



77 PH
320.540954792
H174M

[Handwritten signature]

MAHRATTA NATIONALISM BEFORE TILAK

Two unpublished Letters of Sir Richard Temple on the State of the Bombay Deccan, 1879.

By G. R. G. HAMBLBY

THE commanding personality of B. G. Tilak and his meteoric rise to the foremost place among Indian nationalist leaders by the end of the nineteenth century has tended to obscure the prevailing social and intellectual milieu in Maharashtra, of which he was, paradoxically, both a characteristic product and a culmination. Although the British conquest of the Mahratta Confederacy had been completed by 1818, the memory of their former military and political hegemony over central India was tenaciously retained by the Mahratta people, and especially by their Brahmin leaders. Throughout the nineteenth century spasmodic outbreaks of restlessness and violence in the Bombay Deccan signified the existence of a continuous tradition of Mahratta hostility to alien government. Both the personal attitude of Tilak and the support which his movement obtained among the Mahrattas must be seen as part of a complex and potent sentiment of resentment against British rule which had been germinating steadily from the eighteen-twenties onwards.

That British officials in the Bombay Presidency, even before the emergence of Tilak as a national leader in Maharashtra, were well aware of this feeling among certain castes and groups is confirmed by the two letters printed below, which were written by Sir Richard Temple, Governor of Bombay from 1877 to 1880, to Lord Lytton the Governor-General.* Temple served in India from 1847 to 1880, as Secretary to John Lawrence in the Punjab, as Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, as Financial Member of Council, as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and finally as Governor of Bombay. Probably no civilian of his generation possessed a more extensive knowledge of India than Temple, and a study of his personal papers suggests that he was well aware of the changing climate of Indian public opinion in the last two decades of his Indian service. In Bengal he had shown himself to be not unsympathetic to the embryonic stirrings of the nationalist movement. In Bombay, however, he was distinctly hostile to Mahratta nationalist aspirations.†

* R. Temple to Lytton, July 3, 1879 and July 9, 1879, in the Lytton Papers (MSS.EUR.E.218.519/11). Copies may be found in the Temple Collection (MSS.EUR.F.86.5). Both MS. Collections are in the India Office Library, Commonwealth Relations Office, London.

† Temple's *Oriental Experience*, London, 1883, chapters XV-XVII, contains his article on the Mahrattas written for the 1883 edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, as well as reprints of papers on Mahratta history which he delivered to the Royal Geographical Society in February, 1882, and to the Royal Historical Society in June,

PRESENTED TO THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY, SIMLA

BY



Library

144

IAS, Shimla



00016314

These two letters were evidently written for Lytton's eyes alone and, judging by the spelling and grammar, they were composed in considerable haste. To appreciate the gravity with which Temple viewed the manifestations of discontent with British administration described in these letters it is necessary to recall that in 1875 there had been serious agrarian riots in the districts of Ahmednagar, Poona, Satara and Sholapur, leading to the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry and, eventually, to the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act of 1879; in 1876-77 the Deccan had suffered from acute famine followed by a plague of vermin which added further to the misery of the people.

Poona, July 3rd 1879.

MY DEAR LORD LYTTON,

My telegrams will have kept Your Lordship informed from time to time regarding the *late* Deccan dacoities, as we may now, I hope, call them. Still I owe you a brief general description of that affair.

First, as to its history from a Gov[ernment] point of view.

Early in March last we received reports of certain dacoities committed in the Eastern part of Sattara extending also to Sholapore and even to Eastern part of Poona district. The statements made by some of the prisoners captured indicated a sort of vague political object indistinct indeed, but still seemingly political. About same date we heard of some robberies committed near the boundary of the Poona and Ahmednagar districts in which prisoners (captured) said that they were in the pay of some one whom they never saw, but who was understood by them to represent the Mahratta Peshwa.

Looking to the character of the Deccan,—a range of difficult mountains with rich valleys on either side East and West, the naturally "happy hunting ground" in all ages for this sort of robbery—the known naughtiness of certain limited classes among the people both high and low—the probability that foreign wars and long protracted political excitement might have indirectly affected the public mind (Native), the certainty that the continued tension of distress must predispose many people to mischief—we deemed these robberies as warnings requiring us to take military precautions lest the dacoity mischief should spread. We thought that if once this Evil were to gain head, its eradication might be difficult in such mountains as ours. We feared too that ordinary Civil police might man to man fail to beat down a Deccan dacoit on his native hill side who is a resolute fellow and armed withal.

We therefore sent detachments of troops to Sholapore (which had been denuded of troops owing to the war), to Punderpore the religious capital of the Eastern Deccan,* and to several other places in the Poona and Sattara districts, with the names of which I need not trouble you—the object being to guard those rich towns which are close to the hills, and where Government treasure and offices are—the State interests and also the Native bankers and merchants, who are so many marks for robbers, as

* Punderpore = Pandharpur.

possessing valuables, being thus guarded at the same time. We of course strengthened the Civil Police also.

These precautions were taken as *unostentatiously* as possible—and they attracted very little notice from the Newspapers.

Shortly afterwards the original leader, a Native of *East Sattara Hills*, was captured with several of his gang which checked the robberies in the Sattara district.

On the other hand, a Brahmin named Wasudeo Bulwunt,* employed in the Military Finance Office at Poona, absented himself one fine day from Office and turned brigand leader, giving out *indirectly* that he was the "Pradhan" or minister of "Sivajee II."† And the robberies somewhat increased in the Poona district. We also slightly increased the number of our military detachments and of the places guarded.

We had in the Poona district, the ablest Magistrate and the ablest Police Officer in the Presidency and these local authorities made no doubt of soon catching the Brahmin leader.‡ He was not caught however.

By the end of March however there were only occasional robberies, rare, here and there.

At the beginning of April there is much migration of European families to the hill station of Muhableshwur, by a road which passes through the very country where these robbers might most easily operate. So we caused the road from Poona to Muhableshwur to be well patrolled by Native Cavalry and no mischance occurred. Once only were the servants of an officer with their master's horses and baggage stopped by a gang, on this road, and questioned but not further molested.

During April the robberies dwindled to almost nothing and the little affair seemed to be over. Knowing however that May is always *the* month for mischief we did not relax any precautions, nor withdraw any detachments.

During the last days of April and the first days of May, the robberies began again but in a somewhat worse form than before.

We then strengthened the military detachments and patrolling parties, till the troops thus employed, numbered eight hundred Native Infantry and two hundred cavalry.

One night a gang afforded to a party of Police and Cavalry, an excellent chance of effecting a capture. But this party, owing certainly to want of promptitude and enterprise, partly also (we hear) to want of spirit, failed to catch the robbers who decamped, and who, warned by the

* Wasudeo Balwant Phadke was born in 1845 in Kolaba district. In 1863 he obtained employment in the Commissariat (Military Accounts) Department, Poona. Details of his career may be found in *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India* (collected from Bombay Government Records), vol. 1, 1818-1885, Bombay, 1957, pp. 73-129.

† Sivaji (1627-80), by his successful resistance to the armies of Aurangzeb, was the founder of Mahratta hegemony in central India. Since he was the traditional hero-figure of the Mahrattas, he became a symbol of national resistance to foreign rule to late nineteenth-century nationalists in Western India. From 1895 onwards Sivaji festivals played an important part in Tilak's political programme.

‡ J. G. Moore was Collector and Magistrate, Poona. Major H. S. Daniell, Bombay Cavalry, was Police Superintendent, Poona.

narrowness of their escape on that occasion, have never given us the chance of capturing them again.

About the same time we further strengthened the Police, organizing special pursuing parties, of picked men under European Officers—among those men were professional “trackers” who can follow up footprints even in the jungles.

Just after middle of May, one or two robberies occurred in the Concan, or coast—hitherto the robberies had been in the Deccan—and then a very bad robbery occurred near Panwell,* not far from the head of the Bombay Harbour. A rich Native had his house plundered, with skill and daring, some of his servants wounded, one killed—and about 80,000 Rs or 8,000 £ worth of valuables carried off. This was the native place of the Brahmin leader (already mentioned) who knew the house and all about it. This explanation detracted somewhat from the serious aspect of this case which even then was serious enough.

This time however the robbers were immediately and hotly pursued by parties of Military and Police under European officers. The country being hilly and wooded, near the foot of the mountains these robbers clean outmarched, outran, or otherwise eluded our men for full fifty miles and then ascended a mountain pass leaving their pursuers “dead beat.” On the ridge however they were met by a Police party from the opposite direction (Poona). They got the best of that party and got up to top of a high peak with their booty. Another party however of military and police came up immediately, and went up the peak after the robbers and came up with them on the summit. The robbers were now foodless for many hours, and quite unable to fly farther. Thus brought to bay at last, they made a fight for it—they fired upon our men, killing two, and charged upon them down hill—their leader fired at the European officer and was shot down in return—and five of them were killed by the return volley from the sepoy; some were wounded and captured, the rest fled—leaving the whole of the booty; valued since at 75,000 Rs or 7,500 £; the property, carried off from Panwell, was (I understand) wholly recovered to the last jewel and the last rupee. Of those who got away (in the dense jungle) some have since been caught, and that gang was thus broken up.

One or two occasional robberies were committed by another gang. And robberies were still threatened in the Concan. But we had meanwhile guarded the main points in the Concan, in the same way as we had previously guarded those of the Deccan, and nothing particular occurred.

The Brahmin leader has not however been caught—~~leader~~, is however to be understood thus. The captured members of his gang declare they never saw him, though they received remuneration from him; their leader *in action* was another man, who (as just mentioned) was killed on the summit of the mountain.

On 13th May there occurred the two fires in the Poona city. At first universal opinion attributed them to the instigation of the Brahmin leader and his people; then the captured incendiaries declared they had set fire

* Panwell = Panvel.

to the place in order to conceal the records of a fraud and a defalcation; then opinion became divided, some attributing to the fire political significance, others denying it. The truth will perhaps never be known. But the present opinion of myself and my principal advisers, European and Native, *does* attribute some political significance to the occurrence.*

At the time, of course, we could not tell what might happen, in *continuation*; so we took all suitable precautions in and about Poona. But nothing whatever has happened.

Since 25th May no dacoity by *these* gangs has been committed; and the most stringent search for now six weeks has failed to discover even a section of a gang anywhere; though members of the late gangs are picked up now and again, one or two at a time. One considerable gang however has dispersed and its members are *uncaught*, either hiding singly, or fled from the Deccan.

We maintained all our precautions till near the end of June. But we are easing off now, and withdrawing the military detachments—some few only being kept up.

After many "swoops" and "casts" to catch the Brahmin leader, we fail to trap him—but if he lurks in this Presidency our vigilance will outlast his probably—and some fine day a hand will be laid on his shoulder.† But if he disguises himself and reaches some distant part of India—then there is no knowing. One pledge however he has given to the Argus of the Law—he has left a young wife in the Deccan! She is of course unmolested, but secretly watched.‡

In May a threatening letter was sent to the Governor purporting to come from this "Sivajee II"; and copies were sent to the English Newspapers at Bombay. I afterwards passed through the heart of their country (so to speak) and was, by way of precaution, armed and escorted. But, of course they never presented themselves to me. Whether this letter really came from them, is doubtful. It was the origin of the canard which reached even to England that they had sent a "proclamation" to the Bombay Government.

Various threatening letters were about the same time sent to the local authorities. Whether these came from dacoits is doubtful. The same remark applies to similar letters which were received by some of the lesser chiefs and landholders demanding money.

The fact of such letters being written at all proves, however, at the least that there are evil-minded people about.

Several insolent letters were received by the judges who were trying

* On the night of May 13, 1879, the Budhwar and Visrambag palaces of the Peshwas in Poona were destroyed by fire. M. G. Ranade was suspected by the Bombay Government of connivance in this, as well as in Phadke's revolt. Temple was particularly hostile to him. See J. Kellock: *Mahadev Govind Ranade*, Calcutta, 1926, pp. 68-74.

† In fact, he was arrested three weeks later, on July 21, 1879, in Hyderabad State. In November, 1880, he was sentenced to transportation for life and died in Aden in 1883.

‡ Apparently, this wife survived until as late as 1940. See *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. I, p. 74.

the dacoits probably from the friends of the prisoners who thought thus to exercise intimidation.

Such is the outline of circumstances which have doubtless caused much "talk" of various sorts.

Upon this certain questions will suggest themselves to you, which I will endeavour to answer.

In the first place, *who* were the dacoits and what was their number?

They were mainly Ramoosees. Now Ramoosee is the name of a low caste of Hindoo tacking itself on to the skirts of the Mahratta community. This caste numbers about 50,000 souls in the Deccan—chiefly scattered through the Poona and Sattará districts. They are brave strong hardy active men. Their profession is that of watchmen. They guard houses and the like; their main business is tending crops and minding fields; their wages are in grain; they seldom cultivate on their own account. In the early days of the Mahratta rule, they played a large part in the raids, forays, sudden attacks, assaults on hill-forts and the like. They do not seem to care nowadays for the British service, military or police. They are not predatory nor vicious, still they are ready instruments of mischief.

Some few were "Mangs." The "Mang" being a leather worker by profession, with tendencies similar to Ramoosees.* Some few were "Mhars" a well known sweeper tribe, and strong men. The exact number of the dacoits cannot be known to anyone. But the best computations we can make set them down at three hundred in all, of whom some would be "out," and some at home; when "out" a gang consisted of about fifty; and there were three gangs; so that roughly and figuratively speaking, there were, say, *three hundred enlisted, out of whom one hundred and fifty were "embodied" for active work at any given time. (*Of these more than half have been captured and some few killed in fight.)

Had they fire-arms? Why, yes, to some extent. It is evident that the general disarming of the people carried out long ago, *has* left many matchlocks still in the country and that cheap fowling pieces have been procurable at Bombay and elsewhere. Also in some cases the Dacoits surprised and overcame some small parties of Police and took their muskets!

What was the nature and what was the extent of the crimes? It was robbery, aimed, not at bulky articles,—but at cash, jewels, and currency notes—not arson,—not murder though the robbers were ready to kill if resisted severely, or if pressed in pursuit—some few murders were committed but they were incidental and not designed. The idea was to hoard the plunder *as a fund* whereby to sustain dacoity, to keep dacoits in pay, till the thing gained head; the dacoits to lie hid in the mountains, close to the rich towns and villages.

* The 1881 Census listed 43,361 Ramosis, of which 43,037 were in Bombay; 118 in Berar; 49 in Hyderabad; 155 in the Central Provinces and 2 in Baroda. The same Census listed 578,549 Mangs, of which 194,817 were in Bombay; 315,881 in Hyderabad; 46,596 in Berar; 19,535 in the Central Provinces; 1,509 in Central India; 206 in Baroda and 5 in Ajmer. See E. J. Kitts: *A Compendium of the Castes and Tribes found in India*, Bombay, 1885, pp. 13 and 16.

The exact statistics of the robberies are difficult to give, because some dacoities of the ordinary type get mixed up with these special dacoities. But these particular dacoities did not exceed seventy in number; and the plundered property may have amounted to Rs 300,000 or £30,000 of which about half has been recovered.

It is difficult however to state the number correctly, because some robberies were committed in Ahmednugger district, which may, or may not, have been connected with these gangs, though they received impulse from the dacoity spirit which had been engendered.

Anyway, the total though not great relatively to the size of the country and to the excitement it caused, nevertheless was sufficiently serious to necessitate large precautions and might have readily spread.

Who were the leaders? First Huri Naik a Ramoosee—captured fighting, now under trial on capital charge—Thâtia, a Ramoosee, still at large—Wasudeo Bulwunt, a Brahmin, still at large—Doulat, his deputy and active manager, killed in action.

Huri Naik's motives were plunder with some defiance of local authorities; so were Thâtia's. But Huri Naik's gang was broken up at an early period and his connection with Wasudeo Bulwunt can hardly be traced—but Thâtia acted in concert with Wasudeo Bulwunt, but effected very little with his gang. And Wasudeo Bulwunt's motives were political however insane his ideas may have been.

Wasudeo Bulwunt is said to have "engaged" some hundreds of Ramoosees, besides the three hundred, above stated—and he must have done this to some extent—but the little negotiation could not have gone far—had he at all succeeded, doubtless the "engaged" men would have joined him.

Did the village headmen connive? Apparently *not*, for the most part. One headman, however, did actually help and has been punished; his motives were special to himself. Some headmen must have had an idea of something brewing; but Ramoosees have much free-masonry among themselves and wander about the country, resorting to distant labour markets and the like. So that their movements are not much remarked especially at a time when the destruction of the crops by rats, so greatly affected their ordinary employment.

Did the villagers, the Ryots, evince any sympathy with the dacoits? No, none whatever. But they were very backward in giving information and very apathetic in affording assistance. They allege as a reason, their *fear* of the dacoits and with some truth.

The dacoits said they did not want to ravage, or injure uselessly, but only wanted to take money and valuables from those who possessed such things; that is from traders and bankers; but they would revenge themselves on those villages which acted against them.

Many headmen are being, or will have to be, put on their defence on this account—that is apathy and negligence.

Otherwise there is no sign of agrarian connexion in this case—that is the landholding community had nothing to do with it.

This disposes of the idea that indebtedness of ryots is at the bottom of the matter. The Essays you may have seen about this, recently, in English

newspapers, are pure imagination.* To the minds of people at a distance, the people of the Deccan form one *entity*. But it is not so. There are diverse classes. This year one class has its row. Next year another class has its row, and so on. There is no connexion between the one and the other. The other day "indebted ryots" had their turn. Today "Ramoosees" have their turn.

There is one class among the Brahmins who indirectly foment all troubles by whomsoever such troubles may have been set a-going: and they are or have been "in" with every row in the Deccan.†

There again, however, we have Brahmins and Brahmins. The naughty ones are a small minority. Though these *did* fan the dacoity flame the other day, still we must recollect that most of the monied men victimized were Brahmins. Therefore many, perhaps most, Brahmins must hate dacoity as much as any one can hate it.

Some said that the new forest laws had something to do with the affair. But no such laws had been carried into effect and the dacoits belonged to classes who had nothing to do with forests, and do *not* practice woodcutting or cattle grazing. That saying again was pure imagination.‡ Sudden stoppage of public works was alleged as a reason. But this falls to the ground because on the one hand the works stopped in Poona last December were barracks and a few buildings which employed very few of the labouring classes; while, per contra, many relief works such as tanks and canals were re-opened in March last to prevent undue distress.

The idea about forests may have originated in a dispute which has arisen between the forest officer and the people of a village at the foot of Poorundhur Fort§—which village contains many Ramoosees. This is merely an individual case, not affecting any general question.

* Following the agrarian disturbances of 1875 in the Deccan, the poverty and indebtedness of the Indian *ryot*, especially in Western India, had been attracting attention in England. In September, 1877, W. G. Pedder, an experienced Bombay Civilian, published an essay, "Famine and Debt in India" in *The Nineteenth Century*. In August, 1878, Florence Nightingale, an influential advocate of Indian reform, published "The People of India," also in *The Nineteenth Century*. In October, 1878, H. M. Hyndman published "The Bankruptcy of India," again in *The Nineteenth Century*.

† Earlier in 1879 Temple demonstrated his antagonism towards the Deccani Brahmins when he wrote, with reference to the employment of men of local influence as Conciliation Judges in debt disputes:

191 "Without any disparagement of the Native gentry of the Deccan, I only adduce what is known to every one when I remark that there are many Maratha Brahmins, who, though intelligent and influential, would not ordinarily be selected for an honorary office like that of Conciliation Judge, which affords great scope for intrigue to those who might be minded to exercise it."

See R. Temple: Minute of April 14, 1879 (Further proposals for Legislation regarding the indebted ryots of the Deccan), F.86.193.

‡ Touring India in 1879, Wilfred Scawen Blunt heard many complaints of Temple's harsh administration of the Forest Laws. See *Ideas about India*, London, 1885, pp. 18-20. See also W. S. Blunt: *India under Ripon*, London, 1909, pp. 216 and 218.

§ Poorundhur = Purandhar.

Lastly did Wasudeo Bulwunt make any open preparations? *No*. He engaged men in the most secret way he could. The fact of his doing so at all, undiscovered by the Police, is *not* creditable to their vigilance and observation. Still there was nothing overt with which the Police must necessarily be acquainted. The stories about his drilling himself and others, must be *unauthentic* because the practice whatever it was must have been carried on inside his own house.

At that time of course, the Members of Gov[ernmen]t and the Secretaries were absent from Poona, being at Bombay, or elsewhere.

Then, *had* Wasudeo Bulwunt any accomplices, of his own class? Certainly he had some; men of note, whose names are hardly discoverable. Also two of his brother clerks (Natives) must at least have surmised that he was *up* to something. He must too have had sympathisers in the city of Poona—perhaps many, numerically—tho' the number may be small relatively to the population. It is almost certain that there were in Poona city some receivers of the plundered property.

The stories about treason having been openly preached in Poona are untrue. But there are debating societies of sorts under various designations, in which educated men chiefly Brahmins exercise themselves in discussions of political tendency which tendency is indirectly disloyal. These we duly watch.

The Police, despite many honourable exceptions, have *not* done well; on the whole. The tendency in this part of India has been to keep the Police as mere constables without any real discipline in the use of arms. Consequently they can cope only with fugitive and unresisting criminals. If the criminals shew fight, either the Police will not face them or else are actually beaten in combat. We must try to rectify this.

It might be thought the military precautions we took were excessive. But such a thought, if entertained, would be silliness. It was only by a strong effort that the thing was stopped.

Some people write that at last the Bombay Gov[ernmen]t grappled with the thing etc etc etc. In fact we grappled with it from its very earliest stage. I have shown how on the very first symptoms in the beginning of March we took our measures.

Some say that the Dacoits could not have been so very bad, because they never attacked any of the small Gov[ernmen]t treasuries scattered over the country, nor any one of the European travellers resorting to the hills. But we had guarded every one of these things and places with troops; and the guarding was none the less effectual because it was kept so quiet.

We of course would *not* listen to the suggestion that fire-arms should be supplied to the villagers to defend themselves. Why, these arms would soon have been captured by the Dacoits!

We are taking an enumeration house to house, family to family, of all the Ramoosees; a look out will be kept on all the absentees (who are numerous) whenever they return, to see whether they can be identified as having belonged to gangs.

The new Arms Act must be strictly and diligently worked. No doubt

there are more arms *in* the country than is generally supposed—which would come out in the day of trouble.*

What could have been Wasudeo Bulwunt's design? Many think he was crazed. This idea is not safe. There may have been method in his madness.

Why are sections of the Educated classes in Poona disloyal? This is a curious question, which cannot be treated at the end of this, already too long, letter. I will only here note two things. First, it is our duty to go on giving high education be the consequences what they may. Second, we cannot adopt an attitude of suspicion and distrust towards our people; nor practise espionage.

I will in another letter analyse the case of Brahminical discontent in Western India—though I cannot undertake to propound a remedy.

In this letter I have mentioned the substance of all that is known. The *less* public or official notice is attracted or taken, the *better*; because that prolongs excitement and plays the game of mischief makers. I am greatly obliged to Your Lordship for all the confidence you have shewn us, which we will endeavour to merit.

I am, My Lord,
Yours very truly,
R. TEMPLE.

His Excellency,
The Viceroy.

Poona July 9/79.

MY DEAR LORD LYTTON,

In continuation of my letter of the 3rd current I proceed to give you a sketch of the political discontent in the Deccan. First what is its nature and extent? Secondly what are its causes?

That such discontent exists, has long been known; it should rather be called disaffection; because it arises not so much from any specific causes which could be overtly alleged, probed, and perhaps remedied; but rather from causes inevitably incidental to a foreign rule like ours, and which could not be set forth categorically by the disaffected because they would have to be summed up in one single phrase—British Rule *even* at its best! They cannot exactly tell us this to our faces. Therefore all sorts of superficial reasons will be alleged—while the real reason, as stated above, will never be specified.

The disaffection in question lies deep in the minds of what are popularly known by Englishmen as the "Mahratta Brahmins." This phrase though it has some foundation in the word "Muha-rashtree" Brahmin—which is acknowledged—nevertheless has not any real political significance. The *political* Brahmins of Western India should be divided by Englishmen into two classes namely "Deccanee" and "Concanee"—that is, of the Deccan, and of the Concan—or as is said in the Vernacular "Dêsh-ust" that is belonging to the "Desh," uplands or Deccan—or

* This refers to the Indian Arms Act, Act XI of 1878 of the Governor-General's Legislative Council.

"Concan-ust" belonging to the Concan or lowland coast country. If, for instance, a Brahmin appears before me in Durbar, I should ask, is he "Desh-ust," or "Concan-ust."

But the term "Concan-ust" though it might include all the tribes of Brahmins who inhabit the Concan, yet is socially and by courtesy applied to one tribe alone, namely the "Chit-pâwun"—a tribe whose habitat is to be found in the Concan coast between Bombay and Rutnagiri.* This *Chit-pawun* tribe though preserving its local connection with this tract has spread its members, sparsely perhaps but effectively over the best part of Western India, and from thence did for the whole of the Eighteenth Century dominate all over India. For this tribe supplied the men of the Pêshwa dynasty.

The original *Pêshwa* or prime minister of Sivajee was indeed a "Desh-ust": but that family was displaced after his death. And a "Chit-pawun" Peshwa obtained the place and founded a hereditary office. It was a race of Chit-pâwuns then that reduced the Great Mogul, kept together a vast confederation of Mahratta sovereigns, founded a capital at Poona and from thence gave supreme direction to the greater part of India.

It is commonly said that it was the Mahomedans whom the British displaced as rulers of India. This is true only in a restricted sense. It would be nearer the truth to say that it was the Mahrattas in the main, whom we displaced.

Moreover among the most recent of our conquests was that of the Pêshwa at Poona. So that barely sixty years have elapsed since the Chit-pawuns ceased to be rulers. The memory of all this is still to this day fresh in the minds of the Natives, fresher far than the memory of most of the great political events of Indian history.

Now the Chitpawun tribe still exists in vigour and prosperity. They are inspired with national sentiment and with an ambition bounded only with the bounds of India itself. Though, as is to be expected with men who are now mainly confined to sedentary employment, they are not always physically vigorous—yet their mental power is always conspicuous—and the true Chitpawun in stirring times has the characteristic that he unites the hardihood and energy of a martial Commander with all the address and skill of a diplomatist.

If you were to count heads among our best native employés all over the Deccan and Concan, and even among our humble village accountants, you would be surprised to find what a *hold* this tribe of Chitpawuns has over the whole administrative machinery of the country. And this position is won not by favour but by force of merit. For among prizemen and honour holders in the schools and graduates of the University the Chitpâwuns are predominant.

There are many distinguished "Desh-usts" too; and they have their ambition likewise and would combine with the "Concan-usts."

But nothing that we do now, by way of education, emolument, or advancement in the public service, at all *satisfies* the Chitpawuns. They

* Rutnagiri = Ratnagiri.

will never be satisfied till they regain their ascendancy in the country, as they had it during last century. And British rule is the one thing which is an absolute bar to their aspirations. Whether as British rule becomes consolidated continuously more and more, this ambition of theirs will dwindle and die out, no man can say. But that such ambition exists in this generation of Chitpawuns, and will continue during the next generation at least, may be taken for certain.

They esteem it their charter from on high to rule over the minds of Hindoos. This rule is somewhat weakened by the presence of the British. And this of course is a grievance though *unexpressed*.

They might indeed serve as a check upon the Mahomedans if there were any fear of a Mahomedan uprising. But they have, I feel sure, *no* fear of Mahomedans regaining ascendancy. They think that they could command the Mahrattas and that the Mahrattas would beat the Mahomedans again, as they did last century and especially the century before last.

Their past—to them, their glorious past—survives in their minds. If questioned about the details by us, they will at first feign ignorance or indifference—but you will soon find out that they do know the *relevant* points quite well, after all.

My Lord, what Peshawar now is to H.M.'s Government and to you, that Poona was for 150 years to the Great Mogul and his viceroys and lieutenants—a rich city with wide prestige, close to mountain ranges full of hardy expugnable tribes.

Like as the Mahrattas under Brahminical guidance once beat the Mahomedan conquerors bit by bit, inch by inch, out of the Deccan, so the Chitpawuns imagine that some day more or less remote, the British shall be made to retire into that darkness where the Moguls have retired.

Any fine morning an observant visitor may ride through the streets of Poona and mark the scowl with which so many persons regard the stranger.

Doubtless there are Brahmins in force in other parts of India: but there are also counterbalancing tribes—notably the Kayusths or Kayeths, or “writer” caste—likewise Rajputs—also Mahomedans. Therefore, Your Lordship probably hears little of Brahmin ascendancy in Upper India.

In Western India we have some Purbhōs and some Parsees, also a few Mahomedans to oppose to the Brahmins, who nevertheless form the vast majority of the influential classes.

In Southern India also the Brahmins are greatly in the ascendant—but in some of the regions there we have appeared historically as the deliverers of the Hindoos from Mahomedan oppression.” In other regions we have never once crossed swords with the Hindoos at all.

It is otherwise in Western India. There the Brahmins are strong in every way morally and materially. They regard us as the power which has displaced them from their well-remembered ascendancy, but which they hope, some day, however remote, to see subverted.

I have known many instances of national ambition surviving among tribes of India, even after their being conquered by the British. For instance such ambition survived among the Punjabees long after the annexation of the Punjab, though perhaps it is now dying out. It revived

among the Mahomedans some years ago at the instigation of the "Wuhâbees." That too is dying out since the defeat of Turkey. It exists still among the Goorkhas of Nepaul—but it is to some extent moderated by circumstances and to a large extent satisfied by political conditions.

But never have I known in India a national and political ambition, so continuous, so enduring, so far reaching, so utterly impossible for us to satisfy, as that of the Brahmins of Western India, especially the dominant section of the "Concan-ust" Brahmins above described.

If a racy graphic lecture were to be read to an assemblage of these people in Western India regarding the deeds of Sivajee and his men—their hearts would warm, and their eyes would brighten with sentiments relating not merely to historical interest of the past, but to the status of the present and the prospects of the future! And why? Because those deeds were done by uprising Hindoos against Mahomedan invaders, cantoned in the very same military positions which we now occupy. Your Lordship will see the moral so clearly that I need hardly stop to point it. They think that as the same mountains and fastnesses still stand to favour uprisings, and the same climatic conditions still exist to sustain martial qualities of a certain sort—so the Hindoo polity, perhaps without the Hindoo religion will one day reassert itself over the White Conquest.

This is no imagination on my part. I *know* that they think this. I have heard it stated, reservedly perhaps, but still intelligibly by loyal Natives, indicated with bated breath by waverers, and insinuated, unconsciously perhaps, by the disloyal.

But here there comes a slight split in this amiable camp. For, the younger and "educated" Brahmins preach "unity" among Hindoos, such "union" nationally as may subordinate caste distinctions to political necessity. Many of these preach that British rule is based chiefly on the dis-union of the Natives. But elder Brahmins of a stiffer disposition disapprove of such compromising views. They would not surrender their Brahminism even for the sake of expelling the British.

Brahminism in Western India has two elements, the religious and the political. The religious element is much lowered by "education"—which produces in Eastern India the theism of the "Brahmo" association—and with us in Western India the similar theism of the Prathuna association.* Both forms of theism are distinctly favourable to British ascendancy—and more especially in Western India, where the root of Brahminism is struck. Otherwise education does not lower the national aspirations of Brahmins in Western India.

"Education" indeed does not make them more disloyal than they would otherwise be; for their disloyalty has, as Your Lordship will have seen, a different origin. If indeed education had had the effect of throwing employment into the hands of other castes then the Brahmins might have been jealous. But such is not the case; they have nothing to complain of on this score. On the contrary they being, from intellectual qualities transmitted through many generations, much the cleverest of all people,

* This was the Prarthana Samaj, founded by V. A. Modak as a result of the impact of Keshab Chandra Sen in Bombay.

get altogether the best of it in every thing that depends on "education."

"Education" does indeed in some respects draw them towards us—they reflect on many large matters solely through our language; they learn to use our modes of thought and to dis-use their own. On the other hand education is certainly making their minds *restless*.* The blessings of British Rule, heretofore so ungrudgingly acknowledged cease to excite gratitude and are no longer contrasted with the evils of other Rules, and are judged by some ideal standard which is somehow incompatible with *our* position in the country. "India for the Indians," has a different meaning in their mouths from what it would have in ours. With us it means concession to the Natives to the utmost reasonable limit compatible with the inevitable postulate of British Rule. With them it means concession to a point which would leave British Rule "in the air."

What would happen if British Rule were to be blown into the "air," is a question which I know constantly occurs to the Native mind. *Most* Natives when this question crops up, feel the answer to be so hopeless, that they turn *from* it in dismay, and *return* to acquiescence in the present order of things. *Some* Natives think otherwise, however, and are not afraid to face that question; thinking that they could manage India quite well without the British and could organize States and Confederacies just as they did 150 years ago. And these Natives are the Brahmins of Western India, especially the "Concan-ust" Brahmins above described.

No doubt they admit that this must be a work of time. Still they note (with their expanding education) all the political events in the world and wonder what startling changes tomorrow may bring forth.

For instance during the winter of 1877-8 they thought that the Russian Star was prevailing over our Star—and that we were going to be beaten in the Counsels of Europe. This thought was dissipated by the single circumstance of the despatch of Native troops to Malta: and therefore was not very strong perhaps nor abiding.

This is no imagination: the bearing of the inhabitants of Poona—the head and centre of political Brahminism in Western India—towards European Civil Officers was becoming very uncomfortable, but changed like magic when the Native troops sailed for Malta.

These tendencies of thought are checked by the fear of possible Russian rule. Somehow the Natives have persuaded themselves that Russian Rule in India would be much worse than ours. How they arrived at this persuasion so convenient to us, it is hard to say. I think it must be that the Mahomedans have started the idea (in order to pay out Russia for all she has lately done to Islam) for which we may feel obliged to "them."

The ambitious Brahmin of Western India however probably flatters himself that although Russia may embarrass and undermine British Power in Asia, it does *not* at all follow that she could establish herself in India in our place.

* Temple had already stressed this danger to British supremacy in letters to Lord Salisbury, January 28, 1878, and to Lord Cranbrook, May 6, 1878, F.86.6. To the latter, he remarked:

"The general result of this mental movement is not favourable to that moral force which in part (tho' only in part) sustains the fabric and foundation of our Indian Empire."

This feeling may be formulated something in this wise—prepare the way for the downfall of British Rule, by force if political events outside India in Europe or elsewhere should favour that, or at all events by decay of vital energy; poison the minds of the people against the English and all their ways and works; do not disdain to learn what you can from the English because you may find that no shaft is so potent to shoot them with as their own; discredit and hamper their administration by every indirect manner, so as to render it unpopular and even hateful—and if it shall be got rid of, the Brahmins of Western India may be early in the coming twentieth century what they were early in the past eighteenth century. Or again, in this wise—foment every misgiving which the English themselves may have regarding their Rule in India, turn to our own purpose all such manifestations of English opinion as they may arise; put the worst light on Indian economics; make the country out to be worse than useless as a possession—perhaps the English may retire in disgust.

On the other hand they probably forget that the exaggerations regarding the subtraction of wealth by the English from India to England, militates against a part of the above argument; still they often indulge in them in order to set the people against us.

That suchlike sentiments prevail among the Brahminical classes above described, is indubitable—and they are spreading among the educated youth. Such diffusion is not, however, to be attributed to *our* education. In fact the Brahmins were educated *in a way before*. What we have done is to substitute one kind of education for another. Perhaps some parts of our education may have sharpened their political insight—and may so have given a sharp head to the lance of disloyalty. But the lance existed before.

They have *long* prevailed too—tho' public attention has been more directed towards them of late.

That they did not seriously manifest themselves in 1857 during the war of the mutinies—is truly providential. These disloyal classes were taken by surprise by the rapidity of events in Hindostan and were *too late* before they could arrange anything. For they *did* in the following year—1858-59—organize a conspiracy among the South Mahratta Chiefs, which had for its object nothing short of the re-establishment of the Mahratta Confederation.*

So also, after the first Afghan war, 1840-1841—news travelled *slow* in those days, and a year or so passed before they could disseminate exaggerated stories of our disasters at Caubul. However in 1843-4 they managed to get up a rising in the Southern Deccan and Concan.†

The affairs of 1843-4 and of 1858-9 were soon discovered and rigorously put down. And when the other day 1879; a little breeze began to spring

* This conspiracy is briefly described in S. B. Chaudhuri: *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies (1857-1859)*, Calcutta, 1957, pp. 229-231.

† The risings of 1844 in the Southern Deccan and Konkan are related in S. B. Chaudhuri: *Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India (1765-1857)*, Calcutta, 1955, pp. 165-171.

up, old Bombay officers told me instinctively to look out for some repetition of what had happened at the fag-end of former wars.

This breeze, as Your Lordship has seen, turned out to be mild—still there it is that a Brahmin clerk commences brigandage in the same old hills, according to the old Mahratta usage, in the name of "Sivajee II"—and this insane enterprise meets with a momentary success owing to the predatory disposition of certain classes sharpened by a long continuance of scarcity. The enterprise is regarded by many with sympathy; by many also with a curiosity, to see whether there had been a drain—as rumoured—upon our military resources—and to note how the Government would take it. They soon found, of course, that we were not exactly the sort of men to be trifled with, and that the arm of British authority had not been shortened.

The coincidence of the Poona fires (incendiary) is at least remarkable and raises a violent presumption in the minds of most people, but not of all, that the incendiarism was instigated by the Brahmin brigand and his men.

The conduct of the association of Deccan landholders called the *Survajanik-Subha* has long been, as Your Lordship so well knows, regarded with suspicion—which suspicion continues. Although the Society may not be directly connected with recent events, yet its wires are believed to be pulled by men tainted with the views described in this letter.*

These views do not extend beyond a certain section of the Brahmins—not to all Brahmins, for instance not to trading and banking Brahmins,—not to the educated classes other than Brahmins—not at present to the Mahratta Chiefs of the Deccan—not at all to the ryot or peasant proprietor class, the most important class of all, who are quite loyal—not in the least to the numerical mass of the people.

I have not included in disloyalty the dead set, as it were, which the Brahmins have for some years past been making against the land revenue and against the Survey and Settlement—tho' I do not like the tone of these proceedings still I admit that they may agitate for a permanent settlement like that of Bengal which in the Deccan would perpetuate the favourable terms often granted in former times to Brahmins—if they see any chance of obtaining such a concession, for which we indeed are not prepared.

Also, the disloyalty I have described is not to be confounded with dissatisfaction with particular measures or particular kinds of administration. Such dissatisfaction is not to be mistaken for disloyalty. It may have

* In reply to a Minute of December 17, 1877, on the subject of Indian agrarian distress written by Sir Louis Mallet, the Permanent Under-Secretary for India, Temple severely criticized the attitude of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha regarding the condition of the *ryot* in the Bombay Presidency. See R. Temple: Minute of October 29, 1878, Condition of the Peasantry in the Central Deccan (Districts of Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur, and Satara), para. 15, F.86.193.

Temple's personality and his conduct in Bombay were condemned by M. G. Ranade in an anonymous article, "Sir Richard Temple," which appeared in *The Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha* in April, 1880, immediately following Temple's return to England. This article presumably reflected the general estimation of Temple among the members of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha.

some show of reason. So far as we ever see such reason, we try to mitigate or remove such dissatisfaction.

As the dissatisfaction seems to shew itself among the educated classes, we specially endeavour to secure to them every advantage in the public service to which they could reasonably lay claim; and especially to render their education more practical, more connected with useful sciences, than heretofore; and therefore more likely to prove remunerative to its possessors.

I remain, My Lord,
Yours very truly,
RICHARD TEMPLE.

His Excellency the Viceroy.



