases, such as the Telengana people’s movement in Hyderabad state.

## **Regional studies**

A plethora of regional studies has explored the role of the popular movements that had emerged from the late 1930s onwards and with

which the Congress increasingly affiliated itself.<sup>8</sup> Like the British, the Congress had officially advocated a policy of 'non-interference' in regard to the Indian states, as had Gandhi who had hoped that the princes would eventually become the 'real trustees of the people' in the Indian states.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the Congress frequently stepped in to negotiate on behalf of peoples' movements and acted as a restraining force, as in the case of some of the Orissan princely states.<sup>10</sup> It also increasingly tried to assume leadership of peoples' movements when they became prominent forces to be reckoned with in the late 1930s and 1940s. The peoples' movements in the Indian states were complex and their analysis cannot be confined to the usual binary of people versus rulers. Apart from class demands characteristic of the position of exploited peasants and wage labourers, the struggles included at various points in time an anti-colonial component as well as communalist ambitions.<sup>11</sup> The complex and protracted dialectics of the national movements in the Indian states have been highlighted in particular by scholars who focus on how communist inspired/led movements such as the Telengana people's movement in Hyderabad state developed into mass movements.<sup>12</sup>

### **The invention of princely India**

Other major and enduring themes in the historiography concern the pre-colonial origin of some Indian states and the related question of whether the princes were a 'creation' or 'invention' of the British, or if they 'represented a continuity of traditional state formation in India'.<sup>13</sup> Recent scholarship has tended towards the latter view, which seems to chime in with the assumption that Indian rulers maintained a large degree of autonomy during the British period. This kind of interpretation sits seemingly comfortably also alongside the chronology of developments that saw the emergence of regional power centres in the wake of Mughal rule in India and the subsequent strengthening and consolidation of these power clusters once the central Mughal authority declined over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The rise of the landed aristocracy in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and the Punjab has been particularly well documented in this context. Although the process of state formation was marked by unevenness, it was characteristic of many areas in India, not least those in the east, which were soon to become subject to control by the English East India Company.

However, although the development towards independent and sovereign political entities clearly began well before the arrival of the British, it would be wrong to conclude that these states were able to retain the kind of economic and political systems and regional autonomy they had developed in the wake of Mughal decline once the British began to negotiate treaties with the ruling elites. Although marked by variations, economic and political reorganization became subject to the principles of

the political economy of early colonialism – in British India as well as in the Indian states. This process included measures that ensured stable and loyal allies and access to, and the siphoning off of, agrarian resources that could ‘drive’ the Industrial Revolution in England during the course of the nineteenth century. These wider, global concerns fuelled various policies that guaranteed the payment to the colonial administration of regular and fixed tributes (*peshkush*) by the princes and created the basis for indirect exploitation, that is, the extraction of resources without any direct involvement by the British.

The British interventions occasioned restriction of autonomy in the political sphere and introduction of new settlement and revenue collection structures, as in parts of the south and the north, where the *raiyatwari* and *mahalwari* settlements respectively were introduced. Even in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa, where landlords had existed before the arrival of the British, the ‘permanent settlement’ of 1793 had wide-ranging agricultural, social and political consequences – the well-established landlords who had previously acted mainly as revenue collection officials and landholders were conferred proprietorial rights to the land they had held and a fixed land tax was introduced. Despite variations, the results were similar: existing landholders were turned into landowners and, where they did not exist, a new structure of landownership was introduced as part of a restructured system of princely governance. There may have been continuity in some cases in terms of dynastic background of the ruling gentry and their officials, yet their economic and political positions became fundamentally different to those they had assumed during earlier periods. The British indeed did not have to create all the *rajās*, *zamindars*, *nizams* and *talukdars* because they owed their origin to the social differentiation and the process of state formation in pre-colonial India and the decentralization after the decline of the Mughal empire. However, what the British did do was to reconfigure their roles, impose restrictions on rulers’ political sovereignty, restructure the rural economy and, last but not least, transform the power base of the princes vis-à-vis the peasantry, with the latter being denied rights of ownership of land. In that sense, even if the British did not create *maharajas* and *nizams*, they certainly coddled a new breed of rulers, to whom they referred derogatively but quite aptly as ‘princes’.

### **The quest for an ‘alternative modernity’ and the structures of legitimacy**

There are many pitfalls on the path to a critical history of the Indian states. One of them involves the construction of the Indian states as either ‘backward’, or ‘progressive’ places that nurtured an ‘alternative’ modernity to the one that prevailed in British India. These representations are of course fraught with problems as they are bound up with colonial stereotyping, as in attempts by princes to live up to and even surpass

the modernizing expectations of British officials and of the increasingly Western-trained Indian elite, as well as scholars' hopeful attempts to reconstruct rulers' internal policy measures as evidence of their enlightened governance. Initiatives in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, irrigation and communication as well as in regard to representative political institutions and administrative bureaucratization are often pointed to – at times not without some anti-hegemonic pride and post-colonial vision – as indicative of 'model' states that realized their position as sovereign entities. Yet, the term 'model state' itself already gives its provenance away. The model is closely linked with the British blueprint. The extent of its alleged 'sovereignty' remains severely compromised and needs to be problematized further in the light of the considerable curtailment by the British of rulers' autonomy.<sup>14</sup> Some rulers may undoubtedly have been consummate politicians with reformist ambitions and modernizing visions. Yet, in order to assess these inclinations adequately, it is important to consider individual rulers' motivations for particular initiatives within the context of the expectations and restrictions imposed by the British.

Furthermore, rulers' need to legitimize their position *vis-à-vis* the wider population and in particular in relation to members of the indigenous elite deserves critical appraisal.<sup>15</sup> The structures of legitimacy were a vital component for the maintenance of British colonial rule, as has been shown in much recent writing. They were no less vital for the continuation of princely rule. The extent to which they fuelled 'progressive' measures in some states but not in others therefore requires further probing if the proposition of an 'alternative modernity' in Indian states is to be assessed comprehensively. Another important set of questions concerns the issue of who had to pay the price for 'progressive' measures undertaken in 'model' states such as Mysore, for example. Were the highly commended modern health services accessible to urban and rural communities alike, or did they benefit city dwellers and elite groups only? Where did the financial resources come from to pay for these initiatives? Were the bricks-and-mortar markers and the services that are presumed to be indicative of an 'alternative' modernity in the urban areas sustained by peasants' toil and rural deprivation? Who paid the price for the 'progress' in a 'model' state?

Not all states could be described as paragons of 'progress' and 'modernity' – whatever the meaning of these terms for individual rulers – and some of the princes relied on a range of other measures to ensure that they remained acceptable to the states' people, especially the elite groups, as well as the British officials scrutinizing princely government affairs. These included concerted efforts towards the Hinduization of tribal people, to better integrate them into the preferred social structures, and affiliated control measures; the preservation and strengthening of hierarchies of caste, class and gender, to maintain the status quo and prevent unrest;<sup>16</sup> emphasis on princes' 'ancient' or Rajput lineages, so as to mark them out as 'rulers'

legitimated by custom and history;<sup>17</sup> the manipulation of religious and kingly identities;<sup>18</sup> patronage<sup>19</sup> and the provision of resources and military personnel during the two world wars.<sup>20</sup> Many of these measures could be considered as the routine maintenance tasks of legitimation that any modern or pre-modern state in the region would be expected to apply in order to assure the status quo of the regime. Whether they are evidence of the ‘sovereignty’ of the states calls for further analysis, given that they were deployed within the context of British regional predominance and therefore necessarily always with a keen and wary eye on the dominant power’s approval and acceptance.

### **Princes and the people**

Even in recent writing on the Indian states, there has been a persistent tendency to focus mainly on the politics of the alliance system and indirect rule, military conquest, the hagiographies of princes, nationalist endeavours and accession issues during the 1940s. The areas that have received considerably less attention are those that concern social historians most – social developments, non-elite groups, and the fate of minority communities. One of the consequences of the currently unbalanced historiography is, as Ramusack points out in *The Indian Princes and Their States*, that ‘[t]he paucity of research on social change and popular political activity in the princely states contributes to Orientalist representations of the princely states as the epitome of unchanging India’.<sup>21</sup> This situation clearly needs to be rectified. Given the popularity of the stereotype of Indian rural backwardness and the preoccupation with caste and stagnation, it is particularly surprising that the agrarian structure and social stratification in the Indian states have not attracted much interest among historians. This may partly be related to the Indian nationalist paradigm that located the states’ people as a monolithic block, pitted against colonialism, especially since the late 1930s.

The contributions to this book address especially those themes that have received comparatively scant attention in what little writing there is on the Indian states. A major ambition is therefore to bring the people back into a limited historiography that currently seems to be inhabited mainly by princes and their sub-ifeudatories. The internal dynamics of social group formation and identity and political struggles are core issues that will be explored in a number of chapters.

In his chapter on colonial and postcolonial historiography, Hira Singh reflects on one of the theoretical paradigms that have preoccupied historians concerned with the status of the princely states or ‘little kingdoms’. He discusses the limitations of approaches, ranging from traditional imperial historiography to Foucaultian and ‘subaltern’ studies, and shows how they have tended to marginalize the Indian states in general and focused almost exclusively on the political and private lives of the princely elite. He stresses

the importance of confrontation and people's struggles alongside the more common tropes of accommodation and incorporation. This perspective deals in particular with the world of material foundations, which is neglected in existing scholarship, and emphasizes the need for more complete and comprehensive assessments that move beyond the exclusive world of the princes and colonialism to the life and role of the subaltern groups within the context of princely and colonial rule.

Indrani Sen maps out the stereotypes of princes in colonial fiction, which had a persistent and enduring impact on historical writing and literature alike. She argues that the Indian raja continued to be presented as the 'Other' despite political realignments following the Rebellion of 1857. Hence, novels in the subsequent period, from 1858 to c.1900, circulated stereotypes and participated in the ideological reproduction of colonialism. Their aim was to valorize British colonial rule and target the princes as a spent force, in a state of moral and political decline, by highlighting the darker aspects of magnificent maharajas and the decadence of 'native' feudal culture. An essentially middle-class genre, the writings enacted colonial fantasies of sexuality, class and power as well as those of upward-mobility and 'instant aristocracy'. These were fuelled by underlying colonial anxieties, political insecurities and sexual inadequacies and included fears of miscegenation involving princes and white women, as well as gender stereotypes about princely *zenanas*.

Amar Farooqi's chapter reminds us of the early period of the British–princely encounter that was characterized by military action and fighting over resources. He focuses on the Sindia state (Gwalior) during the nineteenth century, which has not received much attention in the existing literature, despite the fact that it was one of the major north Indian states. Being made up of territories scattered over a wide area, the Sindia state had access to a sizeable proportion of the abundant opium produce of the region, which made it the foremost supplier of the drug for the China market independent from the English East India Company. Farooqi argues that contest for the control of this resource was a significant element in the wars against Gwalior. He also shows that even over two decades following the state's subjection to indirect rule in 1818, the Company's control over the state remained ill defined and superficial. This was largely due to the strong resistance to colonial intervention in the Sindia territories. It was only from 1843/44 onwards, after another major military offensive, that Gwalior was subjugated.

In her chapter on colonial settlement policies in Jammu and Kashmir, Shakti Kak highlights how agrarian interventions affected the local populations detrimentally. She traces the ruptures and continuities in the pattern of agrarian relations between 1860 and 1905, engaging in particular with questions about the extent to which British settlement policies were based on earlier customary procedures or newly 'created' ones. Kak shows that the British initiated policies regarding occupancy rights and the period



of leases, systematized the methods of revenue calculation and collection, and also attempted to bring new areas under cultivation. However, they did not alter the land grants given out by the Sikhs and the Dogras to the relatives of the royal families or loyal elite groups whose continued political support was vital. Consequently, the agrarian interventions created new power structures, but left the existing exploitative conditions in place.

Biswamoy Pati's chapter puts into focus the important issue of legitimacy that increasingly underpins princely as well as colonial rule from the 1850s onwards. He explores the interactive dimensions associated with the process of how legitimacy was worked out and negotiated between the main protagonists: the princes, the people and the colonial power. From the perspective of the princes and their *darbars*, making princely government acceptable to the states' people was achieved through the agrarian settlements that reinforced existing class/caste and gender hierarchies, as well as popular cults and efforts to Hinduize tribals in order to further stabilize these social structures. Alongside these essentially conservative measures pursued in regard to state populations, the princes joined the bandwagon of 'modernity' as well as taking pains to prove their ancient lineage in order to legitimize their position in the eyes of the British and the emerging Indian elite groups. Pati maps out the shifting nature of these various processes, highlighting that they were based on interactions involving the states' people, the princes and their *darbars*, and colonialism. He concludes that the *darbars* not only served to legitimize colonialism but imperial history itself.

Fiona Groenhout's chapter focuses on the consequences of failed legitimation, leading to confrontation and the subsequent deposition of Indian rulers by the British. She argues that the degree of British intervention in cases of alleged misrule or maladministration was largely contingent upon how the measure was expected to affect British interests in India more broadly. The deliberately undefined character of what was supposed to constitute 'misrule' and 'maladministration' enabled the British to redefine the rules as they saw fit, leaving the princes to act in anticipation of (inconsistent) British judgments, rather than providing a clear indication of their roles in the imperial structure. Groenhout focuses on the forced abdication of Maharaja Shivaji Rao Holkar of Indore in 1903, and the deposition of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Rewa in 1946 to explore the circumstances under which a prince was seen to be a liability rather than an asset to British colonial rule. This allows her to assess the nature of 'indirect' rule and the varied relationships between the British and the princes that underpinned it.

Samiksha Sehrawat explores the history of military collaboration between British and Indian rulers, from 1880 to 1920. She highlights the importance of the coercive element in British colonial policies during a period when annexation and military campaigns were officially no longer considered opportune on the subcontinent, and assesses how the princes

were deployed as willing collaborators in Britain's military agendas in Europe and the empire. Sehrawat focuses on the significance of the First World War in reshaping the extent of princely contributions, the expectations the princes harboured in return for their collaboration, and the post-war responses to them by the colonial state and the India Office. Her analysis provides insights not only into the history of princely India but also the scope of the colonial army.

Siobhan Lambert-Hurley shows how a long history of collaboration with the British by a succession of Muslim women rulers in Bhopal assured them an esteemed position within the system of paramountcy. The Bhopal women rulers also managed to craft an image of themselves as benevolent autocrats on the model of Britain's 'improving landlords', thus complicating perceptions of princely rule as based on male succession and as wholly parasitic institutions. Bhopal's reputation with contemporary British and Indian observers was bolstered by the Begams' philanthropic acts and reforms that were made possible by their ability to tax the peasantry as they saw fit. Lambert-Hurley focuses on Sultan Jahan Begam's explication of women's rights and duties within Islam and her attempts to reach less privileged women. She argues that her activities were as presumptuous as those being made by her British counterparts in relation to working-class women.

Hari Sen focuses on the princely state of Mewar during the 1920s, whose ruler was a valuable ally of the British, yet considered by them as unable to control his subjects. Sen shows how the Maharana's internal policies, especially during a period of price rises for staple food items, and his refusal to introduce agricultural reforms triggered peasant discontent and led to the participation of tribal communities in the Eki or 'unity' movement. He explores the nature of the relationship between the British and the ruler of Mewar within a context charged with popular protest and nationalist politics and highlights the Maharana's attempt to attribute the upheaval to the general anti-British sentiments that had spread to his state.

Barbara Ramusack examines the evolution of public and private medical services for women in Mysore, a state that has commonly been seen as 'progressive' and 'modern'. Her focus is on the period from the 1870s to the 1910s, which was characterized by high infant and maternal mortality in both British and princely India. Ramusack finds that British and Indian medical officials, Indian philanthropists and Christian missionaries cooperated with each other sporadically to extend allopathic medical care to women. The motivations underlying these initiatives were manifold and related not only to the legitimation of colonial authority. She also traces the medicalization of childbirth, which was affected by medical professionals, state officials, lady apothecaries as well as 'scientifically' trained midwives and shifted the locus of the birth process away from the private sphere.

Mysore is also at the centre of T.V. Sekher's analysis. He looks at the case of the influenza pandemic of 1918 and shows that the state's administrative

machinery and the existing health infrastructure in the urban centres were utilized effectively in the control of this extraordinary public health challenge. Clear guidelines facilitated the provision of relief and medical care and funding was allocated and distributed swiftly. Sekher highlights the comprehensive rather than narrowly medically focused approach taken to tackle the situation, including measures such as the regulation of the price of essential food grains and their free distribution to the needy. However, he also points out that the various measures were marked by uneven application and rural areas in particular suffered higher mortality rates.

In contrast to Ramusack and Sekher, the chapter by Manjiri Kamat focuses on political movements and state policies in a state that is often considered as ‘conservative’ and disinclined to collaborate fully with the British. Kamat moves us on towards the period around Independence, when questions of accession (to India or Pakistan), sovereignty and dominion status came to the fore – especially so in Hyderabad, where the Nizam hedged his bets for a prolonged period. Kamat explores the social and political complexities that led to the eventual forceful integration of the state into the Indian Union, following the deployment a year after Independence of Indian government forces. She provides a detailed analysis of the activities of the armed rebellion spearheaded by the communists in the Telengana movement.

## Notes

- 1 V.P. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, London: Longmans, Green, 1956; P. Sundarayya, *Telengana People's Struggle and Its Lesson*, Calcutta: National Book Centre, 1972; M.A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1974.
- 2 See, for example, Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- 3 For details, see T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857–1870*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, pp. 222–3.
- 4 Barbara Ramusack, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Indian Princes and Their States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 111, 126–7.
- 5 John Hurd II, ‘The Economic Consequences of Indirect Rule in India’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 12:2, 1975, 169–81, and ‘The Influence of British Policy on Industrial Development in the Princely States, 1890–1933’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 12:4, 1975, 409–24. Although Hurd argues in favour of non-interference, he points to its unevenness as a policy. The princes co-opted ex-members of the Indian Civil Service, which alleviated the anxieties of the colonial government. The British were also involved in the granting of mining licences and leases, and ensured the free movement of goods, all of which benefited colonial interests. Hurd II concludes that the states were allowed to exist, but as semi-sovereign units.
- 6 For example, Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire*, London: Penguin, 2001. Although the cover blurb to Ramusack, *Indian Princes and Their States*, seems to suggest that many princes ‘exercised considerable degrees of autonomy’, her actual analysis is more complex.

- 7 For an early account of the kind of interpretation that is currently being criticized, see Edward Thompson, *The Making of the Indian Princes*, London: Oxford University Press, 1943.
- 8 See, for example, Mridula Mukherjee, 'Peasant Movement in Patiala State', *Studies in History*, 1:1, 1979, 215–83, and 'Communists and Peasants in Punjab: A Focus on the Muzara Movement in Patiala, 1937–53', *Studies in History*, 3:1–2, 1981; James Manor, *Political Change in an Indian State: Mysore, 1917–1955*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1977; Robin Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978; Barbara Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire: The Dissolution of a Patron–Client System, 1914–1939*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978; Ian Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes: 1857–1930*, Bombay: Orient Longman, 1982 and *The Princes of India and the Endgame of Empire, 1917–1947*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Majid Siddiqui, 'History and Society in a Popular Rebellion: Mewat, 1920–1933', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 28:3, 1986, 442–67; Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting Domination: Peasants, Tribals and the National Movement in Orissa, 1920–50*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1993; Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847–1908*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994; Nandini Sundar, *Sovereigns and Subalterns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854–1996*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; Hira Singh, *Colonial Hegemony and Popular Resistance: Princes, Peasants, and Paramount Power*, New Delhi: Sage, 1998; Ian Copland, 'Islam and "Moral Economy": The Alwar Revolt of 1932', *South Asia*, 22 (Special Issue), 1999, 109–32; Ramusack, *Indian Princes and Their States*; Y. Vaikuntham, *People's Movements in the Princely States*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004.
- 9 Gandhi to Kelkar, President All India State Peoples' Conference, July 1934, All India Congress Committee Papers, Private Papers Section, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
- 10 For example, Nilgiri, Talcher and Dhenkanal. See for details, Pati, *Resisting Domination*, especially chapter 3, pp. 85–142.
- 11 For the communal dimension, see Ian Copland, 'Islam and Political Mobilisation in Kashmir, 1933–1943', *Pacific Affairs*, 54:2, 1981, 228–59; 'Communalism in Princely India: The Case of Hyderabad, 1930–1940', *Modern Asian Studies*, 22:4, 1988, 783–814; 'The Further Shores of Partition: Ethnic Cleansing in Rajasthan 1947', *Past and Present*, 160, 1998, 203–39; 'The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947', *Modern Asian Studies*, 36:3, 2002, 657–704; Christopher Snedden, 'What Happened to Muslims in Jammu? Local Identity, "The Massacre" of 1947 and the Roots of the "Kashmir Problem"', *South Asia*, 24:2, 2001, 111–34; Dick Kooiman, *Communalism and Indian Princely States: Travancore, Baroda and Hyderabad in the 1930s*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2003.
- 12 Barry Pavier, *The Telengana Movement, 1944–51*, New Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1981; Lucien D. Benichou, *From Autonomy to Integration: Political Developments in Hyderabad State (1938–1948)*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2000; Margrit Pernau, *The Passing of Patrimonialism: Politics and Political Culture in Hyderabad, 1911–1948*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000; I. Thirumali, *Against Dora and Nizam: People's Movement in Telangana*, Delhi: Kanishka, 2003.
- 13 Ramusack, *Indian Princes and their States*, p. 2.
- 14 See, for example, Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*, Amiya Sen (ed.), *Social and Religious Reform: The Hindus of British India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 4, glorifies the princely states – on the basis of four examples

14 *Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati*

- (Baroda, Kashmir, Indore and Mysore) – for being advanced centres, where social reforms ‘came about faster and more consistently’.
- 15 Historians working on pre/early colonial India offer insights into the process of legitimation. See, for example, Robert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Pre-Colonial India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 and Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. For the colonial period, see Adrian C. Mayer, ‘Rulership and Divinity: The Case of the Modern Hindu Prince and Beyond’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 25:4, 1991, 765–90; Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society: 1700–1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Chetan Singh, ‘Geography, Religion and Hegemony: Constructing the State in the Western Himalaya’, paper delivered at the 8th Annual Lecture, Department of History, Sri Venkateswara College Delhi University, 2006 (unpublished) locates pre-colonial/colonial continuities.
- 16 Janaki Nair, ‘Prohibited Marriage: State Protection and the Child Wife’, in Patricia Uberoi (ed.), *Social Reform, Sexuality and the State*, New Delhi: Sage, 1996, pp. 157–86, questions if the position of the princely states can be seen as ‘progressive’. She argues that the social reform agenda was designed to extend the control of the Mysore *darbar*, with patriarchy itself being left untouched.
- 17 This converged with and reinforced the process of Rajputization that had pre-colonial origins. For details, see Surajit Sinha, ‘State Formation and the Rajput Myth in Central India’, *Man in India*, 42:1, 1962, 35–80.
- 18 Daniel Gold, ‘The Instability of the King: Magical Insanity and the Yogis’ Power in the Politics of Jodhpur, 1803–1843’, in David N. Lorenzen (ed.), *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community Identity and Political Action*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1996, pp. 120–32, refers to Man Singh II of Jodhpur to illustrate this point.
- 19 See, for example, Barbara Ramusack, ‘Punjab States: Maharajas and Gurudwaras – Patiala and the Sikh Community’, in Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes and Paramount Power*, pp. 170–204; L. Erdman, *Patrons and Performers in Rajasthan: The Subtle Tradition*, Delhi: Chanakya, 1985; Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*.
- 20 This area is yet to attract serious scholarly attention.
- 21 Ramusack, *Indian Princes and their States*, p. 206.

## 2 Colonial and postcolonial historiography and the princely states

### Relations of power and rituals of legitimation

*Hira Singh*

The population of India in 1931 numbered 340 millions, and of these one quarter, over eighty millions, are the subjects of princes. India contains close to two million square miles. Of these two-fifths lie in the princely states. The area of Great Britain is 88,000 square miles, its population 45 millions. In these simple terms the importance of the subject lies revealed.

(Sir George MacMunn, 1936)

#### **The colonial mode of historiography: marginalizing princely India**

During British colonial rule, the map of India had two colours representing two Indias, known as the 'British India' and the 'Indian' India. The latter consisted of two-fifths of the territory – one-quarter of the population of the entire country was outside the direct jurisdiction of the colonial state. Expediency, ethnocentrism, lack of understanding of an alien and complex society on the part of the colonizers, simplistic models of evolutionary and functionalist anthropology, along with the ideology of Orientalism, all made their contribution to the development of a conceptual framework and vantage point in which India was identified with 'British India' alone. Hence, in the historiography of colonial India, inferences drawn from British India are applied to the whole of India. I have previously characterized this tendency as the colonial mode of historiography. I have further argued that in order to correct this distortion, agrarian relations, power structures and ideologies of the princely states during the period of British colonial rule deserve to be studied in their own right.<sup>1</sup>

In a different context, Perlin points to a similar distortion in Indian historiography of the pre-colonial period. He calls it 'Mughal-centrism', that is, a tendency to treat the economic and political institutions of Mughal India as representative of the whole of India.<sup>2</sup> He rightly argues that Mughal-centrism is a serious impediment to any recognition of regional diversity in pre-colonial agrarian relations and power structures. He emphasizes the urgent need to investigate the regional systems of

landholding, class structures and ideologies in order to overcome the limitations of a Mughal-centric history of India. While Perlin's critique of Mughal-centrism is well taken, his explanation for this tendency is rather misplaced. According to him, it is a result of a conscious choice on the part of historians based in Aligarh to paint Mughal India in a positive light in order to counter the distortions by obscurantist (communalist) historians. However, this tendency is not confined to the historians of the Aligarh school alone. It is far more pervasive and is found in the Orientalist, colonial, nationalist, as well as the Marxist schools of historiography. Indeed, the tendency to focus on Mughal India, by peripheralizing the rest of the subcontinent, is common to both the pre-colonial and colonial history of India, with the only difference that in the latter, Mughal India is replaced with British India.

### **De-colonizing colonial historiography: discarding the notion of 'indirect rule'**

Why were there 'two Indias' during British colonial rule? This is a serious question from a theoretical and historical point of view that has not received the attention it deserves. 'Indirect rule', the most commonly used notion in conventional historiography to describe the relations between the paramount power and the princely states, has been partly responsible for the marginalization of princely India in the historical discourse on India's colonization. It is in fact a conceptual tool of the colonial mode of historiography and misrepresents the history of colonial rule and resistance. According to the notion of 'indirect rule', the landed aristocracy in India was 'preserved' by the colonial state as a means to its functional requirements. However, the alliance between the colonial state and the landed aristocracy in India was a two-way process of compromise and accommodation, which the colonial state entered in the face of resistance by the latter. The notion of 'indirect rule' eschews the element of resistance, negotiation and mutual accommodation, making it a one-way process in which the colonial state reigned supreme. While privileging the metropolis, it denies Indian subjects their agency, excepting as instruments or 'puppets' of the supreme power. Moreover, it ignores the complexities of the alliance between supreme power and Indian landed aristocracy. The repudiation of the notion of 'indirect rule' is a necessary step towards decolonizing the historiography of colonial and princely India.

### **De-objectifying the princely states**

In order to appreciate the critical importance of indigenous resistance and agency, it is important to consider the legacy of earlier theories of colonial rule and social change. In addition to celebratory accounts, we can identify three main strands of historiography of colonialism, which

influenced critical debate since India's Independence in 1947: the liberal approach (represented here by Barrington Moore),<sup>3</sup> critiques of political economy in the Marxist tradition,<sup>4</sup> and populist perspectives such as the Subaltern Studies school. The most serious limitation of Moore's approach is his attempt to analyse the transition from tradition to modernity both in the metropolis and the colony exclusively within a national context, whereas historically the context of this transition has been transnational in character. Moore, for instance, treats the 'success' of England to modernize, and India's 'failure' to do so, in isolation from each other. In reality, however, as Hamza Alavi points out, the changes in England and India were shaped by each other.<sup>5</sup>

The critical Marxist theories of the 1960s and 1970s in particular recognized the intrinsic connection between colony and metropolis in the process of transition to modernity. However, the central thesis was that colonial capitalism destroyed all elements of pre-capitalist economy and polity and turned them into capitalist political economy. Furthermore, economic changes in the colony were seen to have been accompanied by changes in the political formations. It was, for instance, argued that the imperialist bourgeoisie and the colonial state completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the colonies, by creating a bourgeois state, bourgeois property and a bourgeois legal and institutional apparatus as a necessary condition for its economic domination.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to these claims, the evidence from specific states (such as the princely states in Rajasthan), showed that the land was not commodified. Nor was the peasantry expropriated from the land. There was no 'new mode of surplus extraction' in which the use of extra-economic coercion was neither required nor provided for, that is, the system of land tenure was not characterized by a 'de-fusion' of economic and political power. Like the economic system, the political structure of the princely states was characterized, above all, by the personal authority of the princely rulers (the *darbars*) and the landlords (*thikanedars*). As I have discussed elsewhere, until the 1880s, there was no formal procedure for the implementation of civil or criminal justice in the princely states of Rajasthan, for example. Instead, the rulers and the landlords adjudicated justice within their respective jurisdictions according to religious precepts and local customs.<sup>7</sup> As a norm, justice was administered in the name of God. In other words, the economic-political system and the juridical structure of the princely states remained essentially pre-modern/pre-capitalist.<sup>8</sup>

The most serious limitation of the critical theories based on Marxist critiques of political economy was privileging the metropolitan capital and the colonial state, treating pre-colonial structures as essentially passive, always at the receiving end. However, colonialism was a contested terrain. The history of continuity and change in the agrarian relations and power structures of colonial India is in fact a history of resistance, struggle, accommodation and compromise between the colonizer and the colonized.



If the colonial state settled for the *zamindari* system in Bengal, *ryotwari*, in Madras, *mahalwari* in Agra and *talukdari* in Oudh, not to mention the policy of non-intervention in the agrarian structures of the princely states, covering two-fifths of the country, it was not so much due to what Embree called the 'mental furniture' of the policy makers of the East India Company as to the resistance and struggle by the indigenous forces in the countryside.<sup>9</sup>

Rather than passively accepting, the dominant class in the countryside (i.e. the landed aristocracy) actively resisted attempts by the colonial state to do away with their traditional rights and privileges, forcing compromise and accommodation. The colonial state engaged in such compromise and negotiation not because it was in the best interests of the metropolitan capital, but because it was unable to break the power – economic, political and cultural – of the traditional aristocracy.<sup>10</sup> For example, in 1941, F. Wylie, the political adviser to the Viceroy of India, responded to the mounting pressure from the peasant movements in the princely states. He proposed that the landlords of Rajputana be divested of their customary revenue, political and judicial powers and be reduced to mere assignees of a fixed share of land revenue in cash, abolishing forced labour service and all dues, other than the land revenue. It was further recommended that the right to exercise extra-economic coercion customarily enjoyed by the landlords should also be taken away, and the pressure should be brought upon them to increase the efficiency of their services to a point where they might be prepared to surrender their administrative–judicial powers voluntarily.

In response, the political agent attached to the state of Jaipur expressed his astonishment over the practical wisdom of this recommendation. He had serious reservations whether the landlords in Rajasthan, given their past history, could be brought to accept that their economic–political rights were restricted only to the appropriation of land revenue. Most significantly, he harboured the apprehension that in case of any move to take away the traditional privileges of the landlords, who were still broadly speaking a powerful body, one could not rule out the possibility that they might endeavour to put up a united opposition to block all reforms and oust the reformers.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the secret of the survival of the pre-capitalist production relations, power structure and culture lies not in the functional needs of metropolitan capital, but in the resistance and struggle by the dominant pre-capitalist forces in the Indian states. Faced with such resistance, the British agreed to compromise with the predominantly agrarian ruling class not only in princely India, but also in many parts of British India. These pre-capitalist forces and relations were the main targets of the popular peasant and insurgency movements in the countryside in India from the 1920s to the 1940s.<sup>12</sup>

The tendency in historical analysis to privilege the metropolis is characteristic of postmodern populist historiography (for example, Subaltern Studies) and Foucaultian discourse. For example, Guha, an

eminent representative of the former, writes: 'Political economy which had developed in Europe as a critique of feudalism was made to promote a neo-feudal landlordism in India'.<sup>13</sup> The problematic assumption is that the agency of doing, or not doing, anything in India (say promoting feudalism or neo-feudalism) rested exclusively with European political economy.

Chatterjee, another proponent of the Subaltern Studies school, has similarly argued that colonialism was a new extractive mechanism in the agrarian economy, which had a

differentiated impact on pre-capitalist structures – sometimes destroying them, sometimes modifying them to fit in with the new demands of surplus extraction ... and other times keeping intact, perhaps bolstering, pre-existing productive systems and local organizations of power while merely establishing a suitable extractive mechanism.<sup>14</sup>

It is this one-sided view of colonial encounter in which the Indian subjects are represented as mere objects of manipulation by the colonial-capitalist forces, according to the functional requirements of the latter, that highlights the persistence of the colonial mode of historiography even in more recent analyses.

The same tendency can be discerned in Dirks' Foucaultian analysis of princely India, wherein the colonial subjects are presented as mere objects of manipulation and control by the British.<sup>15</sup> Dirks writes:

Ultimately, colonialism must be seen as a hegemonic structure, which articulated its own particular impact and influence through a variety of institutional and ideological forms.

He continues:

Colonialism purposefully preserved many of the forms of the old regime, nowhere more conspicuously than in the indirectly ruled princely state(s).<sup>16</sup>

According to Dirks, under British rule ('little') kings in India were constructed as colonial objects and given special colonial scripts. They were maintained, altered and managed as part of a systematic set of colonial purposes and understandings. The rajas were reconstructed and – ultimately deconstructed – as objects of colonialism. Seeing the princes and princely states merely as a creation of colonial architecture and not as contributors to that architecture, is looking at the edifice of colonialism and Indian power relationships one-sidedly. The princes also shaped and affected the

process of rule in their states. It was a two-way process of give-and-take in which the colonial state and the princely states were constantly engaged, constructing and deconstructing each other. Colonial hegemony was not totalizing.

The tendency to objectify Indian subjects is similarly problematic, as when Dirks attributes the de-traditionalization of Hindu kingship to British complicity.<sup>17</sup> The British were not only ‘de-traditionalizing’ Indian kings, they were also being ‘traditionalized’ and socialized into Indian kingship. The colonial *tamasha* (spectacle) of imperial *darbars* was an example *par excellence* of the political socialization of the colonial state into Indian tradition. Not only the paraphernalia that accompanied the *darbars*, but also their symbolism were Indian. It could be argued that the colonial rulers were simply imitating the Indian rulers – casting the British Queen/King into the image of the Great Mughal – and making Indians pay for it. However, rather than seeing it for what it was, that is, appropriating an age-old Indian tradition, some historians mistakenly characterize it as the ‘invention of tradition’.<sup>18</sup>

### **The ‘little kingdom’ model**

One significant development in the study of the princely states has been the introduction of the ‘little kingdom’ model, product of a marriage between anthropology and history. The genealogy of the alliance of anthropology and history to produce this model is traced back to the 1960s, followed by a number of studies from the 1980s onwards. Characteristically, this model applies an anthropological, interpretive approach to the study of what it calls ‘little kingdoms’. In this model, the present relations in the princely states are studied in order to reconstruct the past of kingship in India. ‘The seminal work of this school’ ‘according to Frasca, is Nicholas Dirks’ study of a ‘little kingdom’ in south India.<sup>19</sup> Dirks’ work may thus serve as a reasonable resource to review the relevance of this model to the study of the princely states. In particular, I want to focus on two points. First, an issue that occupies a prominent space in Dirks’ work is that of kingship and caste. The second is rather conspicuous by its absence, namely the place of the peasantry in the anatomy of the princely state. Central to the above two issues is the question of land, which, as argued in the following text, is ignored in the little kingdom model, Dirks included.

### **Kingship and caste: Foucaultian discourse on power**

Dirks is rightly aware of the preoccupation with caste in the study of Indian society. He states that the ‘great conundrum of Indian social thought’ is ‘whether the Brahmin or the king had precedence’.<sup>20</sup> He joins issue with Louis Dumont’s *Homo Hierarchicus*, where it is argued that economic and political domains of social life in India are ‘encompassed’ by the religious principle articulated in terms of opposition of purity and impurity.<sup>21</sup> The

political (represented by the king) is thus encompassed by the religious (represented by the Brahmin). Disagreeing with Dumont, Dirks argues that caste was embedded in a political context of kingship, which meant that the prevalent ideology was not a matter, at least primarily, of purity and pollution, but rather of royal authority and honour, and associated notions of power, dominance and order. Emphasis on purity and pollution, he says, ignores the fact of power. His view of caste, Dirks claims, contradicts the 'dominant theory of caste' proposed by Dumont, and provides an alternative.<sup>22</sup>

He goes on to argue that politics play a powerful role in the social organization of caste and kingship, that is, that politics are fundamental to the process of hierarchization, and that until the establishment of the British colonial rule in southern India, kings were not inferior to Brahmins, that is, the political domain was not 'encompassed' by the religious. The political nature of caste hierarchy is seen to be evidenced by the fact that the king always played a strong role in the local articulation of social order. The caste system was ordered in relation to the king.<sup>23</sup> Dirks' analysis is plausible to a certain extent, in regard to the importance of the political power/honour of the king. The fundamental question, however, is: what was the foundation of the king's power/honour? The answer to this question is, lacking in Dirks' cultural construction of power. This omission constitutes a serious limitation. In fact, the king was the owner of all lands in the kingdom, and that was the basis of the royal power and honour.<sup>24</sup>

Dirks is rightly critical of Dumont in regard to the latter's suggestion that land ownership and politics played a minor role in organizing Indian (specifically Kallar) society. He asserts that land played a major role at every level of social definition. However, he does not pursue this any further. Instead, he is concerned with the symbolic aspects of power. Land remains therefore excluded from the definition of the relations between castes as well as within a caste. 'Relations between dominant and untouchable groups', he writes, 'replicate a larger caste structure in terms of command, honour, and social order more than purity and pollution'.<sup>25</sup> Even when the role of land is clear in the evidence cited by him, he treats it as a 'curious form of social organization and caste ideology', as in the case of the replacement of the Vellalars, who were once the dominant caste in Pudukottai, by Kallars, for example.<sup>26</sup> In Dirks' analysis the world of caste is presented upside-down: the symbolic is treated as the basis of the chief's power and authority, that is, royal honour and temple rituals are seen as the cause of power rather than being derived from the Kallar chief's power based on his monopoly of landownership.

In fact, Dumont and Dirks have more in common than Dirks is prepared to concede. Both Dumont and Dirks ignore the unity of economic and political power, while privileging the symbolic or ritual aspects of the social order. The main difference between the two lies in the symbols they choose to privilege in representing social reality, that is, the purity of the Brahmin in the case of Dumont and the power of the king in that of Dirks.

In Dumont, the hierarchical principle of caste is essentially religious, which encompasses the economic and political domains. In Dirks, it is political, but the political is symbolic, indeed, religious; the caste system in Pudukottai, he writes, was organized around principles of honour, order, royal status, rights and shares to *puja* (worship). Citing Hocart, he argues that the entire caste system was a sacrificial order in which the king represented the ritual principle. Both Dumont and Dirks tend to represent India through caste, and caste through religion. For both, Indian social reality and power are essentially religious.<sup>27</sup>

### **Power as a cultural construction**

In the 'little kingdom' model, power is treated essentially as a cultural construction divorced from its material context.<sup>28</sup> One consequence of this divorce can be seen in the misapplication of cultural notions, for instance, the notion of gift that is central to Dirks' analysis of economic-political transactions between a king and his sub-chiefs. Land grants by a king to his sub-chiefs, that constituted the basis of ties between the two, are treated as a gift. Indeed, the conflation of grant and gift is endemic to the little kingdom model, which is premised on the assumption that the king's authority is derived not from his lordship of 'a clearly marked and rigidly bounded territory' but because of his power as 'the master of [re]distribution of land, offices, titles and other gifts that symbolize and constitute royal authority'.<sup>29</sup>

In the first place, the king's power to redistribute land is derived from his eminent ownership of all land within his territory. Given the limitation of space, it is neither possible nor desirable to discuss here at any length the anthropology of gift in India. What must, however, be underlined is that the notion of gift is simply inappropriate to describe the land grants by the king to the sub-chiefs within his territory. This is so since in the Indian tradition, gifts are not contractual: there are no conditions attached to gifts. However, land grants in the princely states were strictly conditional, with explicit sanctions in case of violation of the conditions attached. The notion of gift obliterates the contractual character of the land grants by ignoring the conditions attached to them.

The centrality of the notion of gift in the little kingdom model is not incidental. It is intrinsic to the theoretical, albeit ideological, framework of the model in which 'political and ritual forms [are] fundamentally the same.' In India, it is argued,

caste structure, ritual form, and political processes were all dependent on relations of power . . . and these relations were culturally constructed on the pattern of relations between devotees and the devoted.

The transactions between the chief and the sub-chiefs, it is argued, 'closely parallel the transactions of *puja* [worship]'. Furthermore,

service and worship are indissolubly combined in political relationships ... gifts of symbols can determine political and economic relations, and [...] service/worship only takes on meaning through the gifts that follow and encode its meaning into the substance of a political relationship.

More generally, ‘the realms of the “religious” and the “political” cannot be separated. Worship as a form of transaction and a mode of relationship pervades the political process.’<sup>30</sup>

Power relations and economic transactions between a king and his sub-chiefs are elevated here to a new height – a transaction between devotee and the devoted in the spiritual realm. This is a problem of the Orientalist discourse within which the little kingdom model is situated. In this discourse, the profane is elevated to the sacred. Politics here becomes *pūja* (worship) and polity *pūjasthan* (place of worship). Politics in Indian society/history cannot be discussed in secular, earthly terms. Rather, the terms of discourse have got to be heavenly and sacred. Dumont connects the earth and heaven through the Brahmin as the mediator between man and god. The ‘little kingdom’ model does the same through the king as the master of the ceremonies, viewing the latter in isolation from their social–historical context. Unsurprisingly, ‘political’ in the Indian context is an ‘exogenous analytic term’.<sup>31</sup>

If, however, one looks at the history of political transactions between chiefs and sub-chiefs in India (as opposed to the imagined history of the little kingdom model), the separation between the religious and the secular is very distinct. As I have shown in regard to the case of the princely states of Rajasthan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mutual rights and obligations between chief and sub-chiefs were clearly defined in earthly terms. Conspiracy, competition and coercion, along with loyalty and reciprocity, were very much part of political economic transactions. There is overwhelming evidence that service (*chakari*) and payments (*rekh*) – purely secular in character – were integral parts of the conditions invariably attached to the grants held by the sub-chiefs from their respective chiefs, a common feature of feudal social formations in India and elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> However, in the Indian case, service is transformed into ‘worshipful submission’ (*pūja*).<sup>33</sup> To construe the relationship between chief and sub-chiefs in Indian kingdoms as ‘worship’, rather than a consequence of hierarchical land relations, a characteristic feature of feudal social formations, is highly problematic. The foundation of power in kingdoms – little and great – was land. Cultural construction of power, as in the ‘little kingdom’ model, ignores land and fictionalizes power.

### **The peasant question**

The ‘little kingdom’ model is characterized by a conspicuous absence of the labouring class (subaltern) and tells the story of the kingdom from the point

of view of the ruling class and caste (elite). It presupposes a consensual perspective, eschewing the internal tensions and contradictions within the ruling class and between ruler and ruled. More seriously, it has no room for the story of the subordinate groups, most conspicuously, the peasants. The story of peasants' resistance and struggle for subsistence is not part of its narrative. The exclusion of peasants from analysis is not incidental. It is a consequence of the theoretical and ideological perspective taken, and this is a serious limitation of this model. It is argued that the 'little kingdom' was based on a redistributive process in which relations developed and were maintained by the gifting of the *inam* (land grants to sub-chiefs). The *inam*, we are told, represented the redistribution of the king's right to the first share of the produce of the land. As symbolic of the favour of the king showered down on the subjects, *inam* was constitutive of the essential structure of a kingdom.<sup>34</sup> The *inam* as the basis of the ties binding the chief and the sub-chiefs was no doubt an important element in the structure of the kingdom. However, I would like to argue that the ties between the chief and the sub-chiefs built around *inam* were not constitutive of the totality of the structure of the kingdom. In my view, the most essential component of the structure of a kingdom – little or great – were the ties between the peasantry on the one hand, and the chief and the sub-chiefs on the other. It was peasants' labour that turned *inam* lands into productive units, which sustained the prince and the palace, the priest and the temple, the landlords and their retinue. In the cultural construction of the little kingdom model, this most essential component of state structure is conspicuously absent.

Pursuing the peasant question further, we find that ethnohistory of the little kingdom is confined to the prince's *vamsavali* (dynastic history). *Vamsavali* is the sacred text of the royal lineage, with no room for the peasants. To reconstruct the structure of the kingdom, one has to look beyond the *vamsavali* to include the history of the peasantry. The ethnohistorian has to come down the palace and walk over the fields – the domain of the peasants. Ethnohistory of the 'little kingdom' does not do that. Peasants are ignored or marginalized at best, because the author found that ethnohistorical work among the peasants was difficult: (their) 'memories of the past were dim and the construction of the present vague'.<sup>35</sup> One might argue that precisely because of this, an ethnohistorian has a special obligation to attempt to reconstruct the past and represent the present of the peasant by whatever means available. The ethnohistorians of the little kingdom model ignore this obligation. Consequently, ethnohistory of the 'little kingdom' is the story of the elite. It is an incomplete story.

### **Kingdom and class**

The absence of the peasant, like the absence of land, in the little kingdom model is a result of ideological choice to avoid the question of class. While considerations of caste, kinship and rituals of legitimation of authority

are undoubtedly of paramount importance, it is important to note that kingdoms were class societies, with kings as the biggest landlords of their respective kingdoms. Landlord and peasant were constitutive of the two principal classes of the kingdom. The relations between landlords and peasants must be included in a model of kingdom – little and great alike – if the model aims at what Frasca describes as capturing the ‘internal dynamics’ of the system. Frasca is right in pointing out that the little kingdom model is marked by a major shortcoming, that is, its ‘perception of the state as a static machine-like construct, the structure of which can be transformed but does not account for its internal dynamics’.<sup>36</sup> One may add that the principal reason for the static character of the model is its choice to ignore the questions of class, class contradictions, resistance and struggles in the historiography of the kingdom in south Asia. One of the claims made by the little kingdom model is that ‘the status of the little kings does not depend on economic conditions *alone*’ (emphasis added).<sup>37</sup> Economic conditions ‘alone’ is a euphemism for class, common refrain of conservative and liberal historiography.

In the first place, equation of class with economic conditions alone is a major distortion, which owes its origin to Max Weber’s narrow conceptualization of class as one’s life chances in the market place.<sup>38</sup> Ever since, class ‘as economic conditions alone’ has been the standard staple of the conservative and liberal social sciences’ rhetoric. It may be added that sociology, anthropology and historiography of India, with a few exceptions, have uncritically accepted this Weberian conceptualization of class. The result is the poverty of historiography, sociology and anthropology of India, a problem I cannot deal with here.

Going back to the little kingdom model, it is claimed that the authority of the king ‘derives from a social and religious environment where power, authority and subordination are permanently renegotiated and reaffirmed in the daily ritual and social practice’.<sup>39</sup> One may legitimately ask, why focus on daily ritual and social practice of the palace and the temple involving the chief, sub-chief and the priest, to the exclusion of the daily ritual and social practice of peasants on land – the rituals of real life, which were an integral part of the constitution of kingdom. The intricate relationship between kinship, caste and class in defining the kingship is a challenging task, which the historiography of kingship in south Asia has, by and large, avoided. The ‘little kingdom’ model, given its ideological commitment to ignore class, is ill equipped to meet this challenge. It only contributes to the perpetuation of the most enduring mythology of the mainstream sociology/anthropology of India in which class is treated as alien to Indian culture.

Kingdom in the ‘little kingdom’ model is viewed as a ‘theatre state’.<sup>40</sup> Confined to the choreography of rituals of the palace and the temple, excluding the peasant and land, the idea of ‘theatre state’ does not represent the historical reality in its totality. Marriage between anthropology and history in the making of the ‘little kingdom’ model would have been a



promising development, had it resulted in historically contextualizing the rituals. Instead, it ended up ritualizing history, mainly because of anthropology's conventional preoccupation with the study of rituals in isolation from their social-historical context. The burden of my criticism of the little kingdom model is not to minimize the valuable contribution it makes to the study of the symbolic order of kingdom. The symbolic order must, however, be related to non-symbolic, most importantly, land relations, the foundation of kingdom. Political power and rituals of legitimation, the main concerns of Foucaultian discourse and Weberian sociology, the theoretical inspiration for the genealogy of the little kingdom model, were intrinsically connected with the hierarchy of land relations. Isolating power relations and rituals of legitimation from land relations is a result of conventional social sciences' tendency to fragment social life into economic, political and symbolic, ignoring the underlying unity constitutive of the anatomy of civil society. Eric Wolf characterized the tendency to fragment social life without being able to unite as a self-defeating exercise, akin to 'Danae sisters of classical Greek legend, ever condemned to pour water into their separate bottomless containers'.<sup>41</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The 'little kingdom' model has made a significant contribution to the study of the Indian princely states in pre-colonial and colonial times. It is argued here that while it is important to recognize the valuable contribution made by the protagonists of this model, it should be noted that the model is intrinsically flawed. To begin with, it fails to theoretically problematize the historical importance of the division between British India and Indian India (the 'other India') during colonial rule and tends to replicate the error of conventional historiography by treating it as 'indirect rule', which, as argued above, is a tool of the colonial mode of historiography and should be repudiated. Alternatively, it is suggested that a model for the study of the princely states during colonial rule has to be premised on resistance by the landed aristocracy, the ruling class in the princely states, to the colonial state's attempt to encroach upon its traditional economic, political rights and symbols of authority resulting in compromise and accommodation. It has further been argued that the 'little kingdom' model, given its ideological commitment to ignore the land question, ends up providing a static, supra-historical view of rituals and symbols of royal authority. It has been suggested that the princely states were characterized by the formation of two principal classes, landlords (with kings as the biggest landlords of their respective states) and peasants. The relations between the landlords and peasants, based on their differential rights in landownership and control, were the foundation of the kingly power and authority. Disconnecting the symbols of power and rituals of authority from the system of land ownership and control, as done in the 'little kingdom' model, is symptomatic of the

tendency of conventional social sciences to fragment social reality into economic, political and cultural spheres, ignoring the underlying unity constitutive of the anatomy of civil society.

Increased attention to the study of the princely states in India during British colonial rule and before is a welcome development. The controversy over the diversity of perspectives and approaches to the study of the princely states is a reflection of the competing paradigms representing different ideological standpoints on writing history, broadly divided between those who believe in history essentially as a narrative of ideas and symbols in isolation from their wider social-historical context and others who are interested in interpreting the ideas and symbols in relation to the economic and political formations with specific reference to time and space. The little kingdom model situated within the ideological perspective that believes in the notion of history as the history of ideas and symbols deserves recognition for its rich contribution to illuminate the symbolic order of kingship. At the same time, it is important to recognize the limitations intrinsic to this model, which derive from its view of social reality as symbolic and trans-historical, and to develop an alternative perspective that can historically contextualize the symbols of power and rituals of authority by relating them to the prevailing property and production relations, most importantly, the hierarchical land relations binding the king, the lord, the priest and the peasant – the subjects and objects of legitimation. The historiography of the little kingdom model is the history of the palace and the prince. It is time to bring it down to the ground where the prince and the peasant meet.

## Notes

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- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- 13 Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies, Vol. IV*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 26.
- 14 Partha Chatterjee, 'More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry', in Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies, Vol. IV*, p. 388.
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- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 282.
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- 18 See, for instance, B.S. Cohn, 'Representation of Authority in Victorian India', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 165–210.
- 19 Tilman Frasch, 'In an Octopussy's Garden: Of Chkravartins, Little Kings, and a New Model of the Early State in South and Southeast Asia', in George Berkemer and Margaret Frenz (eds), *Sharing Sovereignty: The Little Kingdom in South Asia*, Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 2003, p. 97.
- 20 Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, p. 4.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 4. See also pp. 7, 8, 10, 55, 278.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6, 259–61.
- 24 Singh, *Colonial Hegemony*, p. 28.
- 25 Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, p. 280.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 259, 283–4.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.
- 29 Burkhard Schnepel and Georg Berkemer, 'History of a Model', in Berkemer and Frenz (eds), *Sharing Sovereignty*, p. 15.
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- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 411.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 271.
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- 38 Max Weber, 'Class, Status, and Party', in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds), New York, Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 181–3.
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- 40 George Berkemer and Margret Frenz, 'Herma Kulke: An Appreciation', in Berkemer and Frenz (eds), *Sharing Sovereignty*, p. 27; Burkhard Schnepel, 'The Stolen Goddess: Ritual Enactments of Power and Authority in Orissa', in Berkemer and Frenz (eds), *Sharing Sovereignty*, pp. 166, 176.
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### 3 ‘Cruel, Oriental despots’

#### Representations in nineteenth-century British colonial fiction, 1858–1900

*Indrani Sen*

This chapter examines the category of the ‘Indian Prince’ as it is inscribed in colonial fiction in the second half of the nineteenth century. It approaches these texts as ideologically loaded constructions of an *imagined* reality, rather than as exact copies or innocent reflections of social or historical reality. Texts do not reflect a pre-given reality, but in fact create or construct the world that they delineate.<sup>1</sup> Our concern, then, will be to probe the agendas underlying these constructions rather than to determine how historically accurate or ‘true’ these inscriptions were.

Literary and cultural representations are fundamental to the creation of ideology because they work imaginatively and upon people as individuals. By its circulation of images and stereotypes colonial fiction serves to produce and disseminate ‘colonial knowledge’ about the colony. When we consider the definitive role that the colonial novel played in shaping ideologies, the need to examine literary representations assumes great significance.

Written by colonial administrators, military officers and journalists, colonial fiction was essentially meant for the consumption of readers in both India and Britain. Usually brought out in England by publishing houses such as William Heinemann, Kegan Paul and Macmillan, novels could go into several editions, especially in the case of hugely popular writers such as Philip Meadows Taylor, Rudyard Kipling or Flora Annie Steel. With its wide readership colonial fiction effectively provided, in many ways, a bridge between the colony and the metropole. In fact, one of its clearly recognized and self-appointed tasks was to impart ‘authentic’ information about India to the metropolitan reading public.<sup>2</sup>

This fiction essentially focused on middle-class European heroes and heroines, with Indian characters restricted to ayahs, servants and the occasional ‘Bengali Baboo’. As Allen Greenberger has pointed out in his classic study on colonial literature, princes appeared relatively rarely in the fiction of this period and when they did they were presented negatively as a proof that direct British rule was beneficial.<sup>3</sup> In other words, although by mid-century nearly two-fifths of the subcontinent consisted of Indian states ruled by the princes, the literature of this period tended to

marginalize 'Indian India' – a discursive silence that would seem to suggest submerged colonial anxieties with regard to this category of Indians.

A tension between denigration and admiration for the princes pervades much of colonial writings. Numerous early nineteenth-century travel-writings and first-person accounts reveal a fascination for princely magnificence and riches.<sup>4</sup> In her well-known account of travels in the 1830s, for instance, Emily Eden, sister of the governor-general, Lord Auckland, directed her upper class, disparagingly ironic gaze at various 'native' rulers and famously compared Ranjit Singh of Punjab to 'an old mouse, with grey whiskers and one eye'.<sup>5</sup> But on beholding the magnificence of his horses, with their 'emerald trappings ... set in gold frames' glittering with 'diamonds and turquoises ... coral and pearl', she had to confess: 'It reduces European magnificence to a very low pitch' (227).

Of course, by the second half of the nineteenth century, there had been shifts and changes in colonial attitudes. The era following the Revolt of 1857 in particular was marked by a widening of the racial divide. It was, moreover, dominated by hierarchies of race, class and gender and by the privileging of colonial masculinity'. Colonial 'masculinity', as Mrinalini Sinha and others have argued, was an integral part of British imperialist politics. It was deployed as a marker of Western superiority and served to polarize the virile modernity of empire builders from the feminized traditionalism of the colonized and sought to establish their unfitness to rule.<sup>6</sup> Colonial perceptions were deeply imbricated with the issues of sexuality and power and inflected with contemporary prejudices about an effete and unchanging East, by racial stereotyping of Asiatic effeminacy and treachery, as well as by memories of 'native' princes rising against the British in 1857.

However, even after the Revolt a complex and contradictory fascination for princely India continued. This is evident in the term 'British *Raj*', adopted after the establishment of empire in 1858 and in the emulation and absorption of princely ceremonial in the imperial assemblies or 'darbars' held 1870s onwards. Based largely on Mughal ceremonial, these consisted of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi in 1877 when Victoria was declared Kaiser-e-Hind and, later, the Imperial Darbars of 1903 and 1911.<sup>7</sup>

In particular, a fascination for their imperial predecessors, the 'Great Moghuls' and the sense of a shared imperial destiny, along with a self-perception of themselves as their historical successors, under-girded colonial discourse. It led popular writer, Flora Annie Steel to liken the British in India to Babur, the sixteenth-century founder of Mughal rule. In *King-Errant* (1912), her historical novel on Babur, she lauded what she saw as similar instances of foreigners not merely conquering an alien land but dedicating themselves to shouldering responsibilities, duties and sacrifices necessary for the immense task of establishing 'an ideal Empire that would endure'.<sup>8</sup>

In the following section a widely read historical romance by P.M. Taylor, *Ralph Darnell*, will be the focus of analysis.

### Taylor's *Ralph Darnell* and the establishment of colonial rule

Philip Meadows Taylor's (1808–76) novel *Ralph Darnell* (1865) offers an excellent entry point for our discussion of the negative stereotyping of 'native' princes. Taylor was widely perceived as an authority on Indian culture, not least because he was the only major colonial novelist to be located in 'Indian India'. While most other writers served in British India, Taylor worked for the *nizam* of Hyderabad, as a member of the 'Hyderabad contingent', a standing army of British troops, which was controlled by the British Resident – but paid for by the *nizam*.<sup>9</sup>

Around 1841 he was appointed as political agent of the princely state of Shorapur, a dependency of the *nizam*.<sup>10</sup> Taylor, like many other political agents and residents, formed a close relationship with the ruling family. He records in his autobiography his deep emotional attachment to the young *raja*, Enketappa Naik, a minor of seven when Taylor assumed charge, who called him 'appa' ('father') all his life.

At the same time, Taylor was of course expected to uphold the political interests of the British colonial government, helping during the Revolt, for example, with supplies and cattle. Later, in 1860, when the fertile district of west Berar was taken over by the colonial government for liquidation of the *nizam's* debts, the Western-ceded district was placed under his charge.

Taylor's first-hand 'Indian' experience gave him a more authentic and sympathetic understanding of things Indian, as several of his novels and other writings clearly testify.<sup>11</sup> His writings on Indian princes are, however, riddled with contradictions. In keeping with his famed syncretism, he valorizes in his novel, *The Noble Queen* (1878) earlier rulers, such as Chand Bibi, the sixteenth-century ruler of Bijapur, as a woman of 'equal ability, ... political talent ... education and accomplishments' as her English contemporary, Elizabeth I.<sup>12</sup>

However, when it comes to princes of the colonial period his fiction displays deeply rooted colonial prejudices.<sup>13</sup> This can be seen in his historical romance *Ralph Darnell* (1865), in which Taylor maps the beginnings of British rule in the 1750s. Although set in the eighteenth-century 'loot and plunder' stage of colonization, the novel's constructions are rooted in the imperialist mode of the nineteenth century, as it celebrates 'the might of England and her civilizing power'.<sup>14</sup>

At the novel's opening in 1755 'Sooraj-oo-Doula' (Siraj-ud-daulah, the last independent ruler of Bengal), is depicted as fiercely hostile to the East India Company.<sup>15</sup> He has treacherously broken off old agreements made between them and his father – disregarding his aged mother's protests that the 'Feringis' (foreigners) are their friends and under the Mughal Emperor's protection.

Kathryn Castle has shown how in British school textbooks and children's periodicals Indian rulers were presented as 'natural' oppressors of their people, displaying the tyrant's abuse of power and wielding arbitrary

powers 'a hundred times more severe than the rule of the English'.<sup>16</sup> Among the famous 'evildoers' of history who found mention in these textbooks were Siraj-ud-Daula and Nana Sahib.<sup>17</sup>

Echoing these prejudices, Taylor's novel too inscribes Siraj as 'cruel, rapacious, vindictive, insolent and tyrannical' (207), feeding into the colonial stereotype of the cruel Oriental despot. The narrative strategy is to locate the Indian prince as the 'Other' – or, to use Edward Said's celebrated phrase, as the 'contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' – of British civilization and its values.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the events of the novel organize themselves around a series of virtually 'Saidian' binaries, of 'native' princely irrationality, effeminacy, cruelty, tyranny and misogyny and the moral superiority of the middle-class British traders, with their rationality, manliness, fair play and chivalric protection of women. Indeed, even figures condemned by history, such as Robert Clive, are valorized as brave and honest.

Subscribing to this 'Orientalist' perceptual framework, Siraj is figured as a stereotypically weak debauchee, controlled by female favourites – in this case, his fiery Afghan mistress, Sozun. A former dancing girl, Sozun is also a brave warrior woman, who, seated on an elephant, leads the victorious assault of the Nawab's forces against British fortifications at Fort William in Calcutta in June 1756. It is significant that as a brave female warrior she secretly harbours profound contempt for the 'cowardly and profligate' (207) Bengali *nawab* – in a playing out of regional prejudices. Indeed, the victory is attributed not to the 'cowardly' *nawab* but to the Afghan valour of Sozun, and to her 'manly' Rohilla soldiers.

Under-girding this construct of 'native' effeminacy is a nineteenth-century emphasis on colonial masculinities, with its intermeshing of race/gender categories. Mid-century colonial perceptions polarized certain groups such as Northern/Eastern, Punjabi/Bengali, Northwest Frontier tribes/effete aristocrat along the binaries of 'manly'/'unmanly', privileging those that were perceived as 'masculine'. When the text valorizes Sozun's valour, 'inherited from her race' (241), it not only plays out colonial regional prejudices, but also marks a gender inversion between the 'manly' Afghan warrior woman and the 'effeminate' Bengali *nawab*.

The construct of native princely cruelty reaches a climax in the episode of the 'Black Hole of Calcutta'. After the fall of Fort William, Siraj has all the English captives packed into one of the cells in the fort on 20 June 1756. Among the captives is the novel's middle-class hero, Ralph Darnell, archetypal eighteenth-century English adventurer, who had also fought valiantly for the East India Company in the battle.

Kate Teltscher has pointed out how most British writings on the 'Black Hole' incident played up the cruel agony and suffering of the English captives, making the Black Hole 'a resonant metonym for colonial horror'.<sup>19</sup> Taylor too gives detailed descriptions of the captives' sufferings but his emphasis is very different. He takes care instead to foreground the prisoners' courage and fortitude and Ralph is shown providing courage and



comfort to his fellow-prisoners through the night – since British heroism, and not British victimhood is the novel's theme.

One dominant trope in the colonial imaginary was that of the beautiful white woman as a target of 'native' lust. This trope enunciated colonial anxieties about miscegenation. Indeed, there were numerous incidents of white women being drawn to Indian princes and sometimes marrying them, particularly from around the turn of the century.<sup>20</sup> As Kenneth Ballhatchet has argued, the strong sexual attraction that oriental princes seemed to hold for white women created '[r]acial, social and sexual' insecurities that haunted the British imagination.<sup>21</sup>

Although inter-racial princely marriages became more prevalent in the twentieth century, in the earlier part of the nineteenth century too numerous instances appear of 'white *begums*' or European wives of princes. In the 1830s, Fanny Parks commented on the presence in the princely *zenana* of Awadh of 'the daughter of an European merchant', formerly 'the king's favourite'.<sup>22</sup> In the 1890s, an American medical missionary noted how a former *diwan* of Kashmir had taken as his fourth wife a white girl 'of pure English blood, though born in India'.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, as Barbara Ramusack observes, particularly problematic were those princes

who chose to marry European, American or Australian women. Both Britons and Indians censured miscegenation. British society in India viewed white women who were sexually attracted to Indian men, and thus subverting the colonial hierarchy, as overtly betraying the imperial mission and covertly undermining claims of British masculinity and Indian male effeminacy.<sup>24</sup>

Taylor's novel gives voice to these colonial anxieties in the figure of Julia Wharton, a female adventurer in search of a rich husband, whose past life in England has hints of sexual 'indiscretions' (222). Siraj, who finds her as beautiful as a '*hourī*' (nymph of paradise), tries to persuade her to join his royal harem. But although herself a 'fallen woman', Julia rejects harem life as 'not pure' (305), and, displaying admirable 'English' courage, refuses to capitulate to the *nawab*.<sup>25</sup> Marking the turning point of Taylor's novel is the battle of Plassey (Palashi) of 1757. When the small British contingent under the command of Robert Clive, inflicts a crushing defeat on the *nawab*'s large and unwieldy forces, it marks the triumph of modern European weaponry and military tactics over obsolete Asian warfare techniques. Abject in defeat, cowardly Siraj undertakes a miserable flight to his court at 'Moorshedabad' (Murshidabad, the capital of the Bengal *nawabs*). But the people's hatred for him is so intense that he is captured and handed over to the 'Feringi', for administration of true justice.

The fall of Siraj is scripted as a deliverance for the people and the middle-class colonials are hailed as liberators. The British colonizers in the nineteenth century saw themselves as 'chivalric protectors', rescuing

‘native’ women from patriarchal practices like sati, child-marriage etc. When Ralph frees the long-suffering *begum* Noor-ool-Nissa and Sozun, both of whom had been imprisoned towards the end by the cruel and capricious prince, he emerges as the chivalric saviour of Indian women, thereby enacting what Gayatri Spivak has termed as the colonial trope of ‘white men saving brown women from brown men’.<sup>26</sup>

The narrative welcomes the British colonial period as the dawn of a new era of healing, liberating, benevolent rule. Sozun, the former enemy warrior-woman, who had earlier resisted them so fiercely, now hails the white men as the rightful rulers of Bengal. Completely subjugated now, she further prophecies Britain’s future imperial destiny: ‘men begin to say that ... of all Hind ye will be kings’.

Towards the novel’s end, the colonial conquest of the land is extended to the erotic conquest of its women. Ralph, the adventurer, weds the *begum* (now a widow) of Siraj-ud-Daulah, much in the manner of eighteenth-century company officers or English adventurers who, as Durba Ghosh’s work shows, often married women from aristocratic Muslim families.<sup>27</sup> Not only is the *begum* pure and beautiful, but, better still, as a wealthy aristocrat, ‘with a handsome dowry’ (439), she will help Ralph gain entry into the ‘native’ ruling elite.

As Ralph becomes a ‘nabob’ – as wealthy eighteenth-century adventurers were termed – acquiring the legendary riches of the East, the text gestures towards the ‘instant aristocracy’ that colonial life bestowed. At the novel’s end, when the English ‘Nabob’ symbolically replaces the Indian *nawab*, the princely order stands defeated and supplanted in both battlefield and sexual arena in the colonial contests.

### Indian princes as rapists in the ‘Mutiny novel’

It is in the genre of the ‘Mutiny novel’ which dominated the literary landscape in the nineteenth century, especially from the 1860s to the 1890s, that negative stereotyping of Indian princes reaches a climax.<sup>28</sup> In the colonial imagination the princes were disaffected rulers hankering for lost political power. ‘Native’ rulers who had participated in the Revolt, such as the Mahratta princes, Nana Sahib of Satara and Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, as well as Muslim leaders, such as the Moulvie of Faizabad, were seen as having come together under the overall symbolic leadership of the erstwhile Mughal emperor at Delhi in order to reinstall the old political order.

In reality, the vast majority of the princes remained loyal to the British in 1857 – notably the *nizam* of Hyderabad, most Maratha and Rajput rulers and the Sikh states. Some of them, such as Patiala, Jind, Kapurthala and Faridkot even actively assisted them with troops and supplies.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, in the aftermath of the Rebellion the British rewarded these rulers with territories, honours and titles and, subsequently, with gun salutes. In

fact, the Order of the Star of India, which was established in 1861 in the aftermath of the Revolt, was first bestowed upon the maharajas of Gwalior and Patiala in gratitude for their loyalty.<sup>30</sup>

Increasingly, therefore, in British political perceptions the princes came to be located as allies and loyal feudatories – or what we would today call ‘collaborators’. Although, to quote colonial novelist Maud Diver, ‘a new era dawned for the Princes of India’, this declared post-Mutiny political ‘friendship’, it did not trickle down into the literary discourse of this period, which projected both male and female princes as the ‘enemy’, to be fought and defeated.<sup>31</sup> It is perhaps to be expected that since some princes were associated with the Revolt as enemies of the British, colonial writings should locate them as the ‘Other’. However, what is revealing is the mould, cohering around issues of gender, class, race, sexuality and power, in which they are cast.

This can be seen in the case of Lakshmbai, the Rani of Jhansi, the only female ruler to have participated in the revolt.<sup>32</sup> While a few colonial writings inscribe her as heroic and wronged by the British, the majority script her as a beautiful ‘Jezebel’, treacherous, cruel and lascivious – with some novels showing her seducing English political agents or even common soldiers.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, in the case of the female prince, stereotypes about uncontrollable ‘native’ female sexuality and ‘Mutiny-related’ constructs about rebel cruelty/ treachery are fused together.

Jenny Sharpe has argued that inter-racial rape of the white woman emerges as a central trope in ‘Mutiny’ writings.<sup>34</sup> But neither Sharpe nor Nancy Paxton’s study of Mutiny writings specifically discuss the princes.<sup>35</sup> In a few key novels the villain is the Nana Sahib of Kanpur or one of the Moghul princes, who covetously eyes the white heroine.

In the very first ‘Mutiny’ novel, *The Wife and the Ward* (1859), the author Edward Money, a former officer in the British Indian army, casts the Nana Sahib as the novel’s lustful villain. Historically, the Nana Sahib had been associated with the Satichaura Ghat and Bibighar incidents where English women and children had been massacred – but not with the rape of white women.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, government commissions set up after the Revolt discounted the rumours of rape.<sup>37</sup> However, this novel rewrites history and scripts him as a lascivious Eastern prince.

On his first appearance the Nana Sahib, ‘attired in the Eastern style, and with real magnificence’, is a towering and sexually threatening presence:<sup>38</sup>

His height, perhaps somewhat above the general height of man, was increased by the head-dress he wore, which was a conical-shaped cap, surmounted by a magnificent white feather. He was of a sinewy, if not a stalwart build, his eyes were coal-black, a moustache shaded his lips, which were peculiarly thick and African in their character, and a large bushy black beard descended to the jewelled hilts of the dagger and pistols in his kummerbund.

It is striking that an Asian prince should be etched in Africanized terms ('peculiarly thick and African' lips). The phallic power of the lustful African and the effete sensuality of the Asian were a part of the common sense of Victorian racism. Hence, the Indian prince's 'African' lips, which arouse the heroine's racial repugnance – 'Such great ugly thick lips, and such a savage face altogether' (271) – suggest his debased 'animal' sensuality. Moreover, while contemporary accounts such as G.O. Trevelyan's *Cawnpore* (1865) noted that the Nana was clean-shaven ('Like all Mahrattas, both head and face were shaven clean'), Money's novel delineates him as bearded, seeking thereby to underline his savage ferocity.<sup>39</sup>

In the novel, the first time the Nana Sahib sets eyes on the white heroine at a ball, well before the Revolt, his burning glance – he 'gazed at Marion with his fiery eyes' (274) – fills her with nameless terror: 'She did not blush: she turned pale, and moved uneasily in her chair. She was frightened; but why, she could not say' (274). Eventually, at the Satchaura Ghat incident, he tries to have her taken alive. But the white heroine chooses death over dishonour, beseeching her beloved, who is a British military officer, to kill her: 'I will be shot by your side ... I *choose* that way!' (402–3). Thus, the moral triumph-in-death of the white girl over the salacious Indian prince becomes an important motif in 'Mutiny' fiction.

Indeed, the construction of rajahs as sexual predators of white women took such firm root in the colonial psyche that it travelled to the metropole and permeated British 'Mutiny' writings as well.<sup>40</sup> In *First Love and Last Love* (1868), a highly popular metropolitan novel written about a decade after the Revolt by James Grant, a British military officer-cum-popular novelist, many of the constructs of princely lechery and rape are reiterated with stridency.

Grant's novel casts as villain not a relatively minor prince such as the Nana Sahib, but the far more symbolically significant scions of the Mughal dynasty – thereby seeking to strike at the very heart of the old, pre-colonial, feudal, political order. Set in Delhi in April 1857, it projects the Mughal princes, Mirza Mogul and Abubeker, sons of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Delhi *badshah* (emperor), as 'cruel and sordid' 'Indian voluptuaries'.<sup>41</sup> They are 'cunning, cruel and licentious' (410), typically 'blasé Oriental sensualists' (114), who have been long lusting after the three pretty daughters of Dr Weston, the English clergyman at Delhi.

On their first appearance the princes are scripted as both cruel/lascivious and magnificently dressed, in language that both replicates Edward Money's *The Wife and the Ward* and also displays a mixture of revulsion and fascination:

Their eyes black as coal; their complexion pure copper; their lips thick and sensual, fringed by a slight moustache. They wore conical caps, surmounted by white feathers; rich shawls were bound about them by

brilliant jewels, and a mass of diamonds, and other precious stones, sparkled in the hilts of the daggers and pistol-butts, which were stuck in their gorgeous cummerbunds or Cashmere sashes.

(31)

When the Revolt breaks out, Mirza Moghul, who covets the two older girls, Lena and Kate, offers ‘the princely reward of one hundred golden mohurs’ (378) for their capture, while the younger prince, Mirza Abubeker targets the youngest, 16-year-old ‘little Polly’ (114). After her capture, the white girl, virtually a child, and the ‘sleepy, sensual, almost middle-aged’ (287) prince, present a grotesque contrast in appearance.

Disregarding her tears and supplications, Abubeker puts her in the ‘greatest zenana in India’ (1868: 285). However, Polly is not subjected there to rape. Instead, her beauty – she is ‘like a houri of the Koran ... a veritable ... Peri Banou’ (403) – and desirability is so powerful that the Mughal prince declares, ‘when I saw you, I felt that a new Queen of Delhi – really a second Nour Mahal – would ascend her throne; one worthy to sleep by my side in life, and to repose with me after death in the tomb of Homaion’ (523).<sup>42</sup> The iconic Mughal imagery – of Humayun’s tomb and the Taj Mahal, repository of the graves of an emperor and his *begum* – suggest that the English girl can become a latter-day Mumtaz Mahal. As a white girl’s beauty overpowers a scion of the erstwhile ‘Great Mughals’, a potential inter-racial rape narrative comes to be replaced by a narrative of inverted power relations and erotic conquest.

Renaming her as ‘Nour Mahal’ (after Nour Jehan, wife of emperor Jahangir) Abubeker woos her in ‘good and well-chosen English’ (410), showering her with entertainments and rich presents – silks from China, Dakka muslins, Kashmir shawls, *mohurs*, bracelets, sapphires, emeralds, diamonds, ‘the very dross of the Orient, laid at her feet’ (406).

Submerged textual anxieties about miscegenation are, however, soon laid to rest. For Polly, unmoved by these riches and repelled by the amorous prince, strikes at him, in spirited British defiance. Abubeker brutally orders her to be ‘dragged by gholandazees [gunners] to the kotwally [police post], and there to the budmashes [ruffians] of the city ... let her be abandoned, since she will not be mine!’ (542).

The act of interracial rape does take place – but it is carried out by the street rabble rather than by the prince. When, at the novel’s end, the English forces recapture Delhi, they find Polly’s body at the Calcutta Gate of the Red Fort, brutally raped, mutilated and crucified against the palace wall – a martyr to the cause of English honour. Hence, both Money’s and Grant’s Mutiny novels mark a moral victory-in-death of an English girl over a decadent ‘native’ princely order.

Towards the novel’s end, both the fleeing princes are finally captured – grovelling, begging for mercy, their debauched sensual faces a contrast to the ‘bright, honest, English faces’ (1868: 355) of the soldiers – at the

tomb of their great Mughal ancestor, 'Homaion' (564). And the historical symbolism of the location, which throws into sharp relief the sordid decline of this once-great dynasty, is not lost on the writer.

The text follows history in narrating how the two Mughal princes are arrested by Captain William Hodson and shot dead. But it fails to mention how Hodson had thereby reportedly broken his promise of giving them safe conduct in case of surrender. When he orders the two Mughal princes to be shot dead and their bodies to be stripped and put on public display in the marketplace, there is a bizarre re-enactment of the public display of Polly's violated, naked dead body.

The narration resonates at this point with a profound sense of the historic extinction of the House of Timur and the 'native', feudal order:

The crimson light of the setting sun was giving way to the shadows of night . . . there might be seen in the kotwally, or mayor's court, in the Street of Silver, hung by the neck upon a common gibbet, naked to the girdle, and defiled with dust and gore, the remains of the three last descendents of the Great Mogul of Timour, he who, after conquering Persia and Transoxania, made himself Emperor of all India. Three days and nights they hung there, ere the task of Nemesis was complete.

(569)

We saw earlier in this essay how British colonial fascination for the Great Mughals coloured their perception of themselves as competitors and, in a sense, replacements of the imperial Mughals as empire builders. Part of the strategy was to underline the moral degeneration of the Mughals. In a later definitive 'Mutiny' novel, *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), too, author Flora Annie Steel projected Bahadurshah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor as effeminate and ineffectual and his son 'Abool Bukr' as lecherous, 'scented, effeminate . . . giving the ladies unabashed admiration' and boasting of 'the European mistresses he meant to keep'.<sup>43</sup> Clearly, the colonial contests were staked out not only on the battlefield but also in discursive writings. Hence, both Grant's 'Mutiny' novel and Steel's own, take pains to script Mughal decline and project themselves as superior successors to the erstwhile imperial rulers.

### **The princely *zenana* in Rudyard Kipling's *Naulahka***

The female space of the *zenana*, forbidden to the male colonial gaze, was often a target of great curiosity in colonial fiction in the nineteenth century. As Malek Alloula has observed in the context of colonial Algeria, harems and *zenanas* were imagined as spheres of indolence and sensuality, feeding into the common myths of female sensuality and the animality of secluded life.<sup>44</sup> This theme will be explored in relation to a number of colonial novels, with special focus on *The Naulahka* (1892), a novel jointly authored by Rudyard Kipling and his American friend, Wolcott Balestier.

Rudyard Kipling's turn-of-the-nineteenth-century novel, *The Naulahka*, set in an imagined state called Rathore, (purportedly in Rajasthan), delineates its 'Rajah', as irrational, politically emasculated, with an appetite jaded through surfeit; his eyes, like 'an extinct volcano', full of 'everlasting weariness'.<sup>45</sup> Such 'Asiatic effete-ness' mars even the nine-year old heir-apparent who, 'like his jaded father', 'required amusement, for there is no childhood in the palace and precocious young princes are 'self-possessed men when they should be bashful babes' (79).

It is particularly striking that Kipling's novel should so harshly critique what is purportedly a 'Rajput' state. Largely due to the far-reaching effects of James Tod's influential study, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (1829–32), and further reinforced by H.H. Risley's writings on racial hierarchies, the Rajput princes were associated in British perceptions with chivalry, honour, valour and antiquity and occupied a special, romanticized status.<sup>46</sup> By choosing to attack a Rajput (rather than, for instance, a Mahratta) ruler, Kipling's text seems intent on carrying out unspoken agendas of discrediting a section of princely India that was singularly valorized in the British imagination.

Not only is the 'native' ruler in this text effete but the local British Political Agent too is projected as languid, ready to bend to 'political necessity' (170), willing to turn a blind eye to the continuing practice of 'infant marriage' (170) between the heir apparent and his infant bride in the palace. Given the American joint authorship, the text makes a satirical dig at the 'English reverence for a King' (57) and at malleable British officials, bending and accepting courtly extravagances and excesses, instead of resisting them.

Into this effete 'native' state enters Dick Tarvin, an American adventurer from Colorado. The ensuing cultural encounter is once again a dichotomized, a virtually Saidian one, between a dynamic, 'living West' and an unchanging 'dead East' (88). Eventually it takes the form of a battle of wits between Tarvin and Sitabhai, a former gypsy-girl and currently the raja's favourite queen.

The maharajah, a typical Eastern ruler, is dominated by a woman and Sitabhai is the most powerful person in the palace. Kipling remarks, '[t]his gipsy without lineage held in less than a year King and State under her feet' (200). Her transition from gipsy girl to *maharani* and her rise to power, play out colonial stereotypes about 'dissolute' Indian princes and their sexual vulnerability to the erotic charms of dancing girls.

In Taylor's novel, *Ralph Darnell*, too, this trope was present in the figure of Sozun, the Afghan dancing girl who controlled the harem of Siraj-ud-Daulah. Indeed, non-literary colonial writings too reinforced this construct. In his authoritative study *The Princes of India* (1934), William Barton observed: 'A Prince may forfeit his throne for a dancing girl'.<sup>47</sup> He pointed out, in his otherwise adulatory account of Rajput

chiefs, instances of debauched rulers, such as Jaggat Singh of Jaipur, ‘who lived a dishonoured life till 1820 ... For years the country was ruled by a Mussalmani dancing girl who had so infatuated the Maharaja that he gave her half his kingdom’,<sup>48</sup> Further, Barton mentioned, what he termed as, the ‘well known’ and ‘quite recent story of the Maharaja of Indore who risked and lost his throne for a dancing girl’.<sup>49</sup>

Besides sensuality, aristocratic *zenanas* were also associated in the colonial imagination with female intrigue. Princely harems, occupied by the raja’s numerous wives all living together, were located as hotbeds of sexual competition, rivalry, instability, power-struggle and political intrigue, with numerous *ranis* endlessly plotting to win the raja’s favours, or to dislodge a current female favourite. In *Ralph Darnell*, Sozun had intrigued for the Nawab’s favours, which had capriciously shifted from one favourite to another, in a manner supposedly typical of Asiatic rulers, resulting in Siraj throwing his begum – and later the out-of-favour Sozun herself – into the dungeon.

Such colonial constructions about *zenana* intrigue were indeed deep rooted. As far back as the 1820s and 1830s, Fanny Parks, a usually sympathetic and admiring observer of princely *zenanas*, had opined: ‘A *zenana* is a place of intrigue, and those who live within four walls cannot pursue a straight path: how can it be otherwise, where so many conflicting passions are called forth?’<sup>50</sup> And almost a hundred years later William Barton echoed these sentiments in the 1930s. Observing that ‘the *zenana* is frequently a law unto itself’, he elaborated:

Imagine the intrigues, the hates and the thwarted instincts of the old-fashioned *zenana*, where in some cases two hundred palace ladies, most of them young, live unnatural lives of idleness and boredom. It is true ... nevertheless, that life behind the *pardah* has its excitements.

(53)

Besides, there also existed the trope of the ‘native’ princes’ vulnerability to manipulations by ambitious, low-born concubines and courtesans. In his study, Barton had taken note of the jealousy and palace intrigue in the *zenana* that, according to him, frequently followed upon the arrival of any pretty slave girl ‘whose charms had attracted the *maharaja’s* gaze’, and had further pointed out that such incidents were fairly common in the ‘old-fashioned courts’ (i.e. non-Westernized courts).<sup>51</sup>

This trope of demonically energetic *pardah* women and effete and ‘emasculated’ palace males was indeed, intrinsic to the colonial imaginary. In Kipling’s novel too Sitabhai’s women are of full of energy – in marked contrast to the enervation of the male princes. The idea of native courts being ruled from behind the veil was an important colonial construct.



'Feminine influence', Barton noted, 'counts for much in the affairs of the State, and an intrigue in the ladies' quarters may deflect policy and compass the ruin of some of the pillars of government'.<sup>52</sup>

In Kipling's novel *Sitabhai*, who had 'borne the King one son, in whom all her pride and ambition centred' (200), applies herself with 'renewed energy to the maintenance of mastery in the state' (59) after his birth, and plots to kill the nine-year-old heir apparent and install her own infant in his place.

It is to be noted that female energy in these texts has a class angle to it. Intrigue and political machination are associated with low-born gipsies or dancing girls. Energetic outsiders, like Sozun or *Sitabhai*, seize power inside the *zenana*, while the outmanoeuvred aristocratic courtly ladies, such as Siraj's *begum* or the senior *rani* in *The Naulahka*, are soon dislodged from princely favour. It is for this reason that the out-of-favour senior queen, mother of the heir-apparent, is completely helpless in countering *Sitabhai*'s intrigue and can only fear for her son's life.

Hidden and powerful behind the veil, *Sitabhai* seeks to 'mould the state from behind the curtain as many queens have done' (200) and spies on conversations between the *maharajah* and Tarvin:

But now all four sides of the green-shuttered courtyard were alive, awake and intent upon him. He could hear muffled breathings, the rustle of draperies and the faintest possible jarring of the shutters, cautiously opened from within. A heavy smell of musk and jasmine came to his nostrils and filled him with uneasiness, for he knew, without turning his head or his eyes, that *Sitabhai* and her women were watching all that went on.

(114)

But the powerful gipsy queen finally meets her match in the tough American. He resists her attempt to seduce him when she invites him to be her king, saying: 'In the old days . . . Englishmen of no birth stole the hearts of *begums*, and led their armies . . . we do not know when the old days may return, and we might lead our armies together' (206).

In Kipling's novel the colonial 'Rescue Fantasy' is recast in terms of gender. For the princely *zenana* is also a repository of female disease and silent sufferings, in dire need of Western medical rescue. Indeed, late nineteenth-century colonial writings often figured *pardah* women as suffering 'pain and anguish . . . doctored by incantations and charms'.<sup>53</sup> The 'white rescuer' in this case is not Dick Tarvin, but his American beloved, the idealistic Kate Sheriff, whom he had accompanied to India. Inspired by 'Pundita Ramabai's account of the sad case of her sisters at home' (2), Kate had come out to rescue *pardah* women with Western medicine and alleviate their sufferings.

In other words, Kate is what Barbara Ramusack has termed a 'maternal imperialist', on a medical 'civilizing mission', and the narrative clearly

carries echoes of the Countess of Dufferin Fund, which sought to bring medical treatment and female doctors inside the *pardah* from the 1880s.<sup>54</sup>

But on entering the princely *zenana*, Kate is revolted by her discovery of the debased, sensual, female life behind the veil:

The heat and the smell of cooking, faint fumes of incense, and the indescribable taint of overcrowded humanity, caught her by the throat. But what she heard and what she guessed sickened her more than any visible horror. Plainly it was one thing to be stirred to generous action by a vivid recital of the state of the women of India, another to face the unutterable fact in the isolation of the women's apartments of the palace of Rhatore.

(97)

Moreover, while in reality the Dufferin project received wide-scale financial and other support from 'native' rulers, in Kipling's novel the medical project receives hostility from the palace.<sup>55</sup> The effete court ladies strongly resist the Western medical systems while others are afraid to accept help from Kate:

There were many women – how many she did not know – worked upon by intrigues she could not comprehend, who refused her ministrations absolutely. They were not ill, they said, and the touch of the white woman's hand meant pollution. Others were there who thrust their children before her and bade her bring colour and strength back to these pale buds born in the darkness; and terrible, fierce-eyed girls who leaped upon her out of the dark, overwhelming her with passionate complaints that she did not and dared not understand.

(97)

The out-of-favour senior queen, who is the mother of the nine-year-old heir-apparent, fears for his life and seeks the white woman's protection, and Kate, along with Tarvin, is able to help her outwit Sitabhai in the latter's *zenana* intrigue and save the child's life. However, Kate's effort to save the women of India medically is doomed to failure and this female 'Rescue narrative' ultimately ends in defeat at the hands of an 'unchanging India'. Steeped in traditionalism, the princely *zenana* resists 'modernization' and the American girl returns home, defeated.

## Conclusion

We saw in this chapter how the princes were delineated in colonial fiction in the second half of the nineteenth century. The political realignments and the emergence of a new political friendship with the princes after 1857 were not reflected in literature. Instead, the fiction delineated the Indian

raja as a traditional foe – and not as the new-found ‘loyal feudatory’ of contemporary government policy.

Novels endlessly and unvaryingly constructed the princes as the ‘Other’. By circulating images and stereotypes as ‘authentic’ facts, these literary writings sought to disseminate colonial knowledge and participated in the reproduction of colonialism. By no means rooted in historical or social realities, these representations constructed an imagined or an invented reality, built up of negative cultural and racial stereotypes. Indeed, in sharp contrast to some of their famed, richly eclectic writings on the other social classes of India – for example, Taylor’s *Seeta* (1872) or Kipling’s *Kim* (1912) – the major writers of this period, like Taylor and Kipling, projected the Indian princes, in particular, in a negative manner in their writings.

The overall design of this literary discourse seems to have been to valorize British colonial rule in different ways. Perhaps conscious of Britain’s new imperial status after the takeover by the Crown in 1858, these writings often specifically targeted the great Mughals, their imperial predecessors, and sought to delineate them as a spent force, in a state of moral and political decline. The effort was to reveal the darker aspects of magnificent maharajahs and to highlight the decadence of ‘native’ culture and princely depravities.

The novels projected middle-class colonials as superior successors to the ‘native’ feudal order. Often displaying an intermingling of derision and covert fascination for princely riches, these writings enacted fantasies of sexuality, class and power, scripting narratives of colonial upward mobility and ‘instant aristocracy’. Middle-class colonials were projected as triumphant in their encounters with Indian princes, resisting, defeating or supplanting them, or gaining entry into the elite ranks of princely society.

However, by no means were these literary writings an uncomplicated assertion of colonial power. On the contrary, they revealed, what Homi Bhabha has termed the ‘ambivalence of colonial authority’, haunted as they were, by submerged colonial anxieties, political insecurities and sexual inadequacies.<sup>56</sup> The insecurities were all the more enhanced in the aftermath of 1857 by fears of ‘another Mutiny’. It is no coincidence that genres like the ‘historical novel’ or the ‘Mutiny novel’ should have been so popular in this period. Such writings were specifically deployed to focus on past encounters and princely defeats. The need of the hour was to glorify British achievements and colonial historical milestones, such as the battle of Plassey of 1757 or the suppression of the princes in the 1857 Revolt, which were markers of colonial triumph against the ‘native’ feudal order.

Subsequently, around the early decades of the twentieth century, the concept of the Indian prince did undergo certain changes due to a number of factors, including the princes’ support of the War cause.<sup>57</sup> The notion of the ‘loyal Indian prince’ and the ‘good ruler’ emerged in discursive writings – that of the Western-educated, anglicized, sports-loving ruler who played

tennis with European friends and went on tiger-*shikars* (hunts).<sup>58</sup> However, notwithstanding these shifts in emphasis, it is important to note that ambivalences continued to under-gird literary inscriptions of the princes, who essentially remained the ‘Other’. Colonial anxieties especially about miscegenation – and the sexual dangers that these aristocratic princes held for white women – continued to haunt this discourse.<sup>59</sup>

All in all, the colonial contests were clearly staked out not only on the battlefield but also in discursive writings. Nineteenth-century colonial fiction, troubled with its own uncertainties, deployed strategies of textual representation in order to critique, condemn, defeat and supplant princely rulers and to simultaneously valorize British rule.

## Notes

- 1 For theories of representation, see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994 and Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997.
- 2 *The Madras Mail* noted that ‘until popular fiction seizes upon India, the bulk of the home public will continue in possession of ... distorted conceptions of it,’ 26 February 1869.
- 3 Allen J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism, 1880–1960*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 141.
- 4 See Anne Katherine Elwood, *Narrative of a Journey Overland from England*, 2 vols, London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830; Marianne Postans, *Western India in 1838*, 2 vols, London: Saunders and Otley, 1839.
- 5 Emily Eden, *Up the Country: Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India*, 1866; reprint, London: Virago, 1983, p. 198.
- 6 For details, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995. See also Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- 7 John Cotton, British Political Officer, notes: ‘The institutions, titles, customs, ceremonials, were all part and parcel of what the British had inherited from the former masters of India, the Emperors of Delhi’, cited in Charles Allen and Sharada Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes*, London: Century Publishing, 1984, p. 210.
- 8 F.A. Steel, *King-Errant*, 1912; reprint, London: John Lane, 1928, p. 273. Her other novels on the Mughals are: *A Prince of Dreamers*, London: William Heinemann, 1908, *Mistress of Men*, London: William Heinemann, 1917 and *The Builder*, London: William Heinemann, 1928.
- 9 For biographical details, see Preface to P.M. Taylor, *The Story of My Life*, 1877; reprint, London: Oxford University Press, 1920. William Barton notes that the Hyderabad contingent was formed after the Treaty of 1800 when the minister and the Resident ‘proceeded to raise a large irregular force’ which was ‘placed under British officers ... appointed by the Resident’ in William Barton, *The Princes of India*, London: Nisbet, 1934, pp. 193–4.
- 10 Shorapur (or Surpur), a small princely state, lay south-west of Hyderabad state, between the rivers Bhima and Krishna (in present day Karnataka). The *raja* of Shorapur was a Beydur tribal from Ratnagiri district. In 1857,

- Raja Enkatappa Naik took part in the Revolt, was defeated, imprisoned and committed suicide. Shorapur was dissolved around 1858 and incorporated as part of the dominions of the Nizam of Hyderabad.
- 11 See P.M. Taylor, *Seeta*; 1872; reprint, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1887.
  - 12 P.M. Taylor, *The Noble Queen: A Romance of Indian History*, 1878; reprint, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1892, p. 133.
  - 13 For negative delineation of princes, see also P.M. Taylor, *Tipoo Suldaun: A Tale of the Mysore War*, 1840; reprint, London: Paul, 1880.
  - 14 P.M. Taylor, *Ralph Darnell*, 1865; reprint, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1889, p. 340.
  - 15 Siraj-ud-daulah, (1733–57), last independent ruler of Bengal, objected to East India Company fortifications at Fort William, Calcutta and successfully attacked them in June 1756. The British, regrouping under Robert Clive, defeated him at the battle of Plassey in June 1757. Siraj fled to Murshidabad but was caught and killed on 3 July 1757, on the orders of Mir Jafar, the nawab installed by the British. Siraj's defeat marked the beginning of English ascendancy in Bengal and eventually the entire subcontinent.
  - 16 Kathryn Castle, *Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism through Children's Books and Magazines*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 52.
  - 17 Castle, *Britannia's Children*, p. 52.
  - 18 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, p. 2.
  - 19 Kate Teltscher, 'The Fearful Name of the Black Hole: Fashioning an Imperial Myth', in B.R. Moore-Gilbert (ed.), *Writing India, 1757–1994: The Literature of British India*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 30.
  - 20 Inter-racial marriages by princes in the twentieth century include the Rajah of Jind's marriage to Dorothy; Tukoji Rao Holkar of Indore's to an American; Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala's to Anita Delgrada, a Spanish dancer; his son Paramjit Singh's to Stella Mudge, an English cabaret dancer; Martanda Bhairava Tondaiman of Pudukkottai's to Molly Fink, an Australian; and the Maharajah of Patiala's romance with Florry Bryan. For details, see Anne Morrow, *Highness: The Maharajahs of India*, London: Grafton Books, 1986, and also Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Romancing the Raj: Interracial Relations in Anglo-Indian Romance Novels', *History of Intellectual Culture*, 4:1, 2004, 9.
  - 21 Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793–1905*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980, p. 96.
  - 22 Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, vol. I, 1850; reprint, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 89.
  - 23 Saleni Armstrong-Hopkins, *Within the Purdah: In the Zenana Homes of Indian Princes and Heroes and Heroines of Zion*, New York: Eaton and Mains, 1898, pp. 143–4. See also Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmans of India*, ed. W. Crooke, London: Milford, 1832, for an account by an Englishwoman married to a Muslim in early nineteenth-century Lucknow.
  - 24 Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, The New Cambridge History of India, vol. III, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 135.
  - 25 Hourī or hour-ul-'ein, the 'black-eyed', are the fair maidens of Paradise in Islam.
  - 26 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988, p. 305.
  - 27 Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society, No.13, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- 28 For a survey of over 80 'Mutiny' novels, see S.D. Singh, *Novels on the Indian Mutiny*, New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1973. See also Indrani Sen, *Woman and Empire: Representations in the Writings of British India, 1858–1900*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002 and Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- 29 For further details on the princes' relationship with the British in 1857 and its aftermath, see Ramusack, *Indian Princes*, pp. 84–5, 92, 105–6.
- 30 Ramusack, *Indian Princes*, p. 92.
- 31 Maud Diver, *Royal India: A Descriptive and Historical Study of India's Fifteen Principal States and Their Rulers*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1942, p. 14.
- 32 Rani Lakshmbai (1835–58), initially a British loyalist, turned hostile when, on raja Gangadhar Rao's death in 1853, the claim of the adopted heir was rejected and Jhansi annexed. In 1857, Jhansi became a centre of the revolt.
- 33 In 'Gillean', *The Rane: A Legend of the Indian Mutiny, 1857–8*, London: Gustavus Cohen, 1887, the rani seduces the British political agent. In Hume Nisbet, *The Queen's Desire: A Romance of the Indian Mutiny*, London: F.W. White, 1893, she seduces an English soldier. For a rare, laudatory account of the rani, see Taylor, *Seeta*.
- 34 See Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, pp. 57–82.
- 35 See Nancy L. Paxton, *Writing Under the Raj: Gender, Race and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830–1947*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999, pp. 109–36.
- 36 Dhondu Pant, the Nana Sahib (1824–59?), adopted son and heir of Mahratta Peshwa Baji Rao II, joined the 1857 Revolt. At the end of the siege of Cawnpore (Kanpur), when the British boarded riverboats at Sati Chaura Ghat, sepoys opened fire, killing most of them. The surviving women and children were kept in Bibighar and later massacred. It has been suggested that the Bibighar massacre may have been in reprisal against British atrocities in Benares and Allahabad. For details, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- 37 See G.O. Trevelyan, *Cawnpore*, 1865; reprint, New Delhi: Indus/Harper Collins, 1992.
- 38 Edward Money, *The Wife and the Ward or A Life's Error*, London: Routledge, Warnes and Routledge, 1859, p. 271.
- 39 Trevelyan notes: 'At the time of the mutiny the Nana was about thirty-six years of age. His complexion was sallow; his features strongly marked, and not unpleasing . . . He was fat, with the unhealthy corpulence which marks the Eastern voluptuary', in Trevelyan, *Cawnpore*, p. 41.
- 40 Colonial and metropolitan 'mutiny' fictions are generally discussed together. See Chakravarty, *Indian Mutiny and British Imagination*.
- 41 James Grant, *First Love and Last Love: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny*, 1868; reprint, London: T. Nelson, 1913, pp. 31, 114.
- 42 Pari Banou, ('nymph of the air'), a beautiful fairy in 'Prince Ahmed and the Fairy', in E. Dixon (ed.), *Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights*, London: J.M. Dent, 1893, pp. 61–83.
- 43 Flora Annie Steel, *On the Face of the Waters*, 1896; reprint, New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1985, pp. 135, 200.
- 44 Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1986.
- 45 Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier, *The Naulahka: A Story of West and East*, London: William Heinemann, 1892, p. 75.
- 46 See Herbert H. Risley, *The Peoples of India*, Calcutta: Thacker Spink, 1908.
- 47 Barton, *Princes of India*, p. 86.

- 48 Barton, *Princes of India*, pp. 86, 103.
- 49 Barton, *Princes of India*, pp. 71, 54.
- 50 Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, pp. 390–2.
- 51 Barton, *Princes of India*, p. 71.
- 52 Barton, *Princes of India*, p. 53.
- 53 Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India*, London: William Blackwood, 1909, p. 76.
- 54 Barbara N. Ramusack, ‘Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865–1945’, in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992, pp. 119–36. For details about the Dufferin Fund, see Maneesha Lal, ‘The Politics of Gender and Medicine in Colonial India: The Countess of Dufferin’s Fund, 1885–1888’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 68:1, 1994, 29–66.
- 55 Princely supporters of the Dufferin Fund included the *maharajas* of Jaipur and Alwar, the *nizam* of Hyderabad, the prince of Arcot and the *maharajas* of Travancore and Vizianagram. For details, see Mary Frances Billington, *Women of India*, 1895; reprint, Delhi: Amarko Book Agency, 1973, pp. 88, 107.
- 56 Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, pp. 85–92.
- 57 The educated and loyal prince appears in Gordon Casserly, *The Elephant God*, London: P. Allen, 1920. See Greenberger, *British Image of India*, pp. 141–2.
- 58 For details, see Castle, *Britannia’s Children*, pp. 34–8.
- 59 In an early twentieth-century novel, the anglicized young *rajah* of Rotah falls in love with Fay, the white heroine, but is finally rejected. See Alice Perrin, *The Anglo-Indians*, London: Methuen, 1912.

## 4 Narcotrafficking, princely ingenuity and the Raj

The subjugation of the Sindia state,  
c.1843–44

*Amar Farooqui*

This chapter looks at aspects of the history of the Sindia state (Gwalior) during the early nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The focus is on the period c.1818–44. Even though the Sindia state was one of the major north Indian princely states, its post-1818 history has not received much attention. Its sprawling, but unconsolidated, territories were scattered over a wide area extending from the river Chambal in the north, to the Narmada in the south. Most of these territories were located in the Malwa region of the present state of Madhya Pradesh.<sup>2</sup> This gave it access to a sizeable proportion of the abundant opium produce of the region. The Sindia state was the biggest producer of Malwa opium, which made it the foremost independent (non-East India Company) supplier of the drug for the China market. I argue that opium was crucial for the Sindia economy during the early nineteenth century, and that the contest for controlling this vital resource was a significant element in the conflict between Gwalior and the company.

Gwalior was the leading Maratha-ruled principality in colonial north India. In 1818, following the third and final Anglo-Maratha war, the Sindia state accepted the supremacy of the East India Company. This implied that it was henceforth placed under what is generally referred to as indirect rule – retaining a measure of internal autonomy while being subject to the company's overall supervision. Yet for over two decades after this event the company's control over the state remained ill-defined and superficial, largely due to the strong resistance to colonial intervention that the company met within Sindia territories. It was only from 1843/44, after a major military offensive against the Sindia army, that Gwalior was subjugated.

By the time the Anglo-Maratha wars came to an end, Sindia territories were principally confined to two regions: Malwa (mainly in the present Madhya Pradesh districts of Mandsaur, Nimach, Ujjain, Shajapur and Vidisha); and the Gwalior region (in the Madhya Pradesh districts of Gwalior, Morena, Bhind, Shivpuri, Guna and Datia). There were also some isolated possessions along, and just south of, the Narmada. Finally, there was a small tract in the Panch Mahals district of Gujarat (which included



the formidable Pavagarh fort). Following independence, when twenty-four princely states of Malwa were integrated to constitute Madhya Bharat, which in turn was included in Madhya Pradesh when the latter was formed in 1956, the Sindia and Holkar (i.e. Indore, the most important Maratha state in Malwa after Gwalior) territories accounted for three-fourths of Madhya Bharat territory. The size of the Sindia state then was about twice that of Indore. This gives some idea of the relative territorial control of the two states during the nineteenth century. There were no major changes in the territorial composition of the Sindia and Holkar states after 1818.

There are three clearly defined phases in the political history of the Sindia state between the 1790s and the early 1840s. In the first phase the reigning Sindia king, Daulat Rao (1794–1827) was engaged in consolidating the kingdom he had inherited from his predecessor Mahadji Sindia (1761–94)<sup>3</sup> and eventually devising means to resist the company's onslaught. In fact, between 1818 and 1827 Daulat Rao was primarily engaged in salvaging the structure of the state and much of its prestige from the reversals of 1818. The Sindias managed to retain almost all territories south of the river Chambal; a large part of the army remained intact; revenue collection was made more efficient by reducing the power of intermediaries and colonial officials were prevented, more or less successfully, from meddling in the internal administration of the state.<sup>4</sup>

The first phase lasted until Daulat Rao's death in 1827 following which one of his wives, Baiza Bai, became the regent of the state. The regency of Baiza Bai, 1827–33, marks the second phase and it was in this period that the hitherto somewhat subdued anti-British sentiment at the *darbar* became increasingly conspicuous.<sup>5</sup> The third phase extends from 1833, when Baiza Bai was deposed in a coup, down to 1843 when the company had to launch a full-scale military operation to subdue the Sindia army. During this phase, the company was able to manipulate the factions at the *darbar* to its advantage, thereby acquiring greater influence over the state. Until 1833 the company had found the Sindia state to be arrogant and unapproachable. By the late 1830s a section of the *darbar* officials, as well as many members of the royal family, had closely aligned themselves with the British.<sup>6</sup> There was, however, still a powerful section of the Sindia elite that resented the company's interference. The conflict that this situation gave rise to culminated in a violent upheaval which was suppressed by the company through, as we shall see, a major military campaign in 1843.

The Sindia state was something of an exception in the protracted, though usually low-key, opposition, and sullenness, which the company encountered from the ruling elite throughout the early nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Compared to Gwalior, the histories of some of the other prominent Maratha states in western and central India (Baroda, Indore, Nagpur), or other indigenously ruled states of the Malwa region (all of which had come under indirect rule by 1818), appear uneventful if one were to look at the period immediately following the third Anglo-Maratha war. Relations with the company were generally smooth, and colonial officials did not find it

very difficult to deal with these states. On the other hand, the Sindia state managed to keep the company's officials at arm's length. For instance, the resident, who could be omnipotent in other states, was not accorded a high status by the Sindias down to at least the early 1830s. The company had maintained a resident at the Sindia Court since the time of Mahadji Sindia but this representative had for quite some time been regarded as no more than a glorified news-writer until the beginning of the century.<sup>8</sup>

The significance of the Sindia state in the history of the East India Company's relations with indirectly ruled princely states during the pre-1857 period can be understood with reference to two circumstances. The expansion of the state during the latter half of the eighteenth century, at a time when the company was busy consolidating its position in eastern India after the conquest of Bengal, was based on the creation of a new and modern army. Territorial expansion was made possible by, and provided the surpluses for, this army. It would be no exaggeration to say that military capability gave to the Sindia state much space for manoeuvre in negotiating with the colonial power. Through considerable diplomatic skill, backed by the presence of a strong army (even if much reduced by the first decade of the nineteenth century), the Sindia state was able to avoid direct military confrontation with the company in the third Anglo-Maratha war. Initially, therefore, the terms of indirect rule were not very harsh for the Sindias.

The other, perhaps fortuitous, circumstance was that the Sindia state as a major centre of opium trade and production in the late pre-colonial period was well placed to benefit from the massive growth in the seaborne export of opium from India's west coast to China in the early decades of the nineteenth century. From the point of view of the company, indigenous participation in the opium export trade, unless sanctioned or authorized by it, was illegal, amounting to smuggling. Hence the association of the indigenously controlled opium economy with criminality, positing the enterprise as narcotrafficking. Ironically this was an inversion of the illegality of the East India Company's own position in China presiding as the company did over a vast narcotrafficking network extending from India to south-east Asia. For the participants in the opium enterprise in the Sindia state, narcotrafficking became a form of resistance to colonial intervention. Profits and revenues from opium added to the resources of the Sindia state in the post-1818 period. We shall try to explore some of the ways in which residual military prowess, reinforced by an ingenuous strategy of improvisation based on narcotrafficking, shaped the encounter between colonialism and the Sindia state.

### **The Sindia army and the struggle for survival: 1794–1843**

With the decline of the Mughals during the first half of the eighteenth century, the Marathas created a vast empire encompassing a large portion of the Indian subcontinent (mainly western and central India, but including parts of northern and southern India). For most of the eighteenth century,

Pune (Poona) was the capital of the empire. The empire had a complex pattern of territorial control. Maratha conquests, though coordinated from Pune, were in fact carried out by various Maratha warlords (*sardars*). The authority of the Pune Court was considerably weakened after the battle of Panipat (1761), in which the armies of the Maratha state were defeated by the Afghan chief Ahmad Shah Abdali. After 1761 many of the Maratha *sardars* became virtually autonomous. However, they continued to acknowledge their formal allegiance to Pune whence their authority derived legitimacy. These developments led to the establishment of heritable kingship within the families of some of the *sardars*: the Bhonsles in central Deccan; the Holkars, the Sindias and the Pawars in different parts of central and northern India; and the Gaikwads in Gujarat – to name the most powerful Maratha dynasties. By the last quarter of the century, the Sindias had emerged as the leading Maratha ruling house in northern India. On the other hand, the Pune Court had almost no significant political role to play by the turn of the century, and ceased to exist after 1818.<sup>9</sup>

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the centre of gravity of Maratha polity had shifted from western Maharashtra to Malwa. The Sindias and the Holkars possessed the largest share of the Maratha territories in the region. These territories, as well as those of other Maratha chiefs, were scattered over the entire plateau. The manner in which the Pune Court had assigned territories or spheres of influence to the Maratha warlords during the course of the eighteenth century had prevented these chiefs from controlling contiguous areas. Consequently, the Sindia state did not have a continuous border. It was, however, in a position to dominate the entire region politically and militarily from the sheer size of its territories.

The lack of territorial cohesiveness, along with the fact that the Marathas were newcomers to the region (the presence of Maratha lineages in Malwa dated back to the 1720s at the earliest), necessitated legitimation through a process of projecting the Sindia name as the unifying symbol of the state.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the ruling class had to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Whereas the leading revenue farmers were largely Maharashtrian Brahmins, the Sindia state had to rely on the support of locally entrenched Rajput lineages for extracting the agrarian surplus.<sup>11</sup> The Rajputs were prominent landholders in the region and had considerable access to political power.<sup>12</sup> The roots of some Malwa Rajputs probably went back to the seventh and eighth centuries. Rajput clans figure prominently in the *Ain-i-Akbari's* list of *zamindar* castes in Malwa.<sup>13</sup> Maratha expansion in several parts of Malwa and north India took place at the expense of the Rajputs. At the regional level, their political power received a setback though at sub-regional and local levels they continued to exercise control over land and extensive authority. Numerous Rajput-ruled states also survived in Malwa (Ratlam, Sitamau and Amjhera for instance).

Apart from its alliance with Rajput *zamindars*, the Sindia state was sustained by a large centrally financed army with a cosmopolitan (and not

exclusively Maratha) officer corps and infantry contingents comprising troops recruited to a great extent from the Ganga–Yamuna Doab. Besides, there were the bankers and merchants, frequently *baniyas* and/or marwaris, many of whom were prominent figures at the Sindia *darbar*. The extensive political influence of this class must be attributed to its position as one of the constituents of the ruling elite. Its role was crucial in making available credit to the state, usually against future revenues, and for financing the army.<sup>14</sup>

Under the great Mahadji, the Sindia state had initiated a military modernization programme in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Mahadji Sindia tried to raise a modern army trained by Europeans. By the 1780s, the Sindia army had several European officers. Benoit de Boigne was one of the pillars of the new Sindia army. He joined in 1784 and left service in 1796. The defection in 1803 of General Perron who had succeeded de Boigne, and Sindia's losses in the second Anglo-Maratha war (1803–05) were major setbacks to the modernization programme.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the war machine inherited by Daulat Rao from his illustrious predecessor was still sufficiently effective during the second Anglo-Maratha war.

Senior military officials of the company seem to have underestimated the strength of the Maratha armies at the time of the second Anglo-Maratha war. According to Randolph Cooper, Arthur Wellesley, 'like many others, believed the traditional Maratha army to have been composed solely of Pindari horse. Disciplined infantry battalions he thought to be a recent and unsuccessful experiment'.<sup>16</sup> That this assessment was a mistaken one was realized at the battle of Assaye (1803). As Cooper points out:<sup>17</sup>

Maratha artillery was more advanced than British on several counts. Wellesley himself conceded there was no comparison in the quality of design and manufacture and ... it featured greater technical innovation and a more advanced method of application. There was also an integrated deployment, which grouped weapons in a manner not found among the British, whose artillery was dominated by six and twelve pounders, with heavier eighteen and twenty-four pounders available as required for siege duty. The Maratha artillery troops, in contrast, carried a much greater variety of guns into the field, often up to thirty-six pounders. Despite the heavy weight, the effort was justified on more than one occasion when they were used for their long range or sheer kinetic energy.

This is borne out by the observations of a British officer who was present at the crucial battle of Assaye:

Nothing could surpass the skill or bravery displayed by their *golumdauze* [*golandaz*, gunner], as our loss fully testified. When taken, their guns were all found laid a few degrees below the point blank, just what they ought to be for the discharge of grape or canister at a short distance.<sup>18</sup>

This is not the place to go into the reasons that were responsible for Daulat Rao Sindia's reverses during the second Anglo-Maratha war. However, lack of military resources was certainly not the most important of them.<sup>19</sup>

In giving an assessment of the total force of Daulat Rao Sindia in the north, it is necessary to recall that he had the capacity, which he did not use well, to reinforce the north from the Deccan. Of the formed infantry brigades all under the overall command of Perron, some 22 battalions, in all about 17,000 men, in the area Aligarh–Delhi–Agra. There would have been a considerable force of both regular and irregular cavalry in addition, certainly numbering at least 20,000.

It should be emphasized that after 1818 the Sindias still had large regular contingents, which were now no longer engaged in campaigns for territorial expansion. Large bodies of troops were concentrated in the main cantonments such as Gwalior. These troops increasingly became a powerful factor in Sindia politics. Even as late as the early 1840s the total number of troops in the army stood at over 40,000. The outward form of Mahadji's army had survived more or less intact. There were thirty infantry regiments (*paltan*) in all, to which were attached six contingents (*ghol*) of irregulars (*najib*) and six contingents (*risala*) of cavalry. These were grouped into brigades (*campoos*), of which the most important were Colonel Jacob's *campoo* (ten *paltans*), the Maharaj *campoo* (seven *paltans*) and Sikandar's (Major Alexander's) *campoo* (four *paltans*). The total strength of the infantry was 30,670 (including the *ghols*).<sup>20</sup> The strength of the cavalry, now mainly for 'parade and pomp', was 10,056.<sup>21</sup> Another element of continuity was the presence of officers of European descent, who still led some of the largest infantry contingents. The three most prominent officers were the veteran Jean Baptiste Filose of Neapolitan descent, Colonel Jacob of Armenian descent and Major Alexander of Portuguese descent. More than half the revenues of the state were spent on maintaining the troops.<sup>22</sup>

The presence of such a large army gave to the Sindia state a degree of independence not enjoyed by most other states that had accepted the company's supremacy after 1818. This situation formed the backdrop to the growing contradictions between the Sindia ruling class and the company during the 1820s and 1830s, especially in the period following the death of Daulat Rao Sindia when Baiza Bai became the regent of the state. The relationship between the state and the East India Company became increasingly turbulent during the six years of Baiza Bai's regency. When Baiza Bai lost the support of the army and was overthrown in 1833 (an event with which the company was not directly connected), the company quickly moved in to prop up a pro-British faction at the *darbar*. For nearly a decade, this faction had the upper hand, but its position did not go unchallenged. An influential section of the elite, with the support of some of the prominent military leaders, constantly pushed for a policy of greater autonomy. By 1843, this section had managed to garner sufficient support

within the army to be able to assert the autonomy of the state in a more aggressive manner.<sup>23</sup>

In a minute on the Gwalior question penned in November 1843 the governor general, Lord Ellenborough, underlined the important aim of maintaining British paramountcy in northern India by ensuring continued influence at Gwalior. This was to serve as an example to other states. Disbanding the Gwalior army was singled out by him as the task that required top priority so that the company could control Gwalior more effectively: '... the first in importance is certainly the reduction of the army, for whose benefit alone the Gwalior government has so long existed and which has been the real ruler of the state'.<sup>24</sup>

After 1818, the Sindia army had survived but it was no longer engaged in expansion. Daulat Rao's troops under Jean Baptiste Filose had, for example, made several important additions on the eve of the third Anglo-Maratha war to the Gwalior territories, which were subsequently recognized by the British. The freezing of borders after the war considerably diminished the work of the army. More and more troops were quartered in Gwalior for long periods. W.H. Sleeman estimated that there was a 'concentrated mass of forty thousand soldiers at the Capital'. Attempts to reduce the number of troops had always been strongly resisted by the army. Moreover the several corps did not allow 'any vacancies in them to remain unfulfilled'.<sup>25</sup>

At the end of 1843, Lord Ellenborough declared his intention of proceeding to Gwalior with a large force under the commander-in-chief Sir Hugh Gough. The Gwalior soldiers were adamant that the advance of the colonial army be opposed. While the *darbar* was in disarray, the rank and file of the army took over the leadership. Sleeman reported from his camp on the left bank of the Chambal that 'the soldiery have no officer of rank with them, and their bearing is not respectful'.<sup>26</sup> The troops comprising the 'rabble army', which was 'without a leader and not even united among themselves', had refused to disband saying that 'they had rather die in the field than starve in the jungle'.<sup>27</sup> The soldiers had announced that crossing of the Chambal by the British army would be regarded as a hostile act.<sup>28</sup> The commander-in-chief, accompanied by the governor general, persisted nevertheless. On 29 December 1843, a fiercely fought battle took place at Maharajpur (district Morena, Madhya Pradesh), near Morena, on the main road from Dholpur to Gwalior. The British force was led by Gough. Gwalior soldiers put up a very stiff resistance. Victory for the British came at the cost of very severe losses, 'infinitely beyond' what the commander-in-chief had calculated upon. The total number of killed and wounded on the British side amounted to 797, including one officer of the rank of major general.<sup>29</sup> On the same date another engagement took place south of Gwalior at Panmar near Antri (district Gwalior), between a British force under Major General John Grey and Gwalior troops led by Major Alexander. More than 200 British troops were killed or wounded.<sup>30</sup>

A first-hand account by a soldier of the company, Captain William Herries, who participated in the battle, provides us with a glimpse of the nature of the fighting. In a letter written to his father immediately after the battle of Maharajpur, Herries wrote:

I write from the ground which we have today won from the Gwalior army, after a bloody and hard fought battle on their part. We have suffered severely in officers, the loss in men is not yet known. Our loss was almost entirely from the enemy's guns which were well secured, and skillfully placed, from 9 o'clock till 12 we were under a very heavy fire which robbed the service of many a good officer. ... We were handsomely noticed by the enemy's guns. The ground was such that it was quite impossible for cavalry to act, a tract of the most intricate and impracticable ravines were between us and the enemy's position and filled with matchlocksmen.

There were several things that struck me very much in the course of the day. I expected to see some marked effect produced after our guns opened, I thought they would immediately silence the enemy's battery, but altho' we had some 30 guns engaged I do not believe that they silenced a single gun or did any material damage among the enemy. This time that the Mahrattas were well covered by the ravines, and only the few men working the guns were exposed at all [sic]. On the other hand, their firing was excellent, they got the range to a nicety, and blew up two of our tumbrils in the course of the day. Their artillerymen stood to their guns to the very last and were bayoneted at their posts.<sup>31</sup>

Herries concluded his letter with the remark that

I have no doubt that our very heavy loss of men will excite enquiries in England and that it will be questioned whether with such a force as ours, a victory might not have been obtained with less sacrifice of life and yet more complete in its results.<sup>32</sup>

How very contemptuous the company's army was of the Gwalior soldiers is vividly illustrated by Herries's account of the death of a colleague due to a wound received on the battlefield. This colleague

had made rather a parade of coming out on a poney Arab with a cane in his hand, and some days before he said a stick was good enough to beat such fellows with. The night before the action he bet a lottery ticket that not a man would be touched by the enemy's shot.<sup>33</sup>

The valiant defence of Sindia territories by Gwalior soldiers ended in defeat. The company's army marched into the capital and disbanded the 'mutinous' contingents. Sindia's military strength was drastically reduced.

The reorganized contingents were placed under British officers.<sup>34</sup> A council of regency, packed exclusively with the company's nominees, was constituted, and the council was to function under the supervision of the resident. The year 1843 and not 1818 then marks the final submission of Gwalior.

As the process of disbanding the Sindia army got underway, the company's officials were particularly eager to get rid of the Purbias ('easterners'). Dirk Kolff has drawn attention to the tradition, which had a long history going back at least to the early sixteenth century, of recruiting Purbias as soldiers in Malwa. The Purbias belonged to the eastern Ganga plains, mainly the region of Awadh and Bhojpur. Kolff attributes the recruitment of Purbia troopers, initially by the Khalji saltanat of Malwa at the beginning of sixteenth century, to their search for new opportunities following the fall of the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur where they had earlier found employment in large numbers.<sup>35</sup>

Iqtidar Alam Khan has recently re-examined the question in his study *Gunpowder and Firearms*. Khan broadly agrees with Kolff's overall thesis, but does not regard the reason put forth by him for the large-scale recruitment of Purbias in Malwa armies to be in accordance with the available evidence. In Khan's view, Purbia recruitment in Malwa was not related so much to the eclipse of Sharqi rule as to their 'expertise in firearms'.<sup>36</sup> Purbias had emerged as specialists in the use of firearms, perhaps even before the Sharqi dynasty was ousted by the Lodis. The acquisition of this skill is linked by Khan to the ease with which saltpetre could be procured in the Bhojpur region. The availability of saltpetre 'presumably enabled warrior groups there to acquire expertise in making and handling of gunpowder at an early stage'.<sup>37</sup> Rulers in Malwa were keen to enlist Purbias for the expertise possessed by them in order to update their military technology. Khan accepts Kolff's argument that Purbia soldiers were recruited through Rajput chiefs of the Doab area.<sup>38</sup>

With time Purbias emerged as a community of specialist musketeers in the context of the Malwa armies. This pattern of recruitment continued into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Purbias constituted the core of the modernized infantry contingents of the Sindia state and demonstrated their continued effectiveness during the Anglo-Maratha wars. After 1818 the Purbias remained a well-knit and still fairly well-trained group, lending strength and cohesiveness to the Sindia infantry. Their community ties ensured that whenever there was a vacancy it was immediately filled from amongst the Purbia clans. We have already referred to Sleeman's remark that the Sindia army did not permit any unfilled position to remain unoccupied for long. What is more, as a group these soldiers were hostile to the British, a legacy of the prolonged struggle between the Marathas and the East India Company in which they had played such a crucial role.

Sleeman, who was entrusted with the task of dispersing the Purbias, stated in a report on the disbanded troops: 'None of them join the yeomanry



of the country ... as almost all were from our districts in the Doab, or from Oude ...'.<sup>39</sup> In another letter, he added that the people in villages and towns outside Gwalior had no sympathy for the infantry battalions as 'not a man among them was ever enlisted from the peasantry of the country'.<sup>40</sup> This might perhaps explain to some extent the inability of the Gwalior army to mobilize more widespread resistance to the company's military onslaught in 1843.

The 1843 campaign, it should be underlined, was not just a matter of checking the turbulent armed contingents of one of the Malwa states. In a broader sense it was aimed at taking the unfinished colonial agenda of 1818 to its logical conclusion. Dismantling the Sindia army and rendering it ineffective was vital in order to curb the relative independence that the Sindia ruling class continued to enjoy even after 1818. This independence provided space to the fairly confident indigenous business class of Malwa, with its links extending to Rajasthan, Gujarat, Sind and Bombay. The opium produce of Malwa was the main commodity in the network of commercial and financial relations that encompassed the region.

The Sindia state held the key to control over this network being the single largest free producer of the drug in India. Besides, its powerful presence and its defiance of the company's opium policies made the complete subjugation of the state, with annexation as a real possibility, the precondition for containment of the Malwa opium enterprise. The urgency of the 1843 campaign should be viewed in this context. The military offensive against Gwalior was part of a larger strategy that extended from China to Sind. The dates are significant and the events are no coincidence: First Opium War (1839–42), annexation of Sind (1843), Ellenborough's Gwalior campaign (1843). In the next section, an attempt will be made to trace the possible linkages between opium and the military potential of the Sindia state in the post-1818 period.

### **Opium in the Sindia economy**

Gwalior possessed one major resource, namely opium, the significance of which has not been adequately assessed in terms of the internal history of the state during the early nineteenth century. Although opium was produced in other Malwa states too, the Sindia state was by far the largest producer of the drug. In the 1820s Malwa was supplying nearly 20,000 chests of opium (each chest of 'Malwa opium' contained 140 lb of the drug) for the export market. This figure had doubled by the end of the 1840s. The territories of the Sindia state situated in Malwa accounted for about 40 to 50 per cent of the total Malwa produce.<sup>41</sup>

For several decades the East India Company attempted to monopolize Malwa opium, in the way it had brought the opium produce of the Ganga region ('Bengal opium') under its control, but was unsuccessful.<sup>42</sup> Initially (1805–20) it prohibited the export of the drug from the west coast to

prevent it from competing with Bengal opium in the China market. This was a goal the company was unable to attain. Rather, the trade in Malwa opium continued to expand. The company was then forced to give up its objective of having a market exclusively for Bengal opium. Instead, it attempted to establish a monopoly over Malwa opium, too, by trying to procure the entire produce of the region, and auctioning it along the pattern of Bengal opium. Malwa opium auctions commenced in 1821 and were held at Bombay (Mumbai).<sup>43</sup> The auctions were discontinued after 1830 since the company was unable to emerge as the sole supplier of the Malwa drug. From 1831 onwards private traders, both Indian and European, were allowed to export Malwa opium via Bombay on the payment of a moderate duty to the company.<sup>44</sup>

In the early 1820s, the company purchased supplies of opium for the Bombay auctions in the open market from private Malwa wholesale dealers. Finding that prices paid to private dealers were exorbitant, from 1824 onwards the company began to negotiate agreements with Malwa states whereby they were to procure the bulk of the opium produced in their respective territories, and supply it to the company at a specified fixed price. The fact that the British exercised no control over opium production, and the refusal of the Sindia state to accept a restrictive treaty, eventually forced the company to abandon its direct involvement with Malwa opium in 1831.<sup>45</sup>

It is not surprising that negotiations for imposing on the Sindia state a treaty that would give to the East India Company exclusive rights to the opium produce of the state reached a dead end during Baiza Bai's regency. Gwalior was the one state in Malwa that consistently avoided any firm commitment on the issue.<sup>46</sup> For the Sindias opium was not just a question of revenues. Conceding to the company control over the opium industry would have been a serious infringement of the internal autonomy of the Sindia state. For a state that was so sensitive with regard to its formal authority, granting such a privilege could not have been a matter of indifference.<sup>47</sup> Let us not, however, over-emphasize the symbolic meaning of not granting to the company exclusive rights over opium. More important were the material interests that were involved. The Sindia ruling elite looked upon opium as a critical financial resource. Although this requires further investigation, it could be suggested that opium helped the state to offset the losses it suffered in the second and third Anglo-Maratha wars. It is difficult otherwise to account for the relative stability of the state in the first half of the nineteenth century or its capacity to maintain a large army till 1844. The army, it should be borne in mind, could no longer be sustained through wars of conquest or raiding expeditions after 1818.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Sindia state was earning a large revenue from opium through customs duties, sales tax and the state's share of produce on land.<sup>48</sup> It is not possible to quantify these items due to the paucity of source material. This was originally one of the objectives

of my ongoing research on the political economy of Malwa in the early nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the available documents of the Sindia state do not provide figures that could be used for the purpose of estimating the revenue from opium.<sup>49</sup> There are no centralized statistics for this period and land records are mostly title deeds. Yet it is possible to extrapolate the gross value of opium for the Sindia economy from figures available for the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Of the approximately 20,000 chests of opium then produced in Malwa for the export market, the share of the Sindia state was roughly half, or about 10,000 chests. In the early 1830s, the wholesale price of a chest of opium (the price at which west coast exporters procured the drug from the Malwa wholesale markets) did not fall below Rs.600 per chest.<sup>50</sup> Taking this as the minimum price, the total worth of the opium enterprise for the Sindia economy works out at Rs.6 million even at a conservative estimate. Whereas it is not possible to estimate the opium component of the state's revenues or the proportion of the gross value of opium that went to the state, it is noteworthy that earnings from opium represent an appreciable figure when placed alongside the total revenue of the state in the early 1830s when it stood at Rs.9,510,415.<sup>51</sup>

The overall revenue yielded by major opium producing tracts can be taken as an indicator of the relative importance of the drug for the economy. For instance, the Mandsaur *pargana*, consisting of just five *mahals* (the revenue unit immediately above a village), was the highest revenue paying unit of the size of a *pargana* (district) in the entire state. In 1833–34 it was assessed at Rs.1,100,000. This represented an appreciable sum in relation to the overall revenue of the state assessed at a little less than Rs.10 million. These sums represent the values of the respective revenue farms. If we add to the Mandsaur *pargana* the revenues of adjoining tracts (Jawad, Jiran, Satmahla and Agar), the total comes to about Rs.2 million. In other words, this small corner of the Sindia state produced nearly one-fifth of the state's revenue.<sup>52</sup> Mandsaur was a major opium producing *pargana*. Moreover, *sahukars* (big merchants) and *mahajans* (bankers, moneylenders) in the Sindia state controlled much of the regional wholesale trade in the drug. It may be mentioned that west coast exporters were totally dependent on Malwa wholesale dealers for their supplies. Ujjain was the main financial and commercial centre of Malwa, and the neighbouring city of Barnagar was the principal centre of the Malwa opium trade in northern, western and central India. Both these cities were located in the Sindia state.

Apart from the revenue that the cultivation and production of the drug yielded to the state and various intermediaries, there were the returns that investments in the opium enterprise brought to bankers, the landed aristocracy and members of the royal family. Some of these investments were of the nature of speculative advances to the state by *ijaradars* (revenue farmers) who then maximized their income by promoting opium cultivation. Quite a few leading *ijaradars*, as for instance Appa Gangadhar who held the contract for opium-rich Mandsaur till the late 1820s, earned

profits by directly arranging for supply of opium to markets located along the smuggling route.<sup>53</sup> Then there were the big banking firms, which stood surety for the *ijaradars* or extended loans to the state against future revenues. The prospect of massive earnings from opium during the 1820s, when smuggling was at its peak, naturally increased the values of the revenue farms. The *ijaras* and personal landed estates should be viewed as captive sources of opium supply. This in turn provided the ruling elite with an opportunity to amass huge private fortunes.

At the same time sufficient cash reserves were available to the state thereby reinforcing the stability of the ruling elite.<sup>54</sup> The official (royal) treasury of the Sindia state, called the *Ganga Jali*, reportedly had a reserve of Rs.30 million at the time of Daulat Rao's death. He is supposed to have 'prided himself upon never taking from, and always adding to, it'.<sup>55</sup> Baiza Bai added another Rs.10 million to the treasury so that in 1833 Sindia reserves stood at 40 million.<sup>56</sup> It is not unlikely that opium revenues (primarily land revenue, transit duties and taxes on the sale of opium) contributed to the healthy state of the *Ganga Jali*. There is no definite statement to this effect, but an inference can be drawn from the suggestion that the reserves kept increasing till the end of Daulat Rao's reign despite the constraints of the post-1818 situation. Baiza Bai's significant addition within a short period of just five to six years should be attributed partly to her own well-known financial skills (she was a prosperous banker) and partly to the large-scale smuggling of opium from Malwa to the west coast during the 1820s.

Unlike the situation that prevailed until the end of the 1820s, there are hardly any references to the direct involvement of high officials, big landowners, and/or bankers associated with the *darbar* in the opium trade in colonial records of the late 1830s. It seems that the speculative ventures that the clandestine trade had given rise to attracted massive investments in the drug so that these sections of the elite participated in such ventures. With the introduction of the pass system and the emergence of Bombay as the main outlet for Malwa opium, the returns were not sufficiently alluring for the Sindia elite to associate with the trade in a big way.<sup>57</sup> We would do well to remember that the Maratha aristocracy of Malwa, a section of which had actively participated in the opium enterprise, did not become a major component of the modern business class of western India.

This was the trend throughout Malwa and the class of revenue farmers-cum-bankers-cum-officials formerly typified by people like Gokul Parakh, the chief minister at the Gwalior *darbar*, preferred, by the mid-1830s, to make use of positions at the *darbar* to augment their incomes in less risky ways through revenue farming, interest on loans to the state, discounting bills of exchange and profits from military contracts.<sup>58</sup> It goes without saying that many of those who belonged to this class had initially accumulated their wealth by speculating in opium.<sup>59</sup>

A new breed of bankers, the most outstanding of whom was Mani Ram, began to dominate the Sindia economy from the 1830s onwards. Mani Ram held

the largest revenue farm in the state. The territories entrusted to him lay in the vicinity of Gwalior and were valued about Rs.2 million.<sup>60</sup> The stability that this class had acquired – a development in which earlier earnings from opium played no insignificant part – made it look towards more secure returns from long-term linkages with the state. It also meant that this class had a stake in maintaining the autonomy of the Sindia state, leading eventually to a breakdown in relations with the company and the military campaign of 1843–44. The implications, which the complete subjugation of the Sindia state had in terms of its failure to emerge as a potential launching pad for indigenous capitalist enterprise, needs to be understood against the backdrop of the crucial developments of the period 1818–44, some of which we have attempted highlight in this chapter. This, of course, is part of the larger story of how indirect rule slowed down the development of princely states in colonial India.

## Conclusion

The early nineteenth-century history of the Sindia state allows us to view indirect rule as an evolving strategy of imperial control. The subjugation of respective princely states in the Indian subcontinent was an ongoing process at least until the suppression of the Revolt of 1857, requiring at times repeated use of force. It would be inaccurate to deny agency to these states. They were not passive recipients of colonial policy either in the initial moment of imposition of indirect rule or in subsequent relations with the British. Further, the terms of indirect rule were not uniform, varying from state to state. These terms were products of different historical situations and frequently, as in the case of the Sindias, constantly renegotiated. A large and quite cohesive army, the bulk of which was physically present in the Capital, together with a thriving opium economy, were twin factors that contributed to Gwalior's strength *vis-à-vis* the company. In the long run several sections of society in the Sindia state developed a tradition of resistance to colonial domination that was to surface yet again in 1857–58.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, it was after the revolt that the entire Sindia ruling class capitulated, finally and completely.

## Notes

- 1 Sindia (also spelt Scindia, Sindhia, or Scindhia) is the anglicized version of Shinde (Śinde). In the colonial period, especially the early nineteenth century onwards, the 'Sindia state' was usually referred to as 'Gwalior state' or just 'Gwalior', Gwalior being the capital of the state. However, Gwalior became the seat of the Sindia rulers only in the 1810s.
- 2 The Malwa plateau, located at the junction of northern, central and western India, constitutes the western portion of the present-day Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. Numerous rulers, ranging from the powerful Sindias to the petty-chieftains of Amjhera and Sailana, controlled different parts of the

plateau. The Sindias possessed the largest chunk of territory, although some of their territories were situated adjacent to but outside Malwa. Gwalior itself lies to the north of Malwa. For the colonial period, the five-volume *Central India State Gazetteer Series* provides the most useful introduction to these states. See C.E. Luard *et al.*, *Central India State Gazetteer Series*, Calcutta: Thacker Spink, 1908, especially vols I, II, III and V. It is necessary to clarify that whereas in the colonial geographical perception of India, Malwa was regarded as part of central India, historically and culturally it would be more accurate to see it as part of the extensive zone of settled agrarian societies of northern India (the nomenclature of the state of Madhya, i.e. 'central', Pradesh notwithstanding). The Vindhya hills constitute the southern boundary of this zone. I have therefore preferred placing the Sindia state in northern India.

- 3 Mahadji Sindia was the real architect of the Sindia kingdom, and the dominant Maratha leader in Malwa, as well as north India, during the latter half of the eighteenth century.
- 4 A lengthy note prepared by John Malcolm (the principal colonial official in Malwa at the time of the third Anglo-Maratha war) on the hostility exhibited by Sindia officials in the context of a commercial dispute in which Malcolm had tried to intervene, brings out sharply the difficulties faced by the company in exercising effective control over the day-to-day affairs of the state. John Malcolm, 3 March 1821, National Archives of India (hereafter NAI), Separate Revenue Branch Consultations, 23 April 1821, no. 2.
- 5 Cf. Amar Farooqui, 'From Baiza Bai to Lakshmi Bai: The Sindia State in the Early Nineteenth Century and the Roots of 1857', in Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Issues in Modern Indian History: For Sumit Sarkar*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2000, pp. 47–61.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 53–8.
- 7 Though the opposition could assume more violent forms, we are referring here to those 'everyday' forms of resistance enumerated in a different context by James Scott: foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, slander and sabotage. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Indian edition, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 29. This resistance was not confined to the elite, but occurred at the popular level as well, as may be seen in the actions of the Gwalior soldiers in 1843. Another example was the short-lived and unsuccessful anti-British rebellion of Lallaji Patel. For details, see Amar Farooqui, 'Towards Dussehra 1831: The Revolt of Lallaji Patel', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 35:2, 1998, 147–77.
- 8 The term usually used for the resident was *wakil* (ambassador; agent; representative). In terms of court protocol, this made him indistinguishable from the *wakils* or representatives/news-writers of other indigenously ruled states in attendance on the *darbar*. The routine appointment of *wakils* to various courts by rulers, chiefs and big landowners was a common practice in north India. As late as 1832, it was noted that the Gwalior resident was

considered as an appendage of the Court, who can be summoned any day or at any hour to dance attendance ... on the Court as the Company's Vaqueel [wakil], to sit on the ground without shoes on the left side instead of the right side, which is the place of honour, of the Maharaja's throne.

14 July 1832, NAI, Foreign Department Misc.  
(hereafter FD Misc.), vol. 235.

- 9 For more details on the rise and expansion of the Maratha empire, see Stewart Gordon, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol. II, IV, *The Marathas: 1600–1818*, Indian edition, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

- 10 Maratha lineages in Malwa had their roots in western Maharashtra.
- 11 In 1843, the leading revenue farmers (*ijaradars*) were Naroo Vishnu Apte, Ram Rao Pandurang and Hurriba Anna. NAI, Foreign Department Political (hereafter FDP), 23 March 1844, no. 913.
- 12 The Rajputs were a major Kshatriya or warrior caste group of north India. Through a long process of migration, settlement and/or assumption of the Rajput identity ('Rajputization') since the early medieval period, Rajput lineages had established superior rights over land. These lineages frequently became the basis for state formation in different parts of north India. Cf. Surajit Sinha, 'State Formation and the Rajput Myth in Central India', reprinted in H. Kulke (ed.), *The State in India 1000–1700*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 304ff.
- 13 Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, 1882, vol. II, pp. 95–102.
- 14 A singular feature of Sindia kingship in the early nineteenth century was that several successive rulers did not have any male offspring. In the absence of direct male descendants, successors to the *gaddi* could only be found by resorting to adoptions. While Daulat Rao himself was closely related to Mahadji, his two immediate successors, Jankoji (1827–43) and Jiyaji (1843–86), were distant relatives of the respective rulers whom they were chosen to succeed. Moreover, both Jankoji and Jiyaji had humble origins and came from families that had not had any access to political power. Given this situation, Sindia monarchy in the early nineteenth century had to be based on a wide consensus. In order to be stable it had to have the support of military chiefs, senior Maratha *sardars* or clan chiefs, the army and powerful bankers. The prolonged minority of Jankoji as well as of Jiyaji, and the long spell of rule by regents or councils of regency made the support of these sections indispensable, thereby enabling them to have some share in political power. Cf. Amar Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion: Colonialism, Indian Merchants and the Politics of Opium, 1790–1843*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005, chapter II.
- 15 Perron went over the East India Company. Herbert Compton, *Particular Account of the European Military Adventurers of Hindustan from 1784 to 1803*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892, pp. 31, 46–8, 229.
- 16 Randolph G.S. Cooper, 'Wellington and the Marathas in 1803', *The International History Review*, XI:1, 1989, no. 33. In colonial writings, the Pindaris are invariably labelled 'freebooters'. They were originally one of the numerous people living on the fringes of settled society in Malwa. During the eighteenth century, they found a place in Maratha military organization. For the Marathas the Pindaris were a self-sustaining auxiliary force. Apart from constituting a low-cost cavalry, the Pindaris had other uses. They effectively harassed and inflicted losses on the enemy with their hit-and-run tactics, plundered retreating troops, and served to generally demoralize the local support bases of the opponent by striking terror through their swift and unpredictable raids. By the early nineteenth century, 'Pindari' had become a generic expression in Malwa for bands of mercenaries who combined soldiering with rapid raiding expeditions. James Tod, 'Origin, Progress and Present State [of the] Pindarras', October 1811, NAI, FD Misc., vol. 124; R. Jenkins, 'Memorandum Relative to the Pindarries', 1812, in *Papers Respecting the Pindarry and Mahratta Wars*, NAI, FD Misc. vol. 124A; John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India, including Malwa and Adjoining Provinces*, London: Kingsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1823, Indian reprint, New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1970, vol. I, chapter X. See also B.K. Sinha, *The Pindaris: 1798–1818*, Calcutta: Bookland, 1971; S.N. Sen, *The Military System of the Marathas*, Bombay: Orient Longman, 1958, pp. 74ff.
- 17 Cooper, 'Wellington', p. 32.

- 18 John Blakiston, *Twelve Years' Military Adventure in Three Quarters of the Globe*, London: Henry Colburn, 1829, vol. I, p. 175.
- 19 A.S. Bennell, 'The Anglo-Maratha War of 1803–5', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, LXIII:255, 1985, 148.
- 20 NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 221.
- 21 Ibid.; W.H. Sleeman, 19 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 446.
- 22 NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 221.
- 23 See Farooqui in Pati (ed.), 'Baiza Bai', pp. 55–63.
- 24 Ellenborough, 'Minute on the Gwalior Question', 1 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 261.
- 25 Lt. Col. W.H. Sleeman, Agent to the Governor General, Sindia's Dominions, to Govt. of India, 21 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 220.
- 26 Sleeman to F. Currie, Secretary, Govt. of India, 24 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 360.
- 27 Letter of Capt. William Robert Herries, 14 December 1843, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London, European Manuscripts (Herries Correspondence).
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Gen. Sir Hugh Gough, Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, to Governor General, 4 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1843, no. 408.
- 30 Maj. Gen. John Grey, to Commander-in-chief, 30 December 1844, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, p. 408.
- 31 Herries, 29 (?) December 1843, Herries Correspondence.
- 32 Ibid. This is a continuation of the letter, but dated 22 January 1844.
- 33 Herries, undated letter, Herries Correspondence.
- 34 C.E. Luard and D.N. Sheopuri, *Gwalior State Gazetteer, The Central India State Gazetteer Series*, vol. I, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1908, pp. 38–9.
- 35 Dirk H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450–1850*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 87–9, 160–3.
- 36 Iqtidar Alam Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms: Warfare in Medieval India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 221.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, pp. 88–9; Khan, *Gunpowder*, pp. 221–2.
- 39 Sleeman, 11 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 568.
- 40 Sleeman, 28 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 678.
- 41 Farooqui, *Smuggling*, pp. 89–95.
- 42 By 1797, after various experiments, the company had introduced a policy under which all the opium produced in its territories in eastern India was directly appropriated from the peasants. Opium cultivation was strictly regulated through the grant of licences to producers. Opium was procured in the raw, semi-liquid state from poppy cultivators and processed by the company in its own establishments. The bulk of this opium was intended for export, mainly to China. Om Prakash, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II, V, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 327ff.
- 43 Later, for a few years, auctions were held simultaneously at Bombay and Calcutta.
- 44 For the company's early Malwa opium policy, see *Parliamentary Papers, Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, 1831, VI, Appendix IV (no. 320 D).
- 45 Farooqui, *Smuggling*, pp. 122–34.
- 46 Ibid., pp. 133–4.



- 47 In a situation where there could be prolonged disputes over the smallest of ceremonial procedures, the company's attempt to monopolize the opium produce of the state could scarcely have been looked upon as a minor affair. The *darbar*, for instance, jealously guarded its prerogative to determine court etiquette relating to interaction with the company's officials. It may be recalled that even residents were not accorded any diplomatic courtesy at this point of time by the Sindia state. At the *darbar*, the resident was required to sit on the ground, without his shoes or boots. That this was considered a snub by the British is evidenced by the fact that, after its triumph in the 1843 campaign, the company insisted that the resident be allowed to wear his shoes and sit on a chair at the *darbar*. Sindia officials were, however, unwilling to modify court etiquette for the benefit of colonial officials below the rank of the resident. See NAI, FDP, 12 February 1844, no. 588. See also note 8, above.
- 48 Poppy fields were assessed at a much higher rate (often five to ten times higher), as compared to other cultivated land. Farooqui, *Smuggling*, p. 87.
- 49 The main repository for the records of the Sindia state is the Gwalior Record Room of the Madhya Pradesh State Archives, Bhopal.
- 50 See itemized charges per chest, 18 November 1832, Jardine Matheson Archives, Cambridge University Library, reel 26, no. 2821.
- 51 NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 223.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 Cf. Farooqui, *Smuggling*, pp. 154–5. The main route for smuggling opium between Malwa and the west coast was overland via Pali in Rajasthan to the port of Karachi in Sind. From Karachi the opium was shipped along the coast to the Portuguese enclave of Daman. The proximity of Daman to Bombay allowed the opium exporters of Bombay to use Daman as a transit port for shipping opium to China. This route remained in use until the occupation of Karachi by the British in 1839 as a prelude to the annexation of Sind in 1843. For more details, see Farooqui, *Smuggling*, chapters V–VI. See also J.Y. Wong, 'British Annexation of Sind in 1843: An Economic Perspective', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31:2, 1997, 225–44.
- 54 A report on the administration of the Sindia state, written in 1856 by S.C. Macpherson, the political agent at Gwalior, states that up to 1833

Revenues were collected by a small number of Farmers' General, interested in the prosperity of their districts through holding permanent contracts; and by the three chief military commandants, to whom the more warlike tracts were entrusted. Those collector prefects exercised every function of civil administration, while they were nearly all, excepting the commandants, Mahratta Pundits, and, employed exclusively the agency of that clerkly and sacerdotal class, which ... has ever dominated as a bureaucracy in each state.

S.C. Macpherson, Political Agent, Gwalior, to R. Hamilton,  
Agent, Central India, 13 December 1856, NAI, Central India  
Agency Records, Gwalior Residency, no. 267, pp. 4–5.

- 55 Letter of Sleeman, 21 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 220.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 For those investors who had an imperfect knowledge of the China market, dealing in opium was a high-risk venture. Otherwise, too, the trade was subject to considerable fluctuations during the 1820s and 1830s. Carl Trocki has pointed out that 'the system lurched out of control' in this period and that 'there were a series of booms and busts in the trade and a constant tendency to speculate, which in the short run, made the trade seem very risky'. Carl A. Trocki, *Opium*,

*Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade, 1750–1950*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 94.

- 58 For the links between the prominent bankers and the army, see Farooqui, *Smuggling*, pp. 57–61.
- 59 It is obvious that speculating in opium must have led to several bankruptcies as well. Curiously, Appa Gangadhar disappears from the records in the 1830s and more research is required on the local history of the Mandsaur area to find out what exactly happened to him and his family.
- 60 NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844, no. 223.
- 61 The Sindia state (the capital in particular) was a major centre of the Revolt of 1857.

## 5 The agrarian system of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir

A study of colonial settlement policies, 1860–1905

*Shakti Kak*

This chapter traces the ruptures and continuities in the pattern of agrarian relations as a result of colonial intervention in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir between 1860 and 1905. The focus is on the valley of Kashmir although reference is made to the other provinces of the state wherever material or information is relevant to the analysis. The pattern and system of collection of land revenue by the Dogra rulers and the proposed settlement policies of the British are analysed. It is argued that the settlement guidelines as formulated by the British administrators led to the evolution of policies governing occupancy rights, period of lease and systematic method of revenue calculation and collection. Attempts were made to bring new areas under cultivation and cultivators were given occupancy rights so long as they paid the taxes. The British, however, did not attempt to change the existing structure of landholdings that consisted of large *jagirs* (estates) given out by the Sikh and Dogra rulers to the members and relatives of the royal family and to such other families whose loyalty was crucial to the rulers.<sup>1</sup> The policies of British intervention implemented through land settlement and other administrative measures created new power structures that left existing exploitative conditions in place. The primary interest of the colonial administration was to generate revenues, and intervention in state administration and the system of tax assessment and collection was designed to ensure this. This chapter describes the land revenue practices of earlier times, followed by a discussion of the method of revenue collection practiced by the Dogra rulers and, finally, analyses the settlement policies of the British and their impact on society in general.

### **Background**

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, as it emerged in 1846, was the largest state in British India; it comprised three main administrative divisions: the valley of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh.<sup>2</sup> These areas had varied geographic and physical features. The population in these regions varied, too, with the valley of Kashmir predominantly Muslim, a Hindu majority in Jammu and the people of Ladakh made up of Buddhists and

Muslims in equal proportions. The areas of Jammu and Kashmir had witnessed the successive rule of the Afghans (1753–1819) and the Sikhs (1819–46) since the middle of the eighteenth century. Both ruled with the help of governors – there were fourteen during the Afghan and twelve during the Sikh period. Gulab Singh, a Dogra Rajput, had become an important ally of the Sikhs through various wars and campaigns, particularly the one in which Kashmir was captured in 1819. As a reward, Gulab Singh was given the territory of Jammu for the purpose of revenue collection in 1820. Subsequently, in 1822, he was conferred the hereditary title of raja of the principality of Jammu.<sup>3</sup> As a vassal of the Sikh rulers, Gulab Singh, along with his two brothers Dhyani Singh and Suchet Singh, ‘succeeded in amassing land and wealth both in the plains and the hill states to the north of the Punjab’.<sup>4</sup> Within a few years, the three brothers had control over 85 *jagirs* bordering the valley of Kashmir. The successful military campaign against Ladakh in 1834 made it a vassal kingdom of Jammu thus enhancing the prestige of the Dogras in the eyes of the Sikhs. However, during the course of the successive Anglo-Sikh wars, Gulab Singh was increasingly veering towards the British. With the defeat of the Sikhs in 1846 and their inability to pay war reparations in cash to the British, they had to cede the territories ‘between the rivers Beas and Indus, including the provinces of Kashmir and Hazara’.<sup>5</sup> The British did not find it feasible to retain the northern territories, as Sutlej was the outer limit of the British dominion in 1846, which was 300 miles away from Kashmir. The English East India Company also wanted to reward Gulab Singh for the tacit support they had got from him during their military campaigns in the Punjab. Hence, the territories of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh were awarded to Gulab Singh for a sum of 750,000 pounds sterling, in ‘recognition of his services to the British crown’, thus defining the boundaries of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>6</sup>

### *The treaties*

In 1846, after the defeat of the Sikhs, the East India Company signed two treaties. The Treaty of Peace was ratified at Lahore on 9 March 1846 between the British and the Sikhs (who accepted Dalip Singh as maharaja on the Lahore throne under British protection). The Treaty of Amritsar was signed on 16 March 1846 with Gulab Singh, leading to the creation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The areas included Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Hunza, Nagar and Gilgit. Mridu Rai points out that the only fully consenting parties in this were the English East India Company and Gulab Singh, the raja of Jammu. The Treaty of Amritsar is said to have been a reward to Gulab Singh for ‘remaining neutral during the Anglo-Sikh hostilities’, although he had to pay for the territories given him by the British.<sup>7</sup> The Treaty maintained in Article VIII that Gulab Singh’s

accession to sovereignty was

conditional upon his respecting various ‘Articles of Agreement’ concluded between the East India Company and Lahore (with the erstwhile Sikh rulers) on 9 March 1846. ... The British had undertaken to ‘respect the *bona fide* rights’ of the *jagirdars* [landholders] appointed by the Sikhs in territories now ceded to the Company and ‘to maintain’ them in ‘their possession during their lives’.<sup>8</sup>

The new Dogra rulers were, therefore, under the obligation to accept the *jagirs* as gifts to members of the erstwhile royal family, state officials and members of the social elite and frozen in terms of revenue to be raised. The Treaty of Amritsar ‘bound the Dogras to a subordinate alliance with the British’.<sup>9</sup> Teng *et al.* maintain that the Dogra rulers recognized the British paramountcy and ‘agreed to pay tribute to them’.<sup>10</sup> One of the clauses of the Treaty defined the boundaries of the state and these could not be changed ‘without the concurrence of the British government’.<sup>11</sup> Teng *et al.* argue that the ‘rights and privileges’ and ‘sovereignty and power’ of the maharaja of the princely state were in fact empty attributes and that this was not much different from the situation prevalent in other states. ‘Like the other Indian states, Jammu and Kashmir was also subject to the operation of the British power which was bound by no limits and Treaty stipulations.’<sup>12</sup>

Soon after the Treaty, the British kept issuing warnings to the Dogras regarding ineffective state administration and the need to establish ‘their jurisdiction within the territories of the state’ by posting their officials.<sup>13</sup> Navneeta C. Behera states that although the state of Jammu and Kashmir was not a part of British territory, its ‘independence was at best nominal’.<sup>14</sup> Chitralkha Zutshi argues that though there may be several parallels between Kashmir and various regions of British India, the colonial impact in Kashmir was mediated through the Dogra state. She states that this kind of mediation was in evidence in many princely states including Hyderabad and Baroda. As a result, some colonial policies were resisted and transformed even before implementation; in other instances, particularly in the realm of administrative bureaucracy, the Dogra rulers sought to emulate their colonial masters.<sup>15</sup> The British appointed an ‘Officer on Special Duty’ in the state in 1852, ostensibly to take care of the European visitors to Kashmir.<sup>16</sup> The involvement of the British in running the state administration got stronger with the status of the Officer on Special Duty being changed to that of Resident in 1885.<sup>17</sup> In 1889, the maharaja was divested of all his powers and a council was constituted to run the administration of the state. Teng *et al.* maintain that the powers of the council and its president were only nominal and ‘real power lay with the British resident under whose supervision and control the council functioned and who was the final arbiter and authority in all the matters of administration’.<sup>18</sup> Through this control, the British were able to intervene in the state’s administration, including assessment and collection of land revenue.

### ***Land revenue practices in earlier times***

Before the arrival of the Dogras, the people of Kashmir had witnessed various rulers and dynasties as well as undergone numerous phases of state formation and revenue generation. The practice of land grants to a few families in exchange for loyalty and support continued throughout the centuries. The rulers generated resources by levying a number of taxes besides collecting land revenue from cultivators. Details about the volume of land revenue collected are not available for the early medieval period. A clear pattern of land taxes, also known as *nasaq*, appears to have evolved during the Mughal period in Kashmir.<sup>19</sup> To maintain economic and political stability in the state, Emperor Akbar sent a five-member team in 1589 to formulate 'the pattern of land revenue assessment and to determine the nature and volume of collection'.<sup>20</sup> Thus, a detailed report about the nature of land, its classification, production and appropriation was prepared. As Hangloo has argued, 'the new assessment of land and its revenues, carried out by these officials, made it extremely difficult for the corrupt officials to continue their practice of depriving both the State and the peasants of their due shares'.<sup>21</sup> Revenue administration was thoroughly reorganized by the Mughals with the creation of positions such as *patwari*, *tahsildar*, *amil*, *fotedar*, *munsif*, *qanungo*, *chaudhri*, *dewan* and others.<sup>22</sup>

Revenue generation was based on activities related to agriculture, village manufacturing and wood carving, weaving of woollen cloth, basket making, papier mache, silver and copper work, shawl and carpet making, leather and furs. Most of these enterprises were situated in and around Srinagar. Taxes on all these economic activities and the import and export of various commodities provided revenue for the rulers, in particular the export of shawls and carpets. However, land taxes, both in kind and cash, formed a vital component of the revenue. Hence, it was important to encourage prosperous and diverse agricultural activities, including the cultivation of grains and fruits.

### ***Dogra rulers and land revenue policies***

Subsequent to the Mughal period, the Afghan, Sikh and Dogra rulers retained, with minor variations, the practice of land grants and the old system of revenue generation. The Dogra rulers assigned *jagirs* to influential and loyal families for services to the state, to religious trusts and institutions and for political exigencies.<sup>23</sup> The institution of *jagirdari* provided prestige as well as power associated with the collection of revenue for the state. *Jagirdars* imposed various levies and taxes on the farmers as a number of corrupt practices entered the administration of revenue collection. In some cases, they took charge of land that was not part of their *jagir* and in others the cultivator was made to pay much higher taxes than was his due. Maharaja Gulab Singh issued a proclamation on 6 September 1847 in which

‘the complicated system of allotting land to cultivators, of calculating the government share of the produce and fixing the rate at which the grain was to be purchased and sold to the farmer’ was retained in the manner of the Sikh rulers.<sup>24</sup> The land was considered the property of the ruler, called *Khalisa*, which was partly given out as grants (*jagirs*) and partly assigned to cultivators every year in proportion to the strength of the family.<sup>25</sup> Bamzai states that during the Dogra period, the cultivator ‘had no right of ownership or even of occupancy over the land he tilled’.<sup>26</sup> There were very few hereditary occupants and often the cultivators would shift to other villages, depending on the location of the plot assigned to them by the *kardar*, the official in charge of cultivation in a group of villages.

The cultivators had to pay levies to cover the share of the state, the revenue officers and the additional state taxes demanded by the ruler from time to time. Maharaja Gulab Singh retained the system ‘under which the State took half the share of the *kharif* crop (harvested in spring) and four *traks* per *kharwar*. The Rabi crop (harvested in autumn) was taxed at half-share of the produce, and three *traks* per *kharwar*, in addition to various other cesses’.<sup>27</sup> Other taxes to be paid by the cultivator were *nazarana* (levied four times a year) and the *tambol* (to be paid at the time of a marriage in the royal family). Zutshi points out that land taxes were charged at differential rates from Kashmiri Pandits, Sayyids and Pirzadas.<sup>28</sup> These formed the social elite in the state and were charged lower tax rates.

It has been observed in some studies that the volume of revenue to be paid by the cultivator to the Dogra rulers was extremely steep. In his communication dated 21 August 1878, F. Henvey, Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir stated that although the government is supposed to take ‘about one half of the gross produce, and generally in kind’, this is not ‘observed in respect of rice, of which more than half is taken by the state from the *zamindar*, who, on the other hand is to some extent compensated by receiving more than the stated share of miscellaneous grains, such as millet, maize and the like.’ Henvey goes on to note that this informal arrangement for the collection of larger amounts of *shali* (rice) as tax created situations during periods of shortages in which the revenue officials deprived the cultivators of their whole crop.<sup>29</sup>

Among the long list of taxes to be paid by the people, Khan states that for every 32 *traks* of *kharif* crop, the revenue to be paid was 21 *traks* and 11.75 seers (nearly two *traks*) in kind and for Rabi crop it was 20 *traks* and 6.75 in kind. Other common taxes included the *russo-dart* (a tax to be paid by each house in the village and varied from 4 to 20 annas), fruit tax (75 per cent of the annual produce), animal tax (two to three sheep and goats annually), pony tax (one pony every year), *pattu* (tweed) tax (one *loie* [blanket] annually), poultry tax (1–10 poultry annually), ghee (half a *seer* of ghee per dairy cow annually) and taxes on products such as honey and firewood.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, cash rates were levied on wheat, barley, *mussoor*, flax, *oorud*, *tel*, *moong* and *cotton*. T.D. Forsyth, Officiating Secretary to the Punjab

Government, noted in 1863 that the collection of taxes in Kashmir was made both in cash and kind.<sup>31</sup> Taxes were levied in kind for *shali* and wheat and in cash on tobacco and other smaller crops. There were various other taxes on a wide range of activities and products like taxes on production of silk, shawl, orchards, saffron, dried poppy heads, registration of marriages and several other activities, which could be termed artisanal and home-based production activities. The rulers used various occasions and ceremonies to levy different types of cesses and taxes, which were eventually collected from the cultivators with a large number of intermediaries consisting of state officials and community representatives. The British considered this a wasteful method of collecting revenues.

The state controlled the sale of grains through its granaries at the prices determined by it. Zutshi points out that this was the case even in other princely states in earlier times.<sup>32</sup> However, during the late nineteenth century, grain markets in other princely states had been deregulated and the British wanted to do the same in Kashmir. It was argued that the state control of grain trade led to a corrupt administration, especially during periods of scarcity.

The need for proper land revenue settlement and efficient revenue administration was recognized by Nisbet, Secretary to the Government of India, who argued that 'as more than three-fourths of the revenue of the Kashmir state was drawn from land and the cultivating classes', the method and scale of land revenue collection was crucial.<sup>33</sup> It was possible to increase the revenue yield from agriculture as 'the soil of Kashmir [was] the most fertile in the world'. Both the Settlement Officer and the Officer on Special Duty observed that the Kashmiri cultivators were ingenious and easily understood superior agricultural practices such as grafting, and raising of vegetable crops alongside artisanal activities. In good agricultural years, there were enough grains produced in the valley to meet the demand for food grains. The grain collected by the government was put in public granaries and supplied at fixed rates to the army, officials and the urban population. However, the years of drought and other natural calamities during 1877 to 1880 brought misery to the people as the government fell short of grains for distribution among the city and village population. According to the official reports by F. Henvey, the population of Srinagar declined from 127,400 to 88,000 during this period. He states that a shawl trader from France noted that, after the famines, the population of weavers in Srinagar had gone down from nearly 30,000 to 4,000. This meant that orders from France could not be executed 'for want of hands'.<sup>34</sup> The British argued that the recurring famines could only be mitigated by a more efficient revenue settlement system. As Zutshi points out, the British perceived the existing system as chaotic and fraudulent; they maintained that issuing grains at fixed rates to the city population, collection of taxes in kind, and corrupt revenue administration led to problems in the agricultural sector, not least in regard to the full realization of taxes.<sup>35</sup>



### Settlement policies during the British period

A. Wingate was sent to the state in 1887 to introduce a new assessment system followed by Walter Lawrence in 1889.<sup>36</sup> These officials, particularly Lawrence, had conducted the settlement in the Punjab. Both Wingate and Lawrence had to reckon with certain constraints in arriving at the assessments for various villages. The state had to recognize the previously awarded *jagirs*. All *chakdars*, and *jagirdars* (both owners of estates of different types and largely absentee landlords) were recognized as *assamis* or cultivators, which meant that they could not be divested of their large landholdings which were often not utilized in the most efficient manner. As Khan points out, the new assessment system, as proposed by the colonial administrators, did not remove the oppressive elements of the old system. 'The relations between the State, the cultivator and the landlord remained as before.'<sup>37</sup> Various types of *jagirs* were allowed to remain with what they were granted on account of the services rendered by the assignees to the state. Every *jagirdar* had certain villages either wholly or partly assigned to him as a *jagir* and he collected the revenue from these *jagirs*. The *jagirdars* and *chakdars* acted as intermediaries who neither cultivated the land themselves nor delivered the correct amount of revenue to the state. There were a large number of absentee landlords who were normally engaged in other occupations and got the land cultivated by tenants-at-will or subtenants. Three types of tenants prevailed in the state: *mustaqil kashthkar* (permanent cultivators), tenants-at-will (who did not enjoy any rights of occupancy) and subtenants (who cultivated land in lieu of wages). Land was also granted to religious trusts, particularly *dharamarth*, from whom no revenue was collected.

Wingate criticized the prevailing practice of tenants-at-will, which led to the cultivators shifting in and out of cultivation and villages. This was considered inimical to efficient agricultural practice and it was suggested that the cultivator ought to be given occupancy rights to the land he cultivated. In his 'Preliminary Report of the Settlement Operations in Kashmir and Jammu' of 1888, A. Wingate argued:

The Darbar appears to be under the impression that it can govern much as a zamindar manages a private estate by farming with tenants-at-will. Any such delusion ought to be dissipated by the facts disclosed in this report and the Darbar should be convinced that the only way it can preserve its own rights is by entrusting them under proper restrictions to the cultivators.<sup>38</sup>

Wingate suggested that the settlement rules should declare 'the state as the ultimate proprietor, and at the same time, confer the right of occupancy on all persons entered as occupants at the time of settlement *jamabandi* [assessment]'.<sup>39</sup> The occupant was assumed to be in actual possession of

land and directly or indirectly responsible for the cultivation and payment of taxes. Subsequent to his recommendation on permanent occupancy of cultivable land, Lawrence proposed that this right should be limited for the cultivation of land and payment of taxes only. The sole proprietary right of land would rest with the state. In order to be able to generate an ever-increasing surplus, the British wanted a proactive peasantry that accepted the authority of the state restricting control over land, but was at the same time willing to pay land revenue tax.<sup>40</sup> Wingate argued that to replenish revenue, and to convert a discontented peasantry into a contented, thriving community, peasants had to be given interest in the land they cultivated. It was necessary, therefore, to fix the state demands at a fair sum for a term of years and establish a system of accounts that would confine the powers of the *tehsildars* (Revenue Officer) to revenue collection.<sup>41</sup>

Wingate further proposed that the revenue should be paid in cash, believing that this would stimulate the grain trade. He thought that free market conditions would lead to prosperity of the peasantry (and maximization of revenue) and remove malpractice in the collection of the state's share of land revenue. It is only in extreme cases that Wingate allowed the *darbar* to accept whole or part of the assessment in *shali* (paddy). This increased the problem of realization for peasants at the time of harvest when crop prices were low. Lawrence, like Wingate, forwarded the proposal regarding hereditary occupancy rights as long as the assessment was paid. Waste land and fallow lands were considered as *Khalisa* (state) land; taxes on walnut trees, forests and livestock, collected by the state, were made a part of land revenue assessment, and revenue assessments were fixed for a period of ten years.<sup>42</sup> In a letter to the Maharaja, Lawrence stated:

I have to ask the sanction of the Council to the proposed assessments for a term of ten years. My reason for suggesting this somewhat brief term is that the prices of produce may be greatly modified by the opening of the road to Kohala, and that a rise in prices and perhaps a considerable extension of cultivation will justify the State in taking a considerable increase in the land revenue at the end of ten years.<sup>43</sup>

The settlement officer was aware of the limits to agricultural activity due to manpower shortages. This restricted the territorial spread of farm activity. Many cultivators would abandon cultivation and move to other territories if they were charged high rents by the state or *jagirdars*. The settlement officer appeared to be conscious of the complex nature of agriculture in Kashmir, where land was available but would not be cultivated for lack of resources or high taxes.<sup>44</sup> In this context, he commented:

Land is abundant and *assamis* [cultivators] are few, and it will take some years of careful and lenient revenue administration before the Mussalman cultivator becomes fixed to his village. The facility

and familiarity of migration form important factors in assessment, for a severe assessment would assuredly be followed by a general migration . . . . So long as this sentiment prevails, it would be extremely unwise to exact a heavy assessment, and the revenue policy which will, I hope, commend itself to the state, is to impose a fair, all round assessment now, to be followed in six or ten years by a full assessment.<sup>45</sup>

The possibility of cultivators abandoning a village to avoid paying heavy taxes was a real threat that the settlement officers had to deal with. Hence, the twin objective of reasonable taxes (to attract cultivators to grow crops) and strict rules for payment and tax collection had to be achieved. The ten-year period for settlement was considered reasonable and cash payment of taxes the most efficient method of revenue gathering. To increase the volume of taxes, the area under cultivation was increased. To achieve this, they had to rely on the sustained efforts of cultivators who were over-exploited by the intermediaries. This induced them to hide the produce or give up on cultivating land. It was often said that ‘the *assami* [cultivator] will conceal everything he has and he conceals the government share of the crops which baffles detection’.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Lawrence did not trust anybody regarding the prevalent land revenue estimates and calculations:

It has been a matter of some difficulty to ascertain exactly the present revenue of the Lal villages. The *Daftar-i-Diwani* [revenue establishment] gives one figure, the *Tahsildar* sometimes gives another, and the *Lambardars* [revenue collector] invariably give a third. I have now obtained from *Hakim Ala* [district commissioner] a final statement showing the real amount of the revenue demand [which] amounts to Rs.91,636.<sup>47</sup>

In a detailed report on the settlement of Lal Tahsil, Lawrence put forward his understanding of how the settlement system should work.<sup>48</sup> He emphasized that the poor agricultural practices in the state were due to an inefficient land revenue system and oppressive revenue collection bureaucracy. Payment of land revenue in cash was considered important for eliminating the existing layers of corrupt revenue officials. The cash assessment would also be more accurate as there would not be any need for weighing and dividing up the portions of *shali* for the state, the officials and the cultivator. The most significant change driven by cash assessment would be the growth of free grain trade without any interference from the state officials. The colonial administrators did not support the collection of revenue in kind, ‘which allowed the state to fix prices of grain and act as the sole grain trader in the valley’.<sup>49</sup> Lawrence reports that before his assessment ‘a Kashmiri cultivator who sold unhusked rice would have been summarily punished.’<sup>50</sup> In a ‘[n]ote on the system under which assessments

are made in Kashmir', Lawrence explains that

the effect of my assessment in Kashmir will be that a large proportion of the revenue will be paid in cash, and it is probable that before the ten years expire nearly the whole of the revenue will be paid in cash. . . . This will result in a very important change in Kashmir, and it is important that the State should fully understand the full meaning of the change.<sup>51</sup>

In an earlier letter to Raja Amar Singh in September 1889, Lawrence argued that cash settlement and an active grain trade would encourage the cultivation of crops such as cotton, oilseed and wheat. He pointed out: 'As it is these crops are grown, but the cultivation is most slovenly. The Kashmiri is farming for subsistence and cannot believe or understand that there is a prospect for farming for sale.'<sup>52</sup> The British considered the high level of land taxes and other levies responsible for the neglect of the agricultural sector. However, the assessment that the Settlement Officer arrived at in various villages was equally high. Lawrence also advocated a rise in assessments. He informed the *maharaja*: 'I propose, however, to make a change in the present system of collection, which, even if the existing revenue demand remains as it is at present, will in some villages make that demand considerably heavier than it has been hitherto.'<sup>53</sup> The cultivators, therefore, were once again forced to part with large portions of the crops raised by them. In fact, the British did not want to disturb the arrangement of *jagirs* and other land grants. The settlement officers even turned a blind eye to the villages that were held 'as *Dharmarth* [Hindu religious trust] or belonged to an influential official, or [were] farmed out to contractors . . . for a fixed sum, or were *Amani* villages. Excluding these villages and also the area held by Chakdars, Tankhadars, Mukarraridars and Muafidars'<sup>54</sup> from being assessed at current rates was considered acceptable in order to maintain working relations with the *maharaja* and the social elite.<sup>55</sup> Contrary to the frequent pronouncements, the settlement policies protected the interests of the land holding class and the cultivators were left to face the oppressive demands of the landholders for extracting as much surplus as possible.

The revenue assessment was further revised from 1898 to 1905 and raised from Rs.13.4 lakhs (1.3 million) to Rs.17 lakhs (1.7 million).<sup>56</sup> This constituted a large increase in taxes. Revenue increased further as new areas were brought into the fold of reassessments. It was expected that by 1906, 'another 3.5 lakhs would be added to the annual revenue of the State'. There occurred indeed a steady rise in the land revenue collected between 1890 and 1925.

The colonial administrators criticized the structure and layers of revenue administration and the role various officials played in revenue collection. The arguments varied from person to person and from one occasion to

another. A general refrain amongst most of the British officials was that the Hindu or *pandit* officials were heartless and ruthless in exploiting the Muslim cultivator in Kashmir. It was frequently pointed out that ‘the Kashmiri cultivator is a machine to produce *shali* [paddy] for a very large, mostly idle city population. The secret of the cheap *shali* is because if the price were allowed to rise to its proper level, the whole body of *pandits* would compel the Palace to yield to their demands.’<sup>57</sup> The British explained the crisis in the economy by blaming the city folks and the *pandits*. Lawrence mentions, as if to disprove his own statement, that

some years ago a very wise attempt was made by the Late Maharaja to appoint influential Mussalman Lambardars to be Tahsildars. But in the case of one of these men ... it was found that he was more merciless and rapacious than the Pundits, and the appointment was soon cancelled.<sup>58</sup>

However, despite such partial insights, the causes of cultivators’ misery were not accurately identified nor were policy measures suggested to rectify the situation.

The criticisms levelled at the various layers of revenue collecting officials lead neither to attempts to evolve a better and efficient structure nor to suggestion to lessen the burden of tax on cultivators. Instead, the British retained the positions of intermediaries, such as *lambardars*, *chaukidars*, *zaildar* and *tahsildars*. All of these had to be paid directly or indirectly by the cultivator. As the state could not deal with each *assami* (cultivator) separately, it was considered necessary to have ‘some such agency as that of the Lambardars’.<sup>59</sup> In fact, Lawrence points out that

the Lambardar is an institution dating from the time of Todar Mal. In the time of *Amani* system, the Lambardar received 2 to 4 per cent of revenue, and this was deducted from the revenue payable from him. When the appraisal Sambat 1937 (1880 AD) was made, an order was given to the effect that the Lambardar was to receive 5 per cent on the revenue from the villagers, but from enquiries I find that the villagers have never paid this ... [T]he Lambardars are either entirely hostile to the interest of the State, or are so feeble as to be unable to exert any influence over their villages ... I venture to think that it will be good policy to restore the power and position of Lambardars, and to encourage them by the grant of some allowance ... Lambardars receive an allowance of 5 per cent, on the revenue collected by him, this allowance to be paid by the village in addition to the assessment.<sup>60</sup>

Lawrence also recommended the revival of a post called *mir chaudhri* (semi-hereditary *tehsil* level official to collect revenue), which was ‘of

assistance to the officials and the people in former days ... as it would help the administration and the people'.<sup>61</sup> *Zaildars* were also retained as a part of the revenue collecting machinery. The settlement officer suggested that 'two Mir Chaudhris or *Zaildars* would be sufficient for Lal Tehsil. They would be remunerated *in the old way*, with a *muafi* of three *kharwars* or 12 acres, eight of which to be irrigated'.<sup>62</sup> Lawrence suggested the revival of another 'village office bearer known now as *choukidar*', recommending that *choukidars* should be placed under the orders of *tahsildars*.<sup>63</sup>

The colonial administrators could not and did not change the basic structure of landholdings or the revenue collecting agency. The change introduced by them was in regard to the grain trade that benefited the grain traders but not the buyers of grains during the period of scarcity. Lawrence maintained that the 'price of *shali* must rise and fall with the outturn of the harvest'. It would also mean a lower price at the time of harvest, which was particularly disastrous for small cultivators. Lawrence recommended that the rice growing villages should sell their crop in the market and pay the land tax in cash, as was the case in those growing maize, *tilagoglu*, wheat or barley.<sup>64</sup> In order to raise taxes in cash, Lawrence even suggested coercive measures:

I would make it a condition of this arrangement that the *Lambardars* have the power to impound the Government share, i.e. one half the crops, until the assami pays the cash due from him, and I would also make it optional to the assami to pay cash in lieu of the amount of rice or maize for which he will be liable, when the proposed assessment is announced at the present rate of commutation, i.e. Rs.2 per *kharwar*.<sup>65</sup>

In fact, the British wanted rapidly to spread grain trade in the state and discourage any practices that were detrimental to this aim. Lawrence confidently advocated that 'if this proposal is sanctioned, the people will pay more and more in cash, and a very desirable change will be by degrees introduced into the agriculture of Kashmir, in that the people will commence to cultivate staples for sale and export'.<sup>66</sup> In 1892, he reiterated his firm belief in collecting taxes in cash and 'urged that the system of collection in kind of a *revenue fixed* was injurious to the State and to the cultivators'.<sup>67</sup> He made his suggestion at a crucial time as there was a grain shortage that year due to late spring and summer rains and a bad harvest.

### **Price rise and private trade in grains**

The advocacy of grain trade and the shift towards payment of land taxes in cash led to far-reaching changes in the economy. A number of grain dealers became active mostly in hoarding and speculation, which led to a rapid rise in the prices of grains. In his note on grain shortages in Kashmir

in 1892, Lawrence, unmindful of the downside of tax collection in cash for the cultivator, wrote:

On my arrival in Kashmir in April last, I invited some leading merchants in Srinagar to discuss the grain question with me, and pointed out to them that in the place of their old shawl trade a fine business in grain was before them.<sup>68</sup>

Grain prices had started rising within two years of settlement, although there should have been enough grains in the state. Lawrence confirmed this when pointing out that ‘this year we know from the octroi returns [entry tax on goods brought into a town] that over 150,000 *kharwars of shali* were brought into Srinagar by private purchasers, and ... another 100,000 *kharwars* to 150,000 *kharwars* have been secretly imported into the city by private agency’.<sup>69</sup> One of the state officials wrote that ‘after the land settlement a class of *galladars* – grain dealers – came up in Srinagar with whom it became a practice to hoard food grains and sell them to the city population at high rates’.<sup>70</sup>

The issue of price increase since the revised assessments were applied in 1889, assumed political significance due to rising resistance. The unusually high prices were reported by Colonel W.F. Fridfaux, resident in Kashmir, to the Secretary to the Government of India in his correspondence of 7 July 1892:

The prices of the principal articles of consumption during the seasons 1891 and 1892 ... [show] that the price of the best rice had risen from 16 seers per rupee to 11 seers, that of white rice from 21 seers to 14 seers, that of ordinary rice from 33 seers to 16 seers, that of *atta* or wheat flour from 24 seers to 10 seers.<sup>71</sup>

He pointed out that the prices increased since

all the rice and grain appeared to be held by the more affluent inhabitants of the city who had made enormous purchases during the winter in anticipation of a bad rice harvest in 1892, and the stores in the hands of the petty retail traders were entirely exhausted. The Military Secretary to the Kashmir Government wrote to me that the troops in garrison found it impossible to buy any rice or grains from the regimental *bannias* [traders], and that if arrangements were not made for the supply of food, there would be a risk of the sepoys breaking into the houses where rice was known to be stored and helping themselves.<sup>72</sup>

In fact, the situation had become acute, with shortages and mismanagement of grains. The newly gained control of grain dealers over the trade

guaranteed them enormous profits as the state had as yet no policies in place to restrain them. The frequent shortages and resultant price rises of grains eventually led the state administration to resort to intervention in the grain market. In 1917–18, the state government called upon the cultivators to pay land taxes in kind (*shali*), so that there were enough stocks in the state granaries for distribution and to curb the emerging social unrest. It was remarkable that the rising food prices, acute grain shortages, social unrest, political criticism and letters from some of the British officials, did not shake the belief of the settlement officers, the resident and the British in the policies they advocated.

## **Conclusion**

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir came into existence in March 1846 with the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar between the East India Company and the Dogra *raja* of Jammu. The British established their control over the political and economic administration of the state by posting their officials. In fact, after setting up the residency in 1885, the British directly intervened in the running of the affairs of the princely state. One of the major areas of intervention was the restructuring of the land revenue system by reorganizing the pattern of land ownership, land utilization and the system of revenue assessment and payment. It is argued that the objective of reorganizing the land ownership structure could not be fully realized as the Treaty of Amritsar, which Maharaja Gulab Singh had signed with the British, had a clause pertaining to the continuation of the *jagirs* and land grants given out by the Sikh rulers. The Dogra rulers also continued with granting *jagirs* of various types. The colonial administrators could not effect any changes in the pattern of these estates and had to accept the system as it prevailed. They also realized that the layers of revenue officials could not be done away with. The changes that were made dealt with the mode and method of payment to these officials and their duties were defined in a more precise manner.

The measurement and assessment of land revenue in the princely state was carried out from 1889 to 1899 and revised in 1901–02. The new assessment system proposed by the British dealt with occupancy rights, period of lease, payment of revenue in cash and the institutional structure to collect taxes. Occupancy rights were permanent and hereditary so long as taxes were paid, but these were non-alienable. To achieve their objectives of more extensive cultivation and higher revenue collection, taxes had to be collected in cash. With hereditary occupancy rights, a class of settled ‘peasants’ was created while at the same time the traditional landed elite who had held land for several generations was retained. Allocation of new *jagirs* gave rise to a new set of *jagirdars* who were loyal to the new rulers and were willing partners of the British establishment as well. While these *jagirdars* would accept the legitimacy of both the Dogras and the British, the ordinary cultivators



did not see much change in their economic and social condition. For them, the demand for land revenue under the new assessment was not reduced, in fact, the assessment rates went up. There was also a transientness built into the land relations as the right to cultivate could be withdrawn by the state in case of failure to pay the revenue/tax. The need to pay the tax in cash added to the problems faced by the cultivators as they were forced to sell immediately after the harvest when grain prices were low.

The recurring famines and food shortages aggravated the crisis since the residency dissuaded the *maharaja* from intervening by buying and distributing the grains, as it believed that grain prices should be determined by market forces. The trends that emerged in the state as a result of the settlement policies of the British, disrupted some aspects of the old order without removing the basic elements of economic exploitation and social oppression. In fact, the exploitation that lay at the heart of the previous state formation was only exacerbated by the British settlement policies, which consisted of only cosmetic changes upon a structure that had been put in place in the centuries before.

## Notes

- 1 A land grant given to an individual by the state who held the right to assess and collect land revenue and other taxes from this land.
- 2 The territory of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was roughly 222,797 sq. km and the three administrative divisions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh included the territories of Poonch, Baltistan and the Gilgit Agency. Chitralkha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging – Islam, Regional Identity and the Making of Kashmir*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 8.
- 3 Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in the Crossfire*, London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 1996, p. 40.
- 4 Schofield, *Kashmir*, p. 39.
- 5 Article IV of the Lahore Treaty in Schofield, *Kashmir*, p. 55.
- 6 See Navneeta C. Behera, *State, Identity and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000, p. 37.
- 7 Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects – Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, p. 26.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- 9 M.K. Teng, R.K.K. Bhat and S. Kaul, *Kashmir: Constitutional History and Documents*, New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, 1977, p. 16.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 16. See also Schofield, *Kashmir*, p. 56.
- 11 Schofield, *Kashmir*, p. 56.
- 12 Teng *et al.*, *Kashmir: Constitutional History*, p. 17.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 14 Behera, *State, Identity and Violence*, p. 37.
- 15 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 58.
- 16 Teng *et al.*, *Kashmir: Constitutional History*, p. 18.
- 17 The ‘resident’ was a colonial official acting as advisor to the ruler.
- 18 Teng *et al.*, *Kashmir: Constitutional History*, p. 36.
- 19 Various forms of *nasaq* prevailed in Berar, Bengal and Kashmir. See for details: Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556–1707*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 258.

- 20 R.L. Hangloo, *The State in Medieval Kashmir*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2000, p. 112.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Habib, *The Agrarian System*, p. 263, describes the system of revenue generation that prevailed in earlier centuries in the state in his study of the agrarian system.
- 23 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, pp. 70, 71.
- 24 P.N.K. Bamzai, *Socio-Economic History of Kashmir (1846–1925)*, New Delhi: Metropolitan, 1988, p. 124.
- 25 The allocation of land to the cultivator on the basis of family members was called *nafre*. A *nafre* or unit comprised a man, his wife and grown-up child. This family unit was allotted four acres of irrigated land. The *nim nafre* consisted of a man and his wife, and *pao nafre* of a bachelor and would get 2 acres and one and a half acre, respectively; Bamzai, *Socio-Economic History*, p. 120.
- 26 Ibid., p. 118.
- 27 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 64. Kashmiri weights: 1 *kharwar* = 80 kgs, 16 *traks* = 1 *kharwar*, 1 *seer kashmiri* = 960 grams; Source: Bamzai, *Socio-Economic History*, p. 133.
- 28 Pandits, Sayyids and Pirzada families provided a clerical service for revenue collection to Afghan, Sikh and Dogra rulers, hence the special treatment. See Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, pp. 62, 64.
- 29 Note submitted by F. Henvey, Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, to J.G. Cordery, Officiating Secretary to the Government of Punjab, 21 August 1878, Foreign Department, Political No. 155/88, *National Archives of India* (hereafter NAI), New Delhi.
- 30 M.S. Khan, *The History of Jammu and Kashmir: 1885–1925*, Kashmir: Gulshan Publishers, 2002, p. 64.
- 31 Note submitted by T.D. Forsyth, Officiating Secretary to Govt., Punjab, 30 May 1863, Foreign Dept., Political No. 74, NAI.
- 32 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 66.
- 33 Col. R.P. Nisbet to the Secretary, Govt. of India, Foreign Department, 29 January 1890, no. 295, NAI.
- 34 Note on the famine in Kashmir by Henvey, Officer on Special Duty, 1877–1880, Foreign Department, Secret E, Pros., March 1883, No. 86, NAI.
- 35 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 59.
- 36 Bamzai, *Socio-Economic History*, p. 144.
- 37 G.H. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir – 1931–1940*, New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, 1980, p. 18.
- 38 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 91.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., p. 90.
- 42 Ibid., p. 92.
- 43 Letter from W.R. Lawrence to Raja Amar Singh, 14 September 1889, No. 298, NAI.
- 44 *Diwan* Kishan Lal in 'A Short Account of Cashmere' writes in 1848 that 'of the cultivable land about one half is under the plough'; cited in Bamzai, *Socio-Economic History of Kashmir*, p. 132.
- 45 Letter from W.R. Lawrence to Raja Amar Singh, 14 September 1889, No. 298, NAI.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Lal Tahsil, located in Kashmir province, was considered highly fertile with excellent alluvial soil on the west side and possibilities of improving yields in other parts by renovating local irrigation systems.

- 49 Zushi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 92.
- 50 Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 443.
- 51 'Note on the system under which assessments are made in Kashmir', (No. 152) submitted by W.R. Lawrence, NAI.
- 52 Letter from W.R. Lawrence to Raja Amar Singh, 14 September 1889, No. 298, NAI.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 *Chakdars, tankhadars, mukarraridars and muafidars* received land grants from the Dogra and earlier rulers, under various terms ranging from fixed tax in kind to taxes to be paid in cash.
- 55 New Delhi Letter from W.R. Lawrence to Raja Amar Singh, 14 September 1889, No. 298, NAI.
- 56 Khan, *The History*, p. 115.
- 57 Wingate quoted in Lawrence in Letter to Amar Singh, dated 14 September 1889, NAI.
- 58 'Note on the system under which assessments are made in Kashmir', No. 152, submitted W.R. Lawrence, NAI.
- 59 Letter from W.R. Lawrence to Raja Amar Singh, 14 September 1889, No. 298, NAI.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid. Emphasis added.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Letter from Col. W.F. Fridfaux, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, October 1892, No. 149. Note on the causes of scarcity of grain in Srinagar submitted by W.R. Lawrence on 28 June 1892, NAI.
- 68 Letter from Col. W.F. Fridfaux, 7 July 1892, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, October 1892, No. 149–60, NAI.
- 69 Letter from Col. W.F. Fridfaux, 7 July 1892, NAI.
- 70 Jia Lal Kaul Jalali, quoted in Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 107.
- 71 Letter from Col. W.F. Fridfaux, 7 July 1892, NAI.
- 72 Ibid.

## 6 The order of legitimacy

### Princely Orissa, 1850–1947

*Biswamoy Pati*

British colonialism was a very powerful legitimizer of the princely states over the 1850–1947 period. Stung by the 1857 Rebellion, the colonial government sought to improve its links with the Indian rulers after the British crown took over India in 1858.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, in the case of Orissa, colonialism itself was being legitimized by the rulers, who were its pillars of support in large tracts, inhabited by diverse people. This process of legitimacy then was interactional. However, this mutual legitimation needs to be set also against the background of the states' internal processes of legitimation, namely how the *darbars* themselves secured legitimacy from their subjects. The latter were associated with colonial agrarian interventions, yet also related to the enduring order of caste and the conversion of large sections of the *adibasis* (tribals) into the *varna* (caste) system. These features reinforced the process of social stratification and polarized caste, class and gender. Together they contributed in a significant way to making the *darbars* – the otherwise authoritarian structures of the rulers – relatively acceptable to the states' people.

Efforts were also made by the *darbars* to draw upon popular, local cults that emerged over the nineteenth century in some of the Orissan states. The cult of Jagannatha associated with Puri is but one example.<sup>2</sup> Although claiming to be of Hindu origin, most of these states were ruled by sections of Hinduized *adivasis*. In fact, the process of Hinduization in the nineteenth century contributed significantly to the creation of a support base for the states. There was also a search for 'ancientness' by most of the *darbars* over the latter half of the nineteenth century. This drive included the rise of *rajabansabalis* (or accounts of lineage), which was largely inspired by an endeavour to gain acceptance from colonialism, but was embedded in and could draw on culturally congruent and acceptable customs. Thus, 'tradition' as an ideological means of legitimation on the one hand, coexisted with the rather contradictory project of modernity on the other. Taken together these features legitimized the states internally and externally. A further point of analysis will be the interactions of the middle class that emerged over the period of our study, both with the princely order and colonialism. Needless to say, the

middle class was not a monolith; sections of it contributed significantly to the legitimization of the *darbars* and British colonialism, whilst others were associated with the powerful Prajamandal movement that challenged the states.<sup>3</sup>

### **Colonial interventions, the shaping of social hierarchies and legitimation**

Colonial interventions had far-reaching implications for the Indian states, which were supposedly not under direct colonial control. The enumeration and census operations that were initiated in the late 1870s contributed towards, among other features, polarizing identities and relationships.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, these kinds of enterprises were superficial, or at best formalized a process that had been inaugurated already by the land revenue settlements that were created by British colonialism. This can be demonstrated by a cursory examination of the colonial agrarian interventions and the social stratification that developed in some of the Orissan states. The rulers were at the top of the social hierarchy and behind them was the East India Company, and the British colonial administration in the post-1858 context. In some cases the colonial administration appointed *diwans* to oversee the administration when the chiefs were minors or when states faced political or economic problems. For example, the colonial administration took over the direct administration of Kalahandi in 1882 by appointing a British officer as a political agent to manage the state. This followed the death of Udit Narayan Deo in 1881 and a major *adibasi* rebellion in 1882. Again, between 1897 and 1917 the state was under British administration as the ruler was a minor. Similarly, when Srirama Chandra Bhanja, the Mayurbhanj chief, died in 1912 and his minor son, Purna Chandra Bhanja Deo, succeeded him, the administration was managed by the colonial administration.<sup>5</sup>

The colonial land revenue settlements in the states of Orissa were modelled along the lines of the 'permanent settlement', first introduced by the British in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1793.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the landlords of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (and princes in the case of Orissa) got property rights over the tracts controlled by them and paid a fixed amount of tribute annually (*peshkush*) to the colonial administration. The cultivators therefore had no land rights, and the tax they had to pay to their chiefs was left undefined. The Dhenkanal state, for example, had an agreement (*sanad*) with the first British Commissioner of Orissa under the East India Company. This secured an amount of Rs.5,099 permanently as *peshkush* for the colonial administration. The gross land rental of the state increased from Rs.63,316 in 1846 to Rs.239,347 by 1923.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the Nilgiri state's land revenue increased more than five times between 1853 and 1920, although the *darbar* paid a fixed *peshkush* of Rs.2,108 as per the agreement with the East India Company in 1809.<sup>8</sup> As for Mayurbhanj, the *darbar* paid Rs.1,001

as *peshkush*, though it had the largest income among the Orissa states, with an average annual income of Rs.2,820,000 by the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> This meant that peasants and tribals lost out in two ways: they had no rights over lands (in fact even customary rights over forest, pastures and rivers were progressively undermined over the nineteenth century) and were left mercilessly to the whims of the *darbars* when it came to taxation demands, which increased steadily over the 1860–1947 period.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of social stratification, the land revenue settlements sharpened and polarized existing social hierarchies. The rulers and their relatives – who in some cases controlled *zamindaris* (e.g. Mayurbhanj, Gangpur and Kalahandi) or privileged land holdings (e.g. Khanjas in the case of Ranpur) – were identified as Kshatriyas. The structure of resource extraction and power had multiple layers of intermediaries that were connected to the *darbars*. Thus, in Kalahandi, for example, the exploitative system was perfected by the *zamindars* who had sub-*zamindars* under them. The *zamindars* were quite powerful and levied their own tolls and taxes. The colonial administration was closely aligned to these *zamindars* and by the early years of the twentieth century colonial presence was felt in the remotest corners of the state. In some states, like Kalahandi, *gounti* (privileged land holding) rights were auctioned off to the highest bidders by the *darbar*. The people who bought these rights included sections of the affluent *adibasi* population who emerged as internal exploiters.<sup>11</sup> These sections also identified themselves as Khandayats (sword-wielding martial caste, who invoked the Rajput tradition of north India) to distinguish themselves from their social origins, elevate their social position, and assert their exploitation.

There were also revenue officials and village headmen, who identified themselves as Khandayats. Moreover, in some states, like Gangpur, the *zamindars* of Nagra, Hemgir, Sargipalli, Sarapgarh were *adibasis* (Bhuyans) who both distinguished and distanced themselves from their community and their social origins by calling themselves Khandayat Bhuyans.<sup>12</sup> Land grants were also made to the Paikas (feudal martial retainers) – who represented the warrior caste. Grants to Brahmins and gods/goddesses marked an effort to keep the Brahmins, who constituted an important section, aligned to the *darbars*. At the same time, it needs to be emphasized that in some states, like Kalahandi, Brahmins held most of the villages and the good lands and dominated the local power structure, money lending and the grain trade.<sup>13</sup>

The agriculturists, mostly Chasas, were a major peasant caste. In some states like Gangpur, the Agharias were the chief cultivators.<sup>14</sup> A section of the affluent peasants moved up in the hierarchy of caste and identified themselves as Khandayats. Some peasants had occupancy rights, which hardly meant anything. In fact, in Kalahandi it was mentioned that the occupancy tenants had no rights. Many peasants who held lands of occupancy *raiya*ts were purely tenants-at-will since they did not have these rights. Besides, there were some *adibasis* (such as Sabaras, Gonds

and Kandhas) and some outcastes (Panas, Bauris and Dombs) who held lands, which they were not supposed to sell to non-*adibasis* and upper castes, respectively, although this was often violated in practice. Besides the idea of extending cultivation in order to tap resources, this drive aimed to create collaborators from among sections of affluent *adibasis* and also, as in the case of Talcher, to settle some out-castes like Panas, who were located as 'criminal castes', and incorporate them into a network of rural police (*chowkidars*).<sup>15</sup>

At the bottom of the social hierarchy were the agricultural labourers, composed of outcastes (Panas, Dombs, Chamaras, Bauris and Hadis; and *adibasis* such as Sabaras, Gonds, Bhumijis, Bhuyans, Kols, Santhals, Mundas, Bhuyans, Oraons, Gandas, Kisans and Kandhas). These agricultural labourers were called *haliyas* (derived from the word *hala*, plough). They were paid meagre wages in paddy (rice) or cash.<sup>16</sup> In Kalahandi this amounted to three seers of paddy in the early part of the twentieth century, with women getting half of it. This became 25 *paise* in 1942 and 37 *paise* in 1945 per day for males, whereas female agricultural labourers continued to receive their wages in kind.<sup>17</sup> In Gangpur cash wages paid to the agricultural labourers amounted to three *annas* per day for men (for harvesting and threshing) and two *annas* per day for females (for weeding).<sup>18</sup> In states like Dhenkanal agricultural labourers were recruited in March for one year and paid advances. This tied them to their masters. Besides, they were also paid three *manas* of paddy per day and given a small plot of land (about quarter of an acre) or something in kind in lieu of the plot. Plots of land were not given to *kamtunis* or women agricultural labourers.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the land settlements considerably polarized hierarchies of gender. Among the other common patriarchal practices were, for example, fees on widow remarriage<sup>20</sup> and the extraction of dowry.<sup>21</sup>

The agricultural labourers comprised a mass of marginalized people who barely managed to survive. Most of them were outcastes or *adibasis*, whereas the shifting cultivators were predominantly *adibasis*. Thus, the poorer sections were incorporated as agricultural labourers or shifting cultivators, who were tapped for resource extraction.

All the states had shifting cultivators, mostly drawn from the *adibasis*. They were not assessed in a uniform manner and sometimes taxed either on the seed capacity of the strips they had cleared for cultivation, or on the number of ploughs and axes owned by them. In some states, like Kalahandi, settlements were made quite frequently (for six to twenty years) with shifting cultivators in the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the mode of assessment and the frequency of the settlements, coupled with the nature of cultivation, made conditions extremely difficult for shifting cultivators.

Bonded labourers are rarely visible in the settlement reports. Nevertheless, forced labour recruitment was a rather common phenomenon in all the

Orissan states, where it affected even the section of the peasants engaged in settled agriculture.<sup>23</sup> Drawing in a wide range of people involved with settled and shifting cultivation was possible, as we will see, also because of the association of the *darbars* with cults that were considerably restructured over the nineteenth century itself.

Finally, in Talcher and Mayurbhanj de-peasantized communities and *adibasis* worked in the coal and iron ore mines. These sectors became important in the twentieth century and implied direct colonial presence in the case of Talcher, and the Tatas, who were the indigenous capitalists involved with the steel factory at Jamshedpur in Mauyrbhanj.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, the colonial agrarian interventions of the twentieth century witnessed a significant polarization of the affluent landed elements in these predominantly *adibasi* tracts. There also existed multiple layers of landed sections below the rulers. Some of these intermediaries were quite powerful, created their own extractive mechanisms, and had direct associations with colonialism. This was possible because they made use of their assumed superior caste position and the privileges bestowed on them by the rulers and the colonial land settlements. As highlighted above, most of the chiefs, *zamindars* and privileged tenure holders were Kshatriyas/Khandayats – this marked them out as ‘rulers’. It also needs to be considered that the existence of these various layers of intermediaries – including those at the local, village level – made the exploitation of *darbars* relatively invisible, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As discussed, in terms of caste, the agriculturists were mostly identified as Chasas or Agarias, some of whom emerged as ‘rich’ peasants as reflected in their identification as Khandayats.<sup>25</sup> The Khandayats also included relocated *adibasis*, as in Mayurbhanj, for example, where a large number of *adibasis* from various communities identified themselves as Hindus.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the highly complex phenomena of Hinduization/Kshatriyaization and Oriyaization are implicated here. These were driven also by the large increase of the Khandayat population – with 45.4 per cent the largest for any caste – between 1901 and 1931 in the Orissa division and the Orissan states. These processes were premised on the structure of caste, and sustained by the agrarian system.<sup>27</sup> There were even major drives to preserve and institutionalize caste through caste-based segregation in the state prisons,<sup>28</sup> the logic of excommunication,<sup>29</sup> and the maintenance of caste courts.<sup>30</sup> The *darbars* sought to preserve caste and its related hierarchies and did not tolerate any transgressions. The example of the Nilgiri *darbar* is a case in point when it issued ‘show cause’ notices to the Prajamandal activists and threatened to excommunicate them in 1937. This followed the Prajamandal’s ‘common dinner’ where people of different castes – including outcastes – dined together.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the Nilgiri *darbar* used the exclusive aspects of caste to implement punitive measures and discredit a movement that posed a threat to the ruling order.



Consequently, the land settlements – although they were inclusive since their primary aim was resource extraction – served to preserve as well as reinforce social hierarchies by monetizing pre-colonial relationships and polarizing identities in the Orissan states. The intimate link between agrarian production, the political system, caste/gender/power hierarchies and the structure of intermediaries contributed significantly to the legitimation of the *darbars*.

### **Hinduization, the ‘high’ and ‘low’ cults and legitimation**

The Orissan rulers sought to secure legitimacy and acceptance through their association with and the popularization of certain social, religious and cultural practices. The Jagannatha cult, which flourished in the wake of Hinduization, is a prominent example. Efforts to draw upon this cult and integrate it in their states were made by the rulers already in the pre-colonial period. Colonial officialdom, too, was from the taking over of Orissa in 1803 acutely aware of its potentially useful ‘integrative’ aspect, as when in a despatch of September 1803 the governor-general made a ‘famous pandit of Bengal’ write a letter assuring the Puri Brahmins of the religious tolerance of the British. Shortly before reaching Puri, the British troops were informed by the priests that ‘they had applied to Juggernaut’ who had a ‘decided answer ... that the English Government was in future to be his guardian’.<sup>32</sup>

We find that the cult was consolidated by the *darbars* over the nineteenth century. Even architectural planning in most of the capitals of the states recreated a Jagannatha temple, with a ‘*bada danda*’ (big street) in front of it, and the annual *ratha jatra* (the chariot festival) – modelled along the lines of Puri. Orissa’s colonization perfected this drive.<sup>33</sup> Arguably, the encouragement of the cult enabled the rulers as well as British colonialism to negotiate a region that had a very large *adibasi* population. This becomes more evident if seen within the context of the Hinduization/Kshatriyaization/Oriyaization framework referred to earlier and related to the rulers’ various efforts to invoke ‘traditions’ and establish connections with the cult of Jagannatha and Puri. There were other implications as well. The Dhenkanal *darbar* for example obtained *bethi* (forced labour) from every *raiya*t (peasant) to ‘celebrate’ the annual *ratha jatra* – a feature that legitimized exploitive practices of *darbars*, such as forced labour recruitment.<sup>34</sup> It also implied establishing links with the *raja* of Puri. For example, the Talcher *darbar* sought to trace its links with the *raja* of Puri and organized the *ratha jatra* every year.<sup>35</sup> The Nilgiri *darbar* claimed that one of its chiefs was a commander of Purusottam Deb (*raja* of Puri) and another married to the sister of a *raja* of Puri.<sup>36</sup> The Ranpur *darbar* also celebrated the annual *ratha jatra* in a big way.<sup>37</sup> There is evidence of the reverential feelings exhibited to the Puri *raja*, as when Lord Mayo wanted to meet the *garjat* (derived from *garh*, fort) rulers during his visit to Orissa

in 1872. The local officials organized the seating arrangements and offered the first seat to Parikud, the second to the *raja* of Dhenkanal and the third to the Puri *raja*. The chiefs of Parikud and Dhenkanal were reluctant to occupy higher chairs than the *raja* of Puri, and therefore an 'elevated seat was reserved' for the *raja* of Puri, and the others sat in two rows to his left and right according to their rank and position, when they met at the Cuttack Printing Company Hall.<sup>38</sup>

This meant that the cult of Jagannatha, which had distinct *adibasi* (Sabara) origins and incorporated the Puri *raja* as its high priest, served to legitimize the *darbars* through their association with the cult and the incorporation of the people in tracts that contained a large *adibasi* population, even while distancing them from the structure of power and the hierarchies of caste that the cult enforced.

The ambition to incorporate the *adibasi* population and guarantee their loyalty arguably was an important driving force behind rulers' encouragement and support of *adibasi* traditions and customs. Lt. Elliot, for example, in his report of 1856, referred to the coronation ceremony of the Kalahandi *raja*, where a Kandha Pat Majhi (chief) of a particular Kandha family was dressed especially for the occasion. A rich cloth was thrown on his lap, on which the *raja* sat during the ceremony. Interestingly, this custom is said to have originated at the time of some ancestor whose name was unknown since 'the legend [had] been lost'.<sup>39</sup>

Another feature associated with the structure of legitimacy relates to healthcare practices prevalent in some Orissan states, such as Keonjhar. Palm-leaf manuscripts and the associated popular oral tradition suggest the widespread use of the Bhramaramari plant as a cure for leprosy since the seventeenth century.<sup>40</sup> It is said that one of the kings of Keonjhar (who ruled some time before the seventeenth century) had learnt in a dream about the plant and was 'advised' to popularize it for the welfare of the people. The *raja*, in fact, looked upon this dream as a divine intervention – a theme that is stressed by the popular oral tradition. In the dream, he was ordered to locate the plant at a specific site in the dense forest, along with detailed instructions regarding the method of use in the treatment of leprosy. This dream perhaps became the basis for a process that led to the virtual deification of the plant and its subsequent ascendancy to the position of a local deity in the region.

According to the oral tradition, the name Bhramaramari was derived from the wandering beetles that met their death when they came into contact with the plant. Hence, the name came to mean the killing of beetles (*bhramara*, beetles and *mari*, to kill). In *adibasi* perception, the plant itself became a centre of divinity possessing healing qualities. As the plant went through a process of deification there emerged the idea of worship and propitiation of the plant in the larger interest of the community. The ensuing veneration of Bhramaramari was congruent with an established *adibasi* tradition of focusing on worshipping trees and plants and had

some distinct similarities with the Sabara legends associated with the Jagannatha cult.<sup>41</sup>

By the nineteenth century, a network around the treatment of leprosy had been in place that reinforced the power of the Keonjhar *darbar*. The *darbar* created a priestly class called *dehuri* for the worship of the Bhramaramari goddess. The *dehuri* linked the royal order of Keonjhar with the *adibasi* villages as they were recruited from the *adibasi* community. The rituals associated with the cult implied that the *dehuris* had access to the royal palace at a specified time of a particular day to receive the royal honour. The bodyguards of the king placed the royal gift – a sari – at the feet of the king before symbolically placing it on the head of the *dehuri*. This ritual simultaneously validated the legitimacy of the office of the *dehuri* and the position of the raja. The *dehuri* then visited the palace accompanied by members of his village. Furthermore, he received a basketful of articles from the *raja* meant for the worship of the goddess. Only after this royal approval could the *dehuri* begin his role of performing *puja* for Bhramaramari.

The *dehuri* chanted esoteric *mantras*, which were known only to him. The ability of possessing and chanting these secret *mantras* became a monopoly of the priestly class of the *dehuris*, which came to be inherited by the family members over generations. The priest prayed for the welfare of his family, the village, the kingdom and the royal family. After the performance of the ritual the *dehuri*, accompanied by the village folk, visited the royal palace at Keonjhar, carrying the basket of medicine. The arrival of the *dehuri* at the lion's gate of the palace was greeted with the sound of conch shells and the tune of *mangalacharan* (welcome songs for the guest). Amidst the rejoicing and the songs recited by the queens, the king proceeded to receive the basket of Bhramaramari medicine from the *dehuri*.

The Bhramaramari cult is an example of how a forest deity, associated with healing qualities, was incorporated into the Hindu/Kshatriya power structure. An *adibasi* medical tradition came to be interwoven with a royal tradition in the state of Keonjhar. References to the *dehuris* being incorporated to propitiate *mahasakti* (Shiva) suggests a significant degree of Hinduization. The conception of *mahasakti*, which had hitherto been associated with the dominant figure of Shiva, as *mahasakti*, merged with Balabhadra (the state deity of Keonjhar and 'elder brother' of Jagannath at Puri). Moreover, it seems that Mangala – the local deity of the state – was linked to the pantheon of healing deities and the 'divine' cure for patients. Consequently, besides what we have already mentioned, the treatment of leprosy also became linked with local deities and the cult of Jagannatha.

The *dehuri* enjoyed rent-free land grants. Consequently, as a social class they began to command tremendous respect within *adibasi* society on account of the privileges bestowed on them, their role in the treatment of leprosy and their association with the *darbar*. While legitimizing the *dehuris* through gifts and a certain degree of power in their localities, the royal order itself was legitimized. What is interesting is that the office and

position of the *dehuri* was neither rivalled nor substituted by any *kabirajas* or *baidyas* (the *ayurvedic* doctors) associated with the royal establishment. In other words, the *darbar* never attempted to assign the job of acquiring the Bhramaramari plant to the ‘specialists’ in the royal palace. Instead, it preferred to retain the *adibasi* tradition of treating the plant as a goddess, empowered with the qualities to cure leprosy.

Leprosy patients from different parts of the state and outside thronged the gate of the palace in the hope of getting the Bhramaramari medicine. As the principal devotee of the goddess, the *raja* distributed this medicine personally, free of cost to the patients at his doorstep. From the point of view of his own people, this demonstrated his charitable inclination, through which he could assert his position as their chief.

The Palm-leaf manuscripts provide details explaining the use of Bhramaramari medicine to the patients. Among the significant features, the dietary prescription stressed vegetarianism. It also advocated isolation for a few weeks and the idea that ‘male’ patients should not see the ‘face of women’, which implied sexual restraint. After this period, the patients were expected to come out of the room and offer *bhog* and *puja* to Shiva and Balabhadra, the state deities of Keonjhar. Hence both these gods had to be finally approached for their blessings in order to get cured.

Taken together, these features demonstrate a significant level of Hinduization through which the *darbar* made itself acceptable to the largely *adibasi* population in Keonjhar, even while certain imprints of the forest deity and its worship were retained. What is witnessed is a two-way process that involved the appropriation and integration of a cultural tradition by the Keonjhar *darbar* and the incorporation of *adibasi* society into both the *darbar* and the Kshatriya/Hindu order.

### **The ideological links with the past and the enterprise of modernity**

Apart from the appropriation of popular traditions there were other complex and contradictory processes – the search for ‘ancientness’ and the project of modernity – that coexisted and contributed significantly towards legitimizing the *darbars*. The search for ‘ancientness’ was aimed at gaining acceptance from the British and had a significant impact on a section of the emerging, educated middle class in the Orissan states. The *darbars* attempted to incorporate the middle class from the closing years of the nineteenth century. This way the educated public in the states came to be represented through the *darbars*. This perhaps explains the effort by the *darbars* to get their ‘past’ recorded in the form of ‘*rajabansabalis*’ – a feature that had the clear blessings of the colonial administration.<sup>42</sup>

The component of modernity saw the construction of communication networks (roads and railways), irrigation, mines, jails, education and health services, which demonstrated to the British colonial administration and

the middle class that ‘progress’ along Western lines was made.<sup>43</sup> Discussions on modernity often overlook the exploitative component involved with most of these enterprises.<sup>44</sup> They were based on the extraction of forced labour and the devastation of the forests.<sup>45</sup> Mining linked states like Mayurbhanj – which had iron ore deposits – to the Indian capitalist class. Thus, the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) at Jamshedpur had lease agreements with the *darbar* in 1904–05 and by 1922–23 the average number of people working in the mines stood at 3,132. These mines were mostly located in the *adibasi* tracts of Mayurbhanj. The state did not have labour laws until the independence of India in 1947.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, besides the obvious drain of resources to Britain, colonial capitalism and modernity also meant exploitation and internal drain, with indigenous exploiters being involved. Even if in a limited way, the Indian bourgeoisie along with colonial capitalism and modernity converged in and coexisted with princely states like Mayurbhanj. This meant that along with colonialism, modernity also legitimized the *darbars*.

## Conclusion

The order of legitimacy in the Orissan princely states was complex, protracted, interactional, and contradictory. Its focus shifted dramatically over the period examined. Thus, if the 1860s saw an attempt by colonialism to draw legitimacy from the states (in the aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion), the idea of marking out the states as bastions of exploitation since the late nineteenth century was a construction that legitimized colonial presence and administration.<sup>47</sup> The late nineteenth century also saw the process in reverse, with the states seeking to establish themselves in the eyes of the colonial establishment. What perhaps needs to be stressed is the way the princely states legitimized even imperial history.

The colonial agrarian settlements and the emerging social stratification polarized caste class and gender hierarchies. This had serious implications. It served to secure legitimacy for the princes, who worked hard to preserve a system that ensured stability for them. After all, it enabled them to exercise power over and exploit their people, and extract resources. The association of the social stratification with caste, class and gender hierarchies made it remarkably successful in gaining acceptance from a diverse section of the people. Consequently, large sections of the states’ people were incorporated into the social system, which was in itself a powerful legitimizer of the *darbars*.

Internally, the process of interacting with the *adibasis* through the process of Hinduization aided the *darbars*. It enabled the *darbars* to create networks that ensured access to resources. Hinduization also provided the legitimacy to the princes to incorporate and exploit the *adibasis*, making exploitative practices like forced labour acceptable. Consequently, the Jagannatha cult and the local cults and practices marked an effort to reach out to the large

*adibasi* population in the princely states. In fact, Hinduization disguised the exploitative onslaughts of the *darbars* considerably until the early years of the twentieth century.

Finally, it needs to be mentioned that the states aimed to draw legitimacy from the emerging middle class and the colonial masters through the contradictory process of looking back into the ‘past’ and the project of modernity. This saw the *darbars* assembling accounts of their lineage. Alongside, efforts were made to incorporate structures of ‘modernity’. Like many other complexities, both these features coexisted rather harmoniously in the princely states. After all, they were tailored to meet the needs of an order that was vital for the existence of the princely states and also colonialism.

### Acknowledgements

A grant from the Charles Wallace India Trust (England, 2003) and a ‘Baden-Wuerttemberg’ Fellowship (Germany, 2004) enabled me to explore and draw upon the resources available at the British Library and the School of Oriental and African Studies Library (London), and the Orissa Research Project collection at the South Asia Institute Library (Heidelberg) to finalize this paper.

This chapter focuses on the question of legitimacy in the princely states of Orissa. I have dealt with the exploitative dimension and how this was contested by the states’ people in *Resisting Domination: Peasants, Tribals and the National Movement in Orissa, 1920–50*, Delhi: Manohar, 1993, and ‘Interrogating Stereotypes: Exploring the Princely States in Colonial Orissa’, *South Asia Research*, 25:2, 2005, 165–82.

### Notes

- 1 Twenty-four Orissan states merged with Orissa after India’s independence during the period 1947 to 1949.
- 2 See for some details of the Jagannatha cult: A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and G.C.Tripathy (eds), *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, Delhi: Manohar, 1987.
- 3 See for details: Sadasiba Pradhan, *Agrarian and Political Movements: States of Orissa, 1931–1949*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1986; Pati, *Resisting Domination*.
- 4 See for details: Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘The Imaginary Institution of India’, in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey (eds), *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 1–39.
- 5 See for details: *Memoranda on the Indian States, 1930*, Calcutta: Government of India, 1931, p. 229; Nilamani Senapati and Nabin K. Sahu (eds), *Orissa District Gazetteers: Mayurbhanj*, Cuttack, Orissa Government Press, 1967, p. 81; this meant a more direct form of involvement.
- 6 See for details: Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement*, Paris: Mouton, 1963; Dharma Kumar (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol. II, c.1757–1970*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1984, especially pp. 86–177.

- 7 *Final Report on the Settlement of the Dhenkanal Feudatory State Orissa 1923–4*, vol. I, Berhampur: Board of Revenue, Orissa, 1966, pp. 26–9, 40. *The Memoranda on the Indian States 1930*, Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, Government of India, 1931, pp. 222–3, gives us the figures of the *peshkush*.
- 8 *Final Report on the Nilgiri Settlement 1917–22*, Berhampur: Government of Orissa, no date, pp. 1, 41. As mentioned, the land revenue increased fivefold between 1853 and 1922.
- 9 See for details: Senapati and Sahu, *Mayurbhanj Gazetteer*, pp. 72–5; *Memoranda on the Indian States, 1932*, Delhi: Government of India, 1933, pp. 222–3, puts the average annual revenue at Rs.28,20,000. The payment to the government was Rs.1,068, an increase of Rs.67 over what was paid in 1812.
- 10 See for details: H.K. Mahtab, Lalmohan Pattnaik and Balvantrai Mehta (eds), *Report of the Enquiry Committee: Orissa States*, Cuttack: Orissa Mission Press, 1939; R.K. Ramadhyani, *Report on the Land Tenures and the Revenue System of the Orissa and Chattisgarh States, vol. III, The Individual States*, Berhampur: Indian Law Publications, 1942.
- 11 Ramadhyani, *Report on the Land Tenures*, pp. 110–11, 113; J. Das, *Final Report of the Land Revenue Settlement in Kalahandi District Ex-State Khalsa Area 1945–56*, Berhampur: India Law Publication Press, 1962, p. 13, mentions that out of the total 69,194 holdings in 1946–50, Brahmins had 2,461, Kultas 2,196, Gonds 13,725, Kandhas 11,910 and Dombs 12,350. Although the Brahmins and Kultas together had 4,657 holdings, land was heavily concentrated in their hands with the others having smallholdings. These figures also illustrate the rise of internal exploiters from among the *adibasis* and outcastes like Dombs who emerged as creditors; p. 3.
- 12 Indrabilas Mukherjee, *Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gangpur State 1929–1936*, Berhampur: India Law Publication Press, 1938, p. 10.
- 13 Das, *Final Report*, p. 3. The reference mentions the Brahmins, along with the Kultas.
- 14 Mukherjee, *Gangpur Settlement Report*, pp. 12, 17.
- 15 In princely states such as Talcher, rent-free lands were given to Panas, who worked as *chowkidars*; *Talcher Settlement 1911–1912*, p. 13; Ramdhyani, *Land Tenures III*, p. 284.
- 16 For example, wages were paid in cash or kind in Nilgiri. *Final Report on the Nilgiri Settlement 1917–22*, Berhampur: Sarada Press, 1922, p. 51.
- 17 Ramadhyani, *Report on the Land Tenures*, pp. 109, 115; Das, *Kalahandi Settlement Report*, p. 10; Nilamani Senapati and D.C. Kuanr, *Orissa District Gazetteers: Kalahandi*, Cuttack: Orissa Government Press, 1980, p. 234.
- 18 Mukherjee, *Gangpur Settlement Report*, p. 29.
- 19 *Dhenkanal Settlement Report*, pp. 13–14.
- 20 Confidential History of Ranpur state, Crown Representative Papers, R/2 – 306/131, undated, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London. This fee was charged by the *darbars* when widows remarried.
- 21 Confidential History of Talcher state (1926), R/2 – 306–134, Crown Representative Papers, OIOC, referred to the *raja* of Talcher demanding a cash dowry of Rs.2.36 (Rs.236,000) *lakhs* for his son's marriage. This was reported as a practice that was 'not unusual with the chiefs of Orissa', although this was 'the first instance of an Orissa Chief having demanded it'. Thus, as is clear, the system of dowry was a standard practice among the chiefs, although, as reported, this was the first time that dowry was actually demanded.
- 22 Ramadhyani, *Report on the Land Tenures*, pp. 109, 115; Das, *Kalahandi Settlement Report*, p. 10. Senapati and Kuanr, *Kalahandi Gazetteer*, pp. 269, 274. Thus, there were settlements in 1904–05, 1911–12 and 1922–23.

- 23 For example, Mukherji, *Gangpur Settlement Report*, p. 33, mentioned quite clearly that the 'gauntias and the landlords have to depend on the free labour provided by raiyats'. For details, see Mahtab *et al.* (eds), *The Report Enquiry Committee*, 1939.
- 24 *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement 1911–1912 Talcher State*, Cuttack: Orissa Government Press, 1970, p. 2. Talcher had coal mines. *Review of the Administration of the Feudatory States of Orissa and Chotanagpur for the Year 1922–3*, Superintendent Government Printing: Patna, 1923, p. 21. Mayurbhanj had iron ore mines and by 1922–23, the Tata Company exported 393,138 tons of iron ore from the state to Jamshedpur and on average about 3,132 persons worked in the mines.
- 25 This point has been highlighted earlier.
- 26 Mohammad Laeequdin, Census Officer Mayurbhanj state, *Census of Mayurbhanj State 1931, Report*, vol. I, Calcutta: Calendonian Printing Company, 1937, p. 111. For details related to this process, see Biswamoy Pati, *Identity, Hegemony, Resistance: Towards a Social History of Conversions in Orissa, 1800–2000*, New Delhi: Three Essays, 2003.
- 27 Based on W.G. Lacey, *Census of India, 1931, vol. VII, Bihar and Orissa Part I: Report*, Patna: Superintendent Government Printing, 1933, p. 267.
- 28 *Report on the General Administration of the Tributary Mahals of Orissa for the Year 1894–5*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1895, p. 7, refers to different cooking places for different prisoners in the Talcher prison aimed at preserving the caste system.
- 29 This included leaving pieces of earthenware, used by outcastes for eating, at the door of peasants to extract taxes. Since these were considered as 'polluting' in terms of caste, as long as they remained no one could eat or go out. *The Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Conditions and How to Improve It ('Report from the Bengalee with some additions and alteration')*, Cuttack: Orissa Patriot Press, 1877, p. 26. One also witnesses serious efforts of the *darbar* to prevent common dinners organized by the Nilgiri Prajamandal in 1937; Pati, *Resisting Domination*, pp. 110–11.
- 30 L.S.S. O'Malley, *Census of India, 1911, vol. V, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim, Part I, Report*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913, p. 454.
- 31 *Nilgiri Praja Andolanara Itihasa*, [Oriya; 'The History of the Nilgiri Prajamandal'], Balasore: Nilgiri Prajamandal Compilation Committee, 1981, p. 64; *Krushak*, 3 January 1938. Gandhian ideals of social reform and Harijan (outcastes) uplift had inspired these activists, mostly Congressmen, to organize this 'common dinner' since 1932.
- 32 Cited in Hermann Kulke, 'Juggernaut under British Supremacy and the Resurgence of the Khurda Rajas as Rajas of Puri', in Eschmann *et al.* (eds), *The Cult of Jagannath*, p. 346. Jagannatha's 'decided answer' reached the British camp on 16 September 1803.
- 33 Hermann Kulke, 'Kshatriyaisation and Social Change: A Study in Orissa Setting', in S.D. Pillai (ed.), *Aspects of Change in India: Studies in Honour of Professor G. S. Ghurye*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1976, pp. 403–4, refers to the pre-colonial origins/spread of this cult and specifically to the building of Jagannatha temples in the second half of the nineteenth century. This phenomenon becomes clear if one looks at most of the Revenue Settlement Reports of the princely states (and even the big *zamindaris*), or studies the architectural pattern of the 'castle towns'.
- 34 *Dhenkanal Settlement Report*, p. 24.
- 35 *Talcher Settlement Report, 1911–12*, pp. 1, 31.
- 36 *Nilgiri Settlement Report*, p. 41.



- 37 G.N. Singh, *Final Report on the Original Survey and Settlement Operations of the Ranpur Ex-State Area in the District of Puri, 1943–1952*, Berhampur: Sarada Press, 1963, p. 10.
- 38 *The Orissa Tributary States: Their Present Conditions*, pp. 3–4.
- 39 Lieutenant Elliot (Deputy Commissioner of Raipur), Report on Kalahandi state, 28 July 1856, cited in Senapati and Kuanr, *Kalahandi Gazetteer*, pp. 478–9.
- 40 This is based on M.M. Mishra, A Note on Leprosy: Sources Based on the Palm-leaf Manuscripts of the Rajasabha of the Erstwhile Keonjhar state, Oriya, n.d., unpublished. It needs to be considered here that the palm-leaf manuscripts illustrate the transition from orality to a developing textual tradition. Consequently, it needs to be emphasized that they should be located along a time frame that is fluid, to the extent that it acknowledges the continuities of certain aspects that it deals with, insofar as the pre-colonial/colonial transition is concerned. At the same time, although they describe several aspects of treating leprosy in Keonjhar since the seventeenth century, it is highly possible that – given the search for ‘ancientness’ of most of the princely states in colonial Orissa – they might have been actually produced only in the nineteenth century.
- 41 See for details: Eschmann *et al.* (eds), *The Cult of Jagannath*.
- 42 The collection of the *rajabansabalis*, Orissa Research Project, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg and OIOC, Crown Representative Papers, throw considerable light on the efforts to draw upon the ‘past’. Research on the *rajabansabalis* is yet to be undertaken. Burkhard Schnepel, *The Jungle Kings: Ethnohistorical Aspects of Politics and Ritual in Orissa*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2002, pp. 139–40, explores the Jeypur *zamindari* of Orissa on the basis of the ‘Jeypur Raja Bansabali’ (Family Chronicle of the Jeypur kings) written in 1938 by R. Nanda Sharma, a ‘darbar poet’ of Jeypur.
- 43 These aspects need to be studied. For details related to communication networks, see Ravi Ahuja, “‘Opening up the Country?’ Patterns of Circulation and Politics of Communication in Early Colonial Orissa”, *Studies in History*, 20:1, 2004, 73–130.
- 44 A classic example is Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- 45 See for details: *General Review of the Administration of the Feudatory States of Orissa for the Year 1925–6*, Patna: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1926, p. 12, which reported that ‘most of the work on these [buildings, roads and irrigation] is carried out by means of *bethi* labour in many states ... notably Talcher and Sonpur’; and Mahtab *et al.* (eds), *The Report of the Enquiry Committee*. See also Biswamoy Pati, ‘Environment and Social History: Kalahandi, 1800–1950’, *Environment and History*, 5:3, 1999, 345–59; Ahuja, “‘Opening up the Country?’”.
- 46 *Report on the Administration of the Tributary Mahals of Orissa for the Year 1904–1905*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1905, p. 5. *The Review of the Annual Report on the Administration of the Feudatory States of Orissa and Chota Nagpur for the Year 1922–3*, Patna: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1923, p. 21, mentioned that the TISCO exported 393,138 tons of iron ore from Mayurbhanj, for which it paid a royalty of Rs.50,919. ‘All India State Peoples Conference’, File No. 112, Private Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, mentions the absence of labour laws in the state.
- 47 This phenomenon has remarkable continuities. Thus, it is quite common to witness debates on the level of exploitation, which, we are told, was more severe in the princely tracts. Besides the fact that it is not possible to binarize the tracts held by colonialism and the princes, or to quantify exploitation, oppressive *zamindaris* like Kanika and Aul in British Orissa (under direct British rule) provide evidence to the contrary.

## 7 Loyal feudatories or depraved despots?

### The deposition of princes in the Central India Agency, c.1880–1947

*Fiona Groenhout*

British perceptions and expectations of Indian princes as Oriental potentates and imperial collaborators were complex, ambiguous and often contradictory.<sup>1</sup> They were located along a spectrum of princely behaviour, rather than a simplistic dichotomy of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ princes. Throughout the colonial period, the British presumed that most princes would manage their states with an adequate, if not ideal, level of administrative ability and commitment. Despite periodic shifts in policy, British ideas of race, class, gender and culture, and pragmatic consideration of their own interests, led them for the most part to condone princely mediocrity and to accept that few rulers would become a ‘model prince’. Indeed, those ‘model’ rulers who were committed to progressive modes of administration could be perceived as undermining the imperial status quo, as they demonstrated that ‘natives’ were capable of providing the very kind of ‘enlightened’ government over which the British asserted a moral monopoly in India.<sup>2</sup>

However, if few rulers exceeded British expectations, those who failed to meet even the implicit standard of acceptable mediocrity were also relatively few.<sup>3</sup> Yet, due largely to the nature of the actions or events that tended to precipitate British intervention, these princes constitute a highly visible minority in the history of princely India. While it may be argued that such rulers are therefore unrepresentative, it is precisely because they violated British-imposed standards of princely conduct that they represent a valuable means by which to illuminate them. The system of indirect rule (by which the British delegated administrative jurisdiction over much of India to local rulers) was fundamentally reactive – it evolved through British attempts to resolve problems with particular states. In the absence of established, unambiguous definitions of appropriate princely conduct, such standards were formulated and reformulated on an ad hoc basis in relation to specific instances of inappropriate conduct. It is thus through episodes of crisis in relations between a ruler and the British that the relative significance of British conceptions of princely character in shaping indirect rule can be discerned.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter argues that although the British condoned what they perceived as mediocrity amongst princes, there were limits to their tolerance. The

degree of British intervention in cases of misrule or maladministration was largely contingent upon considerations of expediency, i.e. how the contemplated intervention was expected to affect British interests in India more broadly. This explains why the British often tolerated behaviour they thought repugnant and sometimes deferred intervening in a state long after deciding its ruler merited removal.<sup>5</sup> The deliberately undefined character of concepts of ‘misrule’ and ‘maladministration’ thus enabled the British to redefine the rules of the political ‘game’ in their interests whenever it was expedient, leaving the princes to act in anticipation of (inconsistent) British judgements, rather than providing a clear indication of their role in the imperial structure.<sup>6</sup> However, it would be a mistake to infer that pragmatism was the sole influence on British policy. Just as their conceptualizations of India influenced the manner in which they occupied the subcontinent, British relations with the princes were unavoidably shaped by their perceptions of them, even if such perceptions never amounted to a coherent or stable ideology of princely character and conduct.

The decision to retain the princely states in the wake of the uprisings of 1857 appeared to introduce an unprecedented era of stability and security for the princes.<sup>7</sup> However, while the British publicly abandoned the use of annexation, they retained the right to intervene in states and to remove rulers from power when necessary. The primary justification for interference was that the very protection extended to the princes prevented serious problems within the states being remedied by indigenous methods such as insurrection.<sup>8</sup> Although both the states and their ruling dynasties were protected, individual rulers never had absolute security of tenure during the colonial period.<sup>9</sup> Thus, while the princes did experience some success in achieving both individual and collective goals, they were ultimately constrained in their choice of both ends and means by the expectations of, and penalties wielded by, the British.<sup>10</sup> Depositions, suspensions and abdications provide access to the ideas underlying the relationships between the British and the rulers of princely India. By examining two case studies drawn from the Central India Agency – the forced abdication of Maharaja Shivaji Rao Holkar of Indore in 1903, and the deposition of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Rewa in 1946 – this chapter will explore the processes by which a prince became a liability rather than an asset to British rule, the factors that influenced such an assessment and the subsequent British response.<sup>11</sup>

### **The ‘abdication’ of Shivaji Rao**

Shivaji Rao Holkar ascended the Indore *gaddi* (throne) in July 1886. His reign was clouded from the start by British concerns that he could not control himself, would not be controlled and would reverse the administrative improvements made during his father’s reign. These concerns were based upon reports of harassment and torture directed against servants, courtiers and state subjects by Shivaji Rao that the Government of India

(GOI) had received since 1884.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Sir Lepel Griffin, the Agent to the Governor-General for Central India (AGG), held such serious misgivings over Shivaji Rao's prospects that he applied to Simla for authorization to postpone his inauguration as Maharaja until he 'could prove himself worthy'. His justification was that Shivaji Rao's sexual relationship with a courtier had caused him to promote the young man above his 'appropriate' status. Griffin claimed that this display of nepotism threatened the stability of the *darbar* and was, moreover, an insult to any British official forced to interact with the lowly 'creature'.<sup>13</sup>

However, despite the AGG's impassioned appeals, the GOI was unwilling to take action against Shivaji Rao based on his sexuality alone. The Viceroy, the Earl of Dufferin, expressed concern that this was not an issue in which the British should become involved, arguing that

[w]e cannot cover the scandal in any way, for we have no reason but one to object to Gopalia's preferment. And the public is not likely to see that the Government of India has any concern with the Maharaja's vices so long as they do not incapacitate him for the government of the State.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, after receiving an undertaking from Holkar that his lover would not attend events at which British officers would be present, the GOI consented to his installation.<sup>15</sup> Despite their disapproval of such behaviour, and their awareness of its detrimental effect upon the utility of the princes as collaborators, the British were generally reluctant to base criticisms of, or action against, a ruler on issues of sexual misconduct or 'vice'.

Holkar continued to attract negative reports from local officials throughout the following decade, and aggravated his strained relationship with the British by what the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, described as the 'acts of petty insubordination which he [Holkar] delights in piling up', such as ignoring Curzon's request that he cancel his travel through plague- and famine-affected areas of British India.<sup>16</sup> In late 1899, the GOI abandoned their attempts to influence Holkar's 'extraordinary conduct'; instead, they appointed a Resident to Indore to supervise its administration more directly.<sup>17</sup> The Maharaja's powers were restricted, with his decisions and those of his council to be guided in all 'important matters' by the advice of the Resident. The cost of the appointment would be borne by the state.<sup>18</sup> In formal terms, Holkar's powers were limited to control over palace staff, courtiers and family. However, he retained a far broader informal sphere of influence, as many of his subjects and officials anticipated that his powers would be restored, and acted accordingly. Holkar's ongoing influence within Indore caused significant difficulties for the new Resident, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Jennings, in supervising the administration and enquiring into allegations made against the Maharaja by peasants, merchants, officials and family members.<sup>19</sup>

In 1900, it appeared that relations with Holkar would reach crisis point, due to his unwillingness to sanction the provision of famine relief. Beyond the serious humanitarian implications, his recalcitrance also threatened stability and order, within Indore and in neighbouring territories.<sup>20</sup> In 1902, Holkar ordered that the revenue member of his council, Gajraj Singh, be dismissed and returned to GOI service, on the grounds that he had collected insufficient revenue in 1901 – another year of famine.<sup>21</sup> Soon after, the Resident, Major Francis Younghusband, reported that despite the census showing that Indore's population had decreased by 22 per cent, the Maharaja continued to dispute the extent of famine in 1900 and criticize expenditure on famine relief. Holkar also objected to the conversion in 1902 of state currency into British coinage (part of a wider conversion push in this period), arguing that the GOI intended to profit at Indore's expense by setting a punitive exchange rate.<sup>22</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Holkar's violent and unpredictable behaviour was reported as early as 1884 and remained a constant throughout his reign. These reports contain accounts of the Maharaja beating servants and then 'riding' them, his harassment of bankers and merchants, and his "reviewing" the [state] officials [by] making them march past him one by one, selecting certain he did not like and ordering them to slap each other in the face'. Holkar allegedly also ordered 'three Brahmins to be tied by their tufts of hair ... to a Muhammadan, and then beaten outwards till one man's tuft snapped from his head'. Another Brahmin was beaten so badly that, had he been a horse, the Resident remarked, his owner would have been prosecuted by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.<sup>23</sup> The worst of the alleged abuses – the torture in 1902 of a group of nomads for poaching (and the subsequent death of one man) – was being investigated for its potential as grounds for deposition, when such action was pre-empted by Holkar's own offer of retirement in August 1902.<sup>24</sup>

When princes exhibited such extreme behaviour it often led officials to speculate about their sanity; insanity was often perceived, rather inconsistently, as both the cause and effect of a ruler's misconduct, although few princes were ever subjected to formal psychological evaluation.<sup>25</sup> Conceptualizing a prince as being insane also reduced the ruler's culpability for his conduct, and removed the need to find more complex, problematic explanations for his actions. This was how the officiating Resident, Major Younghusband, explained the behaviour of Shivaji Rao:

That His Highness is not always thoroughly sane and is not at times fully responsible for his actions I have become as convinced as my predecessors. ... On first acquaintance, I was struck by his conversational powers, his geniality, his interest in general affairs, and the shrewdness of many of his remarks. But when it became necessary to pass ... to the transaction of State business, I found His Highness altogether different. ... He is, moreover, at times subject to such uncontrollable

bursts of violence and temper, and during these 'bad times' issues such extraordinary orders, that it is very difficult to suppose that he is anything else but temporarily insane upon these occasions.<sup>26</sup>

The medicalization of princely misconduct provided one of the few means by which control could be asserted over the essentially criminal behaviour of some rulers, as princes otherwise enjoyed almost complete legal immunity within their states, in British India, and even in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the notion of princely insanity was of political value to the British. The location of inappropriate behaviour within the framework of 'health' rather than 'vice', 'crime', or 'sedition' effectively depoliticized such behaviour. By the period under examination, the British were highly conscious of what one might call the observers (and potential critics) of paramouncy – other princes, the Indian press and British Indian politicians. All three groups were, to varying extents, considered when officials contemplated taking action against a ruler, as the Secretary of State, Lord George Hamilton privately explained to the incoming Viceroy, Lord Curzon, in 1899:

The last Despatch that we addressed to the Government of India in connection with Holkar was drafted in the sense that he was scarcely responsible for his actions; for I felt that, if ever it became necessary to take so strong a step as deposition, you would be less likely to frighten the Native Princes generally if you took that step, not on the plea of misgovernment but of insanity.<sup>27</sup>

A plea of insanity rendered it far easier to pursue action against a prince without taking the political risks usually associated with intervention.

Although they had concluded by 1899 that Holkar had lost his utility as an ally, the British deferred taking action. Each fresh report of erratic behaviour was viewed, however, with an eye to its potential as a rationale for deposition. Their approach is captured in a remark made by the Secretary of State:

The more one sees and hears of Holkar, the more one is convinced that he is hopeless. However, the longer you can postpone deposing him the better; but some day or other that contingency will have to be faced and carried through.<sup>28</sup>

The opportunity came in 1902, when the Maharaja indicated in a letter to his Resident that

[i]t is my desire, therefore, that either my grievances be removed and I may be given necessary powers, or that I should be allowed to retire on an agreeable pension . . . I wish to depose myself before my enemies succeed in their efforts towards deposing me.<sup>29</sup>

Although the Resident initially attached little significance to Holkar's offer, the response in Simla was unequivocal; the Viceroy stated:

I have long been in favour of getting rid of this dangerous and impossible madman by abdication, and my inclination would be to treat his offer as genuine, to allow him handsome terms, and to let him go. ... he would be a nuisance in retreat, but on the *gadi* he is a chronic danger.<sup>30</sup>

The British grasped Holkar's offer of abdication with alacrity, promptly 'accepting' his 'offer', presenting him with the date on which such acceptance would come into effect, and specifying the conditions on which he would be 'permitted' to retire, including the terms of financial allowances, conduct and subsequent place of residence.<sup>31</sup> When Holkar tried to retract his offer, claiming it was a passing comment made whilst in a petulant mood, the British stood firm, suggesting that it would be far better for him to acquiesce, and retire on generous financial terms with his *izzat* (dignity) intact, than risk public deposition in the future, probably sooner rather than later, and on less favourable financial terms.<sup>32</sup>

The public meanings of Holkar's abdication were then manipulated to suggest that his abdication was both voluntary and the result of poor health, rather than poor relations with the GOI: in finalizing the press communiqué that announced Holkar's abdication, the foreign secretary, H. Barnes, suggested the words 'failing health' be inserted both as a reward for Holkar's dignified conduct, and to discourage speculation that he had been forcefully removed from power.<sup>33</sup> The abdication was also postponed when it was realized that the date specified initially (15 November 1902) would prevent Holkar attending the Coronation Durbar of 1903, the most significant ceremonial event in India for decades, at which most rulers would be present. This contradicted the representation of Holkar's abdication as voluntary, as a 'loyal feudatory' would hardly resign just before an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate his devotion. When Holkar requested that his abdication be postponed so that he could attend the *darbar*, the British happily accepted, despite concerns that he might reveal his fate or cause political difficulties,<sup>34</sup> as his request enabled them not only to maintain the facade of a voluntary abdication but also to represent its postponement as the magnanimous concession of a benign government.<sup>35</sup>

Holkar finally announced his abdication in formal *darbar* on the morning of 31 January 1903, when in a speech that had been approved in advance by the AGG, he explained that

[a]s I feel considerable difficulty in attending official functions and discharging other duties connected with my position as Maharaja of Indore, I have now, with the approval of the Government of India,

made up my mind to resign the Chiefship in favour of my son, Tukaji Rao Bala Sahib, and to retire into private life.<sup>36</sup>

Holkar's 'resignation' was accepted by the AGG, who then confirmed the succession of Holkar's minor son, Tukaji Rao, and installed him on the *gaddi*. The ex-Maharaja left the capital by train later that day for his new residence at Barwaha, in the rural outskirts of the state.

### **Deposing Gulab Singh**

Gulab Singh was invested with full ruling powers as the Maharaja of Rewa in 1922, almost two decades after Holkar was forced to abdicate. Trouble within Rewa did not emerge until August 1930, when members of the landholding class, dissatisfied with what they saw as the 'persistent endeavour on the part of the durbar Authorities... to introduce... modifications to the old rules much to the detriment of the *Ilaqedars* [*sic*] (estate-holders) and Zamindars of the estates', petitioned the Maharaja to redress their grievances.<sup>37</sup> At the time, Gulab Singh was attending the Round Table Conference in London, and managed to evade any definite undertakings. The landlords' increasing frustration with him led several of them to cultivate ties with Congress and political activity in Rewa ensued. In late 1930, two *thakurs* (landlords) became openly defiant of *darbar* a authority and subsequently resisted arrest by retreating to one of their forts with their followers, guns and ammunition. A compromise was reached that averted bloodshed, but it failed to resolve the intertwined problems of landlord-*darbar* relations and the infiltration of the state by 'Congress elements'.<sup>38</sup>

These disturbances led to British recognition of the need for change in Rewa, despite their reluctance to push Gulab Singh into enacting reforms, the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, warning that he needed 'careful and sympathetic handling'.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, in 1932 the Maharaja was persuaded to appoint a committee (chaired by Conrad Corfield, the newly appointed vice-president of the state council) to enquire into the landlords' grievances; this committee framed new rules governing the tenure of landholdings. The *darbar* also issued ordinances (similar to those in British India) intended to suppress Congress activities within Rewa.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, these concessions were fairly superficial, and the fundamental issues with Gulab Singh's administration, and the relationships between members of Congress, the Maharaja and his landlords remained problematic throughout the 1930s.

Despite the obvious shortcomings of his administration (such as the expansion of oppressive revenue demands upon landholders), Gulab Singh successfully resisted undertaking substantial administrative or constitutional reform in Rewa for many years, arguing that 'he ran his State quite well on traditional lines and that he saw no reason why he should provoke trouble and agitation by starting to introduce reforms for



which there was no public demand and which would only be calculated to provoke discontent'. As he spent most of his time in Rewa and toured the state extensively for several months each year, he was in touch with his subjects and able to address their grievances without the introduction of modern administrative forms.<sup>41</sup> This argument was intended to appeal both to British imaginings of the princes as possessing a special bond with their people, and anxieties about rulers who became alienated from their subjects through Western education or extended absences from their state. That its appeal was felt is indicated by the response of the Viceroy, the Marquess of Linlithgow:

I suggested to him ... that he would be wise, in my judgment, at any rate to work out the foundations of a plan of progressive advance and reform and to start laying those foundations now. Once they were laid he could build on them as slowly as he pleased.<sup>42</sup>

Gulab Singh's complex personal life – in particular, his sexual relationships with young men and adolescents – was also an object of anxious speculation. Beyond the moral outrage that it inspired, however, the main problem that indulgence in 'unnatural vices' posed for the British was its potentially negative impact on the administration of the state and the reputation of the princely order. Gulab Singh's sexuality was viewed similarly to that of Holkar, whose early exposure to 'homosexual vice' was considered the cause of his erratic behaviour and of the violence that contributed to his removal from power.<sup>43</sup> It was thought that Gulab Singh's sexual entanglements rendered him vulnerable to blackmail and pressure from landholders and Congress members; the courtiers and servants with whom he was involved were also said to 'interfere with the constitutional working of the state, especially in the administration of justice'.<sup>44</sup> Yet even in urging action on this issue, the Resident, Colonel Gerald Fisher, appeared morbidly fascinated by the excesses of Oriental decadence exhibited by the Maharaja, who

takes about with him quite openly ... about two dozen young boys known as the 'Anandi Party'. I have even got a photograph of this party all in women's clothes and ornaments, and ... letters in His Highness's own handwriting ... showing the degree and manner of his degradation. ... I have letters too about his autocratic dealings in procuring other men's wives...<sup>45</sup>

However, the Maharaja's loyalty was the greatest cause for concern. As the loyalty of the princely order was the primary justification for its retention, rulers were watched for evidence of their support for the British. Concern about princely loyalty was heightened in periods when the British

had greater need of their support, such as civil unrest or war. Any signs of disloyalty during these periods were therefore treated far more seriously than at times of greater complacency. Gulab Singh's pragmatic attempts in the 1930s to utilize the support of Congress in internal power struggles were thus viewed as yet another threat to British supremacy in a period when their control over large sections of Indian society appeared tenuous. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 caused speculation about the Maharaja's loyalty to intensify. British intelligence reported in 1940 that Gulab Singh was doing nothing to hinder the growth of Congress agitation in Rewa, having adopted a policy 'of conciliation and "wait and see"'.<sup>46</sup> The Resident reported:

I have, practically since my arrival in Central India, received most disquieting reporting referring specially to the alleged disloyalty of the Ruler and his officials and his peculiar attitude towards the war. This to some extent seems to be borne out by the absence of any noticeable help extended by the Ruler of this State towards the prosecution of the war.<sup>47</sup>

The Maharaja's unconvincing public demonstrations of loyalty during the war were, however, perhaps most damaging to his reputation. In 1941, the Resident alleged that the Maharaja had largely confined his contributions to the non-combatant services 'so that he will stand well with Congress or the Victorious dictators in the event of the collapse of the British Empire'.<sup>48</sup> He subsequently claimed that the Maharaja was trying to create a 'favourable atmosphere' by pledging support for the war effort and consenting to administrative changes; these measures failed to demonstrate any 'sincerity of purpose'.<sup>49</sup> Despite the gravity of these allegations, the British were reluctant to take action against Gulab Singh during wartime, as they did not want to risk losing the support of other princes who might object to their intervening in Rewa, or publicly reveal evidence of problems within the allied camp.

In October 1941, however, relations with Rewa reached a turning point when one of the Maharaja's personal clerks, Baldeo Prasad, was caught and tried for bribing a member of the Indore residency's clerical staff to provide him with confidential correspondence. The magistrate presiding over the case concluded that the evidence overwhelmingly supported the clerk's claim that he had acted merely as an agent for the Maharaja, and that 'were it not for his privileged position he (Gulab Singh) would have shared a position in the dock ... and would presumably as principal have received a heavier punishment'.<sup>50</sup> Although they resented the magistrate's 'somewhat indiscreet'<sup>51</sup> remarks about the Maharaja (which represented interference in their own bureaucratic 'territory'), the political department concurred with his judgement and acknowledged that the case represented 'a heaven-sent

lever to make Rewa put his State in order'. The Resident argued that the Maharaja had become a liability:

The petty mean act of getting information from our office is very small compared to the tangle of misrule, disloyal leanings, and personal scandals attached to this State which appear to me to compose a sort of fulminate that can, and will be exploded at any convenient time by Left Wing Congress as an act of aggression to show up Government and the Statal system as a whole.<sup>52</sup>

Consequently, his proposal to meet with the Maharaja and induce him to consent to major reforms (these included key civil appointments, a separate civil list, introduction of government by council, and publication of administration reports) was approved. The Political Secretary, Sir Kenneth Fitze, specified that the reforms should appear to be a voluntary undertaking by the Maharaja, but that if he failed to cooperate, a commission of enquiry could be considered an option for further action.<sup>53</sup>

However, just before the scheduled meeting, the Resident received information implicating the Maharaja in the murder of two of his personal staff, and associated criminal misconduct, including obstructing the investigation into the deaths.<sup>54</sup> It was alleged that in August 1937, one of Gulab Singh's aides, Uma Prasad, was shot by another aide, Shankar Prasad, on orders from the Maharaja; the death was staged to appear accidental. In November 1937, the murderer was himself assassinated by a man sent for from the United Provinces for this purpose. After the murder, the assassin was sheltered by one of Gulab Singh's servants and then personally escorted from Rewa by the Maharaja. He subsequently procured false confessions for the second murder from two men by force, although neither was charged and one died suspiciously of a drug overdose.<sup>55</sup> These deaths had first been reported by Fitze (then Resident) in February 1938, yet strangely had attracted little attention, despite his assessment that the 'tragedies arose out of jealousies and intrigues connected with the vice to which His Highness is a victim'.<sup>56</sup>

Princely violence, whether in person or by commission, was a matter of serious concern. Reports of violence often precipitated intervention in a state, or, as occurred with Gulab Singh, added a sense of urgency to existing contemplations of intervention. Yet it was often only murder itself that compelled the British to intervene when they would otherwise have preferred to remain aloof. This may be because only murder could not be justified by recourse to relativist arguments about the appropriateness of supposedly 'traditional' forms of justice. The brutality of the conduct alleged against Gulab Singh, if true, could not be tolerated; moreover, it raised questions about the ruler's sanity (and thus fitness to rule), the Resident reporting that the 'only conclusion that I can reach is that His Highness is a mad man'.<sup>57</sup> The British now had to determine how to take action against a ruler

whom they acknowledged was highly intelligent, unscrupulous and unlikely to choose abdication over facing a commission of enquiry.<sup>58</sup>

After extended discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the case, and the impossibility of conducting an effective investigation whilst he remained in power, the British decided to suspend Gulab Singh and remove him from Rewa during the investigation. If sufficient evidence were found to secure a verdict, the Maharaja could be brought before a commission of enquiry. The Resident duly requested an audience at the Indore Residency (thus ensuring that the Maharaja was outside Rewa when informed of the proceedings against him), and on meeting with him there on 12 February 1942 informed him of the charges against him, and ordered him not to return to Rewa.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, the Resident's Secretary, Major L. Wooldridge, drove from Indore to Rewa and assumed control of its administration. Gulab Singh protested against this *fait accompli*, but his powers were suspended nonetheless when he refused to promise to remain outside Rewa and not obstruct the investigation.<sup>60</sup>

The case was brought before a commission of enquiry, which sat at Indore from 10 July until 29 October 1942. The commission was the first to be formed along the lines specified by the GOI resolution of 1920 and consisted of five members – Justice F.W. Gentle of the Calcutta High Court, Lieutenant-Colonel de la Hay Gordon, a political officer, Sir Shankar Rangnekar, a retired judge of the Bombay High Court, Raza Ali Khan, the Nawab of Rampur and Rajendra Singh, the Maharaj-Rana of Jhalawar.<sup>61</sup> The misgivings expressed earlier within the government about the strength of the case were confirmed when the commissioners failed to agree and instead submitted two separate reports to the Viceroy for consideration. The three Indian members produced a majority report, in which they concluded that none of the charges had been established against the accused, and recommended that the Maharaja's power should be restored. In contrast, the two 'European' members found that the charge of bribery had been fully established, and the remaining charges had been sufficiently proven to justify them recommending that the Viceroy deprive the Maharaja of his powers.<sup>62</sup>

Left with a result that held grave possibilities of embarrassment for them, the British stalled for time.<sup>63</sup> It was only in late June 1943 that the Viceroy, the Marquess of Linlithgow, informed Gulab Singh that he disagreed with the majority report and considered that the offence of bribery had been proven. He also utilized a rider attached to the report by the rulers of Rampur and Jhalawar (in which they cast doubt on the soundness of Rewa's administration and recommended reform) in order to declare

that in the interests of the Rewa State its administration and resources should now be placed in capable hands to be managed in accordance with modern requirements and without capricious interference. . . . In the present instance he [the Viceroy] has found Your Highness to be guilty

of a serious offence with which you have been specifically charged and he has also before him proof or admissions of other delinquencies and defects in your capacity for rulership which he cannot find it consistent with his duty to ignore.<sup>64</sup>

The Maharaja would be allowed to return to Rewa, under certain conditions. These included the appointment of senior officials selected by the British, that all state business would be initiated in council, and could not be varied by the Maharaja without the Resident's consent, and that his return be deferred until these appointments were made and the new administration firmly established. Should the Maharaja violate these conditions, he would render himself 'liable to deposition at the discretion of the Paramount Power'.<sup>65</sup> After consulting his legal advisers, Gulab Singh accepted these conditions in August, and was finally allowed to return on 25 July 1944.<sup>66</sup>

It was Gulab Singh's attempted subversion of the new administration that led to his ultimate confrontation with the British. The Maharaja's resistance ranged from delaying council proposals (by questioning their appropriateness for the 'people of Rewa') to touring the state to promote educational reform, collecting donations, and using these funds to establish a parallel school system outside council influence. None of this, however, constituted sufficient violation of his conditions of return to justify his removal.<sup>67</sup> The act that did was a speech made on Dusserha Day, 16 October 1945, in which Gulab Singh proclaimed that

we grant full Responsible Government to our subjects. The fundamentals of this Government will be adult franchise, common electorate and no weightage or special representation.<sup>68</sup>

Having dismissed this proclamation as a cynical grasp for power, the British were initially uncertain how to respond, as they knew any action taken against the Maharaja in this context could easily be interpreted as hostility to Indian self-government.<sup>69</sup> Having received no immediate rebuke, however, the Maharaja escalated his efforts at disruption, encouraging his subjects (especially students) to protest against the overseas trip planned for his heir's education and personally threatening members of council. British control of the situation seemed increasingly tenuous, prompting the Viceroy to seek approval in early January 1946 to depose Gulab Singh as 'the only step now open to us'.<sup>70</sup> The solution arrived at was to control the deposition process to the finest detail: first to ascertain that his heir was willing to ascend the *gaddi*; then to inform the Maharaja of his deposition, to ensure that he left Rewa within 24 hours (to prevent him fomenting popular opposition to his departure); and to prohibit him from visiting Rewa or the surrounding agencies and provinces in future.<sup>71</sup> The episode assumed a tone of skulduggery when it transpired that on the

afternoon the Resident went to meet the Maharaja, he was canvassing support in an outlying area. By the time the Resident located and spoke with him it was almost midnight, and as they were by then far from Rewa city, the Resident took the initiative and drove the Maharaja to the state border a few miles away, from whence he was forced to shelter in neighbouring Allahabad.<sup>72</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Maharajas of Indore and Rewa ultimately failed to pursue their interests within the framework of their respective relationships with the paramount power. In both cases, the British eventually felt compelled to conclude that there was no longer any benefit to be derived from allowing the ruler in question to retain power over his state – the prince had lost all utility as a client and instead represented a liability for British interests in the subcontinent. Yet in neither case was this verdict based on a single event, action, or perceived flaw in the ruler's character: a combination of factors contributed to the downfall of both Shivaji Rao and Gulab Singh.

Holkar's lack of political acumen was a major factor in his removal from power. His antagonism towards powerful groups within Indore and his resistance against British administrative initiatives earned him a reputation for obstruction and recalcitrance, rather than that of a reliable ally. Holkar's inability to recognize the privileging of written communication in British culture led him to make an offer (or threat) that, it appears, he never expected would be taken seriously. Most importantly, however, it was through failing to maintain friendly, or at least functional, relationships with British officials that Holkar lacked allies who could have prevented or mitigated the action taken against him. In contrast, Gulab Singh was a sophisticated political actor, at the local, all-India and imperial levels. By making himself a useful ally, he achieved a certain degree of insulation from British attempts to encourage administrative and constitutional change in those states that, even by princely standards, were 'backward'. However, his attempts to claim an image for himself as a 'loyal feudatory' were only successful so long as they were credible. British doubts about the sincerity of his claim were only enhanced by his blatant disregard for the 'rules' of the political game (as indicated by the bribery case), his cynical involvement with Congress and the extreme nature of his personal conduct. These doubts enabled his mortified Resident to conduct an ultimately successful campaign for his deposition, despite inadequate evidence and the reluctance of the GOI.

These cases are arguably representative of the structure underlying the relationship between the British and the princes. This relationship was based on the agreement, sometimes explicitly stated but always implicitly understood, that in return for protection, the princes would support the British imperial enterprise and subscribe to British prescriptions of

good conduct. Those rulers who suffered deposition at the hands of the paramount power were therefore not necessarily the most depraved killers or perverted paedophiles that princely India had to offer. Rather, these were rulers who failed adequately to comprehend what the British expected of them and successfully tailor their own actions to fit the constraints that such expectations imposed.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to convey my thanks to Ian Copland, Waltraud Ernst, Norman Etherington, Dick Kooiman, Jeremy Martens, John McLeod, Biswamoy Pati and Barbara Ramusack for taking the time to read and provide constructive comments on drafts of this chapter, as well as those delegates not already mentioned for their helpful feedback on my presentation of this chapter at Southampton in July 2005. I am also grateful to the University of Western Australia for the funding that enabled the research on which this chapter is based, as well as my attendance at Southampton.

### Notes

- 1 For the purposes of this paper, 'the British' refers to the officials of the Foreign and Political department of the GOI, the staff of the India Office, the Viceroy, and the Secretary of State for India. Its use is not intended to imply that these officials were monolithic in their thoughts and actions.
- 2 Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education, and Empire in Colonial India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003. Ian Copland, 'Sayaji Rao Gaekwar and sedition: dilemmas of an Indian prince', in P. Robb and D. Taylor (eds), *Rule, Protest and Identity: Aspects of Modern South Asia*, London, Curzon Press, 1978.
- 3 It is difficult to ascertain reliable figures on the exact proportion of rulers whose powers were reduced or removed. However, both Copland and McLeod have observed in relation to the twentieth century, that the majority of rulers were 'a decent bunch' (Copland) and 'took their duties seriously' (McLeod); Ian Copland, *The Princes of India and the Endgame of Empire, 1917–1947*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 5; John McLeod, *Sovereignty, Power, Control: Politics in the States of Western India, 1916–1947*, Leiden, Brill, 1999, p. 29.
- 4 My approach is influenced by McLeod's argument that the 'development and resolution of conflicts' played a significant role in shaping the relationship between the princes and the British. McLeod, *Sovereignty, Power, Control*, p. 60.
- 5 For two extended analyses of specific depositions, see Ian Copland, 'The Baroda Crisis of 1873–1877: A Study in Governmental Rivalry', in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1968, 97–123, and Barbara Ramusack, 'Incident at Nabha: Interaction between Indian States and British Indian Politics', in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1969, 563–77.
- 6 This point is influenced by Judith Brown's observation that the British were both players and umpires in Indian politics after the First World War. Judith Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 49.

- 7 Thomas Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1870*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964, pp. 223–5.
- 8 ‘... the British Government has recognized that it is its duty to prevent gross misrule; because by giving the irresistible weight of its support to a Chief who is guilty of such misrule it becomes an accomplice in his oppression.’ Charles Tupper, *Indian Political Practice: A Collection of the Decisions of the Government of India in Political Cases*, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1895, Vol.1, p. 48. See also Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 94–8.
- 9 Even the Nizam of Hyderabad was publicly reprimanded for pursuing objectives that threatened British interests. Government of India (Ministry of States), *White Paper on Indian States*, Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1950 (2nd edition), pp. 149–51: Appendix 1, Letter from Reading to Nizam, 27 March 1926; and Copland, *The Princes of India*, pp. 53–5.
- 10 This paper draws upon Ramusack’s conceptualization of the relationship between the princes and the Raj as one of client and patron, consisting of reciprocal, if unequal, benefits and obligations; Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire: Dissolution of a Patron–Client System, 1914–1939*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1978, p. xvii.
- 11 The Central India Agency has been largely overlooked, Bhopal being the exception – see Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, ‘Princes, Paramountcy and the Politics of Muslim Identity: the Begam of Bhopal on the Indian National Stage, 1901–1926’, in *South Asia*, Vol. 26(2), 2003, 165–91; and Shaharyar Khan, *The Begums of Bhopal: A Dynasty of Women Rulers in Raj India*, London, I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000.
- 12 Crown Representative Papers, Foreign Department Internal Branch Secret Proceedings (SI), August 1884, Nos. 58–65, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), British Library, London.
- 13 Telegram from Agent to the Governor-General for Central India to Foreign Secretary, GOI, 10 July 1886, Crown Representative Papers, SI July 1886, Nos. 216–19, OIOC.
- 14 Keep-With No.1 – Comments of Viceroy, 10 July 1886, on telegram from AGG of same date, Crown Representative Papers, SI July 1886, Nos. 216–19, OIOC.
- 15 Letter No.10 P-129, from AGG to Foreign Secretary, 12 March 1888, Crown Representative Papers, SI May 1888, Nos. 50–51, OIOC.
- 16 Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26 November 1899, European Manuscripts, Hamilton Collection, Private Correspondence India Part II, Curzon to Hamilton, Vol. XV, 19–28 December 1899, OIOC.
- 17 Previously Indore was in direct relations with the AGG for Central India.
- 18 Secret telegram from Sec. State to Viceroy, 8 July 1899, European Manuscripts, Curzon Collection, Telegrams to and from the Secretary of State, 1899, OIOC. See also: Crown Representative Papers SI August 1899, Nos. 24–101; SI October 1899, Nos. 3–32; SI July 1900, No. 6; OIOC.
- 19 Demi-official (D.O.) letter from AGG to Foreign Secretary, 10 September 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 20 Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 8 February 1900, European Manuscripts, Hamilton Collection, Private Correspondence India Part II, Curzon to Hamilton, Vol. XV, 19 September–28 December 1899, OIOC.
- 21 Note from H.H. Indore’s Secretary to the Minister, Indore, 29 June 1902; ‘Translation of Huzur Tipan No.60–11, Huzur Order, 10 May 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 22 Confidential letter No. 5814G from Officiating Resident, Indore to First Assistant to the AGG in Central India, 3 September 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.



- 23 Confidential letter No. 5814G from Officiating Resident at Indore to First Assistant AGG, 3 September 1902; Confidential letter No. 5895G from Officiating Resident at Indore to First Assistant AGG, 6 September 1902; Confidential letter No. 5902G from Resident at Indore to First Assistant AGG, 8 September 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 24 Office note by Foreign Secretary, 17 September 1902; ‘Letter No. 10852 from AGG to Foreign Secretary, 10 September 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 25 Shruti Kapila explores two such cases in S. Kapila, ‘Masculinity and Madness: Princely Personhood and Colonial Sciences of the Mind in Western India 1871–1940’, *Past and Present*, No. 187 (May 2005), 121–56.
- 26 Confidential letter No. 5814G from Officiating Resident at Indore to First Assistant AGG, 3 September 1942, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 27 Letter from Secretary of State to Viceroy, 24 January 1899, European Manuscripts, Hamilton Collection, Private Correspondence India, Hamilton to Curzon, Vol. I, 1899, OIOC.
- 28 Letter from Secretary of State to Viceroy, 7 December 1899, European Manuscripts, Hamilton Collection, Private Correspondence India, Hamilton to Curzon, Vol. I, 1899, OIOC.
- 29 Letter from H.H. Indore to Resident at Indore, 29 August 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 30 Office note by Viceroy, 17 September 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 31 Confidential (draft) letter from AGG to H.H. Indore, no date, sent 10 October 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 32 Notes of conversation between AGG and H.H. Indore, by AGG, 14 October 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 33 Letter from Foreign Secretary to Private Secretary to Viceroy, 31 January 1903, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 34 Memorandum of conversation between Viceroy and H.H. of Indore at Mhow on 1 November 1902, by Viceroy, 3 November 1902, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC. The GOI went so far as to defend their decision when Edward VII objected to Holkar’s presence at the durbar. P\* Telegram No. 479 Viceroy to Secretary of State, 7 November 1902, European Manuscripts, Curzon Collection, Telegrams to and from the Secretary of State, 1902, OIOC.
- 35 Many Indian newspapers, however, speculated that the ‘resignation’ had been, at best, achieved through threats and pressure, and at worst amounted to *de facto* deposition. Extract from the *Bengalee*, Calcutta, 10 February 1903: ‘Is it Abdication or Compulsion?’, Extract from the *Mahratta*, Puna, 8 February 1903, 65–6; The Holkar’s Resignation, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 36 Memorandum of conversation between Viceroy and H.H. of Indore at Mhow on 1 November 1902, by Viceroy, 3 November 1902; D.O. letter from AGG to Foreign Secretary, 31 January 1903; Telegram from AGG to Foreign Secretary, 31 January 1903, Crown Representative Papers, SI March 1903, Nos. 91–120, OIOC.
- 37 Memorial to Maharaja from subjects, August 1930, Crown Representative Papers, Foreign and Political Department (FPD) Political File No. 60-P(S) of 1931, OIOC.
- 38 D.O. letter No. 223/11–31 from Political Agent Bagelkhand to Secretary to AGG, 26 September 1931; D.O. telegram XX No. 68 from AGG to Polindia,

- 1 January 1931; Express Letter No. 273/F.36/24 from AGG to Polindia, 25 February 1931, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 60-P(S) of 1931, OIOC.
- 39 Private and Personal Telegram P., No.3351 from Secretary of State to Viceroy, 17 November 1931, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 60-P(S) of 1931, OIOC.
- 40 Extract from the Central India Agency Fortnightly Report for the fortnight ending 31 May 1932, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 144-P(S) of 1932, OIOC; Office note, no clear author, 31 January 1940, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 3(7)-P(S) of 1940, OIOC.
- 41 Extract from private letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 December 1939, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 42 Extract from private letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 December 1939, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 43 Letter No.10 P.-129 from AGG to Foreign Secretary, 12 December 1888, Crown Representative Papers, SI May 1888, Nos. 50-1, OIOC.
- 44 Confidential Letter No. 54-P from Resident to Political Secretary, 27 February 1942, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.18-P(S) of 1942, OIOC.
- 45 Confidential Letter No. 54-P from Resident to Political Secretary, 27 February 1942, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 18-P(S) of 1942, OIOC.
- 46 Secret report from Central Intelligence Officer, Central Provinces and Berar, No. Na/10/I.S./3-304, Nagpur, 15 April 1940, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 3(7)-P(S) of 1940, OIOC.
- 47 Confidential D.O. Letter No. 44-P. from Resident to Political Secretary, 23 August 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC. The AGG for Central India became the Resident for Central India in 1937. Control over the Political Department was also transferred to the Viceroy in his new capacity as 'Crown Representative'.
- 48 Confidential D.O. Letter No. 44-P. from Resident to Political Secretary, 23 August 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 49 Confidential D.O. Letter No. 60-P. from Resident to Political Secretary, 15 October 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 50 Court Judgment, Criminal Case No. 14-R of 1941, in the Court of the Residency Magistrate, Indore, King Emperor vs. 1. Madan Mohan Mathur, 2. Baldeo Prasad Srivastava, 3 November 1941, by Residency Magistrate, First Class, Anthony Charles Maunsell [Captain], Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC. Due to the legal immunity enjoyed by rulers, the only meaningful punishment for serious criminal misconduct was deposition.
- 51 Office note by Political Adviser, 11 November 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 52 Secret letter from Resident to Political Secretary, 22 October 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 53 Secret D.O. Letter No. F.179-P/41 from Political Secretary to Resident, 18 November 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 54 Very Secret D.O. Letter No.70-P., from Resident to Political Adviser, 11 December 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.

- 55 Very Confidential D.O. Letter from Political Department to Resident, 2 March 1942, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.18-P(S) of 1942, OIOC.
- 56 Confidential D.O. Letter No.99/49/35 from Resident to Political Secretary, 6 February 1938, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 82-P(S) of 1938, OIOC. In this context, 'vice' refers loosely to a range of sexual desires, including pederasty and paedophilia.
- 57 Very Secret D.O. Letter No. 70-P. from Resident to Political Adviser, 11 December 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 58 Secret D.O. Letter from Resident to Political Adviser, 17 December 1941, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.179-P(S) of 1941, OIOC.
- 59 The charges were:

I. That Your Highness commissioned Baldeo Prasad to obtain confidential information from ... the Residency Office at Indore by bribing one or more persons employed therein; II. That you procured or instigated the murder of (a) Uma Prasad, (b) Shanker Prasad; III. That Your Highness in relation to either or both of these murders did (a) screen from justice persons whom you had reason to believe to be guilty; (b) procure the conviction on charges which you knew to be false of persons whom you believed to be able or willing to give material evidence; (c) otherwise made use of your position to obstruct the course of justice.

Note of instructions read once by H.R. [Resident] to H.H. of Rewa on 11 February 1942, by Resident, 12 February 1942, Crown Representative Papers, Central India Agency Confidential File No.CJ.58 HR/1/42 of 1942, OIOC. Charges of 'gross immorality', oppression and misrule were contemplated but rejected as being too nebulous in character to be proved by the Commission.

- 60 Strictly Secret Telegram XX (Immediate) No. 348-P. from Crown Representative to Secretary of State, 17 February 1942, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 18-P(S) of 1942, OIOC.
- 61 Resolution No.426-R. of 29 October 1920 governed British conduct in circumstances where they contemplated depriving a ruler of his powers, temporarily or permanently. It was intended to foster transparency in the political department's actions. However, it could only 'advise' the Viceroy, who (subject to the Secretary of State's approval) retained ultimate control. Crown Representative Papers, Foreign and Political Department Reforms Branch Secret Proceedings (SR) September 1921, Nos. 5–21, OIOC.
- 62 Rewa Commission of Enquiry – Majority Report, January 1943, p. 124, Crown Representative Papers, OIOC. Rewa Commission of Enquiry – The Report on the Rewa case, signed by Mr. Justice Gentle and Col. Gordon, January 1943, p. 200, Crown Representative Papers, OIOC.
- 63 Telegram XX Personal No. 3458 from Secretary of State to Crown Representative, 24 February 1943, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.18(1)-P(S) of 1943, OIOC.
- 64 Confidential letter from Political Secretary to H.H. Rewa, 24 June 1943, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 18(2)-P(S) of 1943, OIOC.
- 65 Confidential letter from Political Secretary to H.H. Rewa, 24 June 1943, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No. 18(2)-P(S) of 1943, OIOC.
- 66 D.O. letter No.CM/2C from Chief Minister, Rewa to Secretary to Resident, 28 July 1944, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.104-P(S) of 1944, OIOC.
- 67 Secret D.O. letter No.F.15(3)-P/45 from Political Secretary to Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 13 October 1945, Crown Representative Papers, FPD Political File No.15(3)-P(S) of 1945, OIOC.

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## 8 ‘Hostages in our camp’

### Military collaboration between princely India and the British Raj, c.1880–1920

*Samiksha Sehrawat*

The history of the Imperial Service Troops (IST) offers a valuable opportunity to explore the considerations that compelled the British and the princely states to collaborate in the execution of coercive action in the British Imperial cause. Such an analysis holds invaluable insights into the history of the military in colonial south Asia, the history of the relationship between the British and the princely states, and the importance of the coercive arm for a colonial state that was never sure of loyalties within the shifting terrain of the rise of nationalism. Precisely for such reasons of overlapping historiographical concerns, the IST appear to have been ignored in scholarly literature on the military, princely states and histories of South Asian participation in the First World War.<sup>1</sup>

To help redress this we will discuss the origins and military context of the IST focusing on two episodes in the evolution of princely–British military collaboration in the early twentieth century. Curzon’s attempt to expand the IST in 1903 was the first major British effort to reinterpret the political terms and military form of this venture. The 1919–20 initiative to reorganize the IST was the second such effort to recast princely–British military collaboration, resulting in the formation of the ‘Indian State Forces’. British attempts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of IST fighting forces were common to both initiatives, with the 1919–20 proposals under Chelmsford developing Curzon’s proposals further in the light of the military experience of the First World War. However, while Curzon’s proposals met with resistance from both the princes and the India Office, the 1919–20 initiative was remarkable for the enthusiastic adoption of reforms by the princes and the agreement of the India Office to change the fundamentals of military collaboration. It is argued here that the success of the latter owed much to the post-war political situation, which made it possible for the British to revise the form of military collaboration in a mode that fulfilled princely interests to a greater extent than before. An attempt will be made to delineate how strategic demands for military manpower to fuel the defence against Russian imperial ambitions determined the initial form of the collaboration and the extent to which the nature of this collaboration

was transformed in response to the post-First World War setting of rising anti-colonial movements.

### **British imperial military policy and the origins of IST**

Distrust of princely military forces had been a part of British military policy in India since the eighteenth century when the English East India Company had competed with Indian state formations for political and military supremacy in India.<sup>2</sup> This distrust continued into the nineteenth century and was clearly articulated by the Eden Commission as late as 1879. The Eden Commission, which had been appointed to consider the reorganization of the Indian Army, assessed the threat from the forces maintained by princely states (aggregating 381,000 men and 2,698 serviceable guns) and laid down British military policy regarding them:

on no account should arms of precision be given to the troops of Native States, ... their field artillery should be kept within the smallest possible limits, and ... the British Government should take no steps to employ or exercise the contingents of different States together.<sup>3</sup>

Lord Lytton (Viceroy 1876–80) himself put forward proposals that sought ‘to bring [princely] armies directly under our own control and indirectly into our own employment’ on the pretext of using the states’ armies for the defence of the Indian empire.<sup>4</sup> Although Lytton’s suggestions regarding the army were not implemented, this distrust of the military power of Indian states and the desire to ‘hold them hostages’ with the British continued to inform British policy.

The high demand for military manpower created by the growing imperial interests of Russia and its strategic advantage of a large military and proximity eventually formed the backdrop of a departure from the policy enunciated by the Eden Commission. This departure took the form of the Imperial Service Troops (IST), which were founded in 1885 against the backdrop of the threat of an Anglo–Russian conflict in Afghanistan, referred to as the Panjdeh crisis.<sup>5</sup> Some princely armies had participated in the Kurram Valley campaign during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–80) and in response to the threat of imminent war, several rulers offered to place the resources of their state at the disposal of the British.<sup>6</sup> Although the war was averted,<sup>7</sup> in 1887 the Nizam of Hyderabad offered to make a contribution of 60 *lakh* rupees (Rs.6 million) towards the defence of the Indian frontier on the occasion of the jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria.<sup>8</sup> Similar offers were also made by other princely states. These were received by the British military establishment within the context of a defensive strategy against Russia that included an increase in the military manpower in India. The Indian Army was increased in size in 1885 to approximately 190,000 men.<sup>9</sup> However, further augmentation of the armed forces continued to be

perceived as a pressing need if the military strategy against Russia were to make sense. To make use of the offers of support from the princely states, the IST scheme was evolved by a committee,<sup>10</sup> which included Lord Frederick Sleigh Roberts, the commander-in-chief of the Indian Army from 1885 to 1894, who was the architect of the Indian armies' organization, training and operational planning as part of the defensive strategy against a Russian attack from the north and north-west.<sup>11</sup> Roberts believed that the employment of troops from the Indian states represented part of the solution to the manpower shortage for imperial defence, especially as they did not involve an increase in military expenditure by the British Indian government.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the IST marked the formalization of the new pattern of British military collaboration<sup>13</sup> with the princes, in that it sought to utilize their armed forces for the purposes of defending the imperial interests of the British in India: 'The idea expressed in [this] new experiment of providing Imperial Service Troops marks a change from the policy of mistrust and isolation which prevailed in the earlier period of British intercourse.'<sup>14</sup> Unlike earlier treaty agreements between the British and Indian states for mutual military assistance and local defence, military collaboration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on the use of selected princely forces by the British in the pursuance of imperial defence policies, initially on the frontiers of India, and later beyond them.<sup>15</sup>

However, suspicion of military forces maintained by the princely states continued to inflect British military policy despite public acclamations of princely loyalty made by Lord Dufferin (Viceroy 1884–88) in his speech inaugurating the IST scheme in 1888 at Patiala.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the initiation of active military collaboration through the IST initiative itself was located as a 'favourable opportunity for making an attempt to settle the question of the native armies.'<sup>17</sup> The committee set up to evolve the IST saw it as a means of channelling the resources of the states into the IST units meant for imperial defence with the intention that it would reduce funds available for the non-IST component of the states' armies, eventually leading to their disbandment.<sup>18</sup> The principles of military organization established by the Peel Commission of 1859 to prevent the recurrence of armed rebellion in India influenced not only the organization of the Indian Army, but also attitudes towards the princely armies.<sup>19</sup> Its main recommendations were that a permanent British force of 80,000 had to be stationed in India; the military ratio of Indian troops to European troops be fixed as two to one for Bengal and three to one for both Madras and Bombay; and that artillery should be mainly a European force with Indians kept out of it.<sup>20</sup> Although these principles were modified to reflect the changing needs of British imperial and military interests in their application to the Indian Army as well as the princely forces, they remained the guiding force of all military decisions until 1947.

The Punjab states were the first to be approached due to their proximity to the North-West Frontier and because it was believed that 'the martial

spirit of the population (of these states rendered them) ... specially suitable for the experiment'.<sup>21</sup> Princely states incorporated in this scheme of military collaboration set aside some military units from their armies, which were designated IST. The military efficiency of selected units was to be raised for imperial service through the appointment of British military officers for their training and inspection.<sup>22</sup> Further, the IST units were rearmed for the first time with improved breach-loading weapons.<sup>23</sup> Within the states, these troops were believed to be useful '[as] escorts and guards, for the suppression of *dakaiti* [armed robbery], and in the case of transport corps in particular, for many other local purposes'.<sup>24</sup>

The continuing threat of Russian imperial ambitions and the need for military manpower continued to be the driving force behind later initiatives to expand the IST until the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Lord Curzon's (Viceroy 1899–1905) initiative to expand and improve the IST during his second term was to some extent an extension of his efforts to strengthen Indian defence and improve the Indian army.<sup>25</sup> Initially the IST scheme focused on princely states in the Punjab, Rajputana and Kashmir, which were expected to supply about 15,000 troops in the event of a frontier war, according to calculations made incorporating the principle of the British–Indian military ratio. However, the number of IST troops could eventually be raised to 19,000 men.<sup>26</sup> Until 1904, the IST consisted of 14,711 fighting men and to Curzon's mind the '[IST] movement ... [did] not possess the expansive force that might have been anticipated'.<sup>27</sup>

### **A monetary scale for measuring princely contribution to imperial defence: Curzon's initiative regarding IST**

Marking a break from the earlier emphasis on the voluntary nature of participation in the Imperial Service Troops initiative, Curzon's elaboration of the rationale behind military collaboration stressed the obligation of the princes to participate in imperial defence. Curzon's initiative in 1903 was based on proposals by Major H. Daly of the foreign department. Daly reinterpreted the duty of states that had agreed in their treaties to provide military assistance to the British, referred to as 'subordinate cooperation' by C.U. Aitchison. Daly's exposition of the duty of Indian rulers to subordinate military cooperation was based on the implicit argument that the prosperity of the states implied a duty to contribute to imperial defence. He compared the per capita contribution from British India to expenditure on the British army and navy with the per capita contribution of the princely states towards 'imperial obligations' and concluded that the average per capita contribution of subjects of princely India was lower than the one from British India.<sup>28</sup> Daly argued that the states had prospered, benefiting from the peace and facilities of extended trade resulting from the expansion and development of British India, and that this was reflected in the increase of gross revenue for the states. He urged that the states make adequate contributions to the maintenance of the



Indian empire. Daly's proposals were meant to encourage 'States which pay nothing, or only petty sums ... to make a reasonable contribution'.<sup>29</sup>

Four officers from the political department were asked to comment on the proposal to extend the IST in line with Daly's suggestions. Their replies indicated that the princes were averse to incurring further expenditure on IST or other imperial obligations and that any efforts to suggest that they did otherwise was likely to be unpopular. However, enthusiasm of military officers for increasing troop strengths through the expansion of the IST may have been an important factor in Curzon's decision to address the princes on the subject.<sup>30</sup> He issued a circular letter in which he asked selected princes to comment on the performance of the IST and make suggestions for improving the system. The circular also pointed to the obligation of princes to contribute to imperial defence and invited their opinion on setting ten per cent of state revenues as a minimum contribution.<sup>31</sup> The India Office was greatly opposed to these measures, due to the belief that they may antagonize the Indian rulers.<sup>32</sup> When the government of India forwarded the lukewarm responses of the princes, which expressed reservations regarding the new initiative, the fears of the India Office were confirmed.<sup>33</sup>

The India Office objected to the initiative primarily because it brought into question the 'voluntary' basis of princely participation in the IST scheme. British rhetoric and public pronouncements had underlined that princely offers were 'spontaneous and unsolicited'.<sup>34</sup> The anomaly of comparing the contribution of British and princely India was pointed out. W. Lee-Warner wrote: 'we have no right to make the States pay, e.g., for war with Tibet, or a forward policy in Aden, unless they have a voice in policy'.<sup>35</sup> Princely rulers confirmed this contention:

Many Chiefs ... contend that apart from tribute and lands ceded to Government for the special purpose of protection... [t]hey indirectly contribute towards the expenses of Empire as their people have to pay salt and customs dues like the people of British India. They argue, too, that they have given up their right of separate negotiation with Foreign Powers in return for protection from us. They are unwilling therefore to acknowledge any legal obligation to contribute to the defence of the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

The princes' objection was fuelled by suspicions about fresh monetary levies and greater intrusion in the management of state revenues.<sup>37</sup> Princely rulers pointed to their apprehension that what would start as a 'voluntary' contribution was likely to be converted to an enforceable obligation by the new proposal.<sup>38</sup> The setting of a definite proportion of princely revenues as a minimum contribution similarly aroused fears of periodical and inquisitorial examination of their states' exchequers and was thus 'apt to give the matter the colour of an imposition'.<sup>39</sup> An analysis of the political

aspects of the Indian rulers' objections to the proposals is beyond the scope of this chapter. The disregarding of treaty payments for 'local defence', the burden placed on state exchequers by the new commitments under consideration and the acceptance of a 'moral' but not a *legal* obligation to contribute to imperial defence were all causes of friction.

### **Improving the military efficiency of IST**

Since the foundation of the Imperial Service Troops, the aim of British policy regarding military collaboration with the Indian states had been twofold: to utilize the resources of the princes in the defence of India and to reduce the local (non-IST) forces maintained by them by diverting resources increasingly into the IST. Curzon's initiative to reshape the IST addressed both aspects. A speech in the imperial legislative council in 1903 by the Agha Khan (1877–1957), linked the threat of Russian expansion with the expense borne by subjects of British India for defence and the 'small tribute' paid by princely states to the Government of India, which was 'totally disproportionate to the expense they would have had to incur for the maintenance of an army sufficiently strong to make them secure against attack by their neighbours or by a foreign Power'.<sup>40</sup> An anonymous article in the *Pioneer* and a tract by General Stuart Beatson also linked the military policy regarding Russia with the possibility of military support from the princely states.<sup>41</sup> The importance of tapping into the manpower of Indian states to feed the Indian military labour market also informed the discussion of the proposal to expand the IST following Curzon's circular. Daly pointed out that 'there exists a substantial reserve of force for the Empire in ... [these] Principalities which support a population of over 60 millions'.<sup>42</sup>

The enthusiasm of the military members for a possible increase and improvement of the IST might have been an important factor in pushing through the proposal despite the doubts expressed by the political officers over the princes' enthusiasm for the scheme. Sir Beauchamp Duff, the adjutant-general, welcomed the possibility of increasing the number of troops under the control of the Indian Army, although he clarified that such an expansion would be acceptable only so long as it did not compromise the traditional elements of military policy.<sup>43</sup> Kitchener, whose opinion as commander-in-chief carried much weight, contended that unless steps were taken to make the IST 'more universally adopted amongst the Native States in India', the system would not survive.<sup>44</sup> He agreed with the proposal that the expansion of the IST was desirable as the 'voluntary contribution of the few States who now supply contingents to imperial defence' was no longer sufficient. For the commander-in-chief, the belief that increased and active participation of princely rulers in military defence would increase their loyalty was an article of faith.<sup>45</sup>

The reappraisal of the military worth of the IST in light of its contributions to imperial defence prompted efforts to improve its efficiency. Even before

the Curzon government's proposals were introduced in 1904, the very idea of 'imperial service' was being redefined. Initially meant to provide support for the British Indian Army in the event of an attack on the North-West Frontier, Curzon utilized the IST in imperial military strategy outside India for the first time by sending a brigade to China during the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901). In 1899, IST accompanied British forces during the South African War (1900–02), and princely states provided crucial aid in the form of 1,200 horses for the use of mounted infantry.<sup>46</sup> Curzon suggested improving its training by associating them more closely with the Indian army. It was hoped that the participation of IST contingents in Army manoeuvres, their inclusion in tours of service on the Afghan frontier and camping with the Indian Army would raise their performance to the level of the Indian Army and that the closer familiarity of operation with the latter would render their mobilization during wartime smoother. Proposals to maintain a war-reserve for the IST to ensure that troops lost during war could be replaced with men from the reserve were also made to the princes. These evoked a less than enthusiastic response from them. The measures seeking to align the IST closer to the British Indian Army provoked princely apprehensions over the possibility of these troops, hitherto acknowledged as belonging to the rulers, being absorbed into the British Indian army. Indeed, proposals seeking to increase the military efficiency of the IST had been resisted by many rulers, who perceived it as being aimed at compelling them to increase the commitment of resources towards the IST. The princes linked the demands of Inspecting Officers with the decrease in princes' control over their armies. Rulers were also generally unenthusiastic about constituting a reserve, as it could not always be incorporated within the army structure of their states; some proposed that their local armed forces be used as reserve.

This latter suggestion was inimical to the British military policy of reducing 'local' princely armies, which continued to be pursued confidentially. In discussions leading up to the proposals, Duff made it clear that an increase in IST would be pursued only to the extent that it did not lead to a reduction in the number of Indian troops in the British Indian Army so as to maintain the British–Indian military ratio. Proposals for the IST war-reserve would not be interpreted to mean an increase in the supply of weapons such as rifles.<sup>47</sup> Kitchener favoured the proposals on the understanding that 'on mobilization [during war we shall] be able to denude the Native States of practically all their trained men, and once these troops take the field, we shall hold [them] hostages in our camp for the good behaviour of their States'.<sup>48</sup> The policy of treating the princely states as a source of danger to be distrusted by the colonial state continued to be pursued until the eve of the First World War, as is evident from the committee set up in 1910 to consider the policy of letting what were now termed 'irregular forces' of the states 'gradually dwindle away'. Acting on the committee's recommendations, the government of India followed a policy of refusing requests from princely states for improved weapons for the use of these forces.<sup>49</sup>

Politically, Curzon's proposals had been counterproductive and his successor, Lord Minto (Viceroy 1905–10), was cautioned to accept IST from states only after ascertaining that they had not been offered under pressure.<sup>50</sup> Militarily, they were a partial success – although Curzon failed in the implementation of measures to improve the military efficiency of the IST, his initiative did lead to an increase in the number of troops assigned for imperial service over the following years. By 1906, Curzon's efforts had led to offers of 3,000 additional troops from different states, so that the IST comprised 16,942 fighting men, 4,485 transport animals and 1,594 carts.<sup>51</sup> These were very useful in the crisis of military manpower generated by the First World War.

As mentioned earlier, the high demand for military manpower generated by the threat of Russian imperial expansion in Asia had been the impulse behind the establishment and expansion of the IST scheme. This threat was muted by the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, which defined the British and Russian 'spheres of interest' in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.<sup>52</sup> However, the beginning of the First World War created a fresh crisis of military manpower. Reinforcements were urgently needed on the western front in 1914 to buttress the weary British line. Since India maintained a large army, it was used to 'help in stemming the tide of invasion of the territory of... [the] Allies'.<sup>53</sup> In the war of attrition that followed, losses in personnel and materiel had to be continuously replaced to win the war, creating a very high demand for troops. In such a context, the value of the IST contingents was immense.

### **Lessons of the First World War**

Princely contribution to the war effort<sup>54</sup> included material aid, with donations amounting to about 5 million pounds sterling (Rs.7.5 *crores*), gifts such as hospital ships, airplanes and mechanical transport, and military supplies such as grain and fodder.<sup>55</sup> Patiala made a monetary contribution amounting to Rs.8,231,845. It also raised Rs.4,500,000 through war loans and its contribution in gifts in kind amounted to Rs.298,680.<sup>56</sup> However, of all these, the military aid provided by the mobilization of the Imperial Service Troops was particularly valuable for the British Indian government, which struggled to keep up forces on the various battlefronts on which the Indian Army was deployed.<sup>57</sup> The number of IST maintained in 1907 was estimated to have been 15,869 (including both cavalry and infantry troops).<sup>58</sup> During the First World War, not only did the number of troops from IST contingents increase to a total of 26,099 combatants sent to serve on overseas battlefronts, but princely rulers had to ensure that troops killed or invalided on the front were replaced by fresh recruits.<sup>59</sup> Further, Indian rulers contributed to the recruitment of combatants as well as non-combatants for the Indian Army during the war. For example, states from Rajputana contributed 48,611 combatants and 5,656 non-combatants.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the aim of the IST scheme to maintain selected princely contingents at the same level as the Indian Army, the majority of these troops were neither equipped nor trained to an acceptable level of efficiency. 'Owing to the somewhat unserviceable condition of the rifles and carbines' with which IST contingents were armed, several contingents, including those from Jind, Patiala and Kapurthala, had to be rearmed with the Enfield short rifles that were used during the First World War.<sup>61</sup> In the absence of a war-reserve for IST – Curzon's proposals to institute one had been unsuccessful – it was found difficult to maintain the strength of individual IST contingents. In many cases, they ceased to exist because replacements for troops killed in action could not be trained in the short time available, and, in others, two units were amalgamated to form one. However, some rulers were successful in maintaining IST contingents at increased war establishments by sending reinforcements. The rulers of Alwar, Gwalior and Patiala were especially commended for 'taking a personal interest in the training of large numbers of recruits at the regimental depots'.<sup>62</sup> Patiala's contribution to wartime recruitment was exceptional, with 26,658 combatants and 1,362 non-combatants. According to a post-war government account, the total recruitment was 'slightly higher than the best British district, and four times as great as that of any other State. The total represents over 15 per cent of eligible males.'<sup>63</sup> Working closely with the Indian Army's recruitment drive brought home to the princes the importance of the maintenance of troops in the field under wartime conditions.

The First World War marked a significant break in the nature of princely involvement in military collaboration with British India. The close personal involvement of the princes in the military effort included visits to the front by as many as eighteen rulers. Some seem to have been widely recognized in Britain due to war propaganda, especially Maharaja Pratap Singh.<sup>64</sup> On the western front, where these rulers often visited hospitals and barracks for Indian troops, their presence ensured that the facilities provided were in accordance with British war propaganda in India.<sup>65</sup> It has been argued that the absence of such 'external scrutiny' significantly contributed to the neglect of medical facilities on the Mesopotamian front.<sup>66</sup> Princes also maintained a close link with IST officers, who were often drawn from the nobility.<sup>67</sup> British efforts to involve the princes closely in the war conferences in India and as representatives of India in the Imperial War Conference, provided for a greater awareness of the possibilities of their role as military and political allies of the British on the imperial political stage.

On the other hand, the timely and valuable help rendered by the IST during the war led to the favourable reassessment of the military value of troops maintained by princes at a useful level of efficiency. This was accompanied by a desire on the part of military officers to enhance further the military capabilities of these troops. Military officers associated with the inspection and training of the IST, such as Inspecting Officer

A.W. Pennington, were keen to propose changes in the organization based on the wartime experience of the deployment of these troops.<sup>68</sup> Shortcomings observed in the organization of IST were as follows:

- a The breaking down of the system of command by officers from Indian states, who were found incapable, due to lack of training, to command the IST contingents in 'modern' warfare. British officers, who had always functioned as 'military advisers' often took over command of the forces during the First World War.
- b The lack of homogeneity in organization in the field in terms of the establishment of the contingents and equipment. As each of the states had its own method of organizing troops, military units from different states consisted of different numbers of troops. On mobilization during the First World War, it proved difficult to fit these contingents of varying sizes into battle-formations of the British Indian Army.
- c Although the training of some IST contingents from states whose rulers took a special interest in their military was considered adequate, the IST were generally considered inferior to the Indian army units in training.
- d The variety of rules for the discipline of armed forces in different states led to problems in enforcing discipline in the field during the war.
- e Due to the absence of a system of maintaining the IST through trained reserves that provided troops when the frontline forces had been killed in action, problems were encountered in finding reinforcements for the IST. Often due to a lack of trained recruits who could take the place of fallen or invalided soldiers, two or more IST contingents had to be merged in the field to form one contingent.

Most of these issues related to the lack of closer modelling of the IST along the lines of the British Indian Army in terms of system of command, organization, training, discipline and reserves.<sup>69</sup>

Although Indian rulers had traditionally been averse to British efforts to improve the military efficiency of IST, participation during the war had brought home to them the military importance of such measures.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, their attitudes to the reorganization of the IST were more positive in the post-war context than they had been before. Around the same time that IST Inspecting Officers were urging the need to reform the IST, princely rulers also expressed a desire for the reconsideration of the basis of IST organization. For instance, in May 1919, the political agent of Rajputana conveyed the wishes of Maharaja Pratap Singh to reorganize the armed forces of his state, Jodhpur. Pratap Singh pointed out that given how stretched military resources of both his own princely state and the British were, the state was vulnerable to the disruption of internal disorder. To remedy the situation, he proposed that the military efficiency of his non-IST contingents be raised through training by British military

officers.<sup>71</sup> These initiatives for IST reorganization, both from British military officers as well as Indian rulers, suggested departures from the earlier policy of military collaboration.

### **Policy of ‘complete trust’**

In the post-war atmosphere of political reforms,<sup>72</sup> officers of the foreign and political departments responsible for initiating the process of consultation with the princes on matters ‘jointly affecting British India and the Indian states’, solicited suggestions from the Army Department regarding issues on which the opinion of the rulers of the states was required.<sup>73</sup> To these officers, the Army Department proposed that the question of the reorganization of all state forces be presented for discussion at the conference of princely rulers.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, a joint committee comprising military and political officers and the princes involved in the Imperial Service Troops scheme met on 29 October 1919. The Maharaja of Patiala presided over the meeting, which began with the discussion of a memorandum from the ruler of Alwar.<sup>75</sup> Alwar pointed to the princely states’ wholehearted support of the British Raj during the war, observing that in time of need the princes had not only sent IST contingents, but had also supplied reinforcements from their ‘local’ forces as well as the state police. Alwar argued that given that all these men rendered ‘imperial service’, it would be inaccurate to characterize only a portion of the armed forces maintained by the princes as IST. Alwar emphasized that the proposal to consider all state forces to be in imperial service may open up the doors of military collaboration to those states that had abstained from participation.<sup>76</sup> Chelmsford approached the India Office in June 1920 for their approval of the substantive reform proposals designed to improve the efficiency of the IST and heralding a new line of policy towards the armed forces of the princely states. Chelmsford observed that after ‘careful examination’ of Alwar’s proposals in the military department, they had been used as ‘the basis of the first three recommendations’ regarding the reorganization of the IST. The recommendations marked the first major attempt since 1904 to reconsider the organization of the IST and a departure in military collaboration between the princely states and British India on the policy of ‘complete trust’.<sup>77</sup>

[The reforms] are based on a policy of trust. The cautious policy of our predecessors, justified perhaps in the past by the lessons of the mutiny, needs revision in the light of new conditions and especially of the great services rendered by the Indian states in the war, which has demonstrated beyond a doubt the strength of the ties which bind them to the crown.<sup>78</sup>

Militarily, the reforms sought to implement proposals that were meant to enhance the efficiency of IST. The most important departure was the

revision of the British stance towards the states' non-IST forces. This marked the abandoning of the earlier policy, which had sought to starve the states' 'irregular local' forces. The new approach was based on the principle that since all troops maintained by the states had been, and would be, available to the British for imperial defence during a time of emergency, any scheme for military collaboration between the princes and the British ought to incorporate all princely forces, including IST contingents, 'irregular local' forces and the police employed by the princes to maintain law and order in their states. All these state forces were to be designated as 'Indian State Forces' in recognition of the fact that they were maintained for imperial service.<sup>79</sup> The princely forces were divided into three categories: contingents maintained at the highest level of efficiency for use as frontline troops during war; troops maintained as war-reserve, which had received the same training as frontline troops and could replace them as need be during war; and the armed police maintained for enforcement of internal order within the states.<sup>80</sup>

Another departure marked by the new military policy of 'complete trust' was the decision to supply arms and equipment to the states' reserve troops and armed police. Despite the rhetoric of removing, 'all the safeguards and restrictions in the matter of numbers, arms and equipment, which had been imposed in the past ... in consideration of the loyalty and solidarity with the British government of which the Ruling Princes and Chiefs had given such signal proofs during the war,' the British confidentially sought to ensure that the new measures did not go against the traditional military safeguards enunciated after the Rebellion of 1857.<sup>81</sup> Calculations were therefore made to ensure that the envisaged measures did not modify the British-Indian military ratio. The arms issued to the states were kept at the same level as that of Indian troops in the British Indian army. IST contingents had been trained to use these weapons – Lewis and Hotchkiss guns – during the war and British military officers considered it desirable not to lose the advantage of trained men.<sup>82</sup> This did away with several limitations imposed earlier on the supply of arms for princely states, but the government of India was careful to retain the supply of ammunition in its own hands to 'safeguard Imperial interests'.<sup>83</sup> The reforms for the reorganization of the IST were approved by the Secretary of State, Montague, in November 1920 and implemented in the following years.<sup>84</sup>

The success of these reforms owed much to a remarkable convergence of opinion between the princely states' interests and those of the British Raj. Efforts by Inspecting Officers of IST to improve the military efficiency of princely troops had been largely unsuccessful in the past due to the resistance from Indian rulers to the apparent prioritization of the IST over other state forces.<sup>85</sup> However, given the new policy of training and equipping all forces maintained by the states, it was now in the interest of the princes to work for the military efficiency of troops on which they relied also for the maintenance of internal order in their states.



The British, on their part, recognized the value of these troops not merely in the event of war, but also as allies against anti-colonial opposition within the Indian empire. During the 'internal disturbances' caused in the aftermath of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre in April 1919, the British had received help from the Punjab Chiefs in ensuring the safety of telegraph lines and railways in their own realm and surrounding areas.<sup>86</sup> As the maintenance of British rule depended on the ability to report anti-colonial attacks and transport troops through the railway network to provide military assistance to 'disturbed' areas, this help was greatly appreciated. As Arthur Hirtzel put it in a note commenting on proposals regarding the reorganization of the state forces: 'There has [lately] been a tendency to see in the Native States not only a bulwark against anarchy, but even a counterpoise to more legitimate forms of nationalism.'<sup>87</sup> This attitude was based on the understanding that such movements were opposed to the maintenance of autocratic rule and hence were anathema to the princes, who linked their own future with the maintenance of British rule in India. Minto Peel and his council elaborated on the reasons why the Government of India believed that the Indian states could be trusted:

Our ultimate assurance against the effects of sedition and Bolshevism lies in the maintenance of a proper proportion of troops upon whom we can rely in any emergency. At the same time, it may justly be claimed that there is no more loyal class in India than the Ruling Princes and Chiefs. They are bound to the British Government by self-interest if nothing else, while Bolshevism is radically opposed to the autocracy for which they stand.<sup>88</sup>

This perception of shared interests formed the foundation of the new post-war agreement regarding military collaboration between the princes and the British Indian government. This was publicly acknowledged in the reports of the new Indian State Forces, which declared that the new efficient armies maintained by the Indian states would be 'of considerable value to the Empire not only in the provision of manpower for large operations but also for the provision of Internal Security in at least one-third of the area of India at the time when our own troops are employed against an enemy'.<sup>89</sup>

The policy of 'complete trust', which was stated to be the genesis of these reforms was, however, implemented only to the extent that it did not contradict the traditional elements of British military policy (such as the British-Indian military ratio and the maintenance of British monopoly over armaments, especially artillery). In fact, efforts by Lord Reading's government in 1921 and 1924 to obtain approval for the grant of even outmoded artillery for ceremonial and symbolic purposes to the princely states were rejected by the India Office, which pointed out that there were limits to the policy of trust towards the Indian states.<sup>90</sup> As Secretary of

State, Montague, pointed out to Reading even if the princes' loyalty could be considered a good reason for entrusting them with big artillery guns,<sup>91</sup> the danger of disaffection among their own subjects with the rulers and the British made access to such potent armaments problematic:

[A]lthough there is every reason to have profound faith in the loyalty of most of the Indian Rulers, is it quite safe at the present time, and under the present conditions, to trust their troops? . . . One knows how non-cooperators are trying to sap the loyalty of the subjects of the Native States. The princes are often not of the same race or religion as their subjects. Bolshevism, having regard to the autocratic constitution of the natives States, may find a particularly favourable field in the Native States, and the guns getting into the hands of disloyal forces might become a danger, both to Rulers and the Government of India.<sup>92</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To gain a more rounded understanding of the basis of colonial hegemony in South Asia, it is important to focus not only on moments of resistance, but also to understand how collaboration between the British and selected social groups was sustained. The British pursued a policy of military collaboration with the princes because it enabled them to augment their armed forces without having to meet the ensuing costs. However, they were careful to guarantee the 'loyalty' of their allies. Thus, no matter how closely the interests of their South Asian collaborators bound them to British rule, and despite the recognition of the importance of the loyalty of their collaborators in sustaining direct and indirect rule in India, in the last instance the British relied on their military strength to guarantee their rule on the subcontinent.

However, tensions in this relationship of military collaboration were also present on the Indian rulers' side. The muted resistance to Curzon's proposals reflected the princes' aversion from falling in line with a policy that was contrary to some of their interests. However, collaboration was sustained despite tensions between the collaborators. As W.H.C. Wyllie pointed out, given the forceful nature of Curzon's suggestions, rulers could not afford to express dissent, as in such situations 'dissent may bear the appearance of disloyalty'.<sup>93</sup> Any dissent that may have been felt by the princes was expressed merely through the deliberate neglect of their IST contingents. Princely agreement to post-First World War proposals, which developed the principles of military efficiency similar to those advanced by Curzon, shows that although British imperial might was supported in crucial times of challenge by its princely collaborators, the wholehearted support of these collaborators could only be ensured when they believed that their own interests would be served by participating in the imperial project.

## Notes

- 1 Barbara Ramusack's brief treatment of the role of princes as 'manly military allies' is one of the more substantial attempts to address the theme of military collaboration in princely history. B. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States: The New Cambridge History of India III*, 6, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 122–3. Other historians who refer in passing to the political impact of IST in princely states include Robert Stern, *The Cat and the Lion: Jaipur State in the British Raj*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988, pp. 198–203; S.R. Ashton, *British Policy towards the Indian States 1905–1939*, London: Curzon, 1982, pp. 22, 25, 31; L. Rudolph and S. Rudolph, 'Rajputana under British Paramountcy: The Failure of Indirect Rule', *The Journal of Modern History*, 38:2, 1966, 138–60; Richard Head and Tony McClenaghan, *The Armies of the Indian Princely States: A Record of the Military Forces Maintained by the Indian Princely States*, Milton Keynes: Military Press, 1998. The IST also remain at the margins of historical accounts of the Indian army. See V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army 1600–1974*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1974, pp. 126–7, 153, 177–8; T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India 1822–1922*, Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974, pp. 79–80; Stephen Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, 2nd edn, pp. 235–7.
- 2 See, for instance, Stuart Gordon, 'The Limited Adoption of European-Style Military Forces by Eighteenth-Century Rulers in India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 35:3, 1998, 229–45.
- 3 Quoted in Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p. 123.
- 4 Quoted in Francis Younghusband, 'The Future Development of the Imperial State Troops (Confdl.)', European Manuscripts, F 197/110, Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), British Library, London, p. 5. Heathcote points out that Lytton had been sent to India by Disraeli 'with the express task of improving the British position on the North-West Frontier', in Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, p. 22.
- 5 In March 1885, a few months after the appointment of Lord Dufferin as the Viceroy of India, Russian troops occupied Panjdeh, a fertile valley within the Afghan frontier. This precipitated a crisis as, according to commitments made by Lord Ripon after the second Anglo-Afghan War, the British Indian government could be called upon to fight a war with Russia for the defence of the Afghan frontier. For a detailed analysis of the event and its impact on British military policy, see R. Johnson, 'The Penjdeh Crisis and its Impact on the Great Game and the Defence of India, 1885–97', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 1999.
- 6 Heathcote, *Indian Army*, p. 79.
- 7 By the London Protocol of 1885, Panjdeh was surrendered to Russia. It was claimed by the British that the Amir preferred to overlook this Russian incursion into Afghan territory as he considered the advance of British forces into Afghanistan for its defence against the Russians as a much greater calamity than the loss of a few square miles of disputed territory. Johnson, 'Penjdeh Crisis'.
- 8 'Preface', *A History of the Imperial Service Troops of Native States*, Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1903, p. iii. See also, 'Attack on Native States in India', *The Nineteenth Century*, 26:152, 1889, 556.
- 9 Brian Robson, 'Changes in the Indian Army', *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, 70, 1992, 126.
- 10 The committee formed to elaborate a scheme that would utilize the military resources of princely rulers included Frederick Roberts, James Lyall, the

- Lt.-Governor of Punjab, Lt.-Gov. G.T. Chesney and Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary, who was intimately associated with negotiations with Afghanistan. *History of IST*, p. iii.
- 11 Brian Robson, 'Roberts, Frederick Sleigh, First Earl Roberts (1832–1914)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004; online edn, October 2006, [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35768](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35768) (accessed 10 March 2007). At the height of the Panjdeh Crisis in 1885, Roberts believed that given the large numbers of Russian troops that would be involved, and the vulnerability of the lines of communication, the British garrison of India required a massive increase, from 65,000 to 80,000 men. R.A. Johnson, "“Russians at the Gates of India?” Planning the Defence of India, 1885–1900", *Journal of Military History*, 67:3, 2003, 717–18.
  - 12 According to Johnson, Roberts saw the role of the IST as that of holding the passes until reinforcements arrived. Johnson, 'Russians at the Gates', p. 726.
  - 13 The term 'military collaboration' as used in this article refers to the new phase in military assistance between the British and Indian states initiated by the formalization of the IST scheme. This military collaboration, on the part of the British, aimed at the co-opting of princely armies into British imperial military policy, and on the part of the princes involved benefits such as the 'modernization' of a part of their forces and approbation of the British.
  - 14 William Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, London: Macmillan, 1910, p. 232.
  - 15 Commenting on the princely armies in a context where British military and political superiority had been established in India, F.W. Verney argued that due to the cessation of the expansionist policies of the British Raj and elimination of the threat of annexation post-1857, the attitude of the princely states could be considered friendly towards the British, and their armies did not pose a threat to internal peace in British India. F.W. Verney, 'Our Armies in India', *Nineteenth Century*, 17:10, 1885, 1009–20.
  - 16 Speech by Lord Dufferin, *History of IST*, pp. vi–vii.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, p. ii.
  - 18 Younghusband, 'Future Development of the IST'.
  - 19 Longer pointed out that the system of divide and rule established by the Peel Commission was introduced '[b]etween the European and Indian forces, between the forces of the Indian princely rulers and the Indian troops under the Crown, and also within the Indian regiments themselves'. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p. 111.
  - 20 After the amalgamation of the three presidency armies into one Indian army, the ratio was fixed at 'approximately one British to two and a half Native soldiers' in 1893. Military Despatch No. 66 (Secret) from Secretary of State to Governor-General of India in Council, 19 April 1907, File 4490/1912 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC, 1.
  - 21 *Ibid.*
  - 22 These inspecting officers reported to the foreign department of the government of India. Speech by Lord Dufferin conveying the scheme for Imperial Service Troops in Patiala, 17 November 1888, *History of IST*, pp. vi–vii.
  - 23 *Ibid.*, p. vii. The significance of this departure is evident from the fact that the Eden Commission had observed that 'the fact that [the princely forces] possess little organized artillery, no rifled ordnance, and no breach-loading rifles, are the chief reasons why these troops do not form potential elements of danger ... to the British Government'. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p. 123. Artillery was considered so sensitive an armament that only Kashmir was allowed to raise and equip two batteries of pack artillery for the defence of the Gilgit frontier. Kashmir had been part of British military strategy regarding Russia since Lytton's time. See Robert Huttenback, 'The "Great Game" in the Pamirs

- and the Hindu-Kush: The British Conquest of Hunza and Nagar', *Modern Asian Studies*, 9:1, 1975, 1–29.
- 24 Circular letter from Curzon to Princely Rulers, 27 April 1904, *Balfour Papers, Cabinet Papers on Indian Affairs, 1903–5*, OIOC, 4.
- 25 Although Curzon's efforts towards imperial defence and military reform have been amply considered by his biographers, his initiative to expand the IST has been largely neglected. See, for example, Lawrence Zetland, *The Life of Lord Curzon: Being the Authorized Biography*, London: Benn, 1928; Michael Edwardes, *High Noon of Empire: India under Curzon*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1965. Princely historiography refers to his interventionist policy towards the Indian princes in passing but they too have only considered this aspect briefly. See, for instance, Ramusack, *Indian Princes and Their States*, pp. 115–17; Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917–1947*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 20–1. The contemporary journalist, Lovat Fraser, is an exception who managed to reconstruct the broad features of the initiative, even though he did not have access to confidential government documents. L. Fraser, *India Under Curzon and After*, London: Heinemann, 1911, pp. 218–21.
- 26 *History of IST*, p. viii.
- 27 Circular letter from Curzon, 27 April 1904, *Balfour Papers*, 4.
- 28 Note by H. Daly, 4 March 1902, European Manuscripts, Curzon Collection, F 111/265b, OIOC, 157–157b.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 Notes by Duff and Kitchener, January 1904, *ibid.*, 191b.
- 31 Circular letter from Curzon, 27 April 1904, *Balfour Papers*, 3.
- 32 Notes by S.C. Bayley, D. Fitzpatrick, W. Lee-Warner and John Edge of the Political Committee, June 1904, *Balfour Papers*, 13–16.
- 33 See P.H. Dumbell, 'Notes on the Replies of Chiefs', 28 August 1905, File 4490/1912 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC. See also, Note by W.H. Wyllie, 9 August 1905, *ibid.*
- 34 See, for instance, 'Speech by Lord Dufferin', *History of IST*.
- 35 Note by W. Lee-Warner, 6 June 1904, *Balfour Papers*, 15.
- 36 Younghusband, 'Future Development of the IST', p. 3.
- 37 An analysis of the political aspects of the Indian rulers' objections to the proposals is beyond the scope of this article. The disregarding of treaty payments for 'local defence', the burden placed on state exchequers by the new commitments considered etc., were all causes of friction.
- 38 See, for instance, the views of the rulers of Bhavnagar and Junagarh, in Dumbell, 'Notes on the Replies of Chiefs'.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 Aga Khan, 'The Defence of India', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 58:343, 1905, p. 374. See also Fraser, *India under Curzon*, pp. 219–20. The Agha Khan III, Sultan Mohammed Shah was the Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and was granted the title of 'His Highness' by Queen Victoria.
- 41 File 4490/1912 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC.
- 42 Note by Daly, 4 March 1902, Curzon Collection, F 111/265b, 158.
- 43 Note by Duff, 17 January 1904, *ibid.*, 191b.
- 44 Note by Kitchener, 19 January 1904, *ibid.*
- 45 *Ibid.* Kitchener had had previous experience with the IST as the chief-of-staff during the South African War (1900–02). He had acclaimed their contribution in the war. *History of IST*, p. ix.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. viii.
- 47 Note by Duff, 17 January 1904, Curzon Collection, F 111/265b, OIOC, 191b.
- 48 Note by Kitchener, 19 January 1904, *ibid.*

- 49 Despatch No. 62 from Viceroy Lord Chelmsford, 24 June 1920, File 3263/1920 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC, 5.
- 50 Political Despatch No. 114 from Secretary of State, 8 December 1905, File 4490/1912 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC.
- 51 Younghusband, 'Future Development of the IST', p. 1.
- 52 Russia took the northern areas of Persia and Britain took the Persian Gulf area in the south. The primary aim of the Entente was to check German expansion into the area. The Anglo–Russian Entente along with the Entente Cordiale and the Franco–Russian Alliance formed the Triple Entente between the UK, France and Russia.
- 53 *India's Contribution to the Great War*, Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1923, p. 166.
- 54 Although the historiography of the princely states has referred to the contribution of the princely rulers during the First World War in passing, the significance of the princely military participation in the war effort has not received adequate attention. The political lessons learned by the princes through their participation in imperial war conferences and measures to boost the war effort have received more attention. See, for instance, Barbara Ramusack, *The Princes in the Twilight of Empire: Dissolution of the Patron–Client System, 1914–39*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press for the University of Cincinnati, 1978, pp. 29–60.
- 55 *India's Contribution*, pp. 167–9. The contribution of the princely states was important not merely for its material but also for its political value. This made it conspicuous in the public declarations and propaganda designed to ensure the maximum resource mobilization during the First World War in the face of the unprecedented large-scale and protracted conflict. The princes' generosity in providing all their resources was stressed – 'entirely of their own volition' – in narratives that suggested that the princely rulers had accepted their assigned role as 'feudatories' and were acting according to it. See, for instance, references to Indian rulers in speeches by prominent British statesmen in varied forums, *India's Services in the War*, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1993, (1st edn 1922), vol. 1, pp. 136–8.
- 56 M.S. Leigh (comp.), *The Punjab and the War*, Lahore: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1922, pp. 84–5. To provide a scale, the history of the war effort pointed out that the average annual income of Patiala was just over one *crore* (ten million). That the desire to make such contributions to gain the favour of the British could lead to the exploitation of the subjects of these states is evident from the complaints registered by the Patiala Enquiry Committee, *Indictment of Patiala: Being a Report of the Patiala Enquiry Committee Appointed by the Indian States' People's Conference*, Bombay: Indian States' People's Conference, 1931, Appendix E, pp. 11–12. The Patiala army itself seems to have been maintained by exploiting the people as indicated by 'villagers'' testimony regarding *beggar* (forced labour) for the army:
- the Army forces come every year or two and ... material ... have got to be supplied by us; if we have not got it at the time, we have to purchase the same from the bazaar and supply to the Army. As for grass, if our stock is exhausted, we have got to cut it and then supply the same to the Army. Our stocks in ghee, butter, fuel, milk etc. get absolutely exhausted when the Army comes.
- (Ibid)
- 57 The fronts on which Indian troops fought included those in France, Gallipoli, Egypt, East Africa, Italy and Salonika. *India's Contribution*, pp. 271–5.
- 58 Military Despatch No. 66 (Secret) from Secretary of State, 19 April 1907, OIOC, 2.
- 59 *India's Contribution*, pp. 198–9. According to another version, 22,000 troops were mobilized as IST during the First World War, of which 18,000 were mobilized to

serve on overseas battlefronts. Henry Watson, 'Preface', *A Short History of the Services Rendered by the Imperial Service Troops during the Great War, 1914–18*, Calcutta: Government of India, Central Publication Branch, 1930, p. ii.

60 *India's Contribution*, p. 200.

61 Rearming of Imperial Service Troops with the Enfield Short rifles (Confdl.), 31 August 1914, Crown Representative's Records, Western India States Agency, OIOC.

62 Letter from Maj-Gen L.J. Bols, forwarded to Secretary, War Office, 6 December 1917, Collection 156/190, Military Collections, OIOC.

63 Leigh, *Punjab and War*, p. 86.

64 See *India's Services*, pp. 161–71.

65 Sir Walter Lawrence, the Commissioner for the Indian sick and wounded, was in charge of the medical arrangements made for Indian troops on the western front. Reporting a princely visit to Kitchener, then British Secretary of State for War, Lawrence wrote:

It may have been reported to you that Raja of Kapurthala paid a surprise visit to the Camp [Convalescent Camp in France]. ... He asked many questions about the food of the Sikhs. The answers to these questions were satisfactory, but if he had been allowed to go around the Camp unescorted, his questions might have led to trouble.

Lawrence to Kitchener, 30 April 1915, European Manuscripts, Walter Lawrence Collection, F143/65, OIOC, 54.

66 Mark Harrison, 'Casualty Disposal in the First World War: A Comparison of Arrangements on the Western Front, the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia', paper delivered at the Department of History Seminar, University of Exeter, 8 March 2007 (unpublished).

67 During post-war discussions regarding the reorganization of IST, the Maharaja of Bikaner pointed out that all the officers of his regiment dined with him. 'Informal Meeting for Discussion of the Question of the Future Organization of the Imperial Service Troops', Collection 156/220, Military Collections, OIOC, 11. Princely rulers received complaints from their military officers regarding racist treatment meted to them by the British during the war, *ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

68 A.W. Pennington, 'Some Notes on Imperial Service Troops', 8 March 1919, *ibid.*

69 The 1919–20 proposals recognized that some of the measures suggested by Curzon in 1904 had tried to address these issues. Despatch No. 62 from Chelmsford, 24 June 1920, File 3263/1920 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC.

70 From the initial stages of the IST scheme, princely rulers neglected the improvement of their IST contingents due to their disgruntlement with the 'increasing claims of efficiency'. Even Curzon recognized that '[d]ifficulty [had] sometimes been experienced in reconciling the high standards ... exacted by Inspecting Officers with the more modest requirements of the Darbars'. Circular letter from Curzon, 1904, *Balfour Papers*, 4. In the context of discussions regarding the IST contribution of Kapurthala, the Punjab government contended that some princely rulers were 'getting restive at the constantly increasing cost of the Imperial Service Troops due to the requirements of the Inspecting Officers'. Letter from M.W. Fenton, Government of Punjab to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 29 October 1909, Internal Branch Secret Progs., No. 39, OIOC.

71 Letter from A.T. Holme, Officiating Agent to Rajputana, to R.E. Holland, Officiating Political Secretary to Government of India, 20 June 1919, Collection 156/220, Military Collections, OIOC.

- 72 For an overview of princely engagement with the constitutional developments of the post-war period, see Ramusack, *Princes of India*, chapters 1–3, and Copland, *Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire*, chapter 1.
- 73 Unofficial Memo from G.D. Ogilvie, Deputy Secretary, Foreign and Political Department to Army Department, 15 April 1919, Collection 156/220, Military Collections, OIOC.
- 74 Note by G.W.M. Kirkpatrick, 11 June 1919, *ibid.*
- 75 ‘Informal Meeting for Future Organization of IST’, *ibid.*
- 76 *Ibid.*, 1–3.
- 77 Committee on Imperial Service Troops (1920) Miscellaneous Papers, Collection 156/220, Military Collections; Despatch No. 62 from Chelmsford, File 3263/1920 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC.
- 78 *Ibid.*
- 79 *Ibid.*, p. 2. See also views expressed by the *maharaja* of Alwar, which were very similar to these proposals in ‘Informal Meeting for Future Organization of IST’, 1–3.
- 80 Despatch No. 62 from Viceroy Lord Chelmsford, File 3263/1920 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC, 2.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 82 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 84 Despatch No. 16 (Secret) from Montague to Chelmsford, 18 November 1920, *ibid.*
- 85 For instance, in 1906, Francis Younghusband had acknowledged that
- many Chiefs are opposed to the system we pursue of pressing them to keep a small portion of their troops very efficient ... and at the same time discouraging the remainder of their troops from being trained at all. These Chiefs would prefer the whole of their armies brought up to a modest level of efficiency.
- (Younghusband, ‘Future Development of the IST’, p. 4)
- 86 Memorandum on the Organization of Indian State Forces by the Government of India, File 3263/1920 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC, para. 15.
- The States have given us most valuable help ... on several occasions in recent years. During the disturbances of 1919 the Punjab States provided troops for the protection of railway lines which in several parts of the province were torn up by the insurgents. Last cold weather [1920] the Maharaja of Alwar rushed out some of his troops to the assistance of some British Indian officials who were besieged at Ferozpur Jhirka in Gurgaon district in the Punjab, and the Maharaja of Dholpur rendered some assistance at Aligarh. These were all cases of assistance rendered in British territory or along British railway lines.
- 87 Note by Sir A. Hirtzel, 30 March 1922, *ibid.*
- 88 Memorandum on the Organization of Indian State Forces, para. 11, *ibid.*
- 89 *Annual Report on Indian State Forces, 1922–3*, p. 3.
- 90 The Question of Artillery, File 3263/1920 Pt 1, Political and Secret Separate (or Subject) Files, OIOC.
- 91 Doubts were expressed regarding the motives behind the princes’ desire for artillery:
- [I]deas of our want of power or rather want of will to maintain ourselves in India [and even among the princes] have spread to such an extent that we



must reckon with it. They [the princes] may want it [artillery] against the day of our disappearance [from India] when certainly they would require it for offence or defence against each other or the Indian government of India.

(Note by [illegible], 30 March 1922, *ibid*)

See also, Note by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, 30 March 1922, *ibid*.

92 Secretary of State to Viceroy, 4 December 1921, *ibid*.

93 Note by W.H.C. Wyllie, 29 May 1904, *Balfour Papers*, 13. Wyllie was supported by D. Fitzpatrick: 'the Chiefs to whom Lord Curzon's letter is addressed can hardly take any other view than that they are compelled to do as he suggests', *ibid.*, 14.

## 9 **Historicizing debates over women's status in Islam**

### The case of Nawab Sultan Jahan Begam of Bhopal<sup>1</sup>

*Siobhan Lambert-Hurley*

In the mid-1990s, the issue of women's status in Islam wormed its way into the world's consciousness after a small, barely known group of Islamic guerrillas called the Taliban took over the southern Afghani city of Kandahar. With the crucial assistance of Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) and a couple of foreign oil companies – the American Unocal and the Argentinian Bidas – they moved to establish a regime across much of Afghanistan that claimed to uphold the *shariah*, or Islamic law. For women, this agenda proved to have the most dramatic effects, leading, as is now well known, to compulsory veiling, including the face, hands and feet, and exclusion from the workplace, educational institutions and even healthcare.<sup>2</sup> Afghani women were quick to counter these restrictive measures, particularly through the auspices of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), offering assistance to women in danger, circulating dissenting literature within the country and providing evidence of the regime's human rights abuses to the world outside.<sup>3</sup> High-profile feminist and humanitarian organizations in Europe and North America also took up their plight, seeking to place pressure on Western governments and citizens to act in women's defence.<sup>4</sup> Yet it was only after the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 – with its accompanying news that America's 'enemy no. 1', Osama Bin Laden, was hiding in Afghanistan – that the West's political and media spotlight really came to focus on the issue.<sup>5</sup> While Muslim theologians and foreign academics alike debated how far the Taliban's policies should be attributed to the Pashtun tribal code, *Pashtunwali*, as opposed to the *shariah*, in the Western popular mind at least its harsh treatment of women had come to be equated with Islam.<sup>6</sup>

Looking back from contemporary Afghanistan into the realms of colonial history, what becomes apparent is that this reviling of Islam based on its treatment of women is far from just a recent phenomenon. On the contrary, this issue tended to be, in the words of a recent scholar, 'at the heart of much colonial criticism of Islamic societies'.<sup>7</sup> Missionaries in particular made it a focus of their polemic – as the words of Mrs McClure from Rawalpindi at the *Missions to Muslims* conference held in Lucknow

in 1911 make clear: ‘You all know the great evils of Mohammedanism. We need not speak to this audience of the sufferings of child-wives, or of the unhappy life of the childless wife, in constant dread of the coming of a second wife into the home’.<sup>8</sup> Yet then, as now, there were Muslim reformers and theologians who sought to engage with these critiques, whether by justifying the offending practices as they stood, seeking to revise them by looking to a reformist tradition within Islam, or offering a modernist reinterpretation of the faith. Associated with the latter two positions in the colonial period were two schools established in north India in the late nineteenth century, namely the Dar ul-Uloom at Deoband (founded 1867) and the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh (founded 1875).<sup>9</sup> While the first has been identified as a part of a ‘transitional movement’ that was pre-colonial in origin – being that it was led by traditional Islamic scholars (*‘ulama*) who made use of indigenous models of dissent – the latter has been defined as ‘acculturative’, suggesting that it emerged as a cultural response to colonialism.<sup>10</sup> As Barbara Metcalf has identified, however, this model should not be understood to be without fluidity, especially when applied to reforms for Muslim women.<sup>11</sup>

Another context in which this process occurred that has received very little attention from scholars to date is that of the Indian princely states – ironically, a setting often tarred with the same rhetorical brush as Taliban-led Afghanistan as backwards to the point of ‘medieval’, despotic and even cruel.<sup>12</sup> This chapter will focus on the writings and activities of one particular princely reformer, Nawab Sultan Jahan Begam of Bhopal (1858–1930; ruled 1901–26), who, to carry the parallel with contemporary Afghanistan further, was a female Muslim ruler of Pathani Afghan descent – though her much flaunted Afghan-ness had, admittedly, been diluted by the fact that her family had been resident in central India for eight generations.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Bhopal provides a unique location to explore debates relating to women’s status in Islam. Though its population was defined as predominantly ‘Hindu’ in the census, it was ruled by a succession of Muslim women throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>14</sup> Displaying an apparent propensity for administrative efficiency alongside an inability to produce male heirs, these Nawab Begams achieved an esteemed position within the system of paramountcy, even being granted a nineteen-gun salute after the second of them, Sikandar (1816–68), offered crucial assistance to the British during the 1857 rebellion. In practical terms, this imperial approbation meant that Bhopal’s female rulers, on the whole, retained a high degree of autonomy within their own borders – though they were subject to the advice of a British political agent resident at Sehore cantonment just 25 miles from the state capital. Like other princely rulers discussed in this volume, they also abdicated responsibility for their foreign affairs to the colonial government in Calcutta, and then New Delhi, according to a ‘treaty of friendship and cooperation’ that had been signed with the East India Company in 1818.<sup>15</sup>

Bhopal's reputation with contemporary British and Indian observers was bolstered by the Begams' generous patronage of religious and cultural activities – philanthropic acts that were, of course, incumbent on their ability as essentially feudal rulers to tax Bhopal's peasantry as they saw fit. Contrary to the pervasive depiction of the 'oriental princess' as a decadent figure, Bhopal's Begams sought to craft an image of themselves as benevolent autocrats on the model of Britain's 'improving landlords', thus complicating perceptions of princely rule as a wholly parasitic institution. Sultan Jahan Begam herself emerged at the forefront of efforts to reform India's Muslim community in the early twentieth century, particularly in the spheres of female education, health, veiling and women's rights. To that end, she not only produced extensive reformist tracts, advice manuals and allegorical stories, but also established and patronized a great number of institutions for women in Bhopal and beyond – from girls' schools and zenana hospitals to ladies' social clubs and national women's organizations. One of the distinctive features of these initiatives, as I have argued elsewhere, was the Begam's attempt to reach less privileged women – for instance, by offering stipends to encourage attendance in her schools and designing a curriculum that recognized their dual role as housewives and wage-earners. Still, her 'elite bias' meant that her 'interventions' were as 'presumptuous' as those being made by her British counterparts into the lives of working-class women in their own country.<sup>16</sup> In order to explore these tensions further, particular emphasis will be placed in this chapter on Sultan Jahan Begam's explication of women's rights and duties within Islam – a topic as relevant today as in the colonial context.

### **The 'woman question' in colonial India**

In the course of the nineteenth century, 'the woman question' emerged as one of the grounds on which British administrators and their Indian subjects debated the subcontinent's fitness for self-rule with the position of women an indicator of a society's development. As James Mill proclaimed as early as 1826 in *The History of British India*: 'Among rude people, the women are generally degraded; among civilized people they are exalted.' From his second-hand knowledge of Indian religions and society, he concluded, 'nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which the Hindus entertain for their women', a state that suggested the backwardness of the country.<sup>17</sup> Hindu reformers such as Raja Rammohan Roy in Bengal responded in force. Though they admitted that women were in a depressed condition at the time, they rejected Mill's formulation of Hindu civilization as eternally degraded, instead arguing that there had once been a 'golden age' when women were accorded value and respect. Before 'the fall', which was normally attributed to the 'Muslim' conquest of 'Hindu' India, women were portrayed as educated and free, playing an active role in the social and political life of the community, unfettered by seclusion or child marriage.

What was necessary, the reformers maintained, was to institute change by returning to this glorious past, which was free from 'evil' customs. Evoking the rationalist Enlightenment language of their British administrators, they claimed that *sati*, child marriage and polygamy were also against the dictates of nature and reason.<sup>18</sup>

Muslim reformers modified these arguments for their own purposes. They called for a revitalization of Muslim culture that was to lead to the restoration of 'pure' Islam free from cultural accretions through a return to scriptural sources and early Islamic history. This revivalism had severe consequences for women. They were discovered to be backward and superstitious, ignorant of scriptural Islam and the basic tenets of their religion. Above all, male reformers observed that their women were dedicated to rituals and customs that were expensive and rarely related to their own faith, including exorcism, vows to spirits, idol-worship and life-cycle ceremonies. They therefore advocated a changed role for women to be achieved through specific moral and practical education.

Others sought to alleviate women's position by issuing bold statements on women's rights that represented a modernist interpretation of Islam. Syed Ameer Ali's *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed*, first published in 1873 and later appearing in an expanded version under the better known title, *The Spirit of Islam*, was an early example.<sup>19</sup> He discouraged polygamy and 'triple *talaq*' divorces – in which the repetition of the prescription for divorce (*talaq*) was made three times in one sitting rather than leaving the requisite intervals for reconsideration specified in the *shariah*.<sup>20</sup> He also argued that women should be given full legal rights as set out in the Qur'an, including inheritance and other property rights, and the freedom to take part in public life, as observed in the lives of Aisha and Fatima. Printed in English by a London-based publisher, this book was either ignored or rejected by scholars in India, though it was popular in Britain, a reaction that often leads it to be dismissed as 'apologia'.<sup>21</sup>

Sayyid Mumtaz Ali's *Huquq un-Niswan* (The Rights of Women), published in Urdu in 1898, combined legal expertise with a comprehensive knowledge of the religious sciences. Mumtaz Ali suggested that women's testimony in court was equally admissible to that of men on most legal matters; girls were guaranteed their right to inheritance and *mahr* (dower); polygamy was rejected unless accompanied by a wife's permission; widows were allowed to remarry; and child marriage was viewed as incompatible with the spirit of 'sympathy and companionship' that should infuse marriage.<sup>22</sup> However, this treatise was not widely received. In rejecting biological difference as the basis for male superiority, it had many overlaps with Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi's later – and very popular – advice manual, *Bihishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments), perhaps reflecting the author's early training at the Maulana's own institution at Deoband. The two authors disagreed, however, on the exemplars to be taken by Muslim women with Sayyid Mumtaz Ali

recommending Nazir Ahmad Dihlavi's novels on women, while Thanawi explicitly proscribed them. These novels included *Muhsinat* (The Chaste Woman), in which the evil effects of polygamy were described, and *Ayama* (Widows), in which widow remarriage was advocated.<sup>23</sup> Barbara Metcalf postulates that it is because Nazir Ahmad's female characters generally display more ability and fortitude than the male characters – and, thus, invert accepted gender hierarchies – that Thanawi rejects them.<sup>24</sup> What women themselves made of these ideas when they started writing in the early twentieth century will be discussed next.

### **Female infanticide and polygamy**

Interestingly, Bhopal's female ruler, Sultan Jahan Begam, did not make use of any of the above books in her own writings on women's rights and duties in Islam. Instead, she referred only to a more general work by Nazir Ahmad, *Al-Huquq-wa'l-Fara'iz* (Rights and Duties), in the introduction to her collection of lectures on religious injunctions in Islam, *Sabil ul-Jinan* (The Path to Heaven), published in 1917. She argued that a copy of this compilation of Islamic doctrine should be kept in every Muslim home so that it could be read by all members of the family. This hints at the 'single standard' of religious education common to Deobandi reformers, even as she recommended the work of an Aligarh modernist.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, her treatise included chapters on faith, *namaz* (prayer), *rozah* (fasting), *zakat* (almsgiving), festivals (including Id ul-Fitr and Id ul-Adha) and *hajj* (pilgrimage) that, in most cases, would have been as appropriate to Muslim men as her female audience. Like Nazir Ahmad, she also wrote in an unscholarly way that would make her speeches and writings accessible. Her aims appear to have been to guarantee that Muslim women were clear as to the extensive rights conferred upon them by their religion once it had, as she saw it, been cleansed of cultural accretions. To that end, she quoted relevant passages from the Qur'an in Arabic before explaining them in Urdu, the language of her audience. In following this method, she placed herself firmly within an Islamic framework, unlike her more radical Bengali contemporary, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, who sought to challenge the very foundations of Islam by questioning the divine inspiration of Qur'anic edicts on women.<sup>26</sup>

The ruling Begam proceeded from a universalist assumption: that everyone, whether male or female, rich or poor, deserved to be treated with justice. This point would certainly have held resonance with her British overlords, whatever the inequities of the colonial situation, but the way in which she developed it was rather different. Specifically, she argued in her pamphlet, *Islam main 'Aurat ka Martaba* (The Position of Women in Islam), that Islam had come to the 'redemption' of woman when she was 'in the lurch', providing her with more rights than other religions that had come before. She sought to substantiate this point by comparing

the status of women in Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and other pre-Islamic doctrines with that advocated by the Prophet Muhammad. All of these pre-Islamic ideologies, she argued, considered women to be impure or sinful beings, unworthy of rights or respect, while Islam treated them with kindness and decency, even providing them with the means to resist male tyranny and oppression – for instance, by banning abuses against women that were common in the pre-Islamic age of ignorance, or *jahilia*, notably female infanticide and unlimited polygamy.<sup>27</sup> That she opened her argument in this comparative way suggests that, implicitly at least, she was offering a direct response to the challenges posed by colonialism. Her reference to those ‘cultural crimes’ – to borrow the phrase of Veena Oldenburg<sup>28</sup> – highlighted in colonial polemic also substantiates this point.

The specific method of her reasoning is perhaps best illustrated by following her argument on the controversial topic of polygamy, as it was put forward in a number of her tracts and speeches. She usually began by relating how the practice was observed in the *jahilia*, explaining that, then, men used to marry innumerable orphan girls with the sole purpose of gaining control of their fortunes. Objecting to this kind of excess, the Prophet Muhammad had, she asserted, sought to regulate, though not forbid, the practice by instituting polygamy as a ‘remedial law’, applicable only in special circumstances and within certain limitations. According to her reading of the Qur’an, this meant that a man was permitted to take up to four wives if there were societal reasons such as war, or personal grounds such as the inability of a first wife to bear children, or the incompatibility of a husband and wife. However, the man was obliged to treat his wives with impartiality and justice. If a man indulged in polygamy without a justifiable reason or did not fulfil the conditions imposed by Islam, he deserved to be treated with public derision and scorn.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the Begam recognized that polygamy could have harmful effects that a woman may want to avoid. She suggested that an extra clause could be added to a woman’s marriage contract – similar to that added to her own by her stepfather, Sayyid Siddiq Hasan, a leading figure in the Ahl-i-hadith movement<sup>30</sup> – that stated that, if her husband were to take another wife, she would receive special damages or have the option of living apart with a suitable maintenance or be granted a divorce. If these measures were thought to be necessary, however, the Begam stressed that they needed to be made before the marriage; once the second marriage had gone ahead, it was the first wife’s duty to please and obey her husband, even if he did not treat her with the required fairness.<sup>31</sup>

Though she sought to regulate polygamy, Sultan Jahan Begam’s stance was far less critical than that taken by her contemporaries in other parts of the Islamic world who had experienced polygamy first-hand, notably Malak Hifni Nasif in Egypt and Halidé Edib in Turkey.<sup>32</sup> Her stance was also more conservative than that of other Indian Muslim women at around the

same time. At a momentous meeting of the Anjuman-i-Khawatin-i-Islam (All-India Muslim Ladies' Conference) in Lahore in 1918, for instance, one of the local organizers, Jahan Ara Shahnawaz, proposed that the conference take a strong stand against the evils of polygamy, arguing that, as the practice was against the true spirit of Islam and contrary to the progress of the Muslim community, educated Muslim women should do all they could to bring an end to it. According to Begam Shahnawaz's own account, this resolution was passed unanimously, suggesting that it must also have had the support of Sultan Jahan Begam's own superintendent of girls' schools, Abru Begam, who was presiding over the conference in that year.<sup>33</sup> The Muslim press greeted the resolution with outrage. Though *Tahzib un-Niswan* (Women's Culture), the leading Muslim women's journal, was in favour, many other Urdu journals for women viciously attacked it. Rashid ul-Khairi, the editor of *'Ismat* (Modesty), was the most virulent, claiming that the Anjuman's members had only passed what he considered to be an 'anti-Islamic' resolution in order to impress their Christian mentors. Not surprisingly, these criticisms touched a nerve with women participants, who insisted that their resolution was based in Islamic tradition. Although the Qur'an permitted polygamy in certain cases, it also stipulated that a man had to treat all of his wives equally. As the latter was, in their view, an impossible task, polygamy was to be proscribed. The spirit of Islam, if not the letter, enjoined monogamy.<sup>34</sup>

Curiously, Rashid ul-Khairi had actually made this same argument in several of his own novels, including *Saukan ka Jalapa* (The Sorrow of the Rival Wife). He was unwilling to concede, however, that Muslim women, whom he defined as modest and unassertive, could stand up for their own rights in a public forum.<sup>35</sup> What is perhaps more surprising is that the Begam of Bhopal came out in agreement with this patronizing male reformer. In a speech before a grand meeting of the Princess of Wales Ladies' Club in Bhopal in 1921, she criticized the 'enthusiastic' speeches given at the 1918 meeting of the Anjuman in Lahore, arguing that polygamy was a necessary institution that had been ordained by the Qur'an to be applied in specific circumstances. Though polygamy could be an 'intolerable affair', Muslim women should know better than to 'exceed the limits of Allah', instead trusting that the requirement of impartiality would act as a deterrent to men taking a second wife. Had the Prophet not asserted that an unjust husband would appear before God on Judgement Day 'with half his body dangling or paralyzed'? She also conceded that women had a right to complain should they be badly treated by their husbands. But to make such an 'unseemly noise' and pass 'impracticable resolutions' in open meetings and conferences was, in her opinion, 'rather bold, and exceeding all bounds'.<sup>36</sup> Her stance may seem contradictory in light of her own bold assertion at the All India Ladies' Association held in Bhopal in 1918 that women be required to take responsibility for their own reform, but it was consistent with her general acquiescence to orthodox opinion on controversial



issues.<sup>37</sup> To have done otherwise would have been against her incremental approach.

### **The relative position of men and women in Islam**

Many of the Begam's opinions, as expressed during the polygamy debates, also hint at her understanding of the relative position of men and women within Islam. She conceived of the sexes as fulfilling complementary roles in society that were dictated by their distinct natures and constitutions. Hence, she articulated a theory of biological difference that anticipated later Islamist writers across the Muslim world, but placed her at odds with more radical female intellectuals of her own time, including Nabawiyah Musa in Egypt and Rokeya in Bengal, who insisted that gender roles were socially constructed, rather than ordained by nature or religion.<sup>38</sup> According to her interpretation, women had been put in charge of domestic responsibilities on the basis that they had the physique to bear children and the tenderness to raise them, while men were required to protect all life and property with their innate physical strength. That was not, significantly, to deny their essential equality. Quoting Surah 33:35 from the Qur'an, the Begam argued that Islam made no distinction between the sexes on moral or religious grounds since both men and women would be pardoned or rewarded in exactly the same way for honourable behaviour in their separate spheres: women would receive the equivalent spiritual merit for 'lighter' acts of devotion, like bearing and raising children or going on pilgrimage to Mecca, that men obtained for attending congregational prayers or fighting in battles.<sup>39</sup> In line with traditional Muslim lawmakers, the Begam recognized that men had been granted slight pre-eminence in the earthly hierarchy since they had the additional charge of taking care of women. But this situation did not lower women's overall position, instead resulting simply in peace and good governance in the universe.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, Sultan Jahan Begam emphasized that the Prophet Muhammad had granted women many special rights and privileges in compensation for their physical weakness, including *mahr* (dower) and proper maintenance. She also specified that women had a right to inheritance as it was laid out in the Qur'an, though she never questioned or explained why a woman's share was less than that of her male relatives. Like Sayyid Mumtaz Ali, she placed emphasis on the idea that husbands were obliged to treat their wives with kindness in non-financial matters providing them not only with affection, but also the freedom to visit their families, participate in social and religious circles and pursue education. Interestingly, this same point was made on several occasions in the Begam's writings and speeches with the explicit aim of refuting the assertions of non-Muslims that men were allowed to maltreat their wives in Islam.<sup>41</sup> That many of her other points were also directed at a Western audience is suggested by her introduction to *Muslim Home* in which she stated explicitly

that it was her intention to defend the allegedly repressive practices of her religion to her European contemporaries by explaining their history and continued importance to women in the contemporary age. As she wrote:

Like many other things of Islam the Occident has given a very wrong and, I may say, false notion of the Qur'anic teachings as to the position of woman in Islam. ... I, however, intend to do something to the enlightenment of my sisters in the west on this subject and write [this] book.<sup>42</sup>

This places her work alongside those of other so-called Muslim apologists, including Ameer Ali and Khwaja Kamaluddin, who similarly wrote to defend Islam before a Western audience.<sup>43</sup>

In turning from women's rights to duties, a wife was, according to the Begam, simply obliged to return her husband's displays of kindness, showing him obedience, chastity and devotion. This emphasis on the mutual offering of comfort and support reflected the growing importance being attached in this period, often in response to Victorian ideals of companionate marriage, to the Qur'anic adage that the sexes should 'be to each other as ornaments'. Muslim female intellectuals across India and other parts of the Islamic world considered at length the method by which a woman would actually fulfil these duties. Specifically, they sought to professionalize the household tasks that women performed by imbuing them with a scientific element that would elevate their prestige. Sultan Jahan Begam herself published extensively on the topic of 'domestic science', including a 456-pages guide to household management, appropriately entitled *Khanadari* (Housekeeping), and a lengthy treatise on women's responsibilities, called *Faraiz un-Nisa* (The Duties of Women).<sup>44</sup> Other women in Bhopal also took up the theme, most notably, the ruling Begam's prolific daughter-in-law, Maimoona Sultan. In a lecture to the Princess of Wales Ladies' Club in Bhopal given under the title *The Duties Nature Has Assigned to the Fair Sex and How to Perform Them*, she proclaimed that, if a woman did not effectively manage the household, it would lead to nothing less than the collapse of society. For how, she asked, could a man smoothly conduct national affairs if he had an ill-tempered wife who was extravagant with his income and ignored their children's education?<sup>45</sup> Clearly, the connections between domesticity and the nation – whether identified with India as a whole or the Indian Muslim community specifically – had already been firmly established in the mind of this young Muslim female reformer.

### **Marriage and divorce**

Sultan Jahan Begam believed that domestic stability was essential to the smooth running of a nation, however that may be defined. For this reason, she urged parents to avoid incompatibility between a couple when arranging

the marriages of their children, in particular mismatches of wealth or social standing. That marriages should be arranged was beyond doubt for her. As she wrote in her autobiography in a passage relating to her own marriage: 'In most Indian families it is still customary for parents to arrange the marriages of their children. And it is right that they should do so.' She then went on to specify other qualities to be looked for when choosing a husband in a 'Muhammadan family of rank', with 'gentle birth' and thrift heading the list, though a 'handsome appearance' and 'the habits and manners of a gentleman' were also desirable.<sup>46</sup> In making these statements, the ruling Begam's acceptance of an earthly hierarchy in which different class groupings were to remain endogamous is clearly apparent.

Concerns about incompatibility led a number of Muslim female reformers to speak out against child marriage. At the inaugural meeting of the All-India Ladies' Association held in Bhopal in 1918, for instance, a resolution was passed in which Indians of all communities were encouraged to oppose the 'evil' custom of child marriage. Begam Khadiv Jang, an author and educationalist from Hyderabad who was the daughter of Sayyid Husain Bilgrami (Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk), a prominent civil servant and Aligarh-associated reformer, spoke in favour of it. She argued that early marriages precluded against companionship between a husband and wife – a point that again represented an adaptation of Victorian bourgeois ideals.<sup>47</sup> In order to make this declaration more effective, it was also resolved that committees of 'influential' women should be formed in various provinces to convince the guardians of young girls that it was detrimental to both their health and morals to marry them off before they had reached the age of maturity.<sup>48</sup>

The Begam of Bhopal's own views on child marriage were somewhat more complex. She held that it was 'sometimes necessary' to marry minors, in which case the bride and groom's guardians should stand in as their representatives in the marriage negotiations. However, she pointed out that both the boy and the girl had the power to dissolve the contract when they came of legal age on the basis that Islam required the agreement of both parties to marriage.<sup>49</sup> Still, early marriage was a practice that she discouraged, particularly when it proved an obstruction to female education. As she stated explicitly in her autobiography: 'I do not consider early marriage very desirable either from the medical or social point of view.'<sup>50</sup> Yet she also believed evils could result from keeping a young girl unmarried for too long, especially in a hot country like India. No explanation was provided for this arbitrary stance in terms of either pseudo-scientific theories, Islamic injunctions or existing practice. But she did marry her own son Hamidullah to Maimoona Sultan when they were just seven and five years old respectively. In her autobiography, she defended this act on the basis that, as female education was 'universally neglected' among the Muslim community, she had no chance of finding an educated wife for her son before he reached the age of majority and thus she had chosen a young bride

whom she could educate herself.<sup>51</sup> Whatever her motives, it is worth noting that this marriage was not just in name only: Maimoona bore her first child at the age of just 12 and she had three daughters before her sixteenth birthday.

Like Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade of Bombay and other child marriage reformers who had married girls nearly twenty years their junior, Sultan Jahan Begam appears to have been subtly chastised for this decision at the meeting of the All-India Ladies' Association. Miss M.E. Elton, a Christian teacher employed in Bhopal, questioned the inclusion of a resolution on child marriage, arguing that if leaders continued to follow the customs they hoped to eradicate, their words were unlikely to carry any weight.<sup>52</sup> Her comment appears to have been prudently overlooked at the time by the rest of the Association's members. Miss Elton's words may have pricked the conscience of her esteemed employer though, as Sultan Jahan did not attempt to marry off her young granddaughters before her death in 1930, though potential matches had been arranged.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, by the time the Dowager Begam took over the presidency of the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1928, she was speaking out vehemently *against* child marriage. On that occasion, she even identified that a trade-off was occurring between women of different communities by which Muslim women would support Hindu women in the campaign to raise the age of marriage if Hindu women supported them in their efforts to reduce purdah restrictions.<sup>54</sup>

An effect of this campaign was that Indian Muslim women found themselves in conflict with male leaders of their community as never before. To be sure, one of the key achievements of the 1928 meeting of the AIWC was that deputations on child marriage were organized to wait on the Viceroy and other political leaders that included prominent Muslim women. Representing the All-India Muslim League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah condemned their case in strong terms on the basis that any attempt to curb the custom would conflict with Islamic law.<sup>55</sup> Sultan Jahan Begam was somewhat sympathetic to Jinnah's position, using her concluding remarks to the 1928 conference to warn the women in attendance not to brashly attack customs that were believed to have the sanction of religion. This approach, she argued, could lead to 'unpleasant controversies' that could be harmful to their cause. This demonstrates a pragmatism that was central to her programme of reform throughout her life, as already exemplified in connection with the polygamy debate.<sup>56</sup> It was not long, however, before Muslim women, including the Dowager Begam herself, found themselves again under zealous attack from male Muslim leaders, including Dr M.A. Ansari and Mohamed Ali, over their support of the Sarda Act to raise the age of marriage. Despite opposition, Muslim women upheld their alliance with Hindu women on this issue, presenting memorials to the Viceroy in which they deliberately contested the views put forward by Muslim men.<sup>57</sup> In time, however, a divide occurred between women of different communities over the matter of legal reform. Unlike their Hindu sisters,

many Muslim women seemed to feel then, as now, that their rights would be better protected by Muslim personal law, as defined in the *shariah*, than by a uniform civil code. Minault argues that this explains why Muslim women remained a small and separate group within the AIWC.<sup>58</sup>

Another legal matter that garnered Sultan Jahan Begam's attention was divorce. She generally discouraged attempts to bring about the dissolution of marriage, claiming that divorce was 'hateful' to God, and condemned in the Muslim law books. It was permitted only in 'impossible' situations, such as when a man neglected, deprived or unduly beat his wife – circumstances also spelled out in her own marriage contract – or if she flagrantly 'misbehaved'. In such circumstances, the Begam recognized a woman's right to initiate divorce, a practice known as *khul'a*. At the same time, she rejected the procedure of pronouncing the three formulas of divorce on one occasion, thus following the examples of Ameer Ali and Sayyid Mumtaz Ali before her. She also confirmed that, if a woman's husband divorced her, she retained her right to *mahr*, her personal estate, and even remarriage – the latter a practice otherwise condemned by the Begam as a 'heinous sin' on the basis that it went against the 'custom of the Afghans'.<sup>59</sup> A woman lost the right to *mahr*, however, if she initiated the proceedings herself.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast to her somewhat hypocritical stance on child marriage, the ruling Begam upheld these ideas in practice, as well as theory. Upon hearing of the Nawab of Rampur's divorce from Chhami Begam, sister of the Nawab of Jaora, in 1922, she wrote him a vitriolic letter in which she claimed that his 'egregious folly' was a 'grave and national wrong', evoking not Islam in this case, but the 'Afghan's code of honour' to support her stance. In doing so, it seems that she may have been seeking to appeal to their common identification as Afghans when sectarian considerations could have divided them – the Nawab of Rampur being a Shia, while the Begam of Bhopal was a Sunni. Surely, she asked, he could 'not yet have so far descended the slough of moral degeneration and abysmal turpitude' as to have brought this 'infamy and disgrace' upon his 'illustrious home?'<sup>61</sup> Upon finding that he had, she turned her attention to advising the Nawab of Jaora on how to best help his sister in her abandoned state, quoting Hanafi law – the dominant school in India as well as Afghanistan – as it related to ill-treatment to justify her claims for maintenance, *mahr* and other moveable property still in Rampur.<sup>62</sup>

In trying to bring Indian marriage practices in line with Qur'anic injunctions – even if she sometimes used Afghan custom to do it – the Begam of Bhopal did not just target those practices that were implemented by male lawmakers in a way that was detrimental to women. She also directed her reforming zeal at 'unnecessary and superstitious' rituals that had, according to her interpretation, been adopted from the majority Hindu community by Muslim women themselves. Above all, she entreated women in speeches to the Princess of Wales Ladies' Club in Bhopal and elsewhere to organize marriage ceremonies in the simple, practical

manner that was common in the early years of Islam, rather than wasting the community's limited resources on large dowries, excessive *mahr* and extravagant wedding parties. She gave the example of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, who, she asserted, had been provided with only a sieve, a leather cushion, a quilt and a hand mill on the occasion of her marriage to Ali. If wealthy families feared that they would be censured for their frugality, she suggested that they donate any extra funds for the good of the Muslim community to charitable causes such as scholarship or marriage funds for poor girls and orphans.<sup>63</sup> In urging women to relinquish customary marriage celebrations, she resembled Muslim intellectuals from across the reformist spectrum. Whether in their desire for Islamic correctness or increased financial stringency or both, they failed to recognize that these occasions offered rare opportunities for purdah-bound women to seek influence and amusement outside their homes.<sup>64</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In terms of a contemporary movement for women's rights, Sultan Jahan Begam's contributions over her 25 years as a princely ruler and four years in retirement may seem negligible, if not actually retrograde. Not only had she reasserted the primacy of women's domestic duties, but she also opposed many of her female contemporaries in their attempts to ban polygamy. Other gender inequalities enshrined in the Qur'an – for instance, the limiting of a woman's inheritance to only half that of their male relatives at best – were also advocated without question. To dismiss the Begam's reformist activities, however, would be to ignore the complex historical circumstances in which she wrote and acted. As a princely ruler with a zeal for women's reform, she had to delicately negotiate a path between the British overlords with their civilizing mission, but usually conservative mentalities, Bhopal's Muslim elites wanting to maintain patriarchal norms protected by custom if not the *shariah*, and, increasingly, various breeds of nationalists for whom the 'woman question' was to be resolved through the inculcation of, what Partha Chatterjee has called, a 'new patriarchy'.<sup>65</sup> In this context, Sultan Jahan Begam's attempts to uphold the Prophet's prohibition on female infanticide, limit polygamy, guarantee women's rights to maintenance, *mahr*, some inheritance and divorce, control men's use of the 'triple *talaq*' formula and improve the conditions of child marriage must be seen as highly significant. Here was an attempt to empower Indian Muslim women, who had been traditionally refused many of their rights by giving them the means to claim proper treatment from their fathers and husbands, economic security and a degree of independence.

A clear break, then, may be seen with earlier male reformers in that she sought to introduce a distinctly feminine sensibility – no doubt reinforced by the unique political situation in Bhopal – to the debate over women's status in Islam. In relation to this point, the princely context should also

be seen as relevant in that it provided a space in which women were only partially implicated by colonial agendas. That is not to say that Sultan Jahan was not willing to draw on the arguments of some of her male predecessors and contemporaries from Aligarh, as influenced by Victorian notions of the ‘angel in the house’, by which women were understood to have special qualities ordained by nature that made them especially suited to the domestic sphere. Yet, like Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi from Deoband, the Begam also recognized women’s essential equality with men, as judged at the spiritual level, giving speeches on religious duties that could have as easily applied to men as women. Nearly all of the ruling Begam’s arguments on the rights and duties of women – with the exception of perhaps child marriage, widow remarriage and occasionally divorce – were made in reference to Islam with quotations from the Qur’an and *hadith* being used to support her reformist position. By building on religious injunctions, she was able to buttress her demands with a higher authority that guaranteed her at least limited success, not achievable had she attacked patriarchy directly. That this incremental approach could still be employed usefully in the context of contemporary debates – whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere – is suggested in that her treatise on women’s rights and duties in Islam was actually reprinted in the 1980s under the title *Muslim Married Couple*, making it available even now from online Islamic bookstores.<sup>66</sup>

## Notes

- 1 This chapter is a revised and reframed version of a section from chapter six of my monograph, *Muslim Women, Reform and Princely Patronage: Nawab Sultan Jahan Begam of Bhopal*, London: Routledge, 2007.
- 2 See on these developments: Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, especially ch. 8.
- 3 See for an accessible introduction to the activities of this organization the autobiography of one of its activists, written with the assistance of John Follain and Rita Cristofari, *Zoya’s Story: An Afghan Woman’s Struggle for Freedom*, London: Review, 2002.
- 4 See for just a couple of examples: Rashid, *Taliban*, pp. 65, 174.
- 5 One case that clearly illustrates the change in profile of Afghan women’s suffering was the airing of Saira Shah’s excellent documentary on the subject, ‘Beneath the Veil’, initially shown on Channel 4 in Britain, on prime-time CNN in the United States.
- 6 See on these debates: Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 4.
- 7 Avril A. Powell, ‘Islamic Modernism and Women’s Status: The Influence of Syed Ameer Ali’, in Avril A. Powell and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (eds), *Rhetoric and Reality: Gender and the Colonial Experience in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 308.
- 8 Mrs McClure, ‘Social Hindrances’, in Annie von Sommer and Samuel M. Zwemer, *Daylight in the Harem: A New Era for Moslem Women*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1911, p. 94.
- 9 See on these two schools: Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982; David Lelyveld,

- Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996 (reprint).
- 10 These labels are borrowed from Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 3–4.
  - 11 Barbara D. Metcalf, 'Reading and Writing about Muslim Women in British India', in Zoya Hasan (ed.), *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities, and the State*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994, pp. 6–14.
  - 12 For a more comprehensive overview of the negative characteristics attributed to Indian princely rulers, see Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 3–8.
  - 13 The founder of the Bhopal dynasty, Dost Mohammad Khan, was born in Tirah, now near the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as a Pathan nobleman of the Mirazi-khel clan of the Orakzai tribe. He came to India to gain employment under the last 'great' Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb, in the late seventeenth century, ultimately carving out a small fiefdom in the 'jungles of Malwa' by the time of his death in the late 1720s. On his career, see Shaharyar M. Khan's family history, *The Begums of Bhopal: A Dynasty of Women Rulers in Raj India*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2000, ch. 1. This Afghan identity was still strong by the early twentieth century. Sultan Jahan Begam herself often made reference to her clan and tribal links, developing an image of herself as a 'Muhammadan of Afghan descent'. On this, see my 'Princes, Paramountcy and the Politics of Muslim Identity: The Begam of Bhopal on the Indian National Stage, 1901–1926', *South Asia*, 26:2, 2003, 165–95, especially p. 174. Interestingly, she also sought to strengthen her family's ties with Afghanistan through marriage – her youngest son, Hamidullah, for instance, being wed to Maimoona Sultan, a girl from Peshawar, who was a direct descendant of Ahmad Shah Abdali, famously the victor over the Marathas at Panipat in 1761. Sultan Jahan Begam's own education, which included lessons in the Pushtu language, as well as fencing and horse riding, must have played a role in inculcating her with this Pathan heritage. For further discussion of these issues, see my *Muslim Women, Reform and Princely Patronage*, especially chapters 1–2.
  - 14 In the 1901 census, 72 per cent of Bhopal's population was defined as 'Hindu', while just 12 per cent was 'Muslim'. However, the latter consisted of 54 per cent of the urban population, reflecting their identification with government and other high status pursuits. For a more detailed analysis of Bhopal's religious composition, see my *Muslim Women, Reform and Princely Patronage*, ch. 2.
  - 15 See on the workings of paramountcy in Bhopal state Lambert-Hurley, 'Princes, Paramountcy and the Politics of Muslim Identity', pp. 169–95.
  - 16 This argument is made throughout Lambert-Hurley, *Muslim Women, Reform and Princely Patronage*. It is best developed, however, with specific reference to health reforms in my 'Subtle Subversion and Presumptuous Interventions: Reforming Women's Health in Bhopal State in the Early Twentieth Century', in Anindita Ghosh (ed.), *Behind the Veil: Resistance, Women, and the Everyday in Colonial South Asia*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007, pp. 116–38.
  - 17 James Mill, *The History of British India*, 2 vols, New York: Chelsea House, 1968 (reprint), pp. 309–10.
  - 18 Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 17.
  - 19 Syed Ameer Ali, *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1873; and *The Life and Teachings of Mohammed or The Spirit of Islam*, London: W.H. Allen, 1891. For a discussion of the relationship between these two texts as it related to women's rights, see Powell in Powell and Lambert-Hurley (eds), 'Islamic Modernism and Women's Status'.



- 20 Interestingly, this form of divorce has once again come into the public eye in India in the context of 'talaq by SMS' – by which the three-word formula is sent in the form of text message by mobile phone. 'Local Maulvis' have declared it lawful, while representatives of the All-India Women's Personal Law Board label it 'un-Islamic'. See 'Now, 'talaq' on SMS: Hi-Tech Split: Local Maulvis Support Divorce over Mobile Phone', in *Sunday Times of India*, 20 November 2005, 9.
- 21 Metcalf, 'Reading and Writing', pp. 9–14. For an example of the unfavourable response to this text in India, see Muhammad Shibli Numani, 'Purdah aur Islam', in *Maqalat-i-Shibli*, vol. I, Azamgarh: Maarif, 1954, pp. 103–20.
- 22 Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 72–84.
- 23 See Muhammad Nazir Ahmad, *Muhsinat*, Delhi, 1887 (2nd edn); and *Ayama*, Delhi, 1891. The first was also abridged and translated into English by Khwajah Khan as *Mubtala*, 2 vols, Madras: The Madras Review, 1895–96.
- 24 Barbara Metcalf, 'Maulānā Ashraf 'Alā Thānavā and Urdu Literature', in Christopher Shackle (ed.), *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 98–9.
- 25 Sultan Jahan, *Sabil ul-Jinan*, Bhopal: Ruler of Bhopal, 1917, p. vi.
- 26 N.Y. Hossain, 'Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain 1880–1932: The Status of Muslim Women in Bengal', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1996, pp. 80–2.
- 27 Sultan Jahan, *Islam main Aurat ka Martaba*, Bhopal: Hamidia Art Press, 1922, pp. 1–10.
- 28 Veena Oldenburg has explored how female infanticide was key to the East India Company's justification of its 'civilizing mission' in *Dowry Murder: The Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, ch. 2. On the centrality of polygamy to colonial and especially missionary critiques of Islam, see my 'An Embassy of Equality? Quaker Missionaries in Bhopal State, 1890–1930', in Powell and Lambert-Hurley (eds), *Rhetoric and Reality*, p. 265.
- 29 See, for instance, Sultan Jahan, *Islam main 'Aurat ka Martaba*, p. 12; and Sultan Jahan, *Muslim Home Part I: Present to the Married Couple*, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1916, pp. 18–22.
- 30 On Sayyid Siddiq Hasan, see Saeedullah, *The Life and Works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan*, Lahore: Ashraf Press, 1973.
- 31 Sultan Jahan, *Muslim Home*, pp. 22–5.
- 32 Thomas Philipp, 'Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt', in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (eds), *Women in the Muslim World*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 283; Halidé Edib, *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, London: John Murray, 1926, pp. 142–6, 308.
- 33 Jahan Ara Shahnawaz, *Father and Daughter*, Lahore: Nigarishat, 1971, pp. 47–8.
- 34 Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, pp. 289–90.
- 35 Gail Minault, 'Ismat: Rāshid ul Khairī's Novels and Urdu Literary Journalism for Women', in Shackle, *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, pp. 135–6.
- 36 *A Brief Decennial Report of 'The Princess of Wales Ladies' Club'*, Bhopal, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1922, pp. 172–8.
- 37 See my 'Fostering Sisterhood: Muslim Women and the All-India Ladies' Association', *Journal of Women's History*, 16:2, 2004, 40–65.
- 38 Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 66; Hossain, 'Rokeya', p. 86.
- 39 It was translated in her English works in the following way:

Verily, the Moslem men and women, and the faithful men and women, and the devout men and women, and the truthful men and women, and the patient men and women, and the humble men and women, and the

charitable men and women, and the fasting men and women, and the men and women who preserve their modesty, and the men and women who remember God much – God has prepared for them pardon and a great reward.

Sultan Jahan, 'Relative Position of Man and Woman in Islam', *Islamic Review* (Woking), 4, 1916, p. 301

- 40 Sultan Jahan Begam made this point regarding the equal, but complementary, nature of the sexes in several speeches, including that quoted in *Decennial Report*, p. 184; *Islam main 'Aurat ka Martaba*, p. 10. It is developed most comprehensively, however, in her *Muslim Home*, pp. 1–5.
- 41 Sultan Jahan, *Muslim Home*, pp. 27–31, 34, 66; *Decennial Report*, pp. 179–80.
- 42 Sultan Jahan, *Muslim Home*, p. i.
- 43 For comparison, see Ameer Ali's *Spirit of Islam* and Khwaja Kamaluddin's *The Ideal Prophet*, Woking: The Islamic Review Office, 1925. It is significant that the latter had been appointed by Sultan Jahan Begam as head of the Woking Muslim Mission in England. On her relationship with him and this organization, see my *Muslim Women*, ch. 2.
- 44 Sultan Jahan, *Khanadari*, Bhopal: Sultania Press, 1916; *Faraiz un-Nisa*, Bhopal: Sultania Press, 1921. For a discussion of comparable examples in the Egyptian context, see Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994, pp. 140–1.
- 45 'English translation of a speech delivered by Maimoona Sultan Begam in the Ladies' Club', in *Decennial Report*, pp. 32–4.
- 46 Sultan Jahan, *An Account of My Life*, vol. I, trans. C.H. Payne, London: John Murray, 1910, p. 57.
- 47 Speech of Begam Khadiv Jang on Resolution 10 in *A Short Summary of the Proceedings of the First Session of the All-India Ladies' Association*, Bhopal: Sultania Press, 1918, p. 17. On Begam Khadiv Jang, see Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, pp. 208–13.
- 48 *Supplements to the Resolutions*, Bhopal: Sultania Press, 1918, p. 1.
- 49 Sultan Jahan, *Muslim Home*, p. 14.
- 50 Sultan Jahan, *An Account of My Life*, vol. II, trans. Abdus Samad Khan, Bombay: The Times Press, 1922, p. 225.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 Speech of Miss M.E. Elton on Resolution 10 in *Proceedings*, p. 17. For comparison with Ranade, see Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, pp. 25–6.
- 53 Abida Sultaan, *Memoirs of a Rebel Princess*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 56–7. Before Sultan Jahan Begam's death, her granddaughters were only wedded to the Qur'an itself in an elaborate *nashra* ceremony to celebrate the eldest's completion of study. It is described in a rare document by Khusrau Jahan Begam, alias Sardar Dulhan, entitled *Halat-i-nashrah*, Bhopal: Hamidia Press, n.d. It was translated into English as *An Account of the 'Nashra' Ceremony of the Princesses Abida and Sajida Sultan Sahiba of Bhopal*, Bhopal: The Bombay Chronicle Press, 1921.
- 54 This situation appears to have been unique within the Islamic world. In Egypt, for instance, Muslim and Christian feminists worked together, but never became involved in campaigns to reform the personal status codes of the other. Badran, *Feminists*, pp. 95–6.
- 55 All India Women's Conference on Educational Reform, Delhi, February 1928, pp. 75–9.
- 56 *Ibid.*, pp. 71–3.
- 57 See Mohamed Ali's 'Muslims and the Sarda Act', in Afzal Iqbal (comp. and ed.), *Select Writings and Speeches of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, vol. II, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963, pp. 321–43. A useful summary of the debate over

- child marriage, including between male and female Muslim leaders, is available in Geraldine Forbes, 'Women and Modernity: The Issue of Child Marriage in India', *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 2:4, 1979, 407–19.
- 58 Gail Minault, 'Sisterhood or Separatism? The All-India Muslim Ladies' Conference and the Nationalist Movement', in Gail Minault (ed.), *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, Columbia: South Asia Books, 1981, p. 101.
- 59 Sultan Jahan, *Account*, vol. I, pp. 103–4.
- 60 Sultan Jahan, *Muslim Home*, pp. 46–62.
- 61 Sultan Jahan to the Nawab of Rampur, 19 August 1922, National Archives of India (Bhopal) (NAI(B)), Bhopal State Records (BSR) No. 10 (Bundle 76), 1922.
- 62 Sultan Jahan to the Nawab of Jaora, 18 October 1923, National Archives of India (Bhopal), Bhopal State Records No. 57 (Bundle 84), 1922.
- 63 'Speech delivered by Her Highness on the various customs and ceremonies connected with Marriages and Deaths', in *Decennial Report*, pp. 70–5. Also see Resolution 6 passed at the inaugural meeting of the All-India Ladies' Association held in Bhopal in 1918 in *Copy of Resolutions*, Bhopal: Qudsia Press, 1918, p. 1.
- 64 See for a development of this point: Gail Minault, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms: The View from the Zenana', in Nita Kumar (ed.), *Women as Subjects*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994, p. 114.
- 65 Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989, pp. 233–53.
- 66 Sultan Jahan, *Muslim Married Couple*, Award, 1980. See, for instance, [www.online-Islamic-store.com](http://www.online-Islamic-store.com) (accessed 1 July 2005).

# 10 The Maharana and the Bhils

## The 'Eki' movement in Mewar, 1921–22

*Hari Sen*

Historians studying colonial India have tended to concentrate on areas ruled directly by the British. The neglect of the Bhils in the present corpus of history writing on colonial India seems to be a product of this and of the growing marginalization of these tribal people in the concerns of society in the Indian state of Mewar (Udaipur) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> This paper focuses on the participation of the Bhils in the Eki (unity) movement of 1921–22 in Mewar and explores the intensification of the symbiotic relationship between the British and Indian Princes, while addressing such popular protests and nationalist politics in a network of complex relationships.

### **Background**

At the end of the nineteenth century, most of the Bhils lived to the south of the city of Udaipur. In this region, the territories called the Bhumat were ruled by the allegedly primordial lineages of the tribal Bhumia *thikanedars* (holders of revenue grants). The other, in the south-west – a rocky and hilly region called Magra – was part of the Mewar *khalsa*, the *maharana's* territories.

In the summer of 1921, the Bhils of the Magra and the Bhumat were in turmoil. Prices had risen sharply during the years of the First World War. The high prices encouraged a shift of cultivable land to cash crops, and there was 'a general deterioration of the mental and physical capacity of the human frame to resist the attacks of severe diseases in general and of epidemics in particular'.<sup>2</sup> Most of the increase of the population of Bhils in Mewar from 138,777 in 1911<sup>3</sup> to 189,151 in 1921<sup>4</sup> happened in the early years of the decade; in the last four years of the period there was a sudden decline in the population's rate of growth under the impact of plague (1917) and influenza epidemics (1918). The number of Bhils looking for cultivable land had grown. The owners of land were able to increase the levies and dues without the risk of peasants deserting the fields. In the late 1910s, slower growth and poor health of the population made it more difficult for the survivors to pay the dues assessed on whole villages.

In their list of grievances and demands presented to the Mewar *darbar* in 1921, the Bhils of the Magra argued that instead of reducing the levies during the period of famine and epidemic (1900–01), they had been unjustly increased.<sup>5</sup> The Bhils had complained against the arbitrary increases during that period but their protests became more organized and resolute during the years of the Sump Sabha in 1913 and the Eki in 1921–22.<sup>6</sup> But there was more to the Eki.

In the last week of June 1921, delegations of peasants, including a large number of Bhils, assembled in Udaipur to put their demands to the *maharana* and ‘threatened to prevent supplies from entering the city ... and ... refuse[d] all kinds of Begar [forced, unpaid labour]’.<sup>7</sup> The *darbar*’s negative response provoked the Bhils to challenge royal authority.<sup>8</sup> They cut grass and killed boar in the royal reserve of Nahar Magra.<sup>9</sup> Among other such acts, at Sakroda a plan was made to prevent grain being sent to Udaipur.<sup>10</sup> With good rains in the second half of July, peasants went back to the fields. Nevertheless, the peasant revolts remained strong in the Magra and Bhumat, and the *thikanas* of Begun, Bijolia and Parsoli.

Motilal Tejawat and his message of liberation from feudal oppression were central to the Bhils’ participation in these events. Born in 1885 in an Oswal Mahajan family of merchants in Koliari, Tejawat, like many traders in the area, knew Urdu, Gujarati, Mewari and the dialects of the Bhils. He was employed in the *thikana* of Jharol in 1912 and had married the Pradhan’s (chief administrator’s) daughter. But, outraged to see that Bhils were captured to perform *begar*, Tejawat resigned from his position in 1920 to fight against the oppression of the Bhils.<sup>11</sup>

It is difficult to reconstruct what Tejawat discussed with the gathered peasants at the annual fair at Matri Kundiya near Chittaur in May 1921, but the deliberations led to the ‘Eki’, a league of predominantly Bhil peasants. At the conclusion of the fair, thousands of peasants joined Tejawat in the march to Udaipur, where they presented their demands to Maharana Fateh Singh in June.<sup>12</sup> Discontented with the *maharana*’s response, Tejawat, accompanied by ‘hundreds’ of his Bhil supporters, reached Jharol.<sup>13</sup> When Tejawat’s old employer, the *thikanedar*, had him arrested, 6,000–7,000 Bhils gathered to storm the Jharol fort.<sup>14</sup> Thakur Kuber Singh was forced to release Tejawat. This was proof of the very large following that Tejawat had gathered, and of the fact that the grievances of the Bhils were deep seated and widespread.

Significantly, Tejawat claimed that he was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>15</sup> By the summer of 1921, the Non-Cooperation movement, which had been built around the literate middle class, had transformed itself and a number of peasant movements had emerged, adding a new dimension of struggle against restrictions on forest use and the various exactions and extortions that were characteristic of feudal landlordism.<sup>16</sup> Gandhi’s message was polysemic and this absence of a fixed definition of the cause enabled the peasants to invest their own concerns and contexts in the

movements led by him, even though Gandhi himself was often at odds with them.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise discrete, their histories converged when the Bhils believed that Gandhi was fighting for them, and that their own struggle was an assault on a regime that was being assailed by many others.

### Links with Indian nationalism

Central to most popular movements and revolts in late colonial India was a belief in the breakdown of hegemonic control, real or rumoured.<sup>18</sup> The emergence of a new symbolic power centre like the Gandhi *raj* of 1921–22 encouraged this process.<sup>19</sup> News of Gandhi's promise of *swaraj* (self-rule) travelled great distances swiftly, making the borders of the Indian states porous. Ian Copland ignores these phenomena, and argues that there was nothing inevitable about the political collapse of the Indian princes in the period from 1947 to 1949. He points to the survival of monarchical institutions in the Persian Gulf, Malaysia and Thailand as evidence that monarchies are not always anachronistic in late twentieth-century Asia.<sup>20</sup> While this perspective adequately recognizes the imperatives of colonial power, it does not speak to the popular paradigm of nationalism in India.

In that context, Tejawat's claim of being a follower of Gandhi was a potent one. Some of his Bhil followers wore a Gandhi cap symbolizing participation in their Eki.<sup>21</sup> David Hardiman argues that peasant protests are often empowered by the belief that they have a potent supporter.<sup>22</sup> In the Gandhian Tejawat, the Bhils had such a champion. However, unlike Gandhi, Motilal Tejawat did not attempt a sartorial empathy with his followers.<sup>23</sup> Like many other Mewari traders, he wore a *dhoti* (loincloth) and an *angarkhi* (jacket), and a saffron turban; all of which amplified his moral authority. An annual visitor to the Chitra Vichitra fair in *thikana* Poshina (Idar state) as a spice merchant, Tejawat discussed the refusal to perform *veth* (or *begar*; forced or unpaid labour) and the campaign to pay fair rates of taxes with the assembled Bhils.<sup>24</sup> The Bhils acclaimed his efforts in ballads that narrate how the 'bania Motilal Tejawat has got a struggle going; ... It's true he united the Bhils... It's true the state's share of the crop... [is] to be brought to the pals.'<sup>25</sup> The ballads recount how he 'changed' the Bhils by accepting the customary one and a quarter rupees<sup>26</sup> and making them his disciples.<sup>27</sup>

Like Govind Giri before him, Tejawat also preached temperance and vegetarianism. When Tejawat went into hiding in 1922, some *sahukars* (merchants and moneylenders) sustained the campaign.<sup>28</sup> To morally 'uplift' the Bhils brought karmic merit; simultaneously, the campaign against theft benefited the *sahukars*. However, the political initiatives of the Bhils in the turbulent winter of 1921–22 went beyond such campaigns.

Tejawat asked the Bhils to refuse payment of all taxes and to settle disputes in their own councils through discussion among their *gametis* (village headmen) and *panches* (members of the community council).<sup>29</sup> He also

appointed one of them as *foujdar* (military commander).<sup>30</sup> The Bhils swore an oath of loyalty on unsheathed swords.<sup>31</sup> These initiatives constituted a direct challenge to the state, fortified by wide support.

In June 1921, letters circulated, asking the Bhils to stop the payment of all taxes,<sup>32</sup> and over the next three months Tejawat told the Bhils that once Gandhi's *raj* was established they would only have to pay one *anna* in the *rupee* to the state, and that if they refused to follow him they would be cursed.<sup>33</sup> The boycott of the courts, the refusal to pay the unjustly high rates of revenue and the denial of *rasad* (extraction of provisions) and *begar* to functionaries of the state followed.<sup>34</sup> The *maharana* responded with reforms but these did not remove the intermediaries, and when he reproved the Bhils for not having petitioned earlier,<sup>35</sup> he failed to realize that by the act of written petitioning the Bhil peasants had subverted the traditional power of writing by appropriating it for their own cause.

The petition stated that the *darbar's* clerks provided the *mahajans* (merchants) with *parwanas* (permits) that forced the Bhils to escort them through the Magra free of cost, and that the *mahajans* supplied the clerks and soldiers with free provisions. The *patwari* (the keeper of the village revenue records) was often a local shopkeeper.<sup>36</sup> These complaints highlighted the alliance between administrative power and commercial resources; they also illustrated the ambiguity in the relationship between the Bhils and the *mahajans* since the available evidence seems to suggest that there was no uniform pattern in the way in which the *mahajans* aligned themselves for or against the Eki.

By September 1921, the movement had found support throughout the Bhil areas of Mewar and developed a strong organization.<sup>37</sup> Alarmed, the British coerced the *darbar* and the *thikanedars* to address the grievances of the Bhils. However, the movement continued because those in power were reluctant to surrender their privileges and not because Tejawat used his influence among the Bhils to prolong an agitation they did not want.

Like Govind Giri's Sump Sabha, Tejawat's Eki was not restricted to the Bhils. Its following included low-caste groups like the Dangis of the Magra and others among the rural poor who found a common cause.<sup>38</sup> Another similarity was that Tejawat's followers included Bhils from a number of states and districts in southern Rajasthan and northern Gujarat, articulating their shared grievances and cultural solidarity across administrative jurisdictions.<sup>39</sup>

In December 1921, 4,000 *gametis* (village headmen) presented a petition to the British on behalf of the Bhils of the Bhumat and the Magra, stating that traditionally they had not performed *begar*, but had been forced to do so over the preceding half-century, while simultaneously old taxes had been enhanced and new fines and levies imposed. A Bhil ballad of the time goes: 'It's true the Raja is making us miserable; ... It's true he makes us do *begar* the whole day; ... It's true he takes double the taxes.'<sup>40</sup> The Bhils fixed the revenue of crops and proposed to pay directly to the British or

the *darbar*.<sup>41</sup> Similar demands were put forward to the British by different groups of Bhils. The Bhil headmen of Panarwa in southern Mewar warned the *thikanedars*: 'We panches unanimously declare that if we are treated harshly, there will be a great disturbance.'<sup>42</sup>

These catalogues of grievances, demands and threats were not addressed only to the British. One of the most assertive declarations was sent directly to the Rana of Panarwa by the Bhils in December 1921, stating: 'we intend never to pay new taxes, and what we propose to give is more than the old rates; if ... you will not accept it ... and if the [Udaipur] *darbar* will not accept it, we shall pay to the [British] government.'<sup>43</sup> Common to these kinds of remonstrance was the belief that it was still possible to appeal for justice to the British, the *maharana* and the *thikanedars*. At the same time, as in the petition addressed to the Rana of Panarwa, the public proclamation of their determination to resist injustice constituted an articulation of the deliberate desire to change their material and political condition.<sup>44</sup> It would be perverse to allege that the petitions were the exclusive outcome of a tutored conspiracy.

A perceptive British officer emphasized that Tejawat had connections with Gandhi, but his 'motive in taking up the cause of Bhil grievances is a purely political one; ... it is [as a] champion of the Bhil cause that he has gained ... influence in Mewar ... and not as a preacher of Non-Cooperation ... and a hope of pecuniary gain is ... not the greatest reason for his doing so.'<sup>45</sup> He also wrote that Tejawat was considered a 'holy emissary of Gandhi', who the Bhils believed was 'an incarnation of God', and that Bhil women and men flocked to pay obeisance to Tejawat and to accept the oath of adherence to the Eki.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the Eki movement emanated from the complex interaction between the aspirations of the Bhils and the leadership of Tejawat; mediated by the ambiguous icon of Gandhi.

Tejawat travelled through the region regularly, holding frequent consultations with the Bhils. In the early winter of 1921, afraid that a gathering would lead to political turbulence, the Idar *darbar* and the British government collaborated and succeeded in preventing it.<sup>47</sup> In December 1921 the Rao of Madri (a *thikana* in the hills of south Mewar) had arrested Khema Bhagora, a Bhil *gameti*, for not performing *begar*, and had him beaten to death.<sup>48</sup> Tejawat began to prepare to hold the meeting that had earlier been suspended. He toured the Bhumat with a growing host of supporters and assembled at Jharol, where they forced the officials to refund the revenue. The Mewar *darbar* announced a reward of Rs.500 for the capture of Tejawat.<sup>49</sup>

Other methods of mobilization were also used. While Tejawat toured the Bhumat, a bangle of lacquer and an arrow were sent around the villages on 24 and 25 December 1921. Those who received them were expected to accept the arrow and join the struggle, or accept the bangle and join the women in staying away from it.<sup>50</sup> In less than a week, about 9,000 Bhils led by Tejawat had assembled at the Raghunathsagar lake, about a mile from



Madri. Many of them were heavily armed.<sup>51</sup> Some were pensioners from the Mewar Bhil Corps and trained in the use of firearms.<sup>52</sup> They were there to protest against the unfair levy of taxes and to demand an explanation from the Rao of Madri regarding the earlier arrest and killing of Khema Bhagora.<sup>53</sup>

The British sent soldiers of the Mewar Bhil Corps in plain clothes to the meeting and one of them, Havildar Alkha, reported that at the meeting Tejawat had given 'orders for committing violence', and that the Bhils were intimidated into doing so.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that Alkha told the British officers what they wanted to hear. Tejawat was not a pacifist, but we need to understand that it was the Bhils' commitment to their cause that brought them to Raghunathsagar in such large numbers. Thus, while Alkha's British masters used his report as evidence of Tejawat inciting the Bhils to violence, it was unlikely that Tejawat alone could conjure up a violent upsurge by his 'orders'.

Initially, the British, who were not concerned directly with local political implications, had hoped to end the unrest among the Bhils by forcing the local regimes to accept some demands.<sup>55</sup> However, the *thikanedars* and the rulers of the states in the area were reluctant to abandon the powers and symbols of their authority. By early 1922, it was evident that the British strategy of dissipating rebellion by forcing local regimes to redress some of the Bhil grievances had only been partially successful. There were reports from northern Gujarat saying that, apart from blocking roads and refusing taxes, armed Bhils were 'obtaining food by intimidation from Banias [shop-keepers]'.<sup>56</sup> The colonial government believed that the movement could sustain itself without Tejawat and gain strength within a pan-Indian upsurge.<sup>57</sup> However, they decided that Tejawat had to be arrested and the Mewar *darbar* agreed to help.<sup>58</sup>

On the day that the British had hoped to arrest Tejawat on his arrival in Abu Road, his putative guru had publicly disowned him. In an article entitled *Danger of Mass Movement* Gandhi made it clear that Tejawat had no authority in his name and that he knew nothing about the issues raised by the Bhil agitation. Objecting to such 'forcible adoption' he made it clear that Tejawat was an unwelcome acolyte, unless he changed his ways.<sup>59</sup>

### **Popular initiatives**

The Eki was contemporaneous with the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921–22. The calling-off of the latter was a blow to the peasant rebels, but militant peasant protest had developed a dynamic of its own, and in some parts of India, like Avadh and Mewar, the movements continued.<sup>60</sup> Gandhi had promised a total change, which enthralled by its very vagueness: 'Swaraj within a year.'<sup>61</sup> Tejawat and the Bhils substantiated this with their own demands, and attributed to Gandhi the movement that he had disowned.

Tejawat was confronted by a dilemma: though Gandhi had criticized and rejected him, the Bhil movement was by no means a failure. In Jawas, Madri, and other *thikanas* in the Bhumat, the British compelled the *thikanedars* to reform their administrations, increase the peasants' share in share cropping arrangements and abolish a number of minor levies collected with the revenue.<sup>62</sup> The revenue was reduced and concessions announced in the levy of *begar*.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, a fortnight after the publication of Gandhi's article, a clearly shaken Tejawat wrote to the Assistant Political Superintendent of the Hilly Tracts, Mewar, reiterating that the Bhil agitation was being conducted under the guidance of the Gandhian Congress.<sup>64</sup> In another letter, he explained:

I want that Bhils may refrain from drinking liquor, killing animals and from stealing. ... The Raj people [officials of the States and *thikanas*] never desired that their subjects would approach you ... Justice is now in your hands. These people are very wild ... your people defamed us and therefore the matter seems to you to be in a serious condition. ... If they oppress us and if there is any bloodshed, I am not responsible.<sup>65</sup>

Tejawat had also implied that he did not control the movement; he was governed by it. On one occasion in early 1922, the Maharaja of Idar and the British Political Agent had tried to meet Tejawat, who 'was ready to come out before the Political Agent, but the Bhils surrounded him and did not let him go'.<sup>66</sup> A few days after this, the Assistant Political Superintendent of the Hilly Tracts, Mewar, asked Tejawat to discuss the grievances with him. 'That night all the Bhils and Motilal met and decided that they would not go to any officer otherwise they would be killed and that they should see the Maharana of Udaipur who would give them justice.'<sup>67</sup> Conscious of their ability to put pressure on the colonial regime, the Bhils did not want a separate settlement of their grievances in each individual state.<sup>68</sup>

However, by the time Tejawat wrote those letters to the British, the terms of the conflict had changed. Gandhi had first denounced the Bhil agitation, criticized Tejawat, and then suspended the Non-Cooperation movement a few days later. Gandhi's criticism of the Eki had emboldened the British who were now considering a new strategy. In a telegram to the Agent to the Governor General (AGG), the Political Secretary wrote that while

[m]ilitary operations might prove expensive ... and the troops might be wanted elsewhere ... allowing Motilal to clear out on condition that he does not take part in any agitation or return to Bhil country and ... promising Bhils enquiry into grievances and redress we shall score a tactical advantage ... making Motilal appear as deserter ... [and] step in as champion of Bhil interests into his place.<sup>69</sup>

On 3 March 1922, the Political Agent in Mahikantha, Gujarat, sent a British officer, together with the Superintendent of the Idar state police and 2 Bhil *gametis*, to Semlia in Idar state to meet Tejawat and some of the approximately 3,000 Bhils who were encamped there. The Bhils refused to let Tejawat meet them, 'and shouted that they would have nothing to do with the *sarkar* [British government representative]'.<sup>70</sup> Evidently, the Bhils were determined to continue the movement, and Tejawat was subject to their control.

Meanwhile, on 26 February 1922 in 'Motilal Tejawat and the Bhils', published in the Gujarati *Navajivan*,<sup>71</sup> Gandhi wrote that he had sent an emissary, Manilal Kothari,<sup>72</sup> to Tejawat who had reported that Tejawat had 'been working mainly to persuade the Bhils to give up drinking and flesh-eating'.<sup>73</sup> Now more generous to Tejawat than in his earlier article, he called on the Bhils and the states to work together.

As a part of Gandhi's initiative, Manilal Kothari had also been working to persuade Tejawat to repudiate the armed mass movement, and to request the British to be conciliatory towards him and the Bhils.<sup>74</sup> The AGG Rajputana told Manilal Kothari that if Tejawat surrendered immediately, the Mewar *darbar* would punish him with an initial period of internment to be followed by externment from Mewar.<sup>75</sup> Tek Chand, who joined Tejawat's camp as a spy for the Thanedar of Koliari, reported that Gandhi's 'disciples' had met Tejawat in February and early March 1922 and advised him and his followers not to commit any *zulum* (oppression). Bijay Singh Pathik<sup>76</sup> wrote to the AGG Rajputana that 'it was beyond Motilal's intellectual capacity to lead the public on the right path'. He felt that the Bhil movement had turned to militant violence because local administrations had obstructed any contact between the Bhils and 'public workers', and that he had convinced Tejawat to 'dilute the demands ... and ... to remain perfectly non-violent ... I succeeded in gaining an assurance from the Bhils that they would be ready for a reasonable compromise'.<sup>77</sup>

These efforts by Gandhi's representatives and the continued pressure mounted by the colonial regime convinced the Bhils that they had to negotiate their demands. Since they did not trust the British or the *thikanedars*, they decided to appeal to the Maharana of Udaipur.<sup>78</sup> Tejawat and about 2,000 of his followers, who set out for Udaipur, were stopped on 7 March 1922 by a contingent of the Mewar Bhil Corps near the Mewar-Idar border. The British acknowledged that in the combat that followed, 22 Bhils were killed and 29 more wounded, without the Bhil Corps sustaining a single casualty.<sup>79</sup> The Bhils' estimate of their casualties was much higher. They reported that they had been surrounded and then fired upon to terrorize them into submission.<sup>80</sup> Tejawat survived the battle and the British were unable to find him in Idar state where Tejawat was reported to be hiding, sheltered by an influential Bhil, Kalio Gamar.<sup>81</sup>

Now in open confrontation, in April 1922, Bhils and Grasiyas<sup>82</sup> in Sirohi refused to pay revenue, looted a liquor shop, and threatened<sup>82</sup> to close

the pilgrim route to Ambaji.<sup>83</sup> They met British officials and Ramakant Malviya, Chief Minister of Sirohi, in Siawa (near Abu Road), and even after being told that errant government officials would be punished and their grievances looked into, they refused to break the Eki till their grievances in all the '52 states' had been removed.<sup>84</sup> In the days after the meeting between the officials and the peasants, the numbers of Bhils and Grasiyas assembling around Abu Road grew to about 3,000 and the looting of shops recurred.

The British attacked the village of Siawa on 12 April 1922 with 550 soldiers including a Company of the Bhil Corps, cavalry and artillery mounted on an armoured train.<sup>85</sup> In May 1922 they attacked the villages of Bhula, Valoria and Nanawas, also in Sirohi state, using machine-guns. According to official reports, three Grasiyas were killed; large stores of grain and over a hundred houses were burnt. Again, the attacking troops suffered no casualties.<sup>86</sup> The villagers told representatives of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh that they 'had been storing corn since the great famine of Sambat 1856 (1899–1900) to meet any similar calamity, and now the Raj has destroyed it all'. The delegation found that the soldiers had in fact burnt more than 600 houses in the villages and carried away more than a 100 head of cattle.<sup>87</sup>

After the attack, the British officers who went to the villages were told by the Bhils and Grasiyas from Mewar, Danta, Idar and Sirohi, that they had joined the Eki 'because they felt it their bounden duty to support the whole Bhil community which had decided to set-up a Bhil Raj'.<sup>88</sup> Some of the rebels were more forthright in declaring their radical agenda to invert the social order. In a written statement the Bhils said that they

had tried to establish a new kingdom of their own ... that they were going to live in the (*maharaja's*) palace in Sirohi and carry on the administration of the State, and that they were going to marry the daughters of Brahmins and Mahajans.<sup>89</sup>

Rupa, a Bhil who was taken prisoner in the attack, told the British that Tejawat had asked the Bhils and Grasiyas not to pay anything more than the fair taxes agreed upon by the Eki, and that he had appointed Bhils and Grasiyas as officers to settle disputes (namely as *foujdars*, *thanedars*, and *diwan*). Tejawat also granted the revenue of a village to a *thakur* (landowner), Rawat Singh, who had joined the Eki.<sup>90</sup> Tejawat 'spoke thus in a "borrowed language" – that of his enemy, for he knew none other'.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, these were conscious attempts by the rebels to appropriate the status and prestige of their rulers, and the powers and devices of government.

The rebels, exhausted by relentless military pressure, and the Sirohi *darbar* alarmed by the forthright assertiveness of the insurgents, finally addressed each other in an attempt to negotiate the grievances. By the end of May 1922, most of the demands of the Bhils and Grasiyas of Sirohi were accepted by the *darbar*. The rebels were pardoned and the arrears of revenue

remitted; the peasants were permitted to take grass and wood from the reserve forests to rebuild their homes; corrupt officials were removed and *patwaris* (tax officials) prevented from levying *begar*; and measures were taken to prevent the harassment of peasants through false criminal charges. Influenced by Tejawat's propagation of vegetarianism and opposition to animal sacrifice, the Bhils also forced the *darbar* to agree that goats offered at the Dashehra festival would be given away in charity alive.<sup>92</sup>

In Sirohi, like in Mewar, the violent suppression of the movement was followed by concrete gains for the peasants, because the colonial regime believed the suffering and losses caused to the peasants would discredit the leaders of the movement, and the redress of their grievances would pacify the Bhils. From the colonial state's point of view, this made sense, but two points need to be made. It was the Eki that forced the British and the various states to seriously address the peasant demands; second, the grudgingly made proclamations of reforms and 'concessions' were not always implemented. The Bhils and Grasiyas recognized that they had to support their demands with sustained popular pressure; an understanding that contributed greatly to the achievements of the Eki.

A similar sequence continued through the summer and monsoon of 1922, with some Bhil villages refusing to pay the taxes and the insurgents confronting the soldiers with shouts of 'Gandhi ki Jai', and the British using force to suppress them and then mounting pressure on the local regimes for a redressal of grievances.<sup>93</sup> However, by the end of 1922, drained by the long struggle and ravaged by the massive military operations against them, most of the Bhils accepted the concessions offered by the local regimes. There were significant gains, but acceptance also signalled a retreat from the utopia of an autonomous peasant Raj.

The experience of the movement and the memories of the struggle for justice remained. Despite emulating the values of the higher castes through vegetarianism and temperance, the Eki movement was fundamentally defensive. The movement's vigorous rejection of the commercializing feudal structure that colonialism had generated reaffirmed the traditions of popular resistance in a new context. By considering themselves a part of Gandhi's movement, the Bhils participated in a process of understanding colonial control and of contesting it. Their widespread communal solidarity empowered them in the approaching age of political arithmetic.

Another legacy of the movement was the Bhils' persistent rejection of the state's judiciary and their abiding commitment to settling their own disputes. There was also the realization that they had to fight for the implementation of the reforms introduced as a consequence of the movement. In 1923, Keesa Taral, Tejawat's Foudjar, held meetings to discuss the continuing problem of *begar*<sup>94</sup> and to settle disputes.<sup>95</sup>

In the winter of 1939, as rumours spread of the British forcing Bhils and Grasiyas to join the army, Prema, a Bhil who had been a part of the Eki, and Phulchand Velchand, a *bania* from Poshina (where Tejawat had been

in hiding from 1922 to 1929), held meetings of Bhils and Grasias from the states of Danta, Idar, Sirohi and Mewar to resist the forced recruitment into the army.<sup>96</sup> The experience of the Eki had reiterated the Bhils' traditions of collective consultations and decision making, and enriched it with an awareness of contemporary politics.

## Conclusion

When the colonial regime was confronted by the rebellion of the Bhils and other peasants, both Fateh Singh and the British were quick to find their favourite demons in the Eki. Fateh Singh argued that the reasons for the protests of the Bhils and other peasants lay in the oppression of the peasants by his *thikanedars*, the inefficiency of some of his officials, and the fact that the peasants had been incited by people from British India.<sup>97</sup> Refusing to believe that his subjects were discontented with his rule, Fateh Singh argued that British rule had led to 'general unrest in India', which had spread into Mewar, and that 'the words Satyagraha and non-cooperation took their rise elsewhere ... neither I nor my subjects ever knew them until they were imported into my state.'<sup>98</sup> Though the Bhils had been empowered by the Non-Cooperation movement, the *maharana* did not realize that the grievances of his peasant subjects were rooted in the society and politics of Mewar, and that he was presiding over a government that was responsible for the peasants' grievances. He did not understand that he was a part of the colonial regime. The ambiguity in the relationship between the British and the Indian princes was obvious. The *maharana's* enormous prestige was valuable to the British in their confrontation with the Bhils, but he became their most famous victim because the British believed he was incapable of suppressing the protests.<sup>99</sup>

The tenacity and extent of the peasant rebellions had shaken the colonial regime. While Fateh Singh had argued that the peasant discontent in Mewar was the outcome of 'unrest' in British India, the British Resident in Mewar put forward the opposite argument in May 1921 by making an analogy between Mewar and the last years of Tsarist Russia.<sup>100</sup> The Russian Revolution gave the British Empire a fright and colonial administrators in India adopted it as a metaphor for a peasant uprising, particularly in Mewar, because the British had cast Fateh Singh in the role of conservative autocrat.<sup>101</sup>

This analogy disregarded the particular history of the peasant movements in Mewar. Speaking at his trial in 1924, Bijay Singh Pathik said: 'Nowadays it has become fashionable in government circles to denounce people and movements by labelling them Bolsheviks whenever they want to take action against them.'<sup>102</sup> This assumes significance if one bears in mind the antithetical declaration of the Bhils to the British in December 1921: 'if the chiefs treat us harshly, then they are responsible for the result.'<sup>103</sup>

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, for a generous travel grant, which enabled me to attend the International Conference entitled 'The Other India', Research Symposium on the history of the Indian princely states, held at the University of Southampton from 8 to 10 July 2005, where this paper was presented, and to all the participants of the symposium for their comments and suggestions.

## Notes

- 1 Other than K.S. Saxena, *The Political Movements and Awakening in Rajasthan 1857 to 1947*, New Delhi: S. Chand, 1971, and Pema Ram, *Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan 1913–1947*, Jaipur: Panchsheel Prakashan, 1986, all other works on the region focus on the participation of nationalist organizations in peasant movements. Only R.K. Ray's 'Mewar: The Breakdown of the Princely Order', in R. Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes, and Paramount Power*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978, addresses the culture of political power in colonial Mewar.
- 2 *Census of India 1921, Vol. XXIV, Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara, Pt I*, Calcutta, 1923, pp. 15–16.
- 3 *Census of India, 1911, Vol. XXII, Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara, Pt I*, Ajmer, 1913, p. 138.
- 4 *Census of India, 1921, Vol. XXIV, Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara, Pt II*, Calcutta, 1923, p. 146.
- 5 Appendix D, Agent to the Governor General of India (hereafter AGG), Rajputana, to Political Secretary, Government of India (hereafter GOI), 13 August 1924; 110-P (Secret) 24–7, Foreign and Political Department, Crown Representative Papers (CRP), microfilm, 92/25, National Archives of India (NAI).
- 6 Famine Report for Udaipur State, No. 829 of 1900, 15–16; Abu Collection, Central Library, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (hereafter CL)
- 7 Fortnightly Memorandum (F.M.) 47, Indian States, Rajputana, Period Ending (hereafter P.E.) 30 June 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 F.M. 48, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 15 July 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Sumanesh Joshi, *Rajasthan Mein Swatantrata Sangram Ke Senani*, Jaipur: Granthagar 1973, pp.176–7.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 177.
- 14 Inspector General, Railway Police and Police Assistant to AGG Rajputana, to General Officer Commanding Sind-Rajputana District, Karachi, 3 September 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 15 F.M. 52, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 15 September 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 16 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, Delhi: Macmillan, 1983, pp. 204–24.
- 17 Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi As Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921–2', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, (1984), *passim*.
- 18 Sumit Sarkar, 'The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-Co-operation, c.1905–22', in Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III*, p. 305.

- 19 Sarkar in Guha (ed.), 'The Conditions', p. 307.
- 20 Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 13.
- 21 Political Secretary, Government of Bombay to Political Secretary, GOI, 6 March 1922, enclosure; 428-P (secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 22 David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 175.
- 23 Tejawat began to dress differently after he went into hiding with the Bhils in March 1922. 'He put on their clothes ...'. President, Idar State Council, to Political Agent Mahikantha, 10 June 1929, enclosed with Chief Secretary Political Department, Government of Bombay, to Political Secretary GOI; 276-P, 1929, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 24 Assistant Political Agent Mahikantha to Political Agent Mahikantha, 14 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, Rajasthan State Archives (hereafter RSA), Bikaner.
- 25 My rendering in English; from *Rajasthani Bhilon ke Lok Geet*, Udaipur: Lok Sahitya Vibhag, Sahitya Sansthan, Rajasthan Vishwa Vidyapeeth, 1954, pp. 153–6.
- 26 The traditional initiation offering of 'sava rupyā' as Guru Dakshina.
- 27 *Rajasthani Bhilon ke Lok Geet*, pp. 153–6.
- 28 Note by Political Agent Mahikantha, 2 April 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 29 Assistant Political Agent Mahikantha to Political Agent Mahikantha, 14 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 30 AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 28 March 1922, enclosure; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 F.M. 47, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 30 June 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.  
The authors were invoking the authority of the written word while addressing an illiterate audience and also subverting the privileges of their literate adversaries.
- 33 Note by J.P. Thompson, 20 September 1923, Notes, 12–13; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 34 Fateh Singh to Viceroy, 26 June 1924; 110-P (Secret) 24–7, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 92/25, NAI.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid. Merchant-bankers (moneylenders-cum-traders) were authorized to collect revenue; 'Pathikji ka Bayan' (Statement of Pathikji), n.d., pp. 60–1; Library of Bharatiya Vidyamandir Shodh Pratishthan, Bikaner.
- 37 AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 29 September 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 38 F.M. 55, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 31 October 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 39 Maharajkumar of Idar to Political Agent Mahikantha, 20 December 1921; and Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Resident Mewar, 1 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 40 My rendering from *Rajasthani Bhilon ke Lok Geet*, Lok Sahitya Vibhag, Sahitya Sansthan, Rajasthan Vishwa Vidyapeeth, Udaipur, 1954, pp. 153–6.
- 41 Exhibit 'A', enclosed with Smallwood to Sutton, 23 December 1921; F. No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 42 Exhibit 'B', enclosed with Smallwood to Sutton, 23 December 1921; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 43 Exhibit 'D', enclosed with Smallwood to Sutton, 23 December 1921; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 44 Ibid.



- 45 Assistant Political Superintendent to Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar, 11 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner. Interestingly, the Assistant Political Agent in Mahikantha (Gujarat) argued that the Bhil movement was 'due to the influence of Non-Cooperation on a highly fanatical and primitive race, and is not due to local grievances'. (Assistant Political Agent Mahikantha to Political Agent Mahikantha, 14 January 1922).
- 46 Smallwood to Sutton, 23 December 1921; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 47 Maharajkumar of Idar to Political Agent Mahikantha, 20 December 1921; and Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Resident Mewar, 1 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 48 Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Resident Mewar, 1 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 49 F.M. 59, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 31 December 1921; and Telegram, 3 January 1922, AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary, GOI; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 50 Rao of Para to Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar, 25 December 1921; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 51 Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Resident Mewar, 1 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA Bikaner.
- 52 Political Secretary, Government of Bombay to Political Secretary, GOI, 6 March 1922, enclosure; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 53 Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Resident Mewar, 1 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA Bikaner.
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- 55 F.M. 54, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 15 October 1921; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 56 Political Agent Mahikantha to Political Department Government Bombay, 10 February 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 F.M. 61, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 31 January 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 59 *Young India*, vol. IV, No. 5, Ahmedabad, 2 February 1922, p. 70; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi.
- 60 Gyanendra Pandey, 'Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism: The Peasant Movement in Awadh 1919-1922', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 184-5.
- 61 Sarkar, 'The Conditions', pp. 315-16.
- 62 Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Assistant Political Superintendent Hilly Tracts Mewar, 27 January 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner; and Telegram, 29 January 1922, AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary, GOI; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 63 AGG Rajputana to Manilal Kothari, 7 March 1922; File No. 12, Basta No. 13, Udaipur Confidential, RSA, Bikaner.
- 64 Motilal Tejawat to Assistant Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar, 16 February 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 65 Abstract translation of a letter 24 February 1922, Motilal Tejawat to Assistant Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 66 Statement of Tek Chand, n.d., enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 28 March 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 67 Ibid.

- 68 F.M. 63, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 28 February 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 69 Telegram 26 February 1922, Political Secretary GOI to AGG Rajputana; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 70 Political Agent Mahikantha to Political Secretary, Government of Bombay, 5 March 1922, enclosed with Political Secretary Government of Bombay to Political Secretary GOI, 6 March 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 71 Serial No. 195, 'My Notes', 26 February 1922, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. XXII, New Delhi, 1961, pp. 476–7.
- 72 Manilal Kothari was a lawyer from Kathiawar. He was a follower of Gandhi, and had been a political worker in the Non-cooperation movement in 1921.
- 73 Serial No. 195, 'My Notes', 26 February 1922, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. XXII, pp. 476–7.
- 74 Telegram 7 March 1922, AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 75 AGG Rajputana to Manilal Kothari, 7 March 1922; File No. 12, Basta No. 13, Udaipur Confidential, RSA, Bikaner.
- 76 In 1921–22, President of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh, Ajmer, one of the nationalist voluntary organizations that were politically active in Rajasthan.
- 77 B.S. Pathik to AGG Rajputana, 26 March 1922, enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 5 April 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 78 Statement of Tek Chand, n.d., enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 28 March 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 79 Chief Officer M.B.C. to Political Agent Mahikantha, 7 March 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 80 B.S. Pathik to AGG Rajputana, 26 March 1922, enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 5 April 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 81 Assistant Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Political Agent Mahikantha, 7 April 1922; File No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
- 82 Said to be descended from Rajput fathers and Bhil mothers, the Grasias were 'allied to the Bhils, but ranking just above them in the social scale' (P.C. Dave, *The Grasias*, Delhi: Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, 1960, p. 1.)
- 83 Telegram 7 April 1922, AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 84 A reference to the notion of the '52' territories, which were said to constitute the remembered Bhil homeland.
- 85 AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 13 and 18 April 1922; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
- 86 Pritchard's Report, 8 May 1922, enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary, GOI, 19 August 1922; 954 Internal Secret, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 96/29, NAI.
- 87 Pamphlet entitled *The Second Bhil Tragedy in Sirohi State*, issued by the Rajasthan Seva Sangh, Ajmer, in May 1922; enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 19 August 1922; 954 Internal Secret, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 96/29, NAI.
- 88 Pritchard's Report, 8 May 1922, enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 19 August 1922; 954 Internal Secret, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 96/29, NAI.
- 89 Chief Minister of Sirohi's Report to His Highness Sirohi, 21 June 1922, enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 19 August 1922; 954 Internal Secret, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 96/29, NAI. While some

- mahajans* were seeking karmic merit by trying to 'uplift' the Bhils, the objects of those campaigns were threatening to invert the social order by marrying their daughters.
- 90 Pritchard's Report, 8 May 1922, enclosed with AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 19 August 1922; 954 Internal Secret, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 96/29, NAI.
  - 91 Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 75.
  - 92 AGG Rajputana to Political Secretary GOI, 27 May 1922, enclosure; 428-P (Secret) 1923, Foreign and Political, NAI.
  - 93 Assistant Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts Mewar to Political Superintendent Hilly Tracts Mewar, 6 June 1922; File No. 460 of 1922, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.
  - 94 F.M. 85, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 31 January 1923; 832 Pt II, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 96/29, NAI.
  - 95 F.M. 87, Indian States, Rajputana, P.E. 28 February 1923; 832 Pt II, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 96/29, NAI.
  - 96 Maharaj Prithi Singh of Danta to Resident, Western Rajputana States, 16 November 1939; File No. 21, Basta No. 12, Udaipur Confidential, 1939-40, RSA, Bikaner.
  - 97 D.L. Paliwal, *Mewar and the British*, Jaipur: Bafna Prakashan, 1971, p. 254.
  - 98 Maharana Fateh Singh to Viceroy, 26 June 1924; 110-P (Secret) 24-27, Foreign and Political Department; CRP, microfilm, 92/25, NAI.
  - 99 P.S. Chaudhry, *Rajasthan Between the Two World Wars*, Agra: Sri Ram Mehra & Co. 1968, p. 225.
  - 100 AGG Rajputana to All Rajputana Rulers, 14 February 1920; Secret Internal 8-26, August 1920, Foreign and Political Department., NAI.
  - 101 Review Memorandum by Resident Mewar for the year ending 31 October 1907, Confidential A, Internal A 19-20, 1908, Foreign and Political; CRP, microfilm, 111/44, NAI.
  - 102 'Pathikji ka Bayan', n.d., p. 105, my translation; Library of Bharatiya Vidyamandir Shodh Pratishtan, Bikaner.
  - 103 Exhibit 'A', enclosed with Smallwood to Sutton, 23 December 1921; F. No. 434 of 1921, 24B, RSA, Bikaner.

# 11 Women's hospitals and midwives in Mysore, 1870–1920

## Princely or colonial medicine

*Barbara N. Ramusack*

British efforts to extend Western medical institutions, preventative measures and treatment regimens in India have spawned lively debates among historians of medicine as to the British objectives, target audiences and effectiveness in maintaining and improving the health of its own community and its Indian subjects. Most historical and social science research has focused on policies in the three-fifths of India that the British ruled directly and primarily on men, whether British or Indian.<sup>1</sup> A few scholars have concentrated on whether the British did or did not pay any attention to the health of Indian women.<sup>2</sup> As with many subfields in historical research on India during the colonial period, the health of men and women as well as the extension of allopathic medicine and Western public institutions in the two-fifths of India indirectly ruled by the Indian princes has received even less consideration. Research on the health of women in the princely states would provide knowledge of

- 1 whether and how these Indian princes, their administrations, and their subjects allocated resources to improving the health of their women subjects through Western medicine and with what success;
- 2 whether support of allopathic medicine was primarily an instrument of European colonial powers seeking to reinforce their authority or whether Indian princely states and their rulers might have used such medicine for similar or different goals.

This chapter addresses these issues through an analysis of the evolution of public and private medical institutions and professions that cared for women in the princely state of Mysore that has long enjoyed a reputation as a 'progressive' princely state because of its articulated administrative system, diverse economic developments and support for education. It focuses on the period from the 1870s through the 1910s during which decennial censuses began to record the high rates of infant and maternal mortality in both British and princely India and small clusters of men and women began to consider what measures would effectively lower those

rates. The four topics are:

- 1 the creation of maternity hospitals and female dispensaries in Mysore;
- 2 initiatives to recruit and employ so-called scientifically trained midwives;
- 3 extension of health care for women beyond the urban centres to the rural districts;
- 4 collaboration between state policies and private philanthropy in providing medical care.

Its thesis is that shifting clusters of British and Indian medical personnel, British and Indian officials, Indian philanthropists and Christian missionaries from Britain sporadically cooperated to extend allopathic medical care to women for varied reasons and not only to legitimate colonial authority. They included a desire to be perceived as modern, which included lowering maternal and infant mortality rates, the need to maintain adequate labour in certain areas, proselytization and personal concern for women. Although the advocates for hospitals frequently used the generic term women, the primary focus of most of their efforts was to provide facilities and personnel to care for women during childbirth and so they contributed to its medicalization. Cecilia Van Hollen has defined the medicalization of childbirth as ‘the process whereby the medical establishment, as an institution with standardized professional guidelines, incorporates birth in the category of disease and requires that a medical professional oversee the birth process and determine treatment’.<sup>3</sup> Here I modify this definition to argue that besides the degree-holders of the medical establishment, groups ranging from state officials to lady apothecaries to so-called scientifically trained midwives came to intervene in the birth process that had hitherto been conducted in the private sphere.

### **Mysore: genesis of a ‘progressive’ princely state**

The princely state of Mysore had an unusual trajectory during the colonial period. Ruled by the Wadiyar family who claimed a genealogy extending to 1399, it emerged as an autonomous unit with the decline of the Vijayanagar Empire in the early 1600s. After Haidar Ali, a Muslim military officer, dislodged the Wadiyar family in 1761, he and his son, Tipu Sultan, enlarged Mysore territorially, centralized its revenue administration and army, and emerged as a major obstacle to the southern expansion of the English East India Company. With their victory in the fourth Anglo-Mysore war in 1799 in which Tipu Sultan was killed, the British concluded a treaty with the Wadiyar family that restored them to their *gadi* or throne. In return, agents for the 3-year-old Krishnaraja Wadiyar pledged his loyalty and guaranteed to pay an annual subsidy of 24½ *lakhs* (Rs.2,450,000) supposedly in return for British assumption of the defence of Mysore.<sup>4</sup> In 1831 after internal

protests against increased taxation and British allegations of arrears in the payment of the subsidy, the British displaced Krishnaraja Wadiyar, took over the administration of Mysore state and established a major cantonment at Bangalore. Sir Mark Cubbon, Chief Commissioner from 1834 to 1861 of Mysore, initiated few changes and generally restricted the use of British officers in administering the state. However, Sir Lewin Bowring, commissioner from 1861 to 1881, increased the number of British officials, recruited Indians with bureaucratic skills from Madras (Chennai) and proceeded to reorganize the administration along the lines of the neighbouring British Indian province of Madras.<sup>5</sup>

In response largely to pressure from London, the Government of India restored the Wadiyar dynasty, in the person of Chamarajendra, the adopted son of Krishnaraja, to the Mysore *gadi* in 1881.<sup>6</sup> As part of this 'rendition', the British demanded that the annual subsidy that the Mysore *darbar* or government had to pay be raised to 35 *lakhs* because of a significant increase in Mysore revenues from 1799. Eventually the increase of 10½ *lakhs* was deferred until 1896, but the Mysore subsidy was the highest of any princely state and a major drain on its resources.<sup>7</sup> In 1882, Maharaja Chamarajendra Wadiyar (ruled 1881–1894) agreed to assign the former British cantonment in Bangalore to the British Government of India in exchange for the island of Srirangapatnam, the capital and death site of Tipu Sultan. Thus Bangalore city had two distinct administrative divisions – the Pettah, which was the administrative headquarters of Mysore state (the *maharaja* lived in Mysore city 86 miles to the southwest of Bangalore), and the civil and military station (the former cantonment) under the control of a British commissioner who was also the resident to the Mysore *darbar*.

Historians have long debated the influence of the five decades of British management on securing for Mysore its reputation as a 'progressive' princely state. Donald Gustafson has stressed that Indian ministers carried out the reforms, while James Manor underscored that reforms in Mysore were implemented largely to project a positive image to the British officials and Indian nationalists.<sup>8</sup> Some British officers continued in the state administration for a few decades and many Tamil-speaking Indians from Madras remained in the administration. However, gradually the Wadiyar princes and their administrators indigenous to Mysore pursued policies that paralleled those in British India but also exhibited distinctive elements. For example, Janaki Nair has analysed how in 1894 the Mysore *darbar* not only passed a regulation prohibiting Hindu girls under eight from marrying and the marriage of men above 50 to girls younger than 14, but actually enforced it. She argues that the *darbar* sought to establish 'not only its power but also its credibility in the eyes of its subjects' and that 'the Mysore government trod fearlessly on the ground that the government of India could not have entered without paying a dear political price'.<sup>9</sup> However, both Nair and James Manor have argued that Mysore's socially, politically and economically progressive policies were not intended to promote

democratization from the top down, but then neither were those of the government of India.

The uneven development of medical institutions to care for women reflects the shifting priorities of the Mysore government and constraints that it encountered. Hence, I argue that

- 1 the Mysore *darbar* sought to shift financial responsibilities to private philanthropists and local governments wherever possible, partially because of the large subsidy payment to the British;
- 2 the latter two groups considered maternal health facilities as evidence of their social responsibility and of modernity;
- 3 mainly lower-class and caste women in Mysore became willing to seek Western-style medical care at a steady pace;
- 4 despite the difficulties in recruiting candidates for training in ‘scientific’ midwifery, the Mysore *darbar* and its medical officers sometimes instituted qualifications for such candidates that severely restricted the number of likely candidates.

### **Urban maternity hospitals as core institutions**

In 1880, maternity hospitals were established in Bangalore and Mysore city, approximately four decades after they had been inaugurated in the three British presidency capitals, but several decades before they existed in capitals of most princely states. In January 1869, the Mysore surgeon first proposed to his fellow British officers on the Mysore commission, who administered Mysore state before it was returned to the Wadiyar dynasty in 1881, that ‘[i]t may fairly be assumed that a Lying in Hospital would be fully taken advantage of here by several inhabitants of the Pettah [Municipality] and Cantonment’, since cases of labour ‘requiring operative interference’ were coming to the general cantonment and Pettah hospitals. He had ‘observed a disposition on the part of some pregnant women who were patients for other complaints to remain for their confinement’ in the general hospitals and that his predecessor had made the same observation, but had to discourage the women from remaining because of a lack of accommodation.<sup>10</sup> In some ways, these comments indicate a desire not to have women in the general hospital; more importantly they reveal that some unspecified women were actually coming to a general hospital, which had mostly male staff. An unsigned note of 11 June that follows provided more specific rationales for a lying-in hospital. It would prevent loss of life because of the ‘ignorance and inexperience’ of traditional *dais* or midwives during childbirth. It would provide asylum for women who could not afford proper care or food necessary during delivery, and relief for women suffering from diseases peculiar to women. It could train subordinate medical officers and nurses and thereby extend the benefits of an urban institution to the

entire state. The author specifically commended the success of the Madras Lying-in Hospital established in 1844 as 'encouragement' for such an institution in Mysore.<sup>11</sup>

Comparing Mysore to Madras, where the maternity hospital had 80 beds, the surgeon argued that Mysore with a quarter of Madras's population would need a facility with 20 beds but one capable of expansion. These hospitals would only accommodate a miniscule proportion of either Madras city or Bangalore (where the combined population of the Pettah and the civil and military station was 450,000 in 1871). Specifications included three wards: one for *pariah* or depressed caste women, one for caste women, and one for European and East Indian, that is, Eurasian, women, with the bed area for first two categories to be 90 feet and for the third to be 120 feet. Thus, the race and caste/class of the patients were inscribed spatially and by segregation that was considered necessary to attract caste women who sought to avoid ritual pollution through contact with lower and depressed castes. Adequate ventilation and the separation of wards for contagious patients from the labour wards were deemed necessary for medical reasons, as was the residence of the matron, apothecary, nurses, and students within the hospital itself rather than in the outside compound.<sup>12</sup> This last measure reflected that medical personnel in a maternity as opposed to a general hospital were on constant call.

Bowring, the Chief Commissioner of Mysore in 1869, wanted to secure private contributions for one-half of the cost of construction and only then approach the government of India for the balance of construction and maintenance expenses. To attract private philanthropists, he promised 'that whoever subscribes Rs.1,000 shall be presented with the freedom of Bangalore, that is shall be held exempt from any municipal taxation, and be a member of the Committee of Management'.<sup>13</sup> Thus, as in the Countess of Dufferin Fund established in 1885 to provide medical service to *pardah* women, Victorian patterns of private philanthropy were transposed from the metropole to the colony.<sup>14</sup> In Mysore as in Madras, merchants emerged as the major supporters.

Although the general hospital in the Pettah was reduced to a dispensary in 1872 because it had acquired a 'taint which is inimical to the welfare of patients as evidenced' by such factors as unspecified 'hospital diseases', ill success of capital operations and the occurrence of hospital gangrene, and thus no facility existed for maternity cases in the Pettah, the impetus to establish a maternity facility lagged.<sup>15</sup> Then, at a public meeting on 5 July 1876, Yella Mullappa Chetty, probably a merchant, subscribed Rs.22,000 that he later raised to Rs.24,696, which was half of the estimated construction costs.<sup>16</sup> As often happens with pledges, collection was protracted. In March 1879, the Secretary of James Gordon, the Chief Commissioner, had advised Chetty that his superior 'feels greatly surprised at the discourtesy and



inattention which have left three previous letters on the subject [of his pledge] for months without a reply'.<sup>17</sup> After sending an initial payment of Rs.15,000, Chetty made six intermittent instalments of 500 rupees each, and usually in response to such dunning letters. Consequently, Gordon permitted only such construction as Chetty's contributions would sustain.<sup>18</sup> By 1880, one of the three wards was completed.

Dr J. Henderson, a physician and superintendent of the central jail in Bangalore city, offered to supervise medical work at the lying-in hospital on a limited scale, apparently without additional compensation, so that the available facilities could be utilized.<sup>19</sup> Henderson's proposed combination of functions as an overseer of the jail and the maternity hospital graphically illustrates the association between the disciplinary institutions of prisons and hospitals in nineteenth-century India. His offer was accepted. Thus in 1880, the same year in which the Madras Lying-in Hospital was moving into new quarters and a private maternity hospital in Royapuram partially endowed by a merchant was opened, and eleven years after it was first discussed, the Bangalore Maternity Hospital was opened also with substantial support from a merchant.<sup>20</sup> Initially 'only labour cases were treated as in-patients till the close of the year 1884, but since then, other diseases also [were] treated.'<sup>21</sup> This statement indicates the perception that childbirth was coded as a disease. In 1880, the Maharani's Hospital for Women, named in honour of Maharani Vani Vilas whom Maharaja Chamarajendra Wadiyar had recently married, opened in Mysore city.<sup>22</sup> By the late 1910s, the Bangalore establishment had beds for 24 and the Mysore one had beds for 30 in-patients.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, these institutions had a limited impact on the maternal and general health of women in Mysore state.

### **Medical care in rural areas**

Parallel to the construction of maternity hospitals in urban areas, efforts were made to extend 'scientific' medical care to mothers who delivered at home, in both urban and rural areas. British and Indian physicians, both male and female, trained in Western medicine, frequently castigated indigenous *dais*, or barber-midwives, as a major factor in high maternal and infant mortality rates.<sup>24</sup> In arguing for the 'scientific' training of midwives, Senior Surgeon Colonel T.G. McGann asserted in 1891:

A competent midwife would save many lives directly herself by skilful treatment, and indirectly by preventing mischievous and unskilful treatment, and further when she may happen to meet with difficult and complicated cases which would be beyond her power to treat, she would inform the relatives accordingly and urge them and perhaps with success to procure more skilled assistance which they would not otherwise do.<sup>25</sup>

Three complex challenges arose:

- 1 The first was to recruit women to midwifery training programmes.
- 2 The second was to build, equip, and maintain female dispensaries and to attract competent personnel to work in them.
- 3 The third was to ensure that Indian women would utilize the services of 'scientific' midwives either in institutions or in their own homes.

The year 1881 witnessed not only the opening of the two maternity hospitals in the twin capitals of Mysore state and the British rendition of the state administration to Wadiyar rule, but also the inauguration of the Mysore Representative Assembly, the first such body in a princely state, by Maharaja Chamarajendra Wadiyar. The representative assembly met at first annually, and twice a year after 1916, and included only nominated members until 1890, when some members became elected. The representatives were primarily tax-paying rural and urban elites, mainly landholders, merchants and some professionals. At the local level, municipal committees had been introduced beginning in 1862 as experimental measures in Bangalore and Mysore city, and gradually district headquarters acquired such committees. The government nominated the members until 1892, when ratepayers were permitted to elect half of the municipal and district committees.<sup>26</sup> In his address to the representative assembly on 26 October 1882, C. Rangacharlu, the *diwan* or chief minister from Madras, advised of the establishment of municipal and local fund boards elected by house-owners and those paying a specific amount of municipal taxes and district boards appointed by votes of local landholders paying certain cesses. These boards were to be responsible for 'minor' hospitals and dispensaries financed from local cesses, ferry and pound collections and whatever contributions the state government would make from general revenues.<sup>27</sup> These local fund boards were soon asked to support measures to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates in their jurisdictions.

By the late 1880s, members of the representative assembly were annually requesting the state government to depute 'trained' midwives to their respective towns, districts, and *taluks* (smaller units of the districts). At the sixth session of the representative assembly in 1889, the representatives from Hiriyur municipality in Chitaldrug district wanted a midwife for every *taluk*. Two members from Bangalore sought a midwife for every 'large and populous town', and a member from Hunsur *taluk* in Mysore district asked for a midwife.<sup>28</sup> A summary of an application from the representatives of the Bangalore district and the government's response at this session of the representative assembly illustrates many of the recurring issues:

A trained midwife for the Dodballapur Dispensary was applied for, the members pointing out the immense risk which the women were exposed to, during confinement, at the hands of ignorant midwives. The diwan

fully sympathized with them, but said that the experience of an English midwife in Shimoga was anything but satisfactory, due to want of sympathy between the European or Eurasian woman, and the Native patients, that owing to this want of sympathy, little or no call was made in Shimoga upon her services by the inhabitants; and that he would therefore not hastily sanction the application. He was, however, sure, that a remedy was imperative and hoped that trained Native women would soon be in the field to remove the existing general complaint.

Expressing concern for the health of women, the Indian petitioners accepted the characterization of the indigenous midwife as ignorant and that a trained midwife was preferable. In addition, although how the English midwife in Shimoga was unsympathetic to her patients was not specified, the *diwan's* comments imply that racial or cultural differences as well as caste could influence Indian women's acceptance of amateur or scientifically trained midwives. K. Seshadri Iyer, another Brahman *diwan* (1883–1901) from Madras, raised a key factor when he replied that since '[l]ocal Funds could not afford the extra expenditure; the Municipality, however, might by additional taxation or other legitimate means in its power, bear the cost and employ a midwife'.<sup>29</sup> One significant issue was to recruit Indian women who would be acceptable to their Indian patients to train to become 'scientific' midwives. A second was that the state government wanted local bodies to tax themselves to pay for these new employees. Although it was not mentioned here, Mysore officials frequently complained that the subsidy of 24½ *lakhs* drastically limited their funds available for development projects.<sup>30</sup>

### **Recruitment and training of midwives**

During the 1880s, no medical college or any other training facility for midwives existed in Mysore state. The nearest programme was at the government lying-in hospital in Madras with whom Mysore shared a border and some bureaucratic personnel and thus likely to utilize institutions in that British Indian province. In 1881, fifteen European and East Indian women and 13 Indian women obtained diplomas as midwives at this hospital. Eight of the thirteen Indian graduates were appointed to up-country posts, including one in Mysore state.<sup>31</sup> Nine European and East Indian and eight Indian pupils remained under training.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, these statistics do not reveal how many East Indian and Indian graduates and pupils were Christians who were prominent among Indian women students in medical, nursing and midwifery classes.

Bangalore had attracted nine midwives trained in Madras by 1869 and sixteen by 1875;<sup>33</sup> by 1891, the *Mysore Gazetteer* claimed nineteen trained midwives were in Mysore state service.<sup>34</sup> In 1891, McGann proposed to recruit and train midwives who would be stationed at the headquarters of *taluks* but expected

to work throughout the *taluks*. His principal rationale for these midwives was the high rate of deaths in childbirth in small towns where women would not seek the assistance of a male doctor.<sup>35</sup> The Senior Surgeon lamented: 'There is much difficulty in getting suitable females both as regards caste, intelligence, etc., to qualify as midwives but if scholarships are available as required, perhaps this difficulty would be gradually overcome'. Thus, he implied that higher-caste women were wanted in order to attract higher-caste women as patients. Other desired qualifications of prospective students included good health, middle age, natural intelligence and the ability to read simple books on midwifery in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil or Hindustani (meaning Urdu that Muslims in Mysore spoke).<sup>36</sup> Scholarships of Rs.10 and pay for qualified midwives of Rs.20 per month were urged as necessary financial incentives.<sup>37</sup> The Mysore *darbar* approved the proposal, but many factors impeded its implementation even when local officials were sympathetic.

In Shimoga district in the Malnad, Abdul Rahman, the district commissioner, was praised for his efforts to recruit candidates for the scholarships. His characterizations of these women provide a glimpse of the kind of subaltern women who were willing to undertake 'scientific' midwifery training. Natalia D'Costa Noranha was about 38 and 'had a fairly good constitution although a mother of eight daughters and two sons'. She knew how to read printed Kannada characters and wrote Kannada, Tamil, Hindustani and Konkani. Two of her daughters, Anna Maria, 18, and Joachima, 12 or 13, also applied for training, but the latter was rejected as too young. Sabina Desousa, 'a clever good looking young woman aged 19', could converse in Tamil, Kannada, Hindustani and Konkani. Rumours that she had disobeyed her mother were deemed a reason to 'doubt her eligibility for a scholarship'. However, Rahman investigated and discovered that the daughter did not consent to marry an elderly widower with several children by his first wife. He concluded that 'in the absence of any aspersion being cast against her morals the refusal on her part to marry an old fellow enhances rather than deprecates her value'. Martha, the mother of four, knew how to read and write Tamil and Kannada, could fluently converse in Tamil, Kannada and Hindustani. Although she was the best educated of the group, she was currently employed as a nurse in the Shimoga jail at seven rupees per month.<sup>38</sup> Her recruitment indicates that personnel of both sexes and different levels moved from one institution to another in Mysore. From their names, these candidates appear to be Indian Christian women, prodigious in their verbal fluency and literacy in more than one language, perhaps socially marginal since no supportive male relatives are mentioned, and ready to secure training that might provide economic security. In McGann's absence, an acting Senior Surgeon, S.M. Benson, thought that Natalia, who was 40, was too old. After another candidate was disqualified when it was learned that she was a prostitute, Martha and Sabina were awarded scholarships to study in Madras, along with Natalia and her

elder daughter, Anna Maria Noranha.<sup>39</sup> Besides the fact that these women were willing to train for a low-status occupation, they were particularly adventurous in their willingness to travel and live in Madras during their year of training. Unfortunately, nothing is recorded of their subsequent employment in Mysore state service.

In 1892, midwifery classes were started with funding from local governmental bodies and the state *darbar* at the maternity hospitals in Bangalore and Mysore city, which were state funded. It is notable that these classes began without external funding. Although Mysore had the first branch of the Dufferin Fund located in a princely state, this all-India fund did not initiate or contribute to this programme. Furthermore, Mysore's scholarships and classes for midwifery preceded Lady Curzon's establishment in 1903 of the Victoria Memorial Scholarship Fund to provide support for 'scientific' training in midwifery throughout India. Although the British Senior Surgeon strongly advocated recruiting Indian women for 'scientific' training in midwifery to lower maternal mortality rates, Indian members of the representative assembly also initiated requests for such midwives and female dispensaries in their constituencies. The debate was over who was to pay for their scholarships and salaries, and to build and maintain the female dispensaries and maternity hospitals as their base of operations.

Since recruitment of Indian women to the midwifery classes faltered, in 1899 a member of the Mysore representative assembly urged that '[c]hildless widows of the Maharani's Girls School may be made to service [sic] in the lying-in hospital [Mysore city], after their school course is over'. The government responded that it was prepared 'to give training to all who may apply. The difficulty is to get caste women.' Because touching human emissions including the afterbirth was deemed polluting, women from the four *varnas* of Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra disdained assisting at births where traditionally women of the depressed castes presided. Another member asked that '[a] Hindu Convent or Home may be established to train high-class nurses, midwives, etc. There are several passed women to be trained thus.' The perfunctory answer from the government was that the 'suggestion is a good one. Noted for consideration.'<sup>40</sup>

In the summer of 1903, state officials now stipulated that candidates for state scholarships for nursing and midwifery should be literate in Kannada, and not only in another language such as Tamil and Telugu as had been acceptable in 1891. John Smyth, the officiating Senior Surgeon, asked that this requirement be removed since '[i]t greatly limits our field of selection to confine us to women educated in Canarese only'.<sup>41</sup> State officials acquiesced, but P.N. Krishna Murthi, the *diwan* (1901–06) and leader among Mysoreans who challenged the power of the two previous *diwans* who were Brahmans from Madras, noted: 'It may be useful to know about their caste and [illegible] so that they may be persons who are freely admitted into Hindu society also'. He added that 'this need not go into the

order – but the Senior Surgeon told about it demi-officially'.<sup>42</sup> State officials continued to scrutinize the language, caste and religion of prospective midwives. In mid-August 1903, the *darbar* questioned the antecedents of the candidates whom Smyth proposed for Victoria Fund scholarships. The Senior Surgeon replied:

They are both Christians and what their caste was before they became Xians [*sic*], or whether they are of Xian parents I know not but I think they were born of Xian parents.

It will not be easy in the present state of Hindu society to get the proper stamp of woman from amongst the Hindus. You know what I mean. When H. H. the Maharani [Vani Vilas] asked me to get her a Palace Nurse she expressly stipulated she must be a Xian. You see the Xian agencies abroad look after these women and keep them 'square'. Whereas there is no equivalent influence to keep Hindu or Mussalman women right.<sup>43</sup>

Subsequently one official noted that 'Govt has no objection to Christians of respectable status being employed but that if proper persons of Hindu castes apply, their cases should be favourably viewed'. Subsequently, the second member of council noted 'I would drop the subject' and *diwan* Krishna Murthi concurred.<sup>44</sup>

Although the Indian Christian population of 50,059 in Mysore in 1901 was slightly less than 1 per cent of its total population of 5,539,399, Indian Christian women were a sizeable percentage of those who received 'scientific' training in midwifery. As documented earlier at least one high status woman preferred Christian nurses. Roman Catholics numbered 33,687 and thus were 75 per cent of the Christian population, but it is not possible to determine what percentage they were among midwives. Although the French Sisters of Good Shepherd opened St Martha's as a general hospital in the Bangalore Pettah in 1886, it would be Protestant missionary groups who sponsored the private hospitals oriented to women and children in Mysore state. These missionary hospitals, which could be considered another form of private philanthropy, served areas and populations that lacked public institutions.<sup>45</sup>

### **Medical missionaries and women's health in Mysore**

In the aftermath of the plague epidemic at the turn of the century, the Wesleyan Mission began to plan in 1901 for a hospital for women and children in a densely populated area of Mysore city that was at a significant distance from the state-supported Maharani's Hospital for Women. Rev. George Sawday appealed to the Mysore *darbar* for a building subsidy and a monthly maintenance grant of Rs.400. The Senior Surgeon supported his request and argued that this hospital

will not only be an ornament to the city, but be of the utmost service to its population. These missionaries have ways of getting at people of which we Government officers know little or nothing. In a population of 60,000 many in extreme poverty, there is certainly room both for the new institution and for our own long established maternity.<sup>46</sup>

The Mysore council and the *maharaja* sanctioned a building grant and a monthly allowance of Rs.200, half the amount requested, with the stipulation that patients of all castes and creeds were to be served and that 'the customs and prejudices of caste and religion shall be respected provided that nothing should be done that may give offence to invalids of a different creed'.<sup>47</sup> In 1906, the Holdsworth Memorial Hospital for Women and Children opened with Miss Elsie Watts as its first physician supported by the Women's Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Mission. Mrs Lisle Williams, the mother of Mrs Holdsworth, a major patron of the hospital project who had died in June 1903 and after whom the hospital was named, had funded a second physician.<sup>48</sup>

The Wesleyan Mission soon established two medical facilities for women in the Malnad, the fertile but insalubrious districts of Shimoga, Kadur and Hassan, that was experiencing a declining population for many reasons including a high incidence of malaria.<sup>49</sup> In 1906, the mission opened the Redfern Memorial Hospital at the headquarters town of Hassan district that lacked a hospital specifically for women and children.<sup>50</sup> Dr Enid Smith, who had her M.B. degree from London and had spent a year in Mysore studying Kannada 'to enable her to deal directly with patients', was the first physician in charge of Redfern which also had an ambitious programme of training for nurses and a travelling dispensary to surrounding villages.<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in India, the term nurse could include women who were nurses in the European sense, those who were both nurses and midwives, and those who were exclusively midwives. Thus, it is uncertain if the training programme at Redfern included instruction in midwifery.

In 1910, John Smyth, the Senior Surgeon, advocated the appointment of midwives to towns in the Malnad with populations of 2,000 or above to improve infant mortality and reverse the 'alleged' decline in population. His proposal covered fifteen towns including eight in Mysore district that were classified as semi-Malnad.<sup>52</sup> Simultaneously, the Mysore government embarked upon a scheme to extend the network of female dispensaries in the Malnad because of its concern with the declining population and probably because of their desire for an adequate labour force for the coffee and areca nut plantations that dotted that region.<sup>53</sup> Eventually, the Mysore *darbar* realized that neither the local district boards nor the municipalities in the Malnad had sufficient income to support female dispensaries. Consequently, the *darbar* agreed to provide grants to a proposed Wesleyan mission at Mandagadde in Shimoga district, with the provision that their proposed female dispensary would train women as midwives.<sup>54</sup> Since no

government department had funds available, the grant was taken from the Malnad Improvement Fund that was constituted in 1913.

The Church of England Zenana Mission Society was the third missionary venture to seek state support. They operated women's hospitals in Bangalore city and Channapatna, a small town about 40 miles southwest of Bangalore that catered to women in *pardah* and had a significant Muslim clientele. At Channapatna they were able to purchase land from the maharaja at a reduced rate for the expansion of their buildings.<sup>55</sup> They also staffed the Ellen Thoburn Cowen Memorial Hospital in Kolar, a major site of gold mining in Mysore from 1884 to the early 1920s.<sup>56</sup>

### **Renewed efforts to train midwives**

In 1916 Diwan M. Visvesvaraya reported to the representative assembly that '135 midwives were employed in the several institutions . . . and the number of labour cases conducted by them was 9,170 . . . [and that] the special hospitals and maternities continued to be popular and useful'.<sup>57</sup> Although trained midwives had increased since the early 1880s, they still attracted a miniscule clientele. Mysore officials renewed their efforts at recruitment. Arguing that most traditional, practising *dais* in the small towns and rural areas could not come to Bangalore or Mysore city for training, in September 1917 T.V. Arumugum Mudaliar, the Senior Surgeon in Mysore, sought to convert existing female dispensaries in district headquarters towns into small-scale maternity hospitals that would provide training for midwives closer to their homes. To attract students, scholarships of ten rupees per month were to be offered. The training would last six months for practising midwives and twelve months for those with no prior experience.<sup>58</sup>

Two issues emerged. As in the past, the first related to cost. The Mysore *darbar* was willing to pay one-third of the construction costs associated with adding inpatient maternity wards and living quarters for supervising midwives and pupils, with local district boards and municipalities bearing the balance of the initial and all recurring expenses.<sup>59</sup> Initially the *darbar* targeted districts in the Malnad for these maternity hospitals since this region still had disproportionately high rates of infant mortality and a continuing need for labour on coffee and areca nut plantations. Local government bodies in Chikmagalur (Kadur), Shimoga and Tumkur were willing to pay the costs, and so they were the initial project sites.<sup>60</sup> Some municipalities such as Chitaldrug declined because of heavy interest payments on loans to improve the town's water supply. In Hassan, the *darbar* was content to rely upon the Wesleyan mission hospital. In an economically significant district, namely Kolar, where the Kolar gold fields were located, the Mysore *darbar* had provided a maternity hospital at Robertsonpet and the facilities for training midwives, despite the refusal of local bodies to contribute to the scheme for training midwives.<sup>61</sup> Families rather than single males were generally encouraged to migrate to the Kolar gold fields but women were not employed underground and worked relatively little above ground at the



mines. It appears that women were to focus on producing future miners and hence likely to need maternal medical facilities.<sup>62</sup>

The second concern was recruitment. New incentives were proposed. One was to erect appealing and free quarters for midwife-pupils near the new maternity wards in district towns.<sup>63</sup> In an effort to attract literate, caste Hindu women to midwifery, Arumugum Mudaliar asked for an increase in scholarship stipends from Rs.10 to 15 per month, *pakka* (good, finished) living accommodations of brick with Mangalore tiled roofs over teakwood rafters, and a clothing allowance. Since practising *dais*, who were from the depressed castes, would have Rs.10 scholarships, his proposal discriminated on the basis of caste and class and might discourage interaction between the two groups. However, both groups would receive the clothing allowance and share the *pakka* accommodation.<sup>64</sup> To recruit literate applicants Mudaliar talked to a newly formed Civic and Social Progress Association and the pupils of the Maharani's College at Mysore city. Subsequently he received applications from twenty Brahman and caste 'ladies ... offering themselves for training in midwifery'.<sup>65</sup> Since it was hoped to have a class of ten non-professional and ten practising *dais* at the Vani Vilas Maternity Hospital in Mysore city, he had secured an appropriate applicant pool. His proposals were sanctioned, but the archival records do not reveal what happened to this scheme and if the Brahman and caste women matriculated, graduated and practised.

## Conclusion

From the 1870s onwards, state and local officials, Indian philanthropists and Christian missionaries in Mysore worked to establish sites and recruit and train women to provide institutionalized, allopathic medical care for women, especially during childbirth. Although British officers had been administering Mysore from 1831 to 1881, they did not seize the initiative to promote maternity hospitals and the 'scientific' training of midwives until almost four decades after they had been started in Madras presidency. British medical officers serving under the Mysore *darbar* after 1881 would continue to advocate improved medical facilities in the public sphere for women after 1881, but Indian ministers and politicians, especially at the local level, were equally stalwart proponents. From the inauguration of the representative assembly in 1881, its members repeatedly called for the deputation of 'scientifically' trained midwives to their urban and especially their rural constituencies. These representatives of taxpaying, local elites articulated rationales for these schemes that were generally similar to those of British officials, namely the high maternal and infant mortality rates and the damage done by traditional *dais*, and occasionally the suffering of women as a generic category. Moreover, these Indian men at least in public discourse offered no support for traditional *dais* and no critiques of Western, allopathic medicine. British and Mysore *darbar* officials

might have been promoting Western medicine to legitimate and extend the power of the British colonial government and the princely state over their respective subjects. However, the members of the representative assembly would not have been so ready to extend state power into local public arenas or their familial spheres. These local elites seem to have considered a female dispensary with a trained midwife as an indication of what they could gain for their constituents and possibly as a symbol of some undefined concept of progress or modernity. Moreover, the frequent references to high maternal and infant mortality rates might be linked to the start of decennial censuses in 1871 that produced statistics of their existence and the basis of comparison between British Indian provinces, between princely states, and between provinces and states.

As in the Madras presidency, the initiative of British officials, Indian ministers and representatives in Mysore to improve the health of women and children points to a significant difference from north India and especially Bengal. For that region, Geraldine Forbes has argued that 'the topic of birthing was not of paramount concern to the men of either [British or Indian] culture. It was women missionaries and the wives of Indian officials who brought these issues into the public arena...'<sup>66</sup> In Mysore, in contrast, British and Indian men, both officials and non-officials, began in 1869 to call attention to the medical needs of women, especially in childbirth, almost four decades before British missionaries arrived in the 1900s and more than five decades before British *memsahibs* and Indian and British women reformers became active.

Two principal reasons why members of the representative assembly felt frustrated with the Mysore *darbar* over the slow extension of female dispensaries staffed with a trained midwives were finance and recruitment. As in Madras, the *darbar* embarked on programmes to which it would contribute varying percentages and then ask municipalities, district boards, local funds boards to finance the remainder. These programmes are similar to current unfunded or under-funded mandates that contemporary national governments delegate to provincial and local units to fund and implement. The Mysore *darbar* urged local units to increase taxes or reallocate existing funds, but local politicians found neither option viable. They were simultaneously responsible for costly improvements to the local infrastructure such as roads, sanitation, and water supply. It could be argued that better sanitation and water supply might indirectly be as likely to lower maternal and infant mortality rates as female dispensaries and trained midwives directly achieved. The practices of traditional *dais* had more immediate consequences and consequently could more easily be seen as responsible for high rates of maternal and infant mortality than fetid water and milk supply and inadequate sanitation and conservancy. Moreover, these projects to improve the health of women and infants call for historical analysis of how local governments, their officials and their politicians

decided to allocate scarce resources during the decades when Indian nationalists began to articulate a vision of how a self-governing Indian nation would provide for its citizens.

Confronted with resistance from local boards for desired funding, the Mysore *darbar* compromised. It selectively allocated funds to local boards in areas deemed economically significant, notably the Malnad and the Kolar gold fields. Although the Wadiyar family were well known as devoutly orthodox Hindus, they allowed their *darbar* to aid private Christian missionary institutions, particularly when they were located in areas such as the Malnad where public institutions were inadequate for the need. Therefore, the British colonial government was not the only government who supported Christian missionaries who were providing services useful to the state.

As throughout India, the Mysore *darbar* and Indian officials sought high-caste women for 'scientific' training as midwives so that high-caste/class women would use their services. Neither British nor Indian officials and elites articulated the possibly greater need of lower-caste/class women who were clearly the numerical majority to have access to improved medical attention. State and local officials always lamented the lack of high-caste women patients but seemed unaware of the difficulties involved in attracting high caste women to any public institution when physical seclusion was so significant a marker of high-caste/class status. Moreover, British and Indian officials seemed oblivious to the difficulties in attracting high-caste women to an occupation associated with low-caste status when performed outside of one's home, and the possible reluctance of high-status families for whom physical seclusion was integral to their status to consent to their female relatives living in urban locations, whether Bangalore and Mysore city or district headquarters, while in training. Although specific data are lacking, it seems possible that widows with or without children to support and orphans would be most able to migrate to large urban centres. In Mysore, as in Madras, Indian Christian women were an alternative. It seems particularly significant that the maharani in an orthodox Hindu family preferred a Christian nurse who would have tasks that involved touching the bodies of the maharani and her children, even if that nurse did not serve as a midwife. Unfortunately, I have yet to locate documents that record the castes of women who came to the maternity or women's hospitals in the urban centres or to the female dispensaries cum maternities in the rural areas. Projects to enhance maternal health enabled diverse groups to achieve widely varying objectives, although they all claimed that their primary concern was to ease the situation of women in childbirth and to improve infant health. What are critically missing from this analysis are the voices of the women medical personnel and their patients. They are the absent centre.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati for inviting me to attend the wide-ranging International Research Symposium on

*The Indian Princely States* at the University of Southampton in July 2005, where I greatly benefited from the lively intellectual exchange among all the participants including the hosts. I am particularly grateful for the insightful critique by Waltraud Ernst of my paper and for the thoughtful comments of Cecilia Van Hollen on an embryonic version of this essay presented at the South Asian Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1996. I wish to acknowledge with gratitude support from the American Institute of Indian Studies, the Fulbright Hays Faculty Research Abroad Programme, and a Fulbright Senior Research Fellowship for funding research in India and the Charles Phelps Taft memorial fund at the University of Cincinnati for support to undertake research in London.

## Notes

- 1 Although these influential monographs devote short sections to women, their overall focus is on state policies and men; David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; Poonam Bala, *Imperialism and Medicine in Bengal: A Socio-Historical Perspective*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991; Mark Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine 1859–1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Mridula Ramanna, *Western Medicine and Public Health in Colonial Bombay, 1845–1895*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002.
- 2 Geraldine Forbes and Tapan Raychaudhuri (eds), *The Memoirs of Dr Haimabati Sen: From Child Widow to Lady Doctor*, New Delhi: Roli Books, 2000; Waltraud Ernst, 'Feminising Madness-Feminising the Orient: Madness, Gender and Colonialism in British India, 1860–1940', in Shakti Kak and Biswamoy Pati (eds), *Exploring Gender Equations: Colonial and Post Colonial India*, New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2005, pp. 57–91; Maina Chawla Singh, 'Gender, Medicine and Empire: Early Initiatives in Institution-Building and Professionalisation, 1840s–1940s', in Kak and Pati (eds), *Exploring Gender Equations*, pp. 93–115; Samiksha Sehrawat, 'The Foundation of the Lady Hardinge Medical College and Hospital for Women at Delhi: Issues in Women's Medical Education and Imperial Governance', in Kak and Pati (eds), *Exploring Gender Equations*, pp. 117–46. Other articles specifically relevant to this essay will be cited later.
- 3 Cecilia Van Hollen, *Birth on the Threshold: Childbirth and Modernity in South India*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003, p. 11.
- 4 A succinct, official version of British relations with Mysore and its subsidy is in C.U. Aitchison (comp), *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries (Revised and Continued up to 1929)*, vol. IX: *Hyderabad Mysore and Coorg*, Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1983, reprint of 1931 edition, pp. 203–15, with copies of the relevant treaties, pp. 240–323. Bjørn Hettne, *The Political Economy of Indirect Rule: Mysore 1881–1947*, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, No. 32, London: Curzon Press, 1977, pp. 55–65, has a detailed analysis of the subsidy issue from its inception until the 1940s.
- 5 Hettne, *Political Economy of Indirect Rule*, pp. 33–5.
- 6 Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1870*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, pp. 227–37.
- 7 Hettne, *Political Economy of Indirect Rule*, pp. 55–9.

- 8 Donald R. Gustafson, 'Mysore 1881–1902: The Making of a Model State', PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1968; James Manor, *Political Change in an Indian State, Mysore 1917–1955*, Australian National University Monographs on South Asia No. 2, New Delhi: Manohar, 1977, chapters 1, 3.
- 9 Janaki Nair, 'Prohibited Marriage: State Protection and the Child Wife', in Patricia Uberoi (ed.), *Social Reform, Sexuality and the State*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 171.
- 10 Mysore Surgeon to Mysore Commission, 20 January 1869, Mysore, Medical–1869, File 3 of 1869, Serial No. 1 of Nos 1–29, Karnataka State Archives (KSA), Bangalore. Emphasis in original.
- 11 Memorandum dated 11 June for which the year is probably 1869 since it is immediately after a memorandum dated 20 January 1869, Mysore, Medical, File No. 3 of 1869, Serial Nos 1–29, KSA. Seán Lang, 'Drop the Demon *Dai*: Maternal Mortality and the State in Colonial Madras, 1840–1875', in *Social History of Medicine*, 2006, 18:3, pp. 357–79, documents a less sanguine view of the facilities of the Madras Lying-in Hospital during the 1860s.
- 12 Mysore Surgeon to Mysore Commission, 20 January 1869, Mysore, Medical, File 3 of 1869, Serial No. 1 of Nos 1–29, KSA.
- 13 Mysore Surgeon to Mysore Commission, 20 January 1869, Mysore, Medical, File 3 of 1869, Serial No. 1 of Nos 1–29, KSA.
- 14 Maneesha Lal, 'The Politics of Gender and Medicine in Colonial India: The Countess of Dufferin's Fund, 1885–1888', in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 68:1, 1994, pp. 36–8.
- 15 Deputy Inspector General, Indian Medical Services, Mysore and Ceded Districts to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, Mysore, Medical, File No. 1 of 1879, Serial No. 8 of Nos 1–17, KSA.
- 16 Note dated 10 March 1877, A.H. Watersz [*sic*], Mysore, Medical, File No. 2 of 1878, Serials Nos 1–8, KSA.
- 17 Secretary to the Chief Commissioner to Chetty, 12 March 1879, Mysore, Medical, File No. 2 of 1878, Serial No. 8 of Nos 1–8, KSA; Deputy Commissioner, Bangalore District to Secretary of the Chief Commissioner in General Department, Mysore, Medical, File No. 3 of 1877, Serial No. 15 of Nos 1–28, KSA.
- 18 Order signed by W.J. Cunningham, Secretary to James Gordon, the Chief Commissioner, 5 May 1880, Mysore, Medical, File No. 3 of 1877, Serials Nos 1–28, KSA.
- 19 J. Henderson, MD, Superintendent of Central Jail to J. Houston, Surgeon to the Mysore Commissioner, Mysore, Medical, File No. 3 of 1877, Enclosure to Serial No. 16, KSA. This use of physicians as superintendents of the jail in Mysore differs from that of Madras where the physician had more limited duties as medical superintendent of the jail. C. Hayavadana Rao (ed.), *Mysore Gazetteer Compiled for Government, vol. IV Administrative*, new edn, Bangalore: Printed at the Government Press, 1929, p. 266.
- 20 On the establishment of this institution, see W.R. Cornish, Surgeon-General with Madras, to C.G. Master, Chief Secretary, Madras-Public, in his cover letter of 17 June 1882, on the Annual Report on Civil Hospitals and Dispensaries in Madras for 1881, p. xvii, National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi, Home-Medical, March 1882, Pro. No. 1.
- 21 Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, p. 434.
- 22 I have been unable to find any records regarding who financed the establishment of this hospital. My surmise is that Chamarajendra or the state probably funded it since it honoured his wife and was located in the dynastic capital.
- 23 Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, p. 434.

- 24 A pioneering analysis of the controversy over midwives that focuses primarily on north and western India is Geraldine Forbes, 'Managing Midwifery in India', in Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (eds), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India*, London, British Academic Press, an imprint of I.B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 152–72, notes on pp. 310–13. On midwives in Madras, see Lang, 'Drop the Demon *Dai*', and for Bengal, see Supriya Guha, 'A History of Medicalisation of Childbirth in Bengal in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', PhD Thesis, University of Calcutta, 1996, chapter 2.
- 25 T.J. McGann, Senior Surgeon, Mysore, to Deputy Commissioner of Districts, Circular No. 513, dated 2 March 1891, Mysore-Medical, File No. 4 of 1891, Serial Nos 1–2, KSA.
- 26 Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, pp. 272–80.
- 27 Printed Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly, Address of the Dewan, 26 October 1882, pp. 5–6, KSA.
- 28 Printed Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly, 10–12 October 1889, pp. 21, 27 and 37 respectively, KSA.
- 29 Printed Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly, 10–12 October 1889, p. 11 KSA.
- 30 Hettne, *Political Economy of Indirect Rule*, pp. 58–9.
- 31 Annual Report on Madras Lying-in Hospital by A.N. Branfoot for 1881, Home-Medical B, March 1883, Pro. No. 1, p. 120, NAI.
- 32 Report of Madras Lying-in Hospital for 1881, Home-Medical B, March 1883, Pro. No. 1, p. 1, NAI.
- 33 Lang, 'Drop the Demon *Dai*,' p. 364.
- 34 Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, p. 433. This source does not specify that all the midwives were trained in Madras but since such facilities did not exist in Mysore state, it seems likely that they were.
- 35 Senior Surgeon and SC, Mysore, to Deputy Commissioners of Districts, Mysore, Circular No. 513, Medical File No. 4 of 1891, Serial Nos 1–2, KSA.
- 36 In 1850, a Dr Balfour had requested support from the Company Government in Bengal for a translation from English to Hindustani of Conquest's work on midwifery but his request was denied. Letter No. 77 from J.P. Grant, Secretary of the Government of Bengal to J.F. Thomas, Chief Secretary, Government of Fort St George (Madras) 20 February 1850, and Enclosure of Letter No. 238. F.I. Monat, MD, Secretary to Council of Education, Fort William (Calcutta), to J.P. Grant, Secretary, Government of Bengal, 7 February 1850, Madras-Public, Vol. 846, Recorded as No. 30 on 26 March 1850, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai.
- 37 See note 64.
- 38 Abdul Rahman, Deputy Commissioner in Shimoga District, to McGann, Senior Surgeon, Mysore, 13 December 1891, Mysore, Medical, File No. 13 of 1891, Serial Nos 1–6, KSA.
- 39 Abdul Rahman to Chief Secretary, Mysore Government, 28 December 1891, on rejection of the alleged prostitute, and McGann on 23 January 1892 recommended a scholarship for Natalia D'Costa despite her age since she was well recommended and would be of use even when she retired, Mysore, Medical, File No. 13 of 1891, Serial Nos 1–6, KSA.
- 40 Mysore Dasara Representative Assembly, 1899, Synopsis, p. 34, KSA.
- 41 John Smyth, Officiating Senior Surgeon to H.V. Nanjundappa, Secretary, General and Revenue (hereafter G&R), Mysore Darbar, 9 August 1903, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 39 of 1903, Serial No. 1 of Nos 1–7, KSA.
- 42 Note by the *diwan* on 20 August 1903, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 39 of 1903, Serial Nos 1–7, KSA.

- 43 Demi-official handwritten letter from John Smyth to H.V. Nanjudappa, 25 August 1903, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 39 of 1903, Serial No. 3 of Nos 1–7, KSA.
- 44 H. noted on 6 September 1903, and the Second Councillor commented on 9 September 1903, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 39 of 1903, Serial No. 1 of Nos 1–7, KSA.
- 45 Secondary sources on medical missionaries are focused almost exclusively on British India. For example, Raj Sekhar Basu, ‘Medical Missionaries at Work: The Canadian Baptist Missionaries in the Telugu Country, 1870–1952’, in Deepak Kumar (ed.), *Disease and Medicine in India: A Historical Overview*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001, pp. 180–97; Rosemary Fitzgerald, ‘A “Peculiar and Exceptional Measure”: The Call for Women Medical Missionaries for India in the later Nineteenth Century’, in Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds), *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues*, Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1996, pp. 174–96, and ‘Rescue and Redemption’ – The Rise of Female Medical Mission in Colonial India during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries’, in A.M. Rafferty, J. Robinson and R. Elkan (eds), *Nursing History and the Politics of Welfare*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 64–79.
- 46 Note of the Senior Surgeon, 4 October 1905, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 85 of 1905, Serials No. 1–2, KSA. The population of Mysore city, according to the 1901 census, was 68,111 in 1901 and had declined from 74,048 in 1891 because of the plague. *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Mysore and Coorg*, p. 197.
- 47 P.N. Krishna Murthi, Diwan, 29 November 1905, Order dated 8 January 1906 sent to Revd G.W. Sawday, Serial No. 2, Mysore-Records, Medical, File No. 85 of 1905, Serials No. 1–2, KSA.
- 48 Wesleyan Annual Report, 1905, pp. 53–5, Union Theological College Library, Bangalore (UTCL).
- 49 Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer, vol. I, Descriptive*, pp. 450–5.
- 50 Wesleyan Mission Report, 1906, Hassan Circuit, pp. 37–8, UTCL.
- 51 T. Halliday Newham, Wesleyan missionary to Chief Secretary, Mysore Government, 7 September 1906, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 86 of 1906, Serial Nos 1–6, KSA.
- 52 John Smyth, Senior Surgeon, to C.S. Balasundaram Iyer, Officiating Secretary, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, 7/8 July 1910, Serial No. 1, and government approval issued on 8 August 1910, Serial No. 2, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 14 of 1910, Serial Nos 1 and 2, KSA.
- 53 In an analysis of the tea plantations in Assam that experienced very high infant mortality rates and a declining population, Janaki Nair found no measures to improve maternal and infant health. Women workers in Assam resorted to abortions because of difficult working condition to such an extent that plantation owners tried to monitor plantation workers to prevent abortions. Janaki Nair, *Women and Law in Colonial India: A Social History*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, published in collaboration with the National Law School of India University, Bangalore, 1996, pp. 100–4.
- 54 M.Visvesvaraya, *divan* from 1912 to 1918, recommended the grant on 26 June 1913 and the *maharaja* sanctioned it on 30 June 1913, KSA, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 79 of 1912, Serial Nos 1–15.
- 55 B. Ramakrishan Row [*sic*], Officer in Charge of Palace Establishment, to C.S. Balasundaram Iyer, Secretary, 1 May 1908, KSA, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 47 of 1906, Serial No. 17 of Nos 1–28.
- 56 For data and analysis of the importance of gold mining to the economy of Mysore, see Hettne, *Political Economy of Indirect Rule*, pp. 242–8; Janaki Nair, *Miners and Millhands: Work, Culture and Politics in Princely Mysore*, Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 1998, Part I.

- 57 Printed Speech on 7 October 1916, Printed Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly, October 1916, Part II, p. 8, KSA.
- 58 T.V. Arumugum Mudaliar, Senior Surgeon in Mysore, to Secretary, 10 September 1917, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 48 of 1917, Serials Nos 1–10 and 12, KSA.
- 59 Note by MK on 4 October 1917 and Finance Department on 17 April (1917 but should be 1918), Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 48 of 1917, Serials Nos 1–10 and 12, KSA.
- 60 Order No. 7271–8-Med. 48–17, 29 June 1918, Mysore-Records, G&R-Medical, File No. 48 of 1917, Serial Nos 1–10 and 12 KSA.
- 61 The Kolar Gold Field Mining Board in an address submitted to the Mysore Representative Assembly on 17 October 1918 acknowledged the presence of these facilities. Printed Proceedings of Mysore Representative Assembly, Dasara Session, October 1918, p. 28, KSA.
- 62 Nair, *Miners and Millhands*, note 1, p. 76. Families were also recruited to the industries in Bangalore where there was a higher proportion of women workers from 1900 to the 1920s than in most other industrial areas in India. Nair, *Miners and Millhands*, p. 193.
- 63 Order No. G. 5137–57, Med. 90–16–18, G&R, C.S. Balasundaram Iyer, Chief Secretary, Government of Mysore, 10 September 1918, Mysore, G&R-Medical, File No. 48 of 1917, Serials Nos 1–10 and 12, KSA.
- 64 T.V. Arumugum Mudaliar, Senior Surgeon, to Chief Secretary, Medical Department, 12 June 1918, Serial No. 11, Mysore, G&R-Medical, File No. 48 of 1917, Serial Nos 11, 13 and 14, KSA.
- 65 T.V. Arumugum Mudaliar to M. Kantharaja Urs, Member of Council, 10 August 1918, Mysore, G&R-Medical, File No. 48 of 1917, Serial Nos 11, 13 and 14, KSA.
- 66 Forbes, 'Managing Midwifery', p. 153.



# 12 Public health administration in princely Mysore

## Tackling the influenza pandemic of 1918

*T.V. Sekher*

The strong hand of Government must always be in evidence and continue to interfere whenever any section of the community tries to take advantage of the difficulties of the public.<sup>1</sup>

Sir M. Visvesvaraya, Diwan of Mysore (1918)

The influenza pandemic of 1918 claimed up to 70 million lives around the world until it unexpectedly disappeared in 1919. No other outbreak has appeared with such intensity and devastation in many countries of the world within as short a time as did influenza in 1918. The Sanitary Commissioner of the Government of India, F. Norman White, noted in his preliminary report on the pandemic:

From the incomplete information, at present available, it would appear that no country suffered as severely as did India, during the last quarter of 1918. Altogether influenza was responsible for a death-toll of approximately five million, in British India alone. ... Without fear of exaggeration, it can be stated then that in a few months influenza was responsible for six million deaths (including Native States) in India.<sup>2</sup>

The few months of influenza resulted in more deaths than nearly 20 years of plague in many Indian provinces. The epidemic struck India at a time when the country was least prepared to cope with the calamity. The total failure of the monsoon, scarcity of food supply, inadequate medical facilities and shortages of health personnel, created a miserable situation in many parts of India. White pointed out:

Influenza within the space of four or five months was responsible for the death of 2 per cent of the total population of British India, the percentage of persons falling victim varying between 5.7 in the Central Provinces and 0.4 in Bengal. As regards the incidence of the disease in Native States but little information is, at present, available, with the single exception of Mysore. The total number of deaths ascribed

to influenza in Mysore, in 1918, was 1,27,651, which is equivalent to a death-rate of 22.37 per thousand.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Mysore was the only princely state that could provide timely information on influenza mortality is an indication of its administrative efficiency, even during crises. Arguably, this may have been due to 50 years of direct British rule, from 1831 to 1881, when the administrative machinery in the state was modernized, thereby contributing to Mysore's subsequent reputation as a 'progressive' princely state.<sup>4</sup>

### **Influenza in Mysore state**

Influenza made its first appearance in a mild form in Bangalore city in July 1918, but disappeared soon without causing any significant loss of life. It reappeared in the middle of September and spread with lightning speed throughout the state. According to government records, the total number of incidents was 883,491 and the death toll amounted to 166,391.<sup>5</sup> The 1921 census for Mysore revealed that the number of deaths per 1,000 in 1918 was about 30, whereas in the previous year it had been ten and for the year 1919 it was only eight – a good indication of the severity of the epidemic in this part of South Asia.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from increased mortality, influenza also affected the spirit of celebrations at the most important annual events of Mysore – the *dasara* festival celebrations and exhibition. This is evidenced by the speech of the Maharaja of Mysore, Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar. On 22 October 1918, at the prize distribution function of the *dasara* industrial and agricultural exhibition, he noted:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Once more our Annual Dasara Exhibition has turned its course and it is my pleasant duty to distribute the principal prizes to successful Exhibitors. I wish that we could have met under happier circumstances and that the complete success which this Exhibition deserves had not been somewhat marred by the adverse season and the sickness which is prevailing everywhere and which has naturally kept away many visitors, besides depriving the Committee of the services of their Secretary and a number of their working staff.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the chief secretary to government, C.S. Balasundaram Iyer, issued an order directing the temporary structure for the exhibition to be placed at the disposal of the president of the Mysore city municipal council, enabling him to open a provisional dispensary for the treatment of influenza patients.<sup>8</sup> The chief secretary issued strict instructions to the deputy commissioners of the districts and the presidents of the two municipalities, Bangalore and Mysore, regarding the monitoring and co-ordination of relief work.<sup>9</sup> The district medical officer, the sanitary officer, the *amilgars* (revenue officers),

and the deputy *amildars* were to tour the *taluks* (divisions) and ensure that the government instructions were implemented efficiently. They also were to liaise with a variety of medically trained people, such as *vaidyas* (ayurvedic physicians), sanitary inspectors and *hakims* (unani doctors), to facilitate the distribution of medicines.<sup>10</sup> Daily messages and weekly reports were sought to take stock of the situation and chalk out action plans. Even in places where the epidemic was under control, the filing of reports was to be discontinued only after consultation with government.

The official memorandum from the chief secretary instructed as follows:

Daily Messages and Weekly Reports – Daily and Weekly Reports or Returns may be submitted as explained hereunder:

- (a) The Presidents of the Municipalities of Bangalore and Mysore should intimate to the government, early every morning, the figures of total mortality and mortality from influenza on the previous day. This should be followed by a brief report, (which unless necessary need not exceed a dozen sentences) on the state of the epidemic each day, the manner in which the organization for dealing with the epidemic is working and any further facilities or help required from government. Copies of the daily messages and the report should be simultaneously forwarded to the Senior Surgeon and Sanitary Commissioner.
- (b) The Deputy Commissioner in each district<sup>[11]</sup> should similarly intimate by wire in a few sentences, the figures as far as available of total mortality in each taluk and the district, areas newly affected and any special facilities or help needed from government. Copies of these should be forwarded simultaneously to the Senior Surgeon and Sanitary Commissioner.
- (c) The Presidents of the two Municipalities and the Deputy Commissioners of Districts should submit a brief detailed report (which need not exceed one page) once a week, every Saturday, regarding the state of epidemic, extent of co-operation received from officials and the non-official public, supply of medicines and medical men, relief to the poor and the adequacy or otherwise of the existing arrangements, copies of the report being furnished simultaneously to the Senior Surgeon and the Sanitary Commissioner.<sup>12</sup>

This memorandum also specified the responsibilities of the senior surgeon and the sanitary commissioner respectively in handling the epidemic:

The Senior Surgeon will be responsible for all the medical arrangements necessary in connection with the disease such as maintaining an adequate staff of medical men in each affected locality, the supply of medicines, entertainment of additional medical staff, the opening

of new dispensaries, etc. He should be regularly in correspondence with the Presidents of the two Municipalities and the Deputy Commissioners and utilise in consultation with them, every available agency for adopting curative and other measures for combating the disease. A brief weekly report, not exceeding one page, of the work done by the Medical Department, should be submitted by him to government every Monday.

The Sanitary Commissioner will be expected to maintain correct up-to-date information regarding the state of the disease in various parts of the State, review the same from day to day, bring to the notice of government any deficiencies in existing arrangements and special facilities required and arrange for bacteriological and other investigations. He should submit a report to government every Monday.<sup>13</sup>

M. Srinivasa Rao, Sanitary Commissioner of Mysore in the Department of Public Health, issued a special statement regarding the cure and prevention of influenza.<sup>14</sup> The printed version of this, both in English and in the local Kannada, was distributed throughout the state to better inform the public. In his note, Rao highlighted in particular what measures and precautions should be taken by people afflicted with influenza and those still in a healthy state (Table 12.1).

In many places, entire families were affected and there was no one to attend to the wants of the patients, prepare food or collect medicines. Many officials also fell sick and died. At one point, even the chief secretary himself, C.S. Balasundaram Iyer, and most of his office staff were suffering from influenza.<sup>15</sup> In most areas, including *taluk* headquarters and large towns, people accepted Western medicines readily. However, in some places they were most unwilling to take them. The deputy commissioner of Chitaldrug district, for example, reported:

It was surprising that some, in their ignorance and superstitious fears, begged of us, to be let alone, and when we still persisted they prayed that they might be let alone for 5 days, at least for 3 days! When as a last recourse we explained to them the use of kashaya [<sup>16</sup>], pepper, ajwan [<sup>17</sup>] and garlic, they were ready to act up to our advice.<sup>18</sup>

In Davengere town, people declined to take milk, saying that they did not want '*sirkar*' (government) milk – although this was distributed by a private agency.<sup>19</sup> There were also several instances when dead bodies had not been cremated due to widespread sickness. For example, the deputy commissioner of Chitaldrug district observed during an inspection that bodies had been thrown in the open in Sasalu in Holalkere *taluk* and the deceased among the Naiker caste people at Bommagondankere in the Moolkalmuru *taluk* had remained in their houses for many days. *Amildars* were instructed to take speedy action for the disposal of the dead.<sup>20</sup>

Table 12.1 Cure and prevention of influenza

*Points for observance by the sick*

- (i) Persons feeling seedy should take to bed at once.
- (ii) All windows and doors of the bedroom to be kept open.
- (iii) The body to be kept warmly covered.
- (iv) The bowels to be kept open by Epsom salts or other purgatives.
- (v) Five drops of thymol solution to be mixed with one ounce of water and taken three times a day.
- (vi) Food to consist of milk or *conji*.
- (vii) Medical advice to be sought wherever available.
- (viii) No physical or mental work till the fever stops.
- (ix) Patients who live in crowded and ill-ventilated houses should go to the open-air camp hospitals wherever they are open.

*Points for observance by the healthy*

- (i) All places likely to be crowded to be avoided.
- (ii) All persons who are coughing to be kept aloof.
- (iii) Five drops of thymol to be mixed with one ounce of water and taken twice a day as a preventive.
- (iv) Ten drops of the solution of thymol or one grain of potassium permanganate in a pint of water or tepid water to be gargled frequently. Tepid water to be sniffed up.
- (v) Easily digested food in moderate quantities to be taken.
- (vi) The bowels to be kept free.
- (vii) To be in the open air night and day as much as possible.
- (viii) Over-fatigue, mental or physical, to be avoided.

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Source: M. Srinivasa Rao, Sanitary Commissioner, *Cure and Prevention of Influenza*, Department of Public Health, Government of Mysore, 1918.

Interestingly, in one instance, the *amildar* of Holalkere *taluk* signed in sick and repeatedly applied for leave. This resulted in local people becoming suspicious and sending a telegram to the *diwan* to request him to enquire into the matter. The deputy commissioner was asked to pay a surprise visit, along with the district medical officer, to examine the *amildar*, who had confined himself indoors. They found no trace of fever on him and heard that the *amildar* had never sought treatment by the local sub-assistant surgeon! It emerged that he was fine and wanted to avoid exposure to the epidemic.<sup>21</sup>

In many districts, the actual mortality was much higher than originally reported. This is evidenced, for example, by the final report of the deputy commissioner of Chitaldrug district:

As the outbreak of the epidemic was sudden and took the people as it were by surprise, and as almost all the patels [village headmen] and shanbogs [village accountants], who are the proper agency for the collection and report of correct statistics in such matters, together with a number of Sheikdars [sub-*taluk* revenue officers], were also taken ill and several of them died, there was practically no means by which

the necessary information could be gathered, and the statistics must therefore be necessarily said to be defective. In fact several villages that got infected could not, owing to these causes, come into the accounts at all.<sup>22</sup>

The administrative report for Mysore for the year 1918–19 confirmed the under-reporting of influenza mortality further and provided an adjusted figure, referring to ‘the unparalleled death-roll of 195,437 representing a ratio of 34.3 per 1,000 population’.<sup>23</sup> However, mortality across districts varied considerably (Table 12.2), with the highest figure of 47 per 1,000 in Tumkur and 44 per 1,000 in Shimoga districts to 17 per 1,000 in Kadur district and the cities of Mysore and Bangalore reporting about 18 and 23, respectively.<sup>24</sup>

In many places, individuals came forward to help and provide relief for the needy. Incidents of humanitarian gestures were frequently cited in the reports of the presidents of the two municipalities and deputy commissioners. Special committees comprising leading citizens and local officers were constituted and provision was made for water supply and fuel in the cremation grounds. In the districts of Kolar, Tumkur, Kadur and Shimoga, sheds were erected near the dispensaries to house the affected people.<sup>25</sup> By the end of October, the disease had spread throughout the state and it became impossible for regular medical staff to cope with the increasing demand. Consequently, the services of local *pandits* (Hindu learned men) and *hakims* were utilized, and the senior surgeon instructed

Table 12.2 Mortality from influenza in Mysore state – 1918

Serial number	Place	Population (Census of 1911)	Attacks	Deaths	Percentage of deaths to total population
1	Bangalore city	88,651	40,000	2,074	2.3
2	Mysore city	71,306	36,550	1,296	1.8
3	Bangalore district	759,522	152,323	16,600	2.2
4	Kolar	789,153	77,800	19,631	2.5
5	Tumkur	735,346	156,316	35,260	4.7
6	Mysore	1,270,765	115,997	23,841	1.8
7	Hassan	580,200	149,340	20,766	3.6
8	Shimoga	516,716	77,716	22,741	4.4
9	Kadur	338,457	24,355	5,867	1.7
10	Chitaldrug	564,243	53,094	18,815	3.3
	Total	5,705,359	883,491	166,391	2.9

Source: *Report on the Epidemic of Influenza, Proceedings of the Government, General and Revenue Departments, Government of Mysore, 4 March 1919.*

Note

The total figures (population and deaths) are reproduced here as provided in the printed government order. However, they do not tally.

the students at the medical school to work in conjunction with the medical subordinates in the cities of Bangalore and Mysore.<sup>26</sup>

### **Tackling influenza in Bangalore city**

At the meeting of the city municipal council on 5 October 1918, it was noted that the so-called mysterious fever of Bombay had been imported into Bangalore and had widely spread in the city.<sup>27</sup> The chief officer, R. Subba Rao, informed the council that this disease was pandemic influenza in some of its graver manifestations.<sup>28</sup> It was reported that the attendance of the patients at the municipal dispensaries had doubled and that there were long lines of patients waiting to get medicines at private dispensaries and chemist shops. The wards for the in-patients in hospitals were overflowing with patients and many people were sent away due to lack of accommodation.<sup>29</sup>

The council passed a resolution urging the government to provide suitable treatment and accommodation as quickly as possible for about 100 in-patients, make available more staff and increase the stock of medicines in the dispensaries. It also instructed the health officer to publish and circulate leaflets explaining the nature of the illness and measures to be adopted and decided to secure voluntary assistance from retired medical men and others. Two municipal councillors, Fr P.N. Briand and Rev. D.A. Rees, promised the co-operation of people in their parish and mission, respectively. Considering the gravity of the situation, K.P. Puttanna Chetty, President of the Municipal Council, immediately instituted enquiries and personally visited all parts of the city and extensions. In his letter to the chief secretary of the government of Mysore, on 7 October 1918, he pleaded for immediate assistance for the senior surgeon and sanitary commissioner, to enable them to control the epidemic effectively.<sup>30</sup> A census conducted in Bangalore on 6 and 7 October indicated that there were about 10,000 persons suffering from influenza on those days.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the situation was so critical that the president of the municipality saw it necessary to refrain from attending the *dasara darbar* at Mysore.

Subba Rao prepared a detailed scheme whereby an organized attempt was to be made to supply food and medicine free to the sick at their own homes.<sup>32</sup> The city was divided into several blocks and small parties were appointed for each block. A house-to-house survey, which commenced on 11 October, was carried out to locate sick people. The free distribution of medicines and *conji* (rice porridge) commenced on 12 October. The instructions were very particular regarding the duties of relief parties, preparation and quantity of food, and distribution of medicine:

*Conji* will be prepared in the Government *Anna Chattram* [charitable home] by a special staff under the supervision of Hari Rao and Vasudeva Rao alternatively. *Sooji* will be fried and boiled in water; an

equal quantity of milk will be added; Sugar to taste and appropriate quantities of powdered cardamoms and saffron will be put in. *Conji* will be ready for issue to the relief parties by 9 AM. The relief parties will start distributing *Conji* in their blocks at not later than 9.30 AM. The quantity to be issued will, for the present, be fixed at 1 pint or 20 ounces per adult and half the quantity for children. An endeavour will be made for the issue of milk to very young children. Note books will be issued to the relief parties wherein the name of each patient, age and quantity of nourishment and medicine issued day by day should be entered.<sup>33</sup>

The government *Anna Chattram*, near the municipal garden, was fixed as the central issuing station for the relief parties to obtain their supplies and to proceed to their divisions. The internal administration of the drug thymol was undertaken both as a routine treatment and as a prophylactic. The Public Health Institute at Bangalore provided the necessary medical advice on the types of treatment. A special ward was opened in the Epidemic Disease Hospital in Bangalore to prevent overcrowding and dispensaries were ordered to be kept open from 7 am to 12 noon and again from 4 pm to 8 pm to facilitate patients' access to treatment.<sup>34</sup> As the disease spread, accommodation was found to be insufficient. Considering the magnitude of the problem, the government decided to open a new temporary influenza hospital. The hospital under canvas came into instant existence on 30 October at the municipal garden. Altogether, 1,062 outpatients and 198 in-patients were treated here; 28 per cent of them died.<sup>35</sup>

St Martha's Hospital, the Convent of Mary at Chamarajpet and several *unani* (Islamic medicine) dispensaries and *vaidyasalas* (ayurvedic Hindu medical centres) attended to the treatment of the sick. The relief work in Bangalore had started with a few people, mainly municipal councillors, missionaries and members of the Gokhale League, but it gradually saw increased participation by a number of volunteers. Fifty-five relief parties numbering 218 volunteers were working in Bangalore city during the influenza season, in addition to municipal officials. The organizations actively engaged in the relief operations were the Amateur Dramatic Association, the Wesleyan and London Missions at Bangalore, the Young Men's Christian Association, the National High School, the Central College, the Government Collegiate High School and the Civic and Social Progress Association.<sup>36</sup> A large body of students – including those from the Vokkaligara Sangha, the Veerasaiva Students' Hostel and the City Boy Scouts, participated in the relief work. The students from Bangalore Medical School played a key role in assisting the senior surgeon, risking even their own lives.

Supply of medicines was a major challenge. A team of volunteers spared no efforts, day and night, in arranging medicines for distribution. A total



quantity of about 6.25 lakhs (625,000) of doses of thymol, 3,898 packets of Epsom salt, 8,334 packets of cough powders for internal administration, and 1,500 ounces of Eucalyptus oil for external application were distributed through volunteer agencies. A total quantity of nearly 40,000 seers (*sihrs*)<sup>37</sup> of *conji* was issued from the government *Anna Chattram* (charity home providing food) and distributed by the volunteers throughout the divisions, using bullock carts, *julkas* (horse-driven carts) and bicycles.<sup>38</sup> At the height of the epidemic, a minimum of 6,000 persons was daily undergoing the thymol treatment and at least 3,000 persons daily received *conji* doles.<sup>39</sup>

Relief parties were organized for the distribution of medicines, milk and *conji* in the affected areas. They worked on the information furnished by the municipal councillors, sanitary inspectors, medical practitioners and residents of the locality. The relief parties patrolled the block in their charge and distributed medicines and food free to all deserving cases. Notebooks were issued to the relief parties to register the name and age of every patient, and the quantity of nourishment and medicines issued each day. The chief secretary issued a statement on 13 October 1918, in which he specified the responsibilities of every officer with regard to the measures to be adopted in the cities of Bangalore and Mysore (Table 12.3).

Bangalore municipality also issued clear guidelines for the supply of essential items (see Table 12.4).

Compared to Mysore, the Bangalore municipality seems to have organized the relief operations in a more systematic manner and the involvement of various organizations and volunteers worked more smoothly. This may have been due to the leadership provided by K.P. Puttanna Chetty, President of the municipality, who had handled the earlier plague epidemic efficiently by liaising effectively with the various organizations in the city.

After inspecting the work of the relief parties on 25 October, the *diwan* expressed his satisfaction with the efforts that had been undertaken, stating that he had the highest hopes for the future generation. He was impressed by the harmonious working together of the old with the young, the official with the non-official and the rich with the poor. He referred to the spirit of civic responsiveness in the face of great suffering and considerable financial loss.<sup>40</sup> He noted:

Our meed of praise is due to the Presidents of the two Municipalities and Deputy Commissioners to the many officers and subordinates of the Revenue and Medical Departments, and particularly to the numerous public men who came forward to assist *Government* and the Municipal authorities and gave freely to their money, time, and energy. Nor should I omit to mention the enthusiasm of the younger generation – students and other volunteers – who showed such a fine spirit of unselfish service in carrying food and medicines to every door of the poor and the needy, without any regard to the risks they were running.<sup>41</sup>

*Table 12.3* Responsibilities of officers in combating influenza in the cities of Bangalore and Mysore

	<i>Measures to be taken</i>	<i>Officers responsible for taking measures</i>	<i>Time given</i>
1	Opening up of temporary dispensaries	Senior Surgeon and Presidents of City Municipal Councils of Bangalore and Mysore	1 week
2	Appointment of the medical and other staff	Senior Surgeon and Presidents of City Municipal Councils of Bangalore and Mysore	1 week
3	Supply of medicines	Senior Surgeon	1 week
4	Provision for tents or sheds	Presidents of City Municipal Councils, Bangalore and Mysore	1 week
5	Providing conveyance, etc. to voluntary workers	Presidents of City Municipal Councils, Bangalore and Mysore	1 week
6	Reporting action taken	Senior Surgeon and Presidents of City Municipal Councils of Bangalore and Mysore	10 days and thereafter every week ending Saturday until the subsidence of the epidemic
7	Educating the public with regard to the preventive and remedial measures by issuing pamphlets, etc.	Sanitary Commissioner	

Source: Anti-Influenza Operations, *Circular from Chief Secretary to Government*, 15 October 1918.

*Table 12.4* Guidelines for the supply of food and medicines

- 1 Sub-dividing the several divisions of the city into blocks, the size of each block depending on the number of volunteers forthcoming to take up the work.
- 2 Organization of relief parties to take charge of one or more blocks.
- 3 The minimum number of persons necessary to form a relief party.
- 4 How relief parties were to obtain information of illness in their blocks.
- 5 The duties of relief parties.
- 6 Nourishments, how and where to be prepared and issued to relief parties.
- 7 How relief parties were to obtain supplies from the central issuing station.
- 8 Quantity of nourishment to be issued per head.
- 9 The issue of medicine.
- 10 The compilation of statistics.

Source: *Letter from the President*, Municipal Council, Bangalore city, 13 October 1918.

The enthusiasm and commitment of volunteers from all walks of life was indeed admirable. A reader reported in *The Karnataka*, an English periodical, on 30 October 1918:

When I pulled out a curtain in a certain Medical shop one afternoon, I was filled with pleasant surprise to see a troop of young friends engaging themselves in all sorts of ways, filtering, labelling, bottling, corking etc. I can never forget the sight of a Tutor of a College sitting on a heap of corks in desperate enthusiasm to find out suitable corks for half ounce bottles, as well as the sight of a M.A. (Hons) squatting on the floor pasting labels.<sup>42</sup>

The health officer of Bangalore municipality also cited an incident: 'I remember one evening a long-suffering volunteer resolutely declined to continue the work the following day unless he was given a seat other than a bag of corks!'<sup>43</sup>

### **Discussion of influenza in representative assembly sessions**

The *dasara* session of the Mysore Representative Assembly held on 17 October 1918, confined its deliberations mainly to two crucial issues – necessary measures to combat the epidemic and the deteriorating food situation. Out of 263 members, only 88 attended the meeting. Others remained in their areas to organize relief measures.<sup>44</sup> In his address to the assembly, the *diwan* echoed the concerns of the administration:

We are passing through anxious times. The war, the drought, the high prices of necessaries of life, the plague and the epidemic of influenza, which has recently spread into this part of the country, mark [a] distressing combination of calamities which are pressing heavily on the population and especially on the poorer classes.

The deficiency of food supplies is a common experience all the world over at the present time. The position in Mysore is intensified by the almost entire failure of the southwest monsoon. At one time the outlook seemed very gloomy, but a few heavy showers during the last and the current months have partially relieved the situation. The difficulties have arisen chiefly from panic, due to the withholding of stocks by the cultivators and attempts at profiteering on the part of the merchants.<sup>45</sup>

To deal with the shortage of food supplies, the government attempted to control the movement of principal food grains. Price limits were enforced for the sale of *ragi* (coarse kind of millet) and rice in certain districts. Depots were opened in the cities of Bangalore and Mysore for the sale of grains at low cost. The *diwan* pointed out the crucial role of traders in

normalizing the food situation:

What is required is that the existing food supplies should be properly conserved and distributed, and the producers, traders and consumers should realize the peculiar difficulties of the situation and work in a spirit of harmonious co-operation.<sup>46</sup>

To what extent this appeal had the desired effect is difficult to establish. It is clear though that there was food scarcity in rural areas in particular. Public sentiments can be gauged from newspaper reports, such as those from Sira and Biroor. These expressed the agony and anger of rural people about the non-availability of food grains. They complained that the government was not doing anything to provide essential supplies to people in the countryside.<sup>47</sup> In the assembly session on 28 April 1999, a member citing newspaper reports stated that the cities received all possible help, with medicine and *conji* being carried to the doorsteps of the suffering poor, but the rural areas received very little attention.<sup>48</sup> In response, the officiating *diwan*, A.R. Banerji, pointed out that the government had spent about Rs.81,000 for relief work during the influenza season and that some of it had been spent in rural areas.<sup>49</sup> He was rather evasive though about exactly how much had gone to the latter. Some assembly members therefore asked that the expenditure incurred in urban and rural areas be specified more clearly.<sup>50</sup> Though both towns and villages were afflicted by the epidemic, due to acute food shortages mortality and the level of distress were higher in the rural districts, as is evident in the administrative report of 1918.<sup>51</sup>

In many cases, it was however not the lack of funds, but the difficulties in reaching out to the affected areas that resulted in lack of relief measures. The deputy commissioner of Shimoga district in his final report on influenza admitted:

It is no doubt true that the taluk officers did not make as generous a use of the ample funds placed at their disposal as the government intended, but there is no reason to suppose that assistance was denied in deserving cases.<sup>52</sup>

In fact, the expenditure statement on the relief measures in the state shows that central government allotted generous funding for influenza relief operations. Out of the total allotment of Rs.113,866, the expenditure incurred was only Rs.81,386, of which Rs.32,186 was for the supply of medicines (see Table 12.5 below).

Only in Mysore city was more money spent on relief efforts than government had designated. For the temporary influenza hospital in Bangalore, the government sanctioned Rs.10,000, but at the same time instructed the municipality to meet one third of the total expense. The city

Table 12.5 Expenditure incurred for influenza relief measures in Mysore state, 1918

<i>Serial number</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Allotment (Rs.)</i>	<i>Expenditure (Rs.)</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	Bangalore city	19,430	19,113	
2	Mysore city	8,750	9,369	Excess expenditure
3	Bangalore district	5,500	1,091	
4	Kolar	5,500	2,480	Mulbagal taluk accounts still due
5	Tumkur	7,000	3,875	
6	Mysore	8,000	2,002	Does not include expenditure of Hunsur taluk
7	Hassan	6,000	4,263	
8	Shimoga	8,000	2,963	
9	Kadur	5,500	2,044	
10	Chitaldrug	8,000	2,000	
11	Sanitary Commissioner	3,490	3,490	Cost of thymol
12	Senior Surgeon	28,696	28,696	Cost of medicines supplied
	Total	1,13,866	81,386	

Source: *Report on the Epidemic of Influenza, Proceedings of the Government, General and Revenue Departments, Government of Mysore, 4 March 1919.*

Note

Rs. 1,13,866 is equivalent to Rs. 113,866.

however refused to take its share of the costs, citing a host of other financial commitments (such as the construction of a new town hall and municipal office, land acquisition etc.).<sup>53</sup> It seems that the government was willing to provide financial support, but was also set on reminding municipalities of their responsibility to make proper arrangements for the prevention of and medical relief during epidemics.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

The well-organized administrative machinery and the existing health infrastructure made it possible to control the influenza pandemic. Instructions from the chief secretary and the guidelines from the senior surgeon and sanitary commissioner provided the general framework for the relief measures. Financial support was provided by the princely government to the two municipalities and the districts. The gearing up of the entire administrative machinery to face this public health challenge was remarkable. Daily messages and weekly reports were sought from the lower rungs of the administration in a most professional manner. Many officers were able to evoke civic responsiveness from the public. The stern measures enforced by the Mysore administration to regulate the price of essential food grains and the free supply of essential goods helped to overcome a famine-like situation.

However, in many rural areas, the relief measures were not very successful. Nevertheless, concerns were freely expressed in assembly discussions and newspaper reports, and the princely government was ready to listen to these. Considering the magnitude of the epidemic and the vast area and population to be covered, the experience of Mysore in combating influenza provides useful lessons for the administration of public health measures.

### Acknowledgements

This chapter was enabled by a grant from the Wellcome Trust, UK. The co-operation extended by the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, The British Library, London, The Karnataka State Archives, Bangalore, Divisional Archives, Mysore, and the libraries of the Mythic Society, Gokhale Institute of Public Affairs, Karnataka State Census Directorate, Bangalore University, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, are acknowledged. The archival assistance of Preethi Bhat deserves special mention. I am thankful to Waltraud Ernst, Biswamoy Pati and Barbara Ramusack for offering valuable suggestions on the earlier version of this chapter.

### Notes

- 1 Statement of Sir M. Visvesvaraya, *diwan* of Mysore, in the Mysore Representative Assembly on 17 October 1918, warning merchants responsible for the sudden shortage of food grains during the influenza epidemic in the state. Karnataka State Archives (KSA), Bangalore, *Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly, Dasara Session, October 1918*, Bangalore: Government Press, 1919, p. 3.
- 2 Wellcome Library (WL), London, *A Preliminary Report on the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 in India*, Simla: Government Monotype Press, 1919, p. 1.

#### Influenza deaths in British India, 1918 (up to 30 November)

<i>Province</i>	<i>Population (Census 1911)</i>	<i>Total estimated influenza deaths</i>	<i>Influenza death- rate per thousand</i>
Central Provinces and Berar	13,916,308	790,820	56.8
Delhi	416,656	23,175	55.6
Bombay	19,587,383	900,000	45.9
Punjab	19,337,146	816,317	42.2
North-West Frontier Province	2,041,077	82,000	40.0
United Provinces	46,820,506	1,072,671	22.9
Coorg	174,976	3,382	19.0
Madras	40,005,735	509,667	12.7
Assam	6,051,507	69,113	11.4
Bihar and Orissa	34,489,846	359,482	10.3
Burma	9,855,853	60,000	6.0
Bengal	45,329,247	213,098	4.7
British India	238,026,240	4,899,725	20.6

Source: *A Preliminary Report on the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 in India*.

- 3 *Preliminary Report on the Influenza Pandemic*, p. 5.
- 4 The 'progressive' image of a few Indian princely states, including Mysore, is generally ascribed to administrative modernization, state support for social services, mainly for education and health, and the introduction of representative institutions. For details, see Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States, The New Cambridge History of India. III.6*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2004).
- 5 KSA, *Report on the Epidemic of Influenza, Proceedings of the Government*, Government of Mysore, General and Revenue Departments, 4 March 1919, p. 3.
- 6 According to the census, the reported numbers of deaths from fevers (including influenza) were 100,511 in 1918 and 32,954 for 1919. It also reported 7,552 deaths from plague, 4,584 from smallpox and 3,166 from cholera in Mysore state in 1918. For details, see V.R. Thyagarajaiyar, *Census of India – 1921, Mysore*, Bangalore: Government Press, (1922).

## Death rates in Mysore state, 1913–25

<i>Year</i>	<i>Death-rate per mille of population</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Death-rate per mille of population</i>
1913	18.07	1919	16.44
1914	18.66	1920	14.99
1915	15.53	1921	14.22
1916	16.63	1922	14.52
1917	19.54	1923	16.09
1918	60.28	1924	21.18
		1925	17.44

Source: C. Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteers*, compiled for Government, Bangalore, 1927–30.

- 7 Speeches by His Highness, Sri Krishnaraja Wodeyar Bahadur, Maharaja of Mysore, 1902–1920, Bangalore: Government Press, 1921, p. 236.
- 8 KSA, *Proceedings of the Government of Mysore, Treatment of Influenza Patients*, General and Revenue Departments, 29 October 1918, p. 10.
- President of the Mysore Municipality is requested to take necessary action to open the hospital in consultation with the Senior Surgeon and report the action taken to Government at once. A sum of Rs.3,000 will be sanctioned for equipment and other charges of the hospital.
- 9 KSA, *Official Memorandum, General and Revenue Departments of Government of Mysore*, 24 October 1918, pp. 8–9.
- 10 KSA, *Official Memorandum from the Chief Secretary to Government*, General and Revenue Secretariat, Mysore, 15 October 1918, p. 1.
- 11 Mysore was the second largest princely state in India, with a population of about six million in 1911. For administrative purposes, Mysore state had been divided into eight districts, each presided over by a deputy commissioner. Every district consisted of several *taluks* under the supervision of an *amildar*. The *amildar* was responsible for revenue administration, and judicial and police work. The *taluks* were sub-divided into *hoblis*, which were under the supervision of *sheikdars* or revenue officers. For details, see James Manor, *Political Change in an Indian State: Mysore 1917–1955*, Australian National University Monograph on South Asia, No. 2, Delhi: Manohar Publications, (1977).

12 KSA, *Official Memorandum, General and Revenue Departments of Government of Mysore*, pp. 8–9.

13 Ibid.

14 Mysore state had a well-established sanitation department. In 1897, epidemic diseases regulations were passed. The Mysore Village Sanitary Regulation Act, was passed in 1898. The Vaccination Regulation Act of 1906 provided for compulsory vaccination throughout ‘notified areas’. From 1902, the sanitary commissioner was responsible for public health services. In 1907, the Mysore government sanctioned a scheme for a separate sanitary service, which led to a uniform policy of sanitary administration throughout the state. The establishment of the Public Health Institute at Bangalore in 1911 strengthened the governmental efforts in improving public health and facilitated laboratory testing. A full-time sanitary commissioner was appointed in 1917 as head of the department.

Along with the development of sanitary services, the government undertook the expansion of health services. In 1881, there were only 24 hospitals and dispensaries in the state, including two asylums, one for lunatics and the other for lepers. By 1918, the number of medical institutions increased up to 178. The establishment of rural health centres in 1931 was an important landmark in the provision of basic health care services. The activities of these centres included improvement of village sanitation, investigation and control of epidemics, immunization services, chlorination of drinking water sources and reporting of births and deaths. For details, see C. Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteers*, compiled for Government, various volumes, Bangalore, 1927–30.

#### Growth of medical Institutions in Mysore, 1881–1923

<i>Medical institutions</i>	1881	1891	1901	1911	1918	1923
State public-general and special hospitals and dispensaries	8	9	15	15	26	28
State non-public such as jail, military and public work departments	—	6	6	8	8	9
Local funds and municipal dispensaries	16	81	113	116	128	146
Private aided	—	—	—	3	4	7
Private non-aided	—	—	—	2	2	3
Railway dispensaries	—	—	—	5	10	7
Total	24	96	134	149	178	200

Source: C. Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteers*, compiled for Government, vol. 4 (Administrative), Bangalore, 1927–30.

15 Divisional Archives (DA), Mysore, ‘Letter from Mysore Camp to Mirza Ismail, Huzur Secretary to Maharaja’, *Dasara Files of Maharaja’s Private Secretariat*, 1918.

16 Ayurvedic liquid medicine made out of herbs, for internal use.

17 Carom (wild celery) seed or combination of herbs used in ayurvedic medicine.

18 KSA, *Final Report from the Deputy Commissioner of Chitaldrug District on Influenza to the Chief Secretary*, 24 December 1918, p. 52.

19 Ibid., p. 7.



- 20 KSA, *Final Report from the Deputy Commissioner of Chitaldrug District on Influenza to the Chief Secretary*, 24 December 1918, p. 9.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 23 BL, *Report of the Administration of Mysore for the Year 1918–19*, Bangalore: Government Press, 1919, p. 68.
- 24 KSA, *Report on the Epidemic of Influenza, Proceedings of the Government, General and Revenue Departments, Government of Mysore*, 4 March 1919, p. 1.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 27 This belief was common also in the districts, as can be seen from the report of the deputy commissioner of Kadur:
- [T]he infection was first imported to Kallenahalli, a village in Sivane Hobli. The Pattegar merchants of the place were in the habit of visiting Bombay once or twice a year to buy silk and cotton yarns necessary for their trade. Three Mahomadan merchants who went to Bombay in the middle of September when that town was infected, returned to their village suffering from fever and cough and died three or four days afterwards. . . . It is possible that persons coming into the district in the Railway from Bombay and other infected localities also might have introduced the epidemic into the district.
- KSA, *Final Report from the Deputy Commissioner of Kadur District on Influenza to the Chief Secretary*, (1918), p. 6
- 28 KSA, *Proceedings of the Ordinary General Meeting of the City Municipal Council, Bangalore*, 5 October 1918, Camp Mysore, 9 October 1918, p. 5.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 KSA, *Letter from the President of the Bangalore City Municipal Council to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Mysore*, 7 October 1918, Medical Annexure, Camp Mysore, 9 October 1918, p. 4.
- 31 KSA, *Report from the Sanitary Commissioner on the Outbreak and Prevalence of Influenza in Mysore State during 1918*, 28 December 1918.
- 32 KSA, *Proceedings of the Meeting of Leading Municipal Councillors and Citizens at City Municipal Office*, 10 October 1918, Letter from the President of the Municipal Council, Bangalore City, p. 3.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 34 *Report on the Epidemic of Influenza, Proceedings of the Government*, p. 1.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 KSA, *Brief Report on the Relief Work Organized during the Influenza Epidemic of October and November 1918 in Bangalore City*, p. 2.
- 37 1 *sihr* is equivalent to 0.9331 kg; in South India equivalent to the mass of 24 current rupees.
- 38 KSA, *Brief Report on the Relief Work Organized during the Influenza Epidemic*, pp. 4–5.
- 39 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 KSA, *Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly, Dasara Session*, October 1918, A.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 KSA, *Mysore Star*, 3 November 1918.
- 48 KSA, *Proceedings of the Second Session of the Mysore Representative Assembly for the Year 1918–19*, 28 April 1919, p. 140.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 *Report of the Administration of Mysore for the Year 1918–19*, p. 68.

52 KSA, *Final Report from the Deputy Commissioner of Shimoga District on Influenza to the Chief Secretary*, 24 December (1918).

53 KSA, *Adjustment of Expenditure Incurred in Connection with the Influenza Epidemic in the Cities of Bangalore and Mysore*, 11 November 1918.

54 Ibid.

# 13 Border incidents, internal disorder and the *nizam's* claim for an independent Hyderabad

*Manjiri N. Kamat*

This chapter highlights the complexity and the seriousness of the events leading to the integration of the princely state of Hyderabad into the Indian Union. It will probe the evolution of the idea of 'Azad Hyderabad' or independent Hyderabad and the circumstances culminating in the Standstill Agreement in November 1947 signed by the *nizam* of Hyderabad and the government of India. The rise in border incidents, particularly those on the borders with the previously British-ruled Bombay presidency in 1947/48 and their implications for districts such as Sholapur will be examined.

The government of India's initial hands-off attitude meant that the government of Bombay and the Sholapur district administration had to devise ways to protect the villages on the border. A dispute between the Indian government and the *nizam* ensued about the alleged breaches of the agreement they each had committed themselves to on paper. This led to the breakdown of negotiations and the government of India decided to embark upon 'Operation Polo', or the 'police action', as it came to be called. It will be argued that the government of India's earlier wait and watch policy precipitated the development of border skirmishes leading to military action.

There were two major factors that had a bearing on the Indian government's decision to send the army into Hyderabad: the fear of a countrywide armed rebellion spearheaded by the communists who were based in Hyderabad, and the expanding activities of the Razakars, the armed brigade of the Majlis-i-Ittehad ul Mussulmeen, which formed the main support base of the *nizam's* regime at the time. These factors were considered by the government of India as a security threat at a moment in time when Indian independence had just been achieved.

## 'Azad Hyderabad'

In his famous announcement of 3 June 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last viceroy of India, declared the British intention of quitting India on 15 August of that year. Soon after this, the *nizam* of Hyderabad issued a *firman* or order staking a claim to independence once British paramountcy had

lapsed. He made clear Hyderabad's intention of acceding neither to India nor to Pakistan.

In July 1947, the Nawab of Chhatari, the president of the *nizam's* executive council, visited Delhi. The discussions between the delegation and the government of India revolved around three issues: the retrocession of Berar to the *nizam*, and the vexed questions of whether Hyderabad should become a dominion or sign the instruments of accession with India. Mountbatten opined that the people of Berar would exercise their right as far as the first issue was concerned. With regard to dominion status, he believed this to be unfeasible and that Hyderabad would not be allowed to become part of the British Commonwealth. He used all his powers of persuasion to convince the delegation of the advantages of acceding to India, highlighting the expected positive impact on the three key areas of external affairs, defence and communications. Hyderabad's geographical contiguity with India, its economic dependence on the surrounding region, its culture, history and the close ties of its people with the rest of India were cited as reasons for acceding to India. The Chhatari delegation, on its part, insisted that the *nizam* would never consider accession to India, as he believed this to compromise his sovereignty. With the day of India's independence drawing near and no sign of a breakthrough with Hyderabad, Mountbatten suggested to the government of India that Hyderabad be granted an extension of two months. This proposal was readily accepted.<sup>1</sup>

Nizam Osman Ali Khan of the Asaf Jahi dynasty ruled over the state of Hyderabad whose income and expenditure in 1947–48 rivalled Belgium's and exceeded that of twenty member states of the UN.<sup>2</sup> The majority of Hyderabad's population was made up of Hindus who were concentrated in the rural areas. The Urdu-speaking Muslim minority was employed in the army, police and civil services and wielded power over the Telegu, Kannada and Marathi-speaking Hindu communities. Hyderabad had a bad record in terms of violation of political, civil and religious liberties. Some parts, such as the Telangana region, experienced the most atrocious forms of feudal exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

The *nizam's* claim for an 'Azad Hyderabad' (Independent Hyderabad) in 1947 was backed by the Majlis-i-Ittehad-ul-Mussulmeen, which formed the regime's main support base. The Ittehad had been founded in 1926 by Mahmud Nawaz Khan, a retired state official. Its aim was to unite the Muslims of Hyderabad in support of the *nizam* and to reduce the Hindu majority by large-scale conversions to Islam and by encouraging Muslims from north India to settle in Hyderabad. This engendered a conflict of interest between the immigrants and both Hindu and Muslim subjects who had an earlier stake in the *nizam's* administration and felt their social position may be threatened. The latter consequently formed the Mulki movement, which was intent on excluding the newcomers from positions of power. Their slogan was, 'Long live the *nizam* – the Royal Embodiment of Deccan Nationalism'.

The Muslims who had migrated to Hyderabad from north India felt isolated as a result and spearheaded the idea of bringing all Muslims,

Mulkis and non-Mulkis together, giving birth to a new cry, that of ‘Muslim sovereignty of Hyderabad’. This led not only to the fragmentation of the joint Hindu and Muslim base of the Mulkis, but the Ittehad, too, began to be increasingly influenced by the idea of a homogenized Muslim identity in the state. In 1938, the constitution of the Ittehad was revised and sovereignty of Hyderabad was vested not in the person of the *nizam* but in the Muslims of Hyderabad. The Ittehad began to parade a strong communal identity, which reached new heights with the investiture of Kasim Razvi as the president of the organization in 1946. The tenure of Razvi, a lawyer from Latur, opened a new chapter of extreme fanaticism in the Ittehad. Under his leadership the Razakars or armed brigade of the Ittehad were trained to launch attacks on Hindus. The aim was to relegate the Hindu majority to an inferior position. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the president of the All India Muslim League, who championed an independent Pakistan and argued the case of Muslim majorities in the Punjab and in Bengal was in agreement with the Ittehad on this point.

This scenario meant that the *nizam* was under considerable pressure from Razvi and the Ittehad when it came to negotiating with the government of India on the question of accession.<sup>4</sup> Although the *nizam's* claim for an independent Hyderabad was fully backed by the Ittehad, the latter wanted him to defend the ‘Muslim status’ of Hyderabad at the all-India level. Gradually the *nizam* gave in to the Ittehad.<sup>5</sup> Intelligence reports testify that the Ittehad planned forcefully to establish a ‘Pakistan in the Deccan’ in case the *nizam* were to join the Indian Union.<sup>6</sup> This plan included the expulsion of the Hindu communities. Arms and ammunition were manufactured on a large scale at Hyderabad to enable the implementation of the planned action. In the months following the partition of India, a large number of Muslim refugees were reported to have made their way to Hyderabad and to have been recruited to the state police and the military.<sup>7</sup>

Another set of complicating factors of the situation in the late 1930s and early 1940s related to the activities of the Arya Samaj (a Hindu reformist organization) and the (soon to be banned) Hyderabad State Congress. They launched activities in 1939 in response to the discrimination faced by the Hindu communities in Hyderabad. Sholapur became the vantage point from where *jathas* (batches of *satyagrahi* volunteers) of Arya Samajists entered Hyderabad. The State Congress workers as well as Arya Samajists faced arrests in Hyderabad.<sup>8</sup> The *nizam's* administration conveyed its concern about these developments to the government of Bombay, which was futile as a Congress ministry was in power there at the time, with K.M. Munshi appointed as home minister. There is strong evidence to suggest that Munshi deliberately chose to turn a blind eye to the situation in Sholapur. It was only when a Hindu–Muslim riot broke out in Sholapur on 21 May 1939 that the Sholapur district bureaucracy took action and closed down the *satyagrahi* (volunteers practising *satyagraha*) camp.<sup>9</sup> The Arya Samaj subsequently withdrew the *satyagraha* (truth-force) on 17 August, following the *nizam's* announcement of a set of political reforms

on 17 July 1939.<sup>10</sup> No progress materialized concerning the latter because of the interlude of the Second World War. In July 1946, the nizam's government finally lifted the ban on the Hyderabad State Congress and again announced a package of reforms. Yet, the State Congress rejected the new constitution and boycotted the elections. In June 1947, with the announcement of the British decision to quit India and the *nizam's firman* of an 'Azad Hyderabad' on the heels of it, Swami Ramanand Tirtha, the president of the Hyderabad State Congress, announced the need for a responsible government and accession to the Indian Union. A report published by the State Congress in 1948 testifies that it firmly believed Hyderabad was an all India problem and that a peaceful settlement with the government of Hyderabad was unlikely.<sup>11</sup>

There existed yet another powerful movement in Hyderabad, which posed a serious threat to the feudal and aristocratic regime of the *nizam*: the peasants of the Telangana region fought against exploitation of the peasantry and the brutal repression by the Razakars. The landlords who were the focus of their grievances belonged to superior castes and were known as *Dora* and had the support of the *nizam's* regime. The methods of exploitation were *vetti* (free services to landlords), usury, subservience to *gadi* (seat of the Doras power), use of force and harassment of women. The peasants initially protested by defending their customary rights, conversion to other religions, obstruction of sale and transportation of grains, songs of protest and theft. Between July 1946 and October 1951, Telangana witnessed the biggest peasant guerilla warfare in the history of modern India. In nearly 4,000 villages, parallel governments were formed. The agrarian rebellion was led by communists, such as P. Sundarayya, who gained sympathy even from the State Congress as the struggle had the potential of striking a blow to the very edifice of the *nizam's* government. The communists and the Andhra Mahasabha, a linguistic regional organization,<sup>12</sup> which had come to be dominated by the communists, effectively led the anti-landlord and anti-*nizam* struggle, while the landlords lined up with the Razakars. The struggle reached its climax from August 1947 to September 1948.<sup>13</sup>

Given the complexity of the situation in Hyderabad and the potential for communalism spreading to other provinces on the subcontinent, it was important for the government of India to strike a deal with the *nizam*. Sir Walter Monckton, the legal adviser to Hyderabad suggested a temporary, one year's agreement that would allow for further negotiations about accession to take place. The government of India hoped that the agreement would also prevent the *nizam* from acceding to Pakistan; legally the *nizam* was entitled to do so. There were also other, strategic considerations concerning the political and communal situation in India: with the Indian army engaged in Kashmir, India could ill afford a situation in the south that might involve them in the deployment of force. Above all, the agreement it was hoped would contain the cry of 'Azad Hyderabad' – at least temporarily. On the *nizam's* side, too, time was a crucial factor. The agreement allowed him to build up Hyderabad's

strength to a position when he could make a successful bid for independence. The withdrawal of the Indian army from Hyderabad was one of the terms of the agreement. This would effectively enable the armed wing of the Ittehad, the Razakars, to pursue the idea of 'Azad Hyderabad'.

The Standstill Agreement was signed by the government of India and Hyderabad on 29 November 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's prime minister, remarked: 'This means we shall have peace for one year.'<sup>14</sup> K.M. Munshi, who was soon appointed India's agent general in Hyderabad, was later to write in his memoirs: 'The country felt that by entering into a Standstill Agreement the government of India had lost its grip over Hyderabad affairs.'<sup>15</sup> The Hyderabad State Congress had opposed the signing of the Standstill Agreement because it was seen as proof of the weakness of the government of India. Their aim was to secure Hyderabad's accession to India and to achieve the objective of responsible government.<sup>16</sup> Instead of the hoped for political and communal consolidation during the period of the agreement, conditions in Hyderabad deteriorated and violent incidents on the border with Bombay increased considerably.

### **Border incidents: claims and counter claims**

Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces shared contiguous boundaries with the *nizam's* dominions and the rise in border incidents became a cause for concern to these provincial governments. At the conference held in the states ministry on 21 February 1948, the premiers of the three provinces informed Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the minister of states, of the seriousness of the situation. The government of India made it clear that it could not spare troops at the moment. Around the same time Munshi, a staunch Gandhian who had been appointed India's agent general in Hyderabad, concluded a pact with Laik Ali, the newly installed prime minister in the *nizam's* government, in order to prevent a proliferation of border tensions. Yet neither of them was certain about its implementation.<sup>17</sup>

The provincial authorities had to bear the brunt of Delhi's noncommittal approach to concerted border security measures. The case of the Sholapur district of Bombay exemplifies the kinds of problems faced on both sides of the border. Sholapur had six *talukas* (administrative units below the level of a district) skirting the *nizam's* dominions. The Barsi *taluka*, in particular, had several villages that formed geographical enclaves in the Hyderabad state and therefore constituted easy targets for the Ittehad's Razakars, as the villagers had to pass through Hyderabad territory in order to access the remaining part of the district. The frequency of armed raids on these villages increased at an alarming rate, and the *nizam's* officials detained travellers in transit. The customs checkpoints supported extortion rackets that affected trading activity in the region. Traders and their goods were held in custody for several days, facing a risk to their lives and property. In various other regions in Hyderabad, Razakar training centres sprang up

from where organized attacks on Hindus were launched with the backing of the state police. Several villages declared themselves independent from the *nizam's* government. The atrocities faced by the people facilitated an exodus of disaffected Hindus from the state and gradually refugees started entering the Sholapur district. Simultaneously, Muslim refugees from the Punjab, the United Provinces, Central Provinces, Berar and Bombay were welcomed into Hyderabad by the Ittehad in order to back up its claim for a Muslim 'Azad Hyderabad'. They were liberally recruited into the *nizam's* police and military.<sup>18</sup>

The railway became an easy target for armed attacks by the Razakars. Numerous assaults were reported by staff and passengers travelling on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway and the Barsi Light Railway, both of which passed through the Sholapur district. There was a real danger of communication lines being cut off between the north and the south of India.<sup>19</sup> On 22 May 1948 an incident was reported in Gangapur. The train from Madras to Bombay was attacked by a group of armed men at the Gangapur station in Hyderabad and armed Razakars stood on the platform during this incident.<sup>20</sup> Intelligence reports from Sholapur indicated that arms and explosives were being manufactured on a large scale in Hyderabad.<sup>21</sup>

These circumstances posed a problem to the district administration at Sholapur. Their complaints to the *nizam's* government were matched by counter accusations. The officials at Hyderabad refused to acknowledge, leave alone take responsibility for, the border incidents brought to their notice by the Sholapur district authorities.<sup>22</sup> In the absence of clear directives or military backing from Delhi, the Sholapur bureaucracy had to devise various means to face the situation on the spot. Sholapur being particularly notorious for Hindu–Muslim riots, the district magistrate was obviously concerned at the alarming developments.<sup>23</sup> Armed police were consequently deployed in the villages on the border and the formation of village defence parties was encouraged.<sup>24</sup> Gun licences were liberally distributed and villagers were asked to get themselves trained in the art of self-defence.<sup>25</sup>

The Razakars generally adopted 'hit and run' tactics in their armed raids on villages. Whenever they met effective resistance from the police and the villagers, they left. The aim was to cause panic among the villages in Indian territories. Houses were set on fire, cattle driven away and crops destroyed. The district magistrate proclaimed in 1948: 'I have been at present issuing weapons very freely in bordering villages.'<sup>26</sup> The government of Bombay approved of these measures and issued orders that arms were to be given for 'crop protection'.<sup>27</sup>

On their part, the *nizam's* administration denied reports of abduction and detention. It was claimed that the allegations made against the state police and the military were baseless. In fact, Hyderabad officials accused the Sholapur district administration of condoning and supporting the subversive activities on the border and alleged that the Hyderabad State



Congress workers received support from the residents of the Sholapur district. It was also argued that Muslim passengers faced harassment on Indian railways while travelling to and from Hyderabad state and that Indian press reports carrying stories of the *nizam's* oppressive regime were incorrect.<sup>28</sup> A complaint was made to Nehru about a broadcast by All India Radio pertaining to the situation in Hyderabad.<sup>29</sup> The government of India promptly advised All India Radio that in future they ought to verify reports in consultation with the ministry of states prior to broadcasting them.<sup>30</sup> The *nizam's* officials also referred to subversive elements allegedly operating from Sholapur and damaging toddy trees, burning customs *chowkis* (outposts) and destroying customs records.<sup>31</sup> They claimed that their attempts to bring the culprits to the book were foiled by the Sholapur administration.<sup>32</sup> An example was cited, as when Hyderabad officials suggested that permits be issued to officers of Hyderabad and Sholapur to undertake inspection visits and culprits be handed over to the governments to which they belonged, and no response had been received from Sholapur.<sup>33</sup>

It is difficult to verify these claims and counter claims for their authenticity. What is clear, however, is that it was feared that if the border incidents progressed unchecked and spilled over into the adjacent provinces surrounding Hyderabad, they might not only disrupt communication lines between the north and south of India, but also constitute a threat to peace on the subcontinent.

The nature of the Hyderabad problem and its potential implications for the peace and security of India have not been adequately addressed in historical accounts. The assumption that the south remained largely unaffected by the repercussions of partition needs to be revised. The question of the Indian princely states and their integration with India has been meticulously researched by Ian Copland in his recent work. However, his analysis of integration as merely a 'transfer of power' leaves much to be desired. He contests the notion that the states' extinction was bound to happen and makes the point that there is no empirical evidence to suggest so.<sup>34</sup> While this seems plausible, in making this case, he seems to suggest that all was well in princely India.

The voluminous evidence pertaining to the *nizam's* regime in Hyderabad brings to light the horrors perpetrated on the people by the combined strength of the Razakars, the military and the state police. The rest of India was bound to be affected by the developments in Hyderabad and *vice versa*. Copland rightly points out that the Indian rulers did not go willingly out of patriotic concern for the larger national benefit. However, he proceeds to say:

They succumbed because once the Muslim League decided in January 1947 not to enter the Constituent Assembly and to hold out, instead, for Pakistan, they had no way of resisting diplomatically, in the

absence of their imperial patrons, the implacable demands of the Congress-dominated Union government – demands backed by implicit threats of public exposure, licensed rebellion and the use, if need be, of military force.<sup>35</sup>

This argument appears seriously flawed if one looks at the example of Hyderabad. No amount of diplomatic skill from the veterans in the ministry of states could persuade the *nizam* to accede to India. Mountbatten returned to England, the question of Hyderabad remaining unresolved. The Indian rulers were indeed consummate politicians who exercised a considerable degree of autonomy until the disintegration of the princely states following independence.<sup>36</sup>

In his recent work on Hyderabad, Lucien Benichou argues:

Hyderabad could well have been allowed to survive as long as it could in the vastly different atmosphere of independent India. Sooner than later it is certain that the Nizam's Government would have found it impossible to continue resisting internal pressure for democratic reforms, and integration, would have been only a matter of time.<sup>37</sup>

This idealistic notion seems like a simplistic appraisal of what was a grave situation in Hyderabad in 1947–48.

### **Crossing the line**

The security situation on the border was deteriorating and diplomacy was making no headway either. No sooner had the ink dried on the Standstill Agreement than Delhi and Hyderabad began accusing each other of violating it. Although the Indian forces had withdrawn from Hyderabad, as per the agreement, the *nizam's* government alleged that Delhi forced an economic blockade on Hyderabad, causing bottlenecks in imports. The non-supply of arms and ammunition, as promised in the collateral letter, became another issue of contention. Above all, the *nizam's* government vociferously protested against the adverse reporting on Hyderabad in the Indian press.<sup>38</sup>

The government of India on its part noticed with alarm the promulgation of two ordinances by the *nizam*, which they thought were clear breaches of the agreement. One restricted export of all precious metals from Hyderabad to India. The other declared that Indian currency would not be accepted as legal tender in the state. The *nizam* was also under obligation to adhere to the States' Forces Scheme of 1939, with regard to defence; yet he refused to accept the appointment of a state military adviser in Hyderabad. The disbanding of the Razakars was also merely an empty promise. What is more, the *nizam* engaged in diplomatic manoeuvres to legitimize the 'Azad Hyderabad' cause by appointing 'agents' in several foreign countries.

A public relations officer was posted in Karachi without the consent of the government of India. The *nizam* went so far as to negotiate with the government of Pakistan for advancing a loan of Rs.20 *crores* (Rs.200 million) and promulgated an ordinance banning Indian currency in Hyderabad.<sup>39</sup>

Negotiations were held between Munshi and Laik Ali on 22 January 1948 to discuss the implementation of the Standstill Agreement. No breakthrough was achieved during the course of these negotiations. In March, a conference was convened in Delhi where Mountbatten asked the Hyderabad delegation to persuade the *nizam* to disband the Razakars. Laik Ali gave an assurance to that effect and led the government of India to believe that a new representative interim government would be formed in Hyderabad. Nevertheless, Razvi's influence prevailed over the *nizam* and none of these suggestions was carried out.

On 23 March 1948, the government of India sent an official communication to the *nizam* outlining the breaches of the Standstill Agreement. Laik Ali responded by making counter allegations against India. In the meantime, the border situation deteriorated. Delhi despatched another letter to Hyderabad on 15 May calling for a ban on the Razakars. Mountbatten made a last bid to salvage the situation before his departure from India on 21 June, but his telegram was met with a negative reply from the *nizam*.<sup>40</sup> The new governor-general of India, C. Rajagopalachari, too, expressed concern over the intolerable conditions in the state on 31 August. He advised the *nizam* to ban the Razakars and invite the government of India to repost an adequate military force at Secunderabad. These suggestions were unacceptable to the *nizam*, who by this time had been completely overpowered by Razvi and the Ittehad. In fact, a delegation from Hyderabad reached the UN on 7 September to put forward Hyderabad's case for independence before the Security Council.<sup>41</sup> On the same day, Nehru announced the final demands made on the *nizam* in the Indian parliament and an ultimatum was sent to the *nizam* on 12 September through India's agent general, Munshi.<sup>42</sup>

On 13 September 1948, Indian troops began military action against Hyderabad under the command of Major-General J.N. Chaudhuri. The main force entered from the Sholapur road, while a smaller force came from the Bezwada road. They met with stiff resistance on the first two days. The *nizam's* army surrendered on 17 September and on the next day Indian troops entered Hyderabad city. 'Operation Polo' was declared a success. A little over 800 people died on both sides during the operation, with the Razakars suffering the majority of the casualties.

The resignation of the Laik Ali cabinet was soon to follow, on 17 September. The *nizam* met Munshi and announced his intention to form a new government. The Razakars were to be banned and the Indian troops free to remain in Secunderabad and Bolarum. However, the government of India strongly disapproved of Munshi having any more dealings with the *nizam*, and the Indian military commander was put in charge of the administration. Laik Ali's ministry was briefly put under house arrest and

Razvi was arrested. The *nizam* withdrew the Hyderabad case from the UN Security Council on 23 September 1948. The government of India made it clear that he would not be deposed as long as Hyderabad fell in line with the other states and remained loyal to India. The *nizam* accepted this offer. He invested the military governor with the power to issue regulations having the force of law. The administration of Major-General Chaudhuri lasted until the end of 1949.<sup>43</sup> India's Police Action not only retarded the *nizam's* ambition of creating an 'Azad Hyderabad' but also struck a death blow to the communists.

## **Conclusion**

The integration of the princely state of Hyderabad into the Indian Union has been researched in several scholarly works. However, most of these writings focus on the high-level politics between the government of India and the *nizam's* administration. There are other accounts that describe the armed struggle of the peasants of the Telangana region during those tumultuous years, which culminated in the integration of the Hyderabad State. This chapter has added a new dimension to the subject. It has focused on the local situation, namely the incidents that occurred in the areas bordering the *nizam's* state and the Sholapur district of the previously British ruled Bombay Presidency (called Bombay State after independence). The chapter has highlighted the constraints faced by the provincial and district administrations in the face of the government of India's 'wait and watch' policy. Above all, the new source material from the district archives cited here brings to light the hardships faced by the villagers, both in Hyderabad State as well as in the Sholapur district. A similar crisis was unfolding in Madras and the Central Provinces, which also shared contiguous boundaries with the *nizam's* dominions. It has been argued that the grave situation had the potential of cutting off communication lines between the north and south of India and constituted a threat to peace on the subcontinent. Moreover, the rhetoric used by the Ittehad-ul-Mussulmeen of creating a 'Pakistan in the Deccan' in case the *nizam* acceded to India, as well as refugees from the Punjab, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Berar and Bombay making way into Hyderabad, challenges the assumption that south India remained largely unaffected by the repercussions of partition. The Sholapur case study thereby provides a new perspective on the history of the integration of princely states into the Indian Union.

## **Acknowledgements**

A generous travel grant from the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, enabled me to attend the International Conference entitled 'The Other India', Research symposium on the history of the Indian princely states held at the University of Southampton from 8 to 10 July 2005, where this chapter was presented.

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- 11 *The Hyderabad Problem: The Next Step*, Bombay: Hyderabad Struggle Committee, Socialist Party, 1948, pp. 58–62; *People's Struggle in Hyderabad, Report of the Committee of Action of the Hyderabad State Congress*, by D.G. Bindu, Chairman, June 1947 to September 1948, p. 2.
- 12 The Andhra Mahasabha was based on the understanding that language constitutes a serious component associated with the identity of the Telugu-speaking people. The communists fought for the linguistic reorganization of India and this aspect is borne out by the way they involved themselves with the Andhra Mahasabha. The result was the formation of Andhra Pradesh, which sought to integrate Telugu-speaking areas, after the dissolution of the Hyderabad state.
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- 14 Menon, *Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, chapter XVII.
- 15 K.M. Munshi, *The End of an Era: Hyderabad Memories*, chapter I.
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  - 43 Menon, *Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, chapter XIX.



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