

Appendix A

Political and Constitutional Developments in India vis-a-vis the Role of the Regency Council (1923 - 1936)

The political and constitutional developments in India during the Regency period form a grand and important theme. These happenings played a vital role not only in shaping the destinies of the British-administered Provinces but also in determining the fate of the Indian States including Cooch Behar. According to Prof. Copland's opinion that at the end of the First World War, The Indian rulers were at the peak of their power safe under the military umbrella of a British Raj, venerated by an overwhelming majority of their subjects, and admired even by many nationalists. The 'darbars' came more and more to dominate His Majesty's Government's strategic thinking about the subcontinent.¹ Therefore it will not be out of context now to give a brief discussion of what happened in British India in general and Princely India in particular.

In 1923, following the suspension of the Non Co-operation Movement and the arrest of Gandhiji, a group of Congressmen led by Chittaranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru formed within the Congress the Swarajist Party with a view to wrecking the legislatures, both Central and Provincial, from within. This party won considerable success in the general elections of that year. In the Central Legislative Assembly the Swarajists put forward a demand for the immediate grant of Dominion Status.²

In the course of debate in that assembly Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Home Minister, asked the Swarajists whether they proposed to extend Dominion Status to the Indian States and whether the States were agreeable to it. Pandit Motilal Nehru replied that they were most welcome to share that status with British India but there should be no compulsion.³ The Swarajists leader's announcement was in consonance with the Congress policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the states as laid down in the Nagpur session of December, 1920. In January 1925, Gandhiji declared that 'just as the National Congress cannot have any effective voice in the relations between Indian states and the British Government, even so will its interference be ineffective as to the relations between the Indian States and their subjects.' The Congress did not want to wage a fight on two fronts. Besides, it had no organisation worth mentioning in the States.⁴

Lord Irwin who was appointed as Viceroy in April, 1926, felt that the political situation in the country demanded some gesture on the part of Great Britain. His Majesty's Government accepted his view and in March, 1927 they announced their decision to appoint an Indian Statutory Commission to enquire into the working of the Government of India Act of 1919 and to make recommendations regarding further constitutional progress of India. The members of the Commission and its terms of reference were announced in November, 1927. The Commission was popularly known as the Simon Commission after its chairman Sir John Simon.⁵

In the meantime, certain published correspondence which had passed between the Viceroy Lord Reading and the Nizam Mir Usman Ali Khan of Hyderabad relating to Berar, created serious doubts in the minds of the rulers about their real position in relation to the British paramount power. As for example, Lord Reading, in his letter to the Nizam dated 27th March, 1926, clearly repudiated the Princes' claim that they could "negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing." He also contended that the right to intervene in the internal affairs of the States was inherent in the Paramountry of the British Crown and could be exercised solely at its discretion.⁶ In November, 1926 the Maharaja of Patiala made a statement on behalf of the rulers that they had 'perused with deep concern certain phrases employed and doctrines enunciated in that correspondence. The Princes accordingly requested the Viceroy at a conference at Simla in May, 1927 to appoint an expert body to give its considered opinion on the issue.⁷ Like Irwin, the British Government found it hard to refuse the request of their loyal allies. They conceded that something needed to be done, 'merely for the sake of the Princes' peace of mind.'⁸ Accordingly, the Secretary of the State for India, Lord Birkenhead, on December 26th, 1927 appointed an Indian States Enquiries Committee of three members headed by Sir Harcourt Butler, 'to report on the relationship between the paramount power and the Indian States' and 'to inquire into the financial and economic relations between British India and the States and to make any recommendations for their more satisfactory adjustment.' The other two members of the Committee were Hon'ble Sidney Peel and Prof. W.S. Holdsworth. The Committee did not include any member of the Indian States or any one representing British Indian people or any representative of the people of the States.¹⁰

The constitution of the Indian States Committee commonly known as the Butler Committee after its chairman Sir Harcourt Butler created a positive impression among the rulers of the Princely States since Sir Harcourt Butler was very much familiar to most of the major Princely States both as a compassionate friend and as an experienced professional with a long successful career in British India. Sir Butler was a retired Governor of the United Provinces while he was invited to head this Committee. In fact majority of the members of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes received the nomination of Butler Committee with jubilation. Since Maharaja Jey Singh of Jaipur had welcome such nomination, H.H. Indira Devi, the Regent of the Cooch Behar State had sent message welcoming the formation of such Committee and the nomination of Butler as its head.¹¹

It may be noted here that after the establishment of the Chamber of Princes in 1921 representing the Indian rulers,¹² the need for an all-India organisation representing the States' people had been felt. The need for such organisation assumed considerable urgency following the announcement of the Butler Committee's appointment in 1927. Thanks to the untiring efforts of persons like Professor G. R. Abhyankar, N. C. Kelkar, Balwantray Mehta and Manilal Kothari, the All-India States' People's Conference (AISPC) was founded in Bombay on the 7th December, 1927. The Conference, attended by more than 700 delegates hailing from different states and provinces, declared that the aim and objective of the AISPC was to influence the Governments of the States as a whole "to initiate the necessary reforms in the

administration by the force of collective opinion of the people of the States."¹³ The Conference at this session called for a federal arrangement between the two parts of India, an amalgamation of smaller states into politically and economically viable units, political reforms such as an independent judiciary and responsible government within the States, and various social and educational reforms.¹⁴

Sir Harcourt Butler and his two colleagues came to India in January, 1928 and visited sixteen of the States. The proceedings of the Committee were held in camera. The purpose of the Committee was objective and specific. It did not consult the representatives of the States' people on the plea that it was outside their terms of reference.¹⁵ The procedure adopted by the Committee had caused considerable disappointment to the people of the States. The AISPC held that the terms of reference of the Butler Committee were narrow and were not sufficiently explicit. The Conference protested against the view of the Committee excluding public bodies and private individuals from this inquiry under the terms of reference and stated that as the terms of inquiry included the relationship between the Paramount Power and the Indian States and as the States included both Princes and people of these States, the people of the Indian States had every right to state their views in so far as they were relevant to the terms of reference of the Committee.¹⁶ Although the Committee refused to give an oral hearing but it received memorandum from the AISPC. This memorandum recorded that the AISPC passed a resolution to the effect "that for a speedy attainment of Swarajya for India as a whole, the states should be brought into constitutional relations with British India, and that the people of the States should be assigned a definite place and an effective voice, in all matters of common concern, in any new constitution that may be devised for the whole of India." Memorandum stated that the question of the future relations of British India and the states can only be solved properly in the manner suggested in the resolution referred to above. In spite of these efforts of the AISPC, not much attention was paid to its proposals in official circles. In fact, the Butler Committee presented no proposals at all for the political advancement of the States' people.

The bulk of the Committee's work in hearing the case for the rulers was done in England. The rulers had engaged distinguished British lawyers headed by Sir Leslie Scott to argue their case and put forward their claims based on treaty rights. As a matter of fact, the most important among the memoranda submitted to the Butler Committee was the Joint Opinion prepared by Sir Leslie Scott and four other constitutional lawyers of the U. K. on behalf of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes. Apart from this, Sir Leslie Scott prepared five massive volumes listing cases of encroachment on the rights of the states during the past 75 years. He also gave oral evidence on behalf the Princes in England.¹⁷

The Butler Committee submitted its report on 4th February, 1929 and it was presented to the British Parliament on 16th April, 1929.¹⁸ On the question of Paramountcy, the Committee disagreed with the views of Sir Leslie Scott that the powers of Paramountcy were defined by what was said in the treaties. The Committee refused

to define paramountcy but asserted that "Paramountcy must remain paramount; it must fulfil its obligations defining or adopting itself according to the shifting necessities of the time and the progressive development of the States." On the issue of the sovereignty of the States, the Committee held that "it is not in accordance with the historical fact when the Indian States came into contact with the British power they were independent, each possessed of the full sovereignty... nearly all of them [States] were subordinate or tributary to the Moghul Empire, the Maratha supremacy or the Sikh Kingdom and dependent on them. Some were rescued, others were created, by the British."¹⁹

However, the Committee endorsed Sir Leslie Scott's assertion that the State's relations were with the Crown, not with the Government of India, and therefore the rulers should not be transferred without their consent to "a new Government in British India responsible to an Indian legislature." The Committee rejected the federal scheme stating that it was at the premature stage. It recorded that the Viceroy, not the Governor-General in Council, should be the Agent of the Crown in all dealings with the States. The Committee also recommended that "important matters of dispute between the States themselves, between the States and the Paramount Power and between the States and British India should be referred to independent bodies for advice."²⁰ With regard to financial and economic relations between British India and the States, the Committee merely expressed some pious platitudes and broke no new grounds.²¹ It recommended for the appointment of an expert body to settle the financial questions between the Imperial Government and the States.²²

The findings of the Butler Committee came as a nasty shock to the Indian rulers. The reaction of the Princes to the Butler report was expressed at the General Conference of the Chamber held in June, 1929 at Bombay, and later at the formal session of the Chamber in February, 1930.²³ Although the rulers were relieved thinking that status quo was to be maintained and there was to be no immediate danger to their position, but they were disappointed since their main hope of being freed from unfettered discretion of the Political Department to intervene in their internal affairs remained unfulfilled.²⁴ They also argued that the Committee's assertion of the irrevocability of treaties between the British Government and Indian states, and its concept of Paramountcy were a contradiction in terms. According to them, while the one recognised the equal status of both the parties, the other implied a relationship between that of a master and a subordinate.^{24*} The Princes now felt that inquiry conducted by the Butler Committee had been a Pandora's box instead of a solution to longstanding problems. 'It seemed to render them more vulnerable than ever before to interference by the Government and opened new fronts for attack by the emerging states' subjects' groups.'^{24**} It has also been pointed out that the Butler Committee consolidated the position of the Indian States as the pillars and props of the British empire, while further eroding their status vis-a-vis the paramount power.²⁵ Therefore, the Indian princes went on raising issues about them.

Nationalist leadership viewed the recommendations of the Butler Committee with grave apprehension. The

Nehru Committee which had been appointed by the All parties' Conference in 1928 to frame a Dominion Constitution for India, declared that 'an attempt is being made to convert the Indian States into an Indian 'Ulster' by pressing constitutional theories into service.' It uttered the warning that 'it is inconceivable that the people of the States who are fired by the same ambitions and aspirations as the people of British India will quietly submit to existing conditions forever or that the people of British India bound by the closest ties of family, race and religion to their brethren on the other side of an imaginary line will never make common cause with them. The Nehru Committee also endorsed the idea of an all-India federation. This Committee, besides inviting the States to join such a federation, assured the States that their privileges and prerogatives would be fully protected.²⁶ The Nehru Committee proposed that the whole issue should have been discussed at a round table conference consisting of the representatives of the British Government, the rulers, their subjects and the people of British India.²⁷ However, the Princes viewed the Nehru Report as a premeditated attack on their constitutional position since it denied their privileged relationship with the Crown.^{27*}

In the meantime, the Indian Statutory Commission popularly known as the Simon Commission was carrying on its enquiry. Sir John Simon, who visited India twice with his colleagues, once in February, 1928 and again from October 11, 1928 to April 13, 1929 was encountered with hostile demonstrations all over the country.²⁸ All the leading Indian political parties had decided to boycott the Commission since not a single Indian had been included in it. The Central Legislature Assembly refused to appoint a committee to assist it.²⁹

At this stage, the Viceroy Lord Irwin realised that only a bold initiative would prevent Congress from its intention, outlined at its Calcutta session of December, 1928, to launch a campaign of civil disobedience if India was not granted 'Dominion Status' within the year.³⁰ He left for England in June, 1929 to confer with the British Government. A Labour Government had already come into power in Britain in May, 1929 with Ramsay Macdonald as Prime Minister. After consultations with the new ministry, Lord Irwin, on his return, announced on October 31, 1929 that 'he had been authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgement it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status.³¹ He also announced that a Round Table Conference would be held as soon as the Simon Commission submitted its report.³²

The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes greeted the Viceroy's announcement which gave them the chance of another hearing at the highest political level on their claims of autonomy.³³ In its session of February, 1930 the Chamber of Princes formally approved of the idea of a tripartite conference, comprising the representatives of the States, British India and His Majesty's Government.^{33*} For the first time the princes were invited to participate with British Indian leaders in discussion on future constitutional reforms of India. To ensure their co-operation, the British Government denied the request of States' people for representation.³⁴

The Simon Commission submitted its report in May, 1930. The Commission agreed with the recommendation of the Butler Committee that the exercises of paramountcy should be in the hands of Viceroy as distinguished from Governor-General.³⁵ The Commission asserted that although the British-governed Provinces and the areas controlled by the Princes were called 'two Indias', 'it would be more true to say that there is really only one India.'³⁶ It recommended for a serious effort to draw up a list of those matters of common concern between British India and the States, and suggested the setting up of a standing consultative body consisting of representatives from both British India and the States, to be called the Council of Greater India, with powers of discussions on 'matter of common concern.' The Council was to be a beginning which might one day lead to Indian federation. However, the Simon Commission's recommendations utterly failed to evoke enthusiasm in Indian political circles.³⁷

As already noted, the Congress, at its session of December, 1928, announced its intension to start a campaign of Civil Disobedience if India was not granted with Dominion Status by the end of 1929. In December, 1929 The Viceroy Lord Irwin himself told Gandhiji that he was not in a position to comply the Congress demands. Thus the stage of confrontation became inevitable.³⁸ At Lahore session of December 1929 the Congress decided to withdraw from the constitutional process and start a campaign of Civil Disobedience against the Raj to force it to concede 'Purna Swaraj' or complete independence.³⁹ In April, 1930, the Congress, under the leadership of Gandhiji, had launched a mass movement of civil disobedience through the initiation of the Salt Satyagraha. The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-31 marked an important stage in the progress of the anti-imperialist struggle.⁴⁰

The Congress also decided at the Calcutta Congress (1928) that it would extend sympathy and support to democratic movements within the states, implying thereby that the Congress by itself would not initiate or organise any movement within the states.⁴¹ In 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru in his presidential address to the Lahore Congress declared that 'the Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India...the only people who have a right to determine the future of the States must be the people of the States.'⁴² In fact, Gandhiji argued that there were few people in the Indian States who were fully prepared to do Satyagraha.⁴³ He adduced another reason for the Congress policy; 'agitations against princely rulers would result in support being given to them by the Government of India, thus strengthening their rule, whereas the establishment of a national government would automatically result in a qualitative transformation in the character of the rulers.'⁴⁴ Gandhiji explicitly declared that Swaraj as conceived by him did not mean the end of kingship.⁴⁵

At this stage, the anti-imperialist element dominated in the Indian national movement to the virtual exclusion of the anti-feudal element. This was amply demonstrated in the tactics actually adopted during the civil disobedience movement. For instance, Vallabh Bhai Patel declared that the States' people should not participate in any aspect of civil disobedience excepting boycott of foreign cloth and liquor.⁴⁶

Despite the reluctance of the Congress to initiate a campaign, the events in the British India inevitably sparked off small fires of popular protests in the princely India. In almost all the States, the people's movement began to grow and gather momentum, though not on the same intense scale as in British India. These movements took various forms-picketing of foreign cloth shops, liquor shops and of schools and college and even in few cases holding of no-tax campaign. Most state governments adopted repressive measures to put down these popular movements. Even some of the rulers like the Maharaja of Kapurthala offered material help to the government of India to counteract the movement in British India, on the plea that the movement in British India,⁴⁷ was also affecting the people in the Indian States. The civil disobedience movement penetrated into the Cooch Behar State as well. The State Government introduced the repressive measures to check the growth of the movement. The 'Deportation Law of the State acted as an effective tool in the hands of the State Government providing for banishment of any person from the State engaged in anti-Government activities.⁴⁸ Ramnath Biswas, the globe Trotter, while visiting Cooch Behar in 1934, said in his accounts that the subjects of the Cooch Behar State lived amidst great fear of Governmental coercion.⁴⁹

However, the movement in the Indian States was only a muted echo of what was happening in British India and that was partly because the leaders of the newly emerging political organisation in the States were also active members of the Congress. The people's democratic movements of the States which arose spontaneously from the internal dynamics of the Princely India's politics lay yet in the future.⁵⁰

It was against the background of an India seething with discontent that the Round Table Conference was held in London. It may be noted here that just before the holding of the Round Table Conference an informal meeting of the Princes in Delhi in March, 1930 decided that all the ruling Princes should be requested to contribute at the rate of ½ percent of their gross revenue for two years towards the expenses involved, in preparation of the Princes' case to be presented at the Round Table Conference. In this connection, the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes appealed to the Maharani Indira Devi, Regent, the Council of Regency of the Cooch Behar State, to make a generous contribution and to stand by the Princes' order.⁵¹ The Chancellor further informed the Maharani Regent that the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes mentioned to the Viceroy the desirability of minority states like Cooch Behar contributing towards the common fund of the Chamber of the Princes. In this context, The Government of India replied that 'in view of the special circumstances of the present year the Government of India have no objection to the Chancellor approaching minority administrations for reasonable subscriptions.'⁵²

The formal opening of the First Round Table Conference by the British King took place in London on the 12th November, 1930. Sixteen delegates of the three British political parties, fifty-seven political leaders from British India and sixteen delegates from the States participated in the Conference and the Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald presided. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, one of the leading delegates from British India to this Conference, declared himself

for a federal system of government at the Centre and invited the rulers to agree to the creation of an all-India federation with the object of starting the process of national unification. The Muslim League represented by Sir Muhammad Shafi and M.A. Jinnah also welcomed the federal scheme. The Maharaja of Bikaner Ganga Singh and the Nawab of Bhopal, Hamidullah Khan asserted that the rulers would support the scheme of an all-India federation provided their rights were guaranteed. The impact of the civil disobedience movement in the States, the impression of some leading rulers of the Chamber of Princes that their States would derive financial benefits by joining the federation and a Labour Government in power in Britain were some important factors which prompted this response from the rulers.⁵³ To many of the princes federation seemed to be a device which would reduce the power of the Political Department in States which were federal Units and consequently were enjoying direct access to the Central executive and legislative.⁵⁴ However, another group of rulers led by the Maharaja of Patiala, Bhupinder Singh, regarded a confederation of States as a necessary preliminary to any association with British India. Particularly the smaller states supported this scheme in the hope that it would help them avoid federal control in their internal affairs.⁵⁵

A Federal Structure Committee was appointed by the First Round Table Conference with Lord Sankey, the Lord Chancellor, as Chairman and representatives both from the States and British India. This Committee, which was attended by Mahatma Gandhi as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress, met on 7th September, 1931, prior to the Second Round Table Conference. It advocated for an all-India federation consisting of the Indian States and the British-administered Provinces and also certain agreed safeguards for a transitional period. The bi-cameral federal legislature would include the members from British India and representatives from the States nominated by the rulers. The Sankey report also stated that there would be only limited responsibility at the Centre for the transitional period. Besides, The Conference appointed the Minorities Committee chaired by Ramsay MacDonald. For the future of a united India, this Committee could only agree that the rights of minorities should be protected.⁵⁶

At the First Round Table Conference it was strongly felt that a constitutional discussion to which the Congress was not a party was a meaningless exercise. Soon after the adjournment of the First Round Table Conference an olive branch from the part of the Government of India to the Congress became imperative. The Viceroy Lord Irwin ordered an unconditional release of Gandhiji and all other members of the Congress Working Committee. Ultimately an understanding was reached between the Congress and the Government. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact as it was called was signed on the 5th March, 1931 which was described as a truce or provisional settlement. By this pact the Government agreed to release all the political prisoners and to concede the right to make salt along the coast for consumption. The Congress agreed to discontinue the Civil Disobedience Movement and to participate in the next Round Table Conference.⁵⁷

The Second Round Table Conference began on the 7th September, 1931 and lasted till the 1st December,

1931.⁵⁸ This session included, besides Gandhiji, new comers like Pandit Madan Mohan Malavia, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Muhammad Iqbal. Most of the leading personalities of the first session were back in their places and the British delegates were mostly the same as before. In October 1931 a general election took place in Britain and the Labour Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald headed a conservative-dominated Cabinet with the reactionary Samuel Hoare as the Secretary of State for India.⁵⁹

The Second Conference was dominated by Gandhiji who was not opposed to the federal scheme. He insisted that the full responsible Government at the Centre must be established at once. The British Government did not accept Gandhiji's demand. Moreover, this session was overshadowed by the communal problem. In spite of his sincere effort, Gandhiji failed to secure an agreed solution towards the communal problem.⁶⁰ Gandhiji returned to India empty handed and the Congress resumed the Civil Disobedience Movement.⁶¹

There were divisions among the rulers too, with regard to representation of the states in the federal legislature and the financial liabilities of the federating states. As regards representation, the major states like Hyderabad, Mysore and Baroda demanded representation in proportion to their importance and population. The Maharaja of Bikaner favoured an upper house of the federal legislature of 250, with 50 percent representation for the states, so that all the members of the Chamber of Princes might have a seat. The Maharaja of Patiala continued to advocate for a confederation of the States as a first step towards federation. As regards finance, The Federal Structure Sub-Committee's report frustrated any hope of the rulers that they could gain any financial profit by joining the federation. The apprehensions that the states might have to contribute more towards all-India expenditure, that federal agencies might function in the States and the federal Supreme Court might extend its jurisdiction over the States' people disillusioned the rulers. At the same time, many of the princes started bargaining with the Viceroy, putting forward extravagant demands in return for their entry into the federation. In fact, the rulers began turning their backs on federation.⁶²

The third and last Round Table Conference began on the 7th November, 1932 and continued upto the 24th December, 1932 with only forty six delegates attending.⁶³ None of the important Indian rulers were present there, the opposition British Labour party refused to participate. The absence of the Congress was the serious gap at the Conference, for the Congress had in the meantime, embarked on another campaign of civil disobedience. The composition of the Federal legislature was the important question which was discussed at this Conference. The form of states' instrument of accession to the federation was also considered. Anxiety was expressed by the British Indian delegates at the delay in deciding the terms on which the States would join the federation. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru observed a marked coolness on the part of the princes towards federation and asked them whether they were still interested in coming in if their rights were protected. Sir Akbar Hydari, representative of Hyderabad, assured him on behalf of the rulers that, despite great difficulties, they would join an all-Indian Federation. However, this Conference

gave the unmistakable impression that the enthusiasm of 1930 had waned and that the rulers were now marking time.⁶⁴

Like the Butler Committee, the organisers of the First Round Table Conference in London did not consider it necessary to consult the States' people's representatives. But some British Indian delegates who went there to attend the Conference, such as C. Y. Chintamani, V.S. Srinivasa.⁶⁵ Rama Chandra Rao and N. C. Kelkar were sympathetic to States' people's groups. Rama Chandra Rao and N. C. Kelkar argued the case of 'submerged humanity' of the Indian States during the deliberations. A well documented memorandum was presented by the AISPC to the Congress in March 1931, hoping that it might represent the States' people's view before the Second Round Table Conference. The Memorandum maintained that a standard of government in the States should be on a par with that prevailing in British India. The memorandum conceded that federation was the most suitable device for bringing British-administered Provinces and Indian States together. It also demanded that the federal legislature and executive should have only the elected representatives from the States, not the Princes' nominees. Gandhiji who attended the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931 advised the Princes to become the trustees of their people and to grant fundamental rights to them. At the same time he reiterated his view that the Congress should not interfere in the internal affairs of the states and leave their reformation to the voluntary will of the rulers.⁶⁶

While the Third Round Table Conference further elaborated the structure of a Federal Government of India, it failed to bring federation closer to reality.⁶⁷ This Conference could not settle the size of the federal chamber; the proportion and the allocation of States' representation and the allocation of States' seats. Therefore, the Viceroy was requested by the Secretary of State to bring about an agreement on these matters and to give adequate explanation of the federal scheme to individual rulers. The Viceroy, besides consulting some leading rulers and leaders of non-Congress parties, convened a Conference of Political Officers in Delhi on the 7th March, 1933. These Officers who were briefed on the proposed constitutional changes, were to explain the implications and the advantages of an all-india federation to individual rulers and to ascertain their views. The Chamber of Princes met about the same time and asked for a number of safeguards as a precondition for their joining the federation. They demanded that their treaty rights should be protected; that there should be no interference in their internal affairs and that a provision should be made for the States joining the federation collectively through a confederation.⁶⁸

The British Government now published their scheme for an Indian constitution as a White Paper on the 19th March, 1933,⁶⁹ in the light of the three Round Table Conferences and subsequent negotiations. In April, 1933 a Joint Committee of both houses of Parliament was formed under the Chairmanship of Lord Linlithgow, who was later to succeed Lord Willingdown as Viceroy, to examine the provisions of this constitution. The Committee was authorised to consult delegates from British India and the States. The Congress was still in the wilderness and did not participate

in these discussions. In October, 1934 the Joint Committee submitted its report which endorsed most recommendations of the White Paper. The Government of India Bill based on the Joint Committee's report was introduced in the Parliament in December 1934.⁷⁰

The Government of India Bill did not evoke enthusiasm of the Princes. The Chamber of Princes appointed a Committee of fifteen States' Ministers with Sir Akbar Hydari as Chairman to examine the Government of India Bill. The Committee noted that 'in some important respects the Bill departs from the agreed position arrived at during the meetings of the States representatives with His Majesty's Government.' It suggested a number of amendments and alterations without which it would not be possible for them to recommend to the rulers the acceptance of the proposed Bill. Another Conference of Rulers and States' Ministers was held in Bombay on 25th February, 1935, when it was resolved that 'the Bill and the Instrument of Accession do not secure those vital interests and fundamental requisites of the States on which they have throughout laid great emphasis.' The resolution further stated that 'in their present form and without satisfactory modifications of, and alteration to, the fundamental points the Bill and the Instrument of Accession cannot be regarded as acceptable to the Indian States.' The rulers of Patiala and Bikaner presented a note to the Viceroy detailing certain amendments. The Secretary of State gave careful consideration of the views of the princes and circulated a memorandum examining the specific points raised.⁷¹

The debate on the Government of India Bill lasted for forty-three days in the House of Commons and for thirteen days in the House of Lords. Its passage was resisted by diehard Conservatives like Winston Churchill in the House of Commons and Lord Salisbury in the House of Lords,⁷² who were against any changes at the Centre and ready to scuttle the India Bill. Despite this opposition, the Government of India Bill passed into law with a handsome majority in the House of Commons on the 4th June, 1935. It received the royal assent on the second August 1935.⁷³ The Government of India Act of 1935 provided for an all-India federation consisting of the Indian States and British India. The federal Legislature was to be bicameral, i.e., The Council of States, the upper chamber and the Federal Assembly, the lower chamber. A special feature of the Act was that whereas the accession of the Provinces to the federation was to be automatic, the States' accession was to be voluntary. A State was considered to have acceded when its ruler executed an Instrument of Accession and after it was accepted by His Majesty.⁷⁴ Under the terms of the Act, the federal part of the new constitution could not be inaugurated until the rulers of the States representing not less than half the total population of princely India and entitled to not less than half the numbers of seats to be given to the States in the federal upper chamber signed the Instrument of Accession.⁷⁵ The relationship of the Rulers with the Paramount Power was safeguarded by creating a Crown Representative in addition to the Governor-General. In the conduct of their affairs as members of the federation, the States were to deal with the Governor-General as head of the Federal Government but in their relations with the Paramount Power, they were to deal with the Crown Representative. The Act permitted the same individual to hold both offices and actually the same person was so appointed with the

style and title of 'Viceroy', but he had different secretarial and other agencies for his dual functions. The Government of India Act of 1935 excepting the federal part, came into force on the 1st April, 1937. From that date, the functions of the Crown in its relations with the States, were entrusted to the Crown Representative and these functions included negotiations with the rulers for their accession to the federation.⁷⁶

The British Government was, thus, able to provide a federal constitution for India States and British India. In fact, the Government of India Act, for the first time in India's constitutional history, opened the way for the States to be brought into the federal structure. But there were conflicting interests as regards the concepts of federations as envisaged by the Indian Princes, British Indian politicians and British bureaucrats. Both British India and the Princes professed belief in an all-India federation. But, while British Indian Politicians desired a strong democratic Centre with responsible government in the federating units, the Princes envisaged a federal union guaranteeing to them full protection to their authority and rights from the growing encroachments of British Paramountcy and the possible interference of democratic forces within their States. Again, 'both the Princes and the British bureaucrats were interested in counter-balancing nationalist forces in the new constitutional set up. However, while the Indian Princes wanted the scope of the Paramountcy of the Crown to be clearly defined within the framework of treaty rights and obligations, the British bureaucrats upheld the doctrine of the unquestioned supremacy of the Paramount Power.'⁷⁷

It has been pointed out that the Indian States were given a decisive role to check the nationalists in the federal legislature. They were given 104 out of 260 seats in the Council of State and 125 out of 375 seats in the Federal Assembly. These were 40 percent and 33 percent respectively. The Muslims had 49 seats in the Council and 82 seats in the Federal Assembly. In combination, these two elements enjoyed a majority in both the Houses; a union among them would frustrate the nationalists in carrying out any policy which was opposed by both these elements. Lord Irwin's policy that he would manage India with the help of these elements, was being fulfilled.⁷⁸ Ian Copland held the same view that the British attempts in 1930s to rope the Indian States into an all-India federation were intended to act as a counter-point to the electoral power of the Indian National Congress. As allies and clients of the British, the Princes were the significant players in that frantic contest between the 'old' world of the States and the 'new' nationalist world of Provinces which historians have called the end game of the empire⁷⁹

However, the Princes were the Principal party in preventing the establishment of an all-India Federation. After an initial attraction to federation, the Princes who would have gained positive guarantees so generously extended to them under such a scheme, ultimately came to reject it. There had been much talk about the need for joint co-operation with British India even before the Round Table Conferences, but there was no disciplined thinking among the Princes about what would be demanded of them in any co-operative arrangement. The closer relations with the British India were seen by the Princes as a one-way street bringing benefits to them and asking nothing in return. After the

blow to their illusions by the Butler Committee's Report, many Princes were ready to negotiate a pact with any party to reduce the British interference in their affairs. Most of the Princes in London who were agreeable to the federal scheme had little understanding of the demands likely to be made on federating units. Having accustomed to limited internal autonomy protected by the British treaty system for more than a century, the Princes found it difficult to establish themselves as viable political leaders on an all-India scene or to participate effectively in constitutional negotiations. They were handicapped by personal habits and institutional structure. Decades of arbitrary rules and extravagant deference shaped their responses, concern about their izzat, their long standing rivalries and personal ambitions disrupted unified reaction when they would have been most useful.⁸⁰

Therefore, the rulers were responsible for their utter failure to rise to the occasion. They must bear a large amount of share of responsibility for the collapse of the princely order.⁸¹ During the 1920s and 1930s growing numbers of politically aware Indians had come to criticise severely or to reject British policies in India. But the Princes were one of the few groups within the Empire who continued to identify their goals with those of the British. 'Their failure to evaluate the rising power of the Indian nationalists and the declining vigor of their British overlord tragically undermined the efforts of Indian princes to obtain security by acting as politicians on the all-India scene'.⁸² At the same time it is also true that the rulers were not the only ones responsible for this debacle. Because their British patron increasingly manipulated them for short term objectives and many British Indian politicians were not willing to share any further devolutions of power with them. 'Not realizing the limited political options open to them', Barbara N. Ramusack has pointed out, 'the Princes failed to maximize the limited advantages the Civil Disobedience Movement or the Round Table Conferences offered them.'⁸³

Notes and References :

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2. Menon, V. P., the Story of the Integration of the Indian States, Orient Longmans, the 3rd Edition, 1961, p.20.
3. Kulkarni, V. B., Princely India and Lapses of British Paramountey, Jaico publishing House, Delhi, the Second Edition 1994, p.150.
4. Menon, V. P., op. cit, p.21.
5. Loc cit.
6. Phadnis, Urmila : Towards the Integration of Indian States, 1917 - 1947, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, p.43. Confer also Kulkarni, V. B, op. cit, pp. 131-132. The Nizam, reviving his demand for the retrocession of Berar, wrote a letter to the Viceroy Lord Reading in September 1925 in which he asserted that "save and except matters relating to foreign powers and policies the Nizams of Hyderabad have been independent in the internal affairs of their State, just as much as the British Government in British India..., two governments that stand in the same plane without any limitation of subordination of one to the other". Replying to the Nizam's letter Lord Reading wrote a letter in March 1926 in which he made it clear that "The sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India and therefore no ruler of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing. Its paramountcy is not based only upon them, and quite apart from its prerogatives in matters relating to foreign powers and policies, it is the right and duty of the British Government, while scrupulously respecting all treaties and engagements with the Indian States, to preserve peace and good order throughout India". Mankekar, D. R, op. cit, p.15.
7. Menon, V. P, op. cit, p.21.
8. Copland, Ian : op. cit, p.15.
9. Report of the Indian States Committees, 1928 - 29, pp.1,4. NAI. Sir Harcourt Butler was the Governor of Burma when he was invited to head this committee. Mr. Sydney Peel was an expert on financial and economic questions and Mr. W. S. Holdsworth was an eminent Professor of Law and Legal History - Chudgar, P. L : Indian Princes under British Protection, Sameer Prakashan, Chandigarh, First Indian Reprint, 1976, p.104.
10. Memorandum of the Indian States, 1928-29, p.4 (National Archives of India). Also see Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit, p.44.
11. Foreign and Political Department, File No. 70, Part-VII, Serial No. 1/2, p.7, NAI. Copland Ian : op. cit, p.65.
12. Report of the Indian States' Committee, 1928-29, p.18, NAI.
13. Kulkarni, V. B : op. cit, pp. 156-157.
14. Indian States People's Conference, Report of the Bombay Session : 17, 18, December, 1927 (Bombay, 1928). Also See Memorandum of the Indian States People's Conference, 1928, pp. 14-15, NAI.
15. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit, p.85. Confer also Menon, V. P : op. cit, pp.21-22.
16. Memorandum of the All India States' Peoples' Conference, 1928-29, pp.3-4, 23-24, NAI.
17. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit, pp.45,89, Confer also Mankekar, D. R, op. cit., p.15 Accession to Extinction, the Story of Indian Princes, Vikash Publishing House PVT. Ltd., Delhi, 1974, p.15. The important States like Hyderabad, Mysore and Baroda declined to be represented by Sir Leslie Scott and preferred to present their own case in written replies to the the questionnaire. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29, p.3, NAI.
18. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit, p.46.
19. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29 (National Archieves of India), pp.31,22.

20. *ibid*, pp. 55-56, 32,36. This laid the formation of a Policy whereby, in later years, a wedge, was to be effectively driven between the States and British India, Menon, V. P, *op. cit*, p.23.
21. Menon, V. P. : *op. cit*, pp. 23-24.
22. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29, pp.45-46. Though Sir Scott's declaration that the Butler Committee's proceedings had been a farce sounds like the "whinge of a loser", there is some substance in the claim. The special organisation (a new full-time body created by the Chamber of Princes in February, 1928) was refused permission to consult records kept in the Political Department and Scott was denied to some confidential documents and was also refused leave to cross-examine witnesses. Besides, it has been pointed out that the Butler Committee was carefully primed by the Political Department to return a favourable report-Birkenhead to Iwrin, 15th December, 1927, Irwin Collections, 2, quoted in Ian Copland, *op. cit*, p.70.
23. Copland, Ian : *op. cit*, p.70. Also confer Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit*, p.49.
24. Menon, V. P. : *op. cit*. p.24.
- 24*. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit*, p.50.
- 24**. Ramusack, Barbara N : The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire : Dissolution of a Patron-Client System, 1914-1939, The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1978, 9. 151.
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- 27*. Ramusack, Barbara N : *op. cit*, p. 191.
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52. Letter dated Regency Council, Cooch Behar 27th June, 1930 from the Dewan to the Maharani Sahiba of Cooch Behar, Woodlands, 8 Alipore Road, Calcutta. CBDRR
53. Menon, V. P. : op. cit, pp.27-28. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit, p.57. Phadnis wrote that the work of First Round Conference (plenary session) began on 17th November, 1930, with an opening address by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. *ibid.*
54. Ramusack, Barbara N., 'The Civil Disobedience Movement and the Round Table Conferences. The Princes' Response', in Essays in Modern Indian History, edited by B. R. Nanda, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1980, p.128.
55. Menon, V. P. : op. cit, p.28. It should be stated that the Maharajas of Patiala and Dholpur met the Rulers of Panna and Jhalawar at Bombay on August 9, 1931 and evolved an agreed scheme which came to be known as Dholpur-Patiala Scheme. This scheme envisaged a federation constituted by British India and "Confederation of States", i.e. "the Indian States collectively", as federating units. The revised scheme accepted an all-India federation for "the purpose of specified matters of common interests only," and accepted the Confederation of States as a medium for their entering into all-India federation with British India. But while Dholpur-Patiala group favoured joining federation through confederation, another group of the Princes known as the Bikaner - Bhopal group favoured joining the federation directly. This was largely a reflection of the conflict between the interests of the smaller States and those of the bigger ones. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit, pp.61, 63-64.
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- Organisation', op. cit, p.386.
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75. Kulkarni, V. B.: op. cit, pp.124-125.
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Appendix B

The End of the Raj : A Historical Review of the Relationship between the Paramount Power, Princely States and Indian National Congress

The Federal Scheme embodied in the Govt. of India Act, 1935 was the first endeavour to set up the constitutional relationship between the Indian States and British India. However, the Federation of India could be established only when the Rulers of States, representing not less than half the aggregate population of the States and entitled to not less than half the seats to be allocated to the States in the Federal Upper Chamber, signified their desire to accede to it. Urmila Phadnis has rightly remarked that the disparate nature of the federating units (Provinces and States), the difference in the scope of powers of the Central authority in the executive, legislative and judicial fields with respect of States and Provinces as well as the peculiar position of the Crown, specially in its relationship with the States, gave the Federation a character which was without precedent anywhere in the world.¹

So far as British India was concerned the 1935 Act attempted to impose a quasi-federal system of Government on a previously existing unitary state. The total population of British India according to the 1941 census was 386,666,623 of which the Muslim community constituted twenty four percent. There were in addition some 660 (or 562) Indian States with a total population of 90,857,901 and a Muslim percentage of 13.3. The latter was provided almost entirely by the states situated in the extreme north-west of the country. Therefore the 1935 Act purported to solve the problem of the governance of a country with upwards of 400 million inhabitants divided into a multiplicity of linguistic groups and including a religious minority of no less than 90 million souls.²

Under the 1935 Act, federal relationship between the Provinces and the Centre could be established irrespectively of the States' accession, but the introduction of responsible government at the Centre was dependent on the inauguration of the Federation of India, for which the accession of a large number of states was necessary. Again, while the whole of British India was to form part of the federation, only 250 out of 562 States were given the option to join it. From all this, it becomes clear that the form of the Federation embodied in the Act was no doubt unique in many respects owing to the existence of federal units with variations of powers in the federal field as well as the emergence of the Paramountcy as the super-power so far as the States were concerned. This made Lord Meston think that the federal scheme was like "mixing of oil with water".³ Besides, while the Princes were given many concessions, some times even at the sacrifice of the federal principles and at the cost of fair deal of British India, no attempt was made to guarantee to their people the enjoyment of civil liberties or even rights of representation in the Federal legislature.⁴

H. V. Hodson has observed that the provisions of the Act appeared so strikingly favourable to the States that

it seems astonishing that the princes and their advisers should not have seized the opportunity of taking their part in an Indian Dominion. A conference of the Rulers and States' representatives held in Bombay in February, 1935 showed that the princes generally had not yet accepted a limitation of powers of the federating units involving a permanent resignation of part of their internal sovereignty to the federation. The Bombay meeting demanded that "treaties" of accession between His Majesty's Government and the States should lay up on the former a counter-obligation 'to preserve and safeguard the whole of their sovereignty and internal autonomy ... from any encroachment in future?' However, the Secretary of State refused to extend the debate with the princes beyond the limited problem of their place in the projected federation.⁵

As has been noted earlier, the Government of India Act of 1935, excepting the part relating to federation, came into force on the 1st April, 1937. From that time the functions of the Crown in its relations with the States were entrusted to the Crown Representative and these functions included negotiations with the Princes for their accession to the federation.⁶

The Viceroy Lord Willingdon was succeeded in 1936 by the Marquess of Linlithgow, who had been the Chairman of the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill. He came to India fired with the ambition to inaugurate the federation during his tenure of office. In the course of his first address to the Central Legislature on the 21st September, 1936, he stated that "the interval between Provincial Autonomy and Federation must inevitably be a very short one."⁷ The princes were already supplied with the draft Instrument of Accession. The Viceroy thought that a direct personal approach to the rulers would induce many of them to accept it. His plan was to send his own personal emissaries to the various states to clear the rulers' doubts and the emissaries he chose were Sir Courtenay Latimer, Sir Francis Wylie and Sir Arthur Lothian, all high officials of the Political Service. Initially the Secretary of State viewed this procedure with a certain amount of misgiving but finally he agreed to the Viceroy's proposal.⁸

The three emissaries toured the principal States in the winter of 1936-37 and explained to the rulers and their advisers the effect of federation and of the terms of accession, embodied in a draft instrument. 'This procedure H. V. Hodson remarked, 'though having obvious merit, had also certain disadvantages. Faced with this concentrated high-level pressure, the rulers and their dewans enlisted constitutional experts from England and the United States to advise them. The result was that the broad policy tended to become lost in detailed legal controversy.' The three emissaries' report which were submitted to the Crown Representative early in 1937, showed two common factors throughout Princely India; a strong reluctance to federate under the Act, and a determination to bargain for every possible concession as the price of overcoming that reluctance.⁹ 'The rulers', in V. P. Menon's Words, 'made it clear that in their case the urge to unity was not dominant.... The question that agitated them was not whether federation would enable them to contribute to the benefit of India as a whole, but whether their own position would be better and

safer inside the federation than outside it.¹⁰ They shrank from committing themselves to a national system of government under democratic forces hostile to their personal power. They also demanded that the offset be a limitation of the paramountcy that they resented, and a guarantee of the sovereignty that they claimed. When it came to particular terms, the States wished to exact mostly financial Concessions, including permanent guarantees of the revenue enjoyed by some of them from sources that would become federal subjects such as customs and excise, salt tax or the match monopoly.¹¹ The emissaries in their reports also suggested many far-reaching concessions to induce the princes to join the federation.¹²

Concessions of this sort would have involved statutory amendment of the aforesaid Government of India Act. But the Secretary of State, Lord Zetland, opposed the Viceroy's wish to grant enough favours of this order to induce some leading states such as Kashmir, Baroda and the Kathiawar States to agree to enter the federation and thus to encourage others by their example. Lord Zetland feared that every concession gained by one state would be demanded by all.¹³ Such concessions were also incompatible with the general scheme of federation. He disliked the method of individual and piecemeal negotiation. Nor was he prepared to move such amendments of the Act unless he could be assured that, if made they would bring in the rulers. He held that no amendment of the Act could maintain the states in an unduly preferential position in the federation indefinitely. Besides, in May, 1937 Lord Zetland had informal talks with a number of rulers who happened to be in England. It was his impression that the rulers generally were unwilling to enter the federation; that the Viceroy was "dealing with unwilling sellers and was tempted to put his offers high".¹⁴

The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, on the other hand, was most keen that no slackness in the negotiations should be allowed to creep in. He felt that the issue of federation could be kept alive only by keeping up the momentum of the parleys with the princes. His correspondence with the Secretary of State shows clearly his uninterupted effort to induce the States to make federation a reality. His attitude was considerably influenced by that of the Political Department and its officers, who had close relations with the several States and were experts on the States' special interests, which were often different from those of British India and especially of its advancing political democracy. As agents for the Viceroy in negotiating with the States they could not be expected to become lord bargainers on behalf of all - India, against the rulers whom they had advised and protected.¹⁵ Instead of putting a brake on the never-ceasing demands of the rulers, the Political Department showed 'a tendency to give in to the rulers all along the line.'¹⁶

The princes and their ministers met in conference at Bombay in November, 1938. While reiterating their faith in the idea of an all-India federation, they expressed their keen desire for effective safe guards for them and their successors. Otherwise, they would find themselves unable to duly discharge their duties to the Crown, to their dynasties and to their people.¹⁷

The Viceroy at last decided to confront the rulers with a comprehensive effort to bring matters to a head. In January, 1939 he addressed a circular letter to the rulers of all salute states, enclosing the revised draft of the Instrument of Accession along with the schedules and the draft acceptance of His Majesty. The letter emphasised that 'there was no prospect of any substantial variation of the terms indicated in the direction of allowing a lesser measure of accession than that which was shown therein, or modifying or adding to the limitations specified.' The rulers were asked to inform the Viceroy within six months whether they would be prepared to accept the Instrument of Accession within those terms.¹⁸

In order to examine the revised draft proposals, the Chamber of Princes appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Akbar Hydari. The Hydari Committee submitted its report in April, 1939 and maintained that the revised draft of the Instrument of Accession and the connected papers were not satisfactory and therefore, could not be acceptable in their present form. Ultimately, a Conference of rulers and their ministers held in Bombay on April 13-14, 1939¹⁹ passed the following resolution :

"The Conference ...having considered the revised draft of the Instrument of Accession and connected papers, resolves that the terms on the basis of which accession is offered are fundamentally unsatisfactory in the directions indicated in the report of the Hydari Committee ... and are therefore unacceptable. At the same time, the Conference records its belief that it could not be the intention of His Majesty's Government to close the door on all-India federation."

Hence the States proceeded to express this 'facing-both-ways' resolution by Resuming their pressure for concessions. After the Bombay Conference, the states' representatives followed their usual tactics. Federation was still as distant as ever. The rulers were adamant in not accepting the revised draft as final. Such was the position towards the beginning of August, 1939.²⁰

In the meantime, the provincial part of the Govt. of India Act of 1935 came into force and elections to the provincial legislatures had been held in February, 1937. The Congress won an overwhelming victory in six provinces and in July of that year had formed ministries. Sometime later, with the support of a few independent members, Congress ministries were also formed in two other provinces, viz, Assam and the North-West Frontier Province.²¹

It may be mentioned here that the Congress had traditionally ignored the States as a field of activity, implicitly recognising the rulers' right to make decisions about the welfare of their subjects. But this laissez-faire stance began to be modified in the 1930s as the party saw the threat of a federal scheme designed to 'hold India to the Empire.' Failing to stop the Round Table Conference process by direct action, the Congress decided after 1936, to accept the provincial parts of the Govt. of India Act and to contest the elections under the Act as a means of highlighting their popularity in the Country.²²

After the general elections in British India in 1937 had placed the Congress Government in office in eight provinces, the situation developed further. These Governments tolerated and in fact connived at agitation in neighbouring states conducted from bases in the provinces. Individual Congress leaders took part in subversive state politics. In several States, Congress Committees were formed. Non-intervention, though reiterated as Congress policy in 1938, became a formality rather than a fact.²³

The overwhelming success of the Congress, no doubt, encouraged States' subjects to agitate for civil liberties and responsible Government. There was unrest in Mysore, Travancore, Kashmir, Hyderabad, Jaipur and other States. In the Orissa States, there was an outbreak of lawlessness and in Kanpur the Political Agent, Major Bazalgette, was murdered. In Mysore, the agitation reached a high pitch. In October, 1937 the All India Congress Committee, meeting at Calcutta, adopted the resolution protesting the measures of the Mysore Government and appealing to the people of British India and Indian States "to give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in the struggle against the State for the right of self determination." But Gandhiji criticised it on the ground that the resolution was contrary to the Congress Policy of non-intervention towards the States.²⁴

The Congress' earlier policy of non-intervention was explained and justified in the resolution adopted at the Haripura session of the Congress in February, 1938. This resolution on the Indian States maintained that the Congress was not prepared to accept any kind of federation unless the States participated in it as "free units, enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India".²⁵ The Congress, the resolution continued, was not yet able to obtain the liberation of the States' subjects by itself operating within their borders. In the existing conditions, 'the burden of carrying on the struggle for freedom must fall on the people of the States.' The Congress as an organisation could only offer moral support and sympathy. Individual Congressmen would be free to render further assistance in their individual capacities, but the Congress Committees which had been formed in the States 'must submit to the control of the Working Committee and must not engage in politics under the Congress name'.²⁶

The Haripura resolution was intended to soft-pedal the agitation in the States. But it was not easy even for Gandhiji to keep the States aloof from the general mass awakening. A radical left wing had, meanwhile, developed within the Congress and it pleaded for a revolutionary policy towards the States. Individual Congressmen by this time started leading the agitation in the States themselves. The All India Congress Committee meeting in Delhi in September, 1938 condemned the repression in Travancore, Hyderabad, Kashmir and the Orissa States. The Congress Ministries of provinces adjoining States refused to use their Statutory powers to prevent agitation being organised within their provinces and launched beyond them.²⁷

The popular agitation in many States not only exerted a profound influence on the Congress leaders but

also had their active participation in some of the States. Particularly Mahatma Gandhiji attitude towards the States now began to change. In an article in Harijan in December, 1938 Gandhi's acclaimed the simultaneous awakening in the States as due to the 'time spirit'. Regarding the non-interventionist policy of the Congress, he held that "It is impossible for me to defend it in face of injustice perpetrated in the States. If the Congress feels that it has the power to offer effective interference, it will be bound to do so when the call comes."²⁸ He further said, "There is no half-way house between total extinction of the States and the princes making their people responsible for the administration of their States and themselves becoming trustees for the people, taking an earned commission for their labours."²⁹ Hence Gandhiji gave warning that the Congress policy of non-interference might be abandoned and he advised the rulers to cultivate friendly relations 'with an organization which bids fair in the future, not very distant, to replace the paramount power-let me hope, by friendly arrangement.'³⁰

In an interview published in the Times of India on the 25th January, 1939 Gandhiji also maintained that "the policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion, a perfect piece of statesmanship when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-round awakening among the people of the States and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights. If once this is recognised, the struggle for liberty, wherever it takes place, is the struggle for all India. Whenever the Congress thinks it can usefully intervene, it must intervene."³¹

It was against this background that the Congress met at Tripuri (Jubbulpore) during the 10th-12th March, 1939. The Congress President Subhas Chandra Bose in his address praised the "unprecedented awakening" of the people in the States. "I am definitely of the view", continued Mr. Bose, "that we should revise our attitude towards the States as defined by the Haripura Congress resolution.... Since Haripura much has happened... In such circumstances should we of Congress not draw closer to the people of the States?" Accordingly, the Congress resolution repeated that its sympathies lay with the people and advised the princes to march with the times. This resolution further said, "This policy [of non-intervention] was dictated by circumstances and by a recognition of the limitations inherent in the circumstances, but it was never conceived as an obligation." But the Congress had always reserved to itself "great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation or to a complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever-increasing identification of the Congress with the States' people". It was decided that the Congress Committee would meet the Standing Committee of the All India States' people's Conference (AISPC) to devise ways and means of bringing about closer co-operation among the people of the Indian States and British India.³² The AISPC, on its part, in its Ludhiana session had already resolved that the people's struggle should be in close co-operation and under the guidance of the Congress.³³

The princes were shocked and dismayed by the sudden turn around in the attitude of the Congress. They

were even more traumatised by the agitation which erupted in the wake of the Haripura decision. Mass demonstrations and peaceful hartals quickly escalated into open defiance of authority and acts of indiscriminate violence, particularly, in the smaller states. Although the agitation was for the most part organised by the local Praja Mandals, literally tens of thousands of outsiders also took part.³⁴ A number of States, heeding the demands of their subjects and the warnings of Congress had already started to implement piecemeal reforms. Some of them had made concessions in the area of civil rights whereas others had established or added to representative bodies. Even some states such as Mysore, Cochin, Gwalior, Aundh, Sangli had allocated ministerial portfolios to elected members of legislative Councils in imitation of the dyarchy system introduced in the provinces before 1937.³⁵ Cooch Behar State also introduced this dyarchy system during 1939-40. Most of these reforms would not have taken place if the princes had not come under pressure from the Congress and AISPC. It was also true as the nationalists again and again pointed out that they fell a long way short of democracy. Robin Jeffrey had rightly mentioned, "But in not a single State by 1930s had there been transfers of powers comparable to those in British India."³⁶

In this volatile political situation, Lord Linlithgow realised that unless some radical reforms were brought about in the States, they would inevitably succumb to the Congress agitation. He felt that the policy of non-interference pursued by the British Government for some years should be abandoned and active pressure should be brought to bear on these states to effect administrative reforms. On the constitutional level, Lord Linlithgow wanted to bring stronger pressure on the rulers than had hitherto been the case in the matter of sponsoring representative institutions and establishing constitutional government. But these proposals were not to the taste of the Political Department. They were against the rulers being hustled in the matter of constitutional advance and were of the opinion that the question should be left to the Chamber of Princes. The Secretary of State was in agreement with Lord Linlithgow's proposals as regards administrative reforms. But on the issue of constitutional advance he considered that the initiative and onus of responsibility must continue to rest with the rulers themselves.³⁷

In reply to a question in the British Parliament on 16th December, 1938, the Under-Secretary of State for India, declared that it would rest with the rulers to decide what form of government they should adopt in the diverse condition of India. The British Government, he said, would neither obstruct constitutional advance which a ruler proposed to initiate in his State, nor force any ruler to introduce such reforms in his State. The obligations of the Paramount Power, he maintained, would "extend to protecting rulers against violence and disorder and to advising and assisting rulers in remedying such legitimate grievances of their subjects as may be found to exist."³⁸

On the other hand, in a meeting with the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes on 21st August, 1939, the Viceroy clarified certain points with regard to the Instrument of Accession and refuted the allegations of some of the princes that some officials of the Foreign and Political Department were putting pressure upon the

Princes to join the Federation. He made it clear that "the choice is the free choice of each individual ruler and it is for him alone to make up his mind as to what decision he wishes to take." He further said that the scope of any modification in the revised draft was very limited. However, it was clear that the possibility of a federation becoming a reality was as distant as ever. The rulers were not at all inclined to agree to accept the revised draft as final.³⁹ Under these circumstances, the Government thought of clarifying its position by issuing a White Paper on federation. Accordingly, in August, 1939, letters were written to various states intimating to them the intention of His Majesty's Government to prepare a White Paper on the subject. However, the outbreak of the Second World War in September, 1939 made the British Government give up the idea of issuing such a White Paper.⁴⁰

The Second World War broke out on the 1st September, 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France were forced to go to Poland's aid and declare war on Germany on the 3rd September, 1939. By this time, not a single Princely State had come forward to join the federation. The British Government needed the help of the Princes in 'Men, money and material'. 'It was not the time to rub them the wrong way'. On 11th September, 1939 Lord Linlithgow announced in his address to central legislature that, while federation remained as before the objective of His Majesty's Government, 'the Compulsion of the present international situation and the fact that, given the necessity for concentrating on the emergency that confronts us, we have no choice but to hold in suspense the work in connection with preparations for federation'.⁴¹ This was, H.V. Hodson remarked, the death-knell of federation under the 1935 Act.⁴² According to E.W.R. Lumby, '... The suspension of the negotiations with the Princes on September 11, 1939 marks the beginning of a decline in the importance of the States in British thinking on the future of India.... The crucial negotiations soon came to be conducted by three parties only, the British, the Congress and the Muslim League.'⁴³

The failure of the federal scheme may be attributed to the unyielding attitude of the rulers as well as of the major political parties in British India. The Congress and the Muslim League were opposed to the federal scheme for different reasons. The Congress wanted radical changes to be made in the scheme of the Act. For example, it was dissatisfied with the degree of the responsible Government at the centre and it demanded that the States' representatives in the federal legislature should be elected and not nominated.⁴⁴ It has also been alleged that it was principally due to the dilatory methods pursued by Lord Linlithgow that an Indian federation in terms of the 1935 Act, was not created before the outbreak of the Second World War.⁴⁵

R. J. Moore is of the opinion that after 1937, the Congress sought to awaken national feeling in the States' peoples and clamoured at the princes's gates for reforms. But the political geography created by the 1935 Act made partition a strong possibility, as the extension to the Princes of a veto on Indian constitutional progress gave them little incentive to emulate in the states the liberality of a formerly autocratic Raj in the provinces. The Princes were

encouraged by the 1935 Act to believe that they could keep British India at arm's length. 'The British Policy', R. J. Moore further said, 'was to grant freedom with safeguard upon the creation of unity through the federation of autonomous provinces and principalities. The objective was freedom with unity but on terms dictated by Britain. Between 1937 and 1939 the design was frustrated by the success of the Congress in the provinces and its subsequent attempt to resolve the dualities of the Indian problem by direct confrontation with the Muslims and the Princes. The Congress' purpose was to create a defacto unitary government and proclaim its freedom. The process of devolution defeated both the British objective and the Congress' purpose.'⁴⁶

The non-accession of the princes to the federation, M.S. Jain thinks, was an event of momentous significance in the political and constitutional development of India. It was the severest jolt to the British imperialists who had been grooming the Indian princes as a reinsurance of their imperial interests. The accession of the Princely order to the federation had been devised by the British as a protection of their interests. The most significant change in British policy pertained to the Indian States whose dependability and reliability in carrying out subtle imperial objectives nose-dived. The British policy framers gradually eliminated the 'princely factor' from the Indian stage and reduced the rectangle to a triangle (the Congress, the Muslim League and the British). The princes were soon made irrelevant to the solution of the Indian problem and the counter-weight built up during 1926-35, had become burdensome and was unloaded systematically.⁴⁷ This event was significant enough to make the Muslim leaders feel insecure and to lead it to put forward the demand for partition as a solution of its insecurity and to make British imperialists feel shaky, about their capacity to control the nationalists, and to lead them to concede the partition demand by stages. The British began by granting a constitutional veto to the Muslim minority, in August, 1940 and the partition of the country was conceded in stages.⁴⁸

On the 3rd September, 1939 Lorth Linlithgow, the Viceroy, unilaterally associated India with Britain's declaration of War with Germany without consulting the Provincial Ministries or any Indian leader. On the 17th October, 1939 the Viceroy issued a statement repeating old offers of Dominion Status for India, promising post-war consultations with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the rulers' to modify the 1935 Act, and the setting-up for the present of a purely Consultative Group of Indian politicians and princely representatives. It, thus, became clear that the British Government had no intention of loosening their hold on India during or after the war. 'Linlithgow's attitude was a part', Sumit Sarkar said; 'of a general British policy to take advantage of the war to regain for the White-dominated Central Government and the ground lost to the Congress from 1937.' British Indian reactionary policies also received support and encouragement from Winston Churchill, who soon took over as the Prime Minister of a National Coalition in Great Britain.⁴⁹

The Congress Working Committee, meeting on the 23rd October, 1939, rejected the Viceregal statement

as a reiteration of the old imperialist policy, decided not to support the war and called upon the Congress Ministries to resign as a protest.⁵⁰ The Congress Ministries had resigned on the 29th - 30th October, 1939.⁵¹

On the other hand, The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes held a discussion with the Viceroy regarding the implications of the Viceroy's statement of 17th October 1939 on the states. The Princes demanded that no commitment affecting their rights should be made without their consent. Lord Linlithgow undertook to honour fully the treaty obligations of His Majesty's Government. Subsequently, at a meeting of the Chamber of Princes held in March, 1940, the Princes declared their complete approval of the war aims of the Allies and their determination to render every possible assistance to His Majesty's Government in the prosecution of the war. At the same time they demanded the preservation of their autonomy and the protection of their rights in any future constitution of India.⁵² However, the people of the States were not wholly with the princes in their stand. For they agreed with the Congress that "if they [Princes] must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad... their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own states in which undiluted autocracy reigns supreme."⁵³

Meanwhile, the communal situation deteriorated in the country. In January, 1940, Jinnah declared that the Hindus and the Muslims formed two separate nations and thereby both must share the governance of their common motherland.⁵⁴ On 23rd March, 1940, at the Lahore session of the Muslim League the famous resolution of Pakistan was adopted.⁵⁵ M. S. Jain thought that with the non-accession of Indian states to the federation, the Muslim leadership felt that the Muslims would remain in the position of a minority. The absence of feudal representatives of Indian states led the Muslim feudal leadership to advocate the creation of a separate state for Muslim Indians... The effort during 1937-39 was concentrated on maligning and defaming Congress rule as Hindu rule in which Muslims were not safe. The insecurity of the Muslims was so much propagated that the mass of the community fell in line. It has, thus, been argued that the demand for partition of India was put forward after the failure of the federal scheme.⁵⁶

The War entered its critical phase with the fall of France. After the resignation of Neville Chamberlain, Winston Churchill formed a National Coalition Government and L.S. Amery became the Secretary of State for India. On the 8th August, 1940 Lord Linlithgow advanced some new proposals. He offered a certain number of seats in the Governor-General's Executive Council to include more Indians and proposed that a War Council should be established containing the representatives of the States and of British India. He also promised that a post-war body representative of the 'Principal elements in India's national life' would be called upon to devise a constitution. At the same time he declared that "His Majesty's Government could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibility to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life". Both the Congress and the Muslim League rejected the 'August offer'. Nevertheless, on the 22nd July, 1941, the Viceroy's Executive was enlarged to give British Indian Politicians a majority for the first time (8 out of 12) and a National

Defence Council consisting of 22 members from British India and 9 representatives of the states was set up with purely advisory functions.⁵⁷

'Linlithgow's 'August offer', Sumit Sarkar said, 'consequently was little more than a repetition of his 17 October, 1939 statement'. Apart from this, 'encouragement of the Muslim League claims formed an increasingly important part of War-time imperialist strategy. Hence the August offer was an indication of British helplessness and they granted a kind of veto to the Muslim League on future constitutional changes.⁵⁸

Towards the close of 1941, two world developments transformed the Indian situation. Hitler's invasion of Russia and Japan's entry into the war in December, 1941 and its remarkable success against the Allies in South-East Asia brought India direct into the Zone of war. From December, 1941 the dramatic Japanese drive swept the British out from Malaya, Singapore and Burma and threatened to bring its Indian empire to a sudden end. As the war daily came nearer India (Singapore fell to the Japanese on 15 February, 1942, Rangoon on 8 March, the Andaman islands on 23 March), the British Government at long last felt obliged to make some gestures to win over Indian public opinion.⁵⁹

Burke and Quraishi have argued that 'the relations between the princes and the British Government remained sympathetic while the Congress was their common adversary'. But a change was discernible as soon as Britain began to think in terms of granting freedom to India. This was to be done in a way which would assure friendly relations with the successor Governments in which Congress was expected to be the predominant, if not the sole, participant. 'It was not the containment but the conciliation of the Congress that now became the prime objective of British Policy'.⁶⁰

It was against this background that Mr. Churchill, on 11th March, 1942, announced the decision of the War Cabinet to send Sir Stafford Cripps, then Lord Privy Seal, with a set of proposals for India's attainment of self-government after the war. A week after his arrival in India, Cripps announced his proposals at a Press conference on 29th March, 1942.⁶¹ The Draft Declaration consisted of two parts—a long-term offer and a short term offer. The long term offer was that 'immediately after the cessation of hostilities a constitution making body would be set up to frame a new constitution with dominion status with right of secession. This body would be elected by provincial legislatures. This constitution would be framed subject only to two conditions, namely, that a province or provinces had the right to secede from the Indian Union and to frame a constitution of their own, and secondly, that a treaty would be signed between the British Government and the constitution making body to cover "all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands." Under the short-term offer, it was maintained that, until the new constitution was framed, the British Government 'invited the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the Principal sections of the Indian people in the Councils of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the

United Nations for the defence of India and the prosecution of the World War effort as a whole".⁶²

The Cripps' declaration with regard to the States was very brief. The Indian States were not mentioned in the short term as they were already co-operating with the British Government. In the long term offer, however, the Draft Declaration announced "whether or not an individual state elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation". The States to appoint representatives to the constitution making body in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole. The States would be free to adhere or not to the new constitution.⁶³

In his Press Conference on 31st March, 1942, Cripps made it clear that there was 'no contemplation' of any dominion being set up which consisted solely of Indian States.⁶⁴ However, a Princes' delegation met Cripps on 2nd April, 1942 and in this meeting the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, then Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, maintained that although the States would like to co-operate and participate in the Indian Union, provision was necessary for "non-adhering States or group of States" to 'have the right to form and negotiate for a Union of their own with full sovereign States.' Sir Stafford Cripps told the Chancellor that he would urge it on behalf of the Princes before His Majesty's Government. Regarding the question of Paramountcy, Cripps clarified that, while in the case of the adhering States to the Union, Paramountcy would be 'automatically dissolved' and with regard to non-adhering States, Paramountcy would continue to be in force.⁶⁵

Sir Stafford Cripps suggested the extension of joint co-operative grouping scheme to wider units. Otherwise, they could have separate Unions instead of a single Union and suffered 'inconveniences involved'. Answering the question of the revision of treaties, Cripps assured the Princes that the 'intention was to revise the treaties only so far as might be required in the new situation'. The Lord Privy Seal also advised the Princes to establish contacts with political parties in British India so that a final decision on the future constitutional changes might be facilitated.⁶⁶ Finally, Cripps explicitly explained to the Princes that the acceding States would have to delegate some of their rights to the Union but also warned them of the disadvantages of non-acceding.⁶⁷

By talking with the Princes Conrad Confield learned that the impression they got from Cripps was that the British Government was only interested in a settlement with British India, and the States would have to do their best to fit into whatever settlement was made.⁶⁸ Cripps had also told the Maharaja of Kashmir that the future of the States lay with India, and no Prince should harbour the illusion that the British Crown would come to his help if he decided to opt out.⁶⁹ Menon also wrote that 'the Cripps Mission brought home to the rulers the discomfoting realization that if the interests of British India and the states come into conflict His Majesty's Government would almost certainly let down the states'.⁷⁰ The Cripps' mission was a failure as its proposals were rejected by both the Congress and the Muslim

League on the 10th April, 1942. The rulers heaved a sigh of relief.⁷¹ The Congress, apart from other points such as defence, rejected the Cripps offer on the plea that 90 million of States' people had no representation in this offer and the principle of non-accession might lead to the balkanisation of India in many states.⁷² The Princes did not also seem to have favoured the Cripps offer. Some of its proposals created anxiety and suspicion in the minds of the Princes regarding the future policy of the British Government towards them. In a letter dated the 15th June, 1942 the Chancellor complained that Sir Stafford Cripps, in his discussion on defence matters, had ignored the States completely. 'Various important references, made in connection with Cripps Mission both in India and in the House of Commons, were confined to British India only as if the Indian states did not matter'. Besides, "Sir Stafford Cripps received a British Indian as a representative of the so-called States People's Conference which is an adjunct of Congress".⁷³ In another letter of January, 1943, the Chancellor further objected to Sir Stafford Cripps' suggestion for 'establishing an effective machinery in the States for ventilating the grievances of the people on the plea that it was in direct contravention to the British Government's policy of leaving the responsibility as well as the decision to the rulers'. The Political Department in this context replied that the British Government endorsed Sir Stafford Cripps' suggestion primarily "in the interests of the rulers themselves". "But it was for the latter to devise the precise form of machinery best suited" to them.⁷⁴

At this time much adverse criticism also appeared in a section of the Indian Press about the demand of the rulers that the non-acceding States should be allowed to form a Union of their own. 'It was alleged that the rulers had been instigated to make this demand by the Political Department with the connivance of the Viceroy. When the matter came up for consideration, the Secretary of State felt....that the rulers' suggestion deserved sympathetic consideration.' However, H. V. Hodson, the Reforms Commissioner and later his successor V. P. Menon opposed this proposal. Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy accepted their advice and informed the Secretary of State that a separate Union of States was not only practical politics but it was also not a worth subject for consideration. He held emphatically that the States should not be encouraged to go on thinking along those lines.⁷⁵

Shortly afterwards, the Congress had passed the 'Quit India' resolution on the 8th August, 1942 and thereby the Quit India movement was launched in the Country. As a consequence, the Congress had been outlawed. During the Quit India movement it was made clear that 'there was no distinction to be made between the people of British India and the States : every Indian was to participate'. The meeting of the AISPC was held along with the All India Congress Committee session at Bombay that announced the commencement of struggle. Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru both addressed the AISPC Standing Committee, and Gandhiji himself explained the implications of the Quit India movement. He told the Standing Committee that henceforth there would be one movement. The movement in the States was now to be not just for responsible government but for the independence of India and integration of the States with British India.⁷⁶

In the Country-wide disturbances which occurred in August, 1942, the States people did not participate in an organised manner as their compatriots in several provinces had done. The AISPC did not directly involve itself in the struggle but it never prevented the State Governments from using the repressive laws in their armoury against public agitations of all kinds. In their attempt to demonstrate their loyalty to the British, some of the States resorted to oppressive laws even more vigorously than had been done in British India. In Patiala, Jhabua and some Kathiawar and Rajashthan States tillers' agitation for agrarian reforms was suppressed in a manner as if it was a political move to spread disaffection against the ruler.⁷⁷

The convulsions wrought by the Pacific War are rightly considered by historians to have been instrumental in the collapse of European colonialism in Asia. But in the short term the outbreak of war, in India, had the effect of reinforcing the imperial presence, strengthening the colonial government's control over public life and temporarily halting moves to devolve power through constitutional change. While the Congress languished in opposition, other groups such as the Muslim League and the princes flourished in the political vacuum created by the Congress' resignation from the provincial ministries.

The Second World War was kind to the rulers in several ways. It generated a martial, authoritarian culture in India which was congenial to their talents and traditions as blue-blooded Kshatriyas. Some younger rulers such as the Maharaja of Bundi, and the Maharaja of Cooch Behar distinguished themselves on active service; while older members of the order such as Ganga Singh of Bikaner and Hamidullah Khan of Bhopal took a prominent part in the planning and promotion of the war effort. Apart from this, 'the resignation of the Congress' Governments, the introduction of authoritarian war time measures such as the Defence of India Rules and the jailing in August 1942 of the greater part of the Congress leadership made life much easier for the Princes who remained at home.⁷⁸

The war allowed the princes to dramatise their loyalty to the Crown. It also allowed the princes partially to redeem themselves with the British for their failure to deliver the goods on federation. Travancore, Bhopal, Kashmir, Hyderabad and other States directly or indirectly contributed to the war-effort. As has been stated in the previous chapters Cooch Behar was also no exception. Altogether, the cost of war materials provided by the States down to 1945 exceeded £5 million. In addition, the States made numerous direct grants of cash and gave generously of their land, buildings and work forces for war purposes. Again, the darbars made an important indirect contribution to the war effort by actively promoting it among their subjects. 'By the end of 1944 over 3,00,000 men from 59 States had signed up for military service and 15,000 more for war-related jobs in industry — a higher per-capita response than that of any of the provinces except for the Punjab — while some Rs. 180 million had been contributed by the states' people in subscription to Government War Bonds and securities and through donations to the Viceroy's War Purposes Fund.⁷⁹

Finally, the Princes aided the British by suppressing the internal disturbances during the Quit India movement of 1942-43, thereby freeing up thousands of police and troops for deployment in the troublespots of Bengal, Bombay and North-West Frontier Province. Hence The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow praised the darbars' response as 'astoundingly helpful and reassuring.'⁸⁰ Comment in London, where former conservative party rebel Winston Churchill had already taken over the prime ministership from Neville Chamberlain and the romantically minded Leo Amery had replaced Zetland at the India Office, was just as laudatory.' 'By the end of Lord Linlithgow's six-year term in 1943', Copland said, "the good will generated in London and New Delhi by virtue of the States' war services had gone a very long way to repairing the damage done to the special relationship between the Rulers and the Crown by the federation debacle".⁸¹ It is also fair to say that the aid generously rendered by the States carried with it firm expectations of political rewards when the imperial cause prevailed. Lord Linlithgow retired on the 24th October, 1943 and Lord Wavell came in his place.⁸² Lord Wavell was a good-hearted but blunt military man with very little knowledge of the States.⁸³

By the end of 1944 some historically significant events had taken place. 'The epic defence of Stalingrad had halted Hitler' and German armies were fought on the defensive. Japan had been effectively checked. Victory for the Allied Powers seemed to be only a question of time. 'About this time the Nawab of Bhopal was elected Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. He infused new life into the Chamber by forging that body into an effective instrument for developing the rulers into a 'Third Force' in Indian Politics. He also hoped that with the Congress and the Muslim League pitted against each other, the States would occupy a key position and hold the balance. Besides, he started taking vigorous steps with the Political Department to safeguard the position of the States in any future constitutional changes. At a meeting of the Standing Committee held on the 18th September, 1944 the Chancellor expressed his intention to move the following resolution at the next session of the Chamber to be held early in December, 1944.⁸⁴

"The Chamber of Princes considers it necessary to reiterate in the most unequivocal and emphatic terms that the Crown's relationship with States and the Crown's power in respect of the States cannot and should not be transferred to any third party or other authority without the consent of the States concerned. The Chamber requests His Excellency the Crown Representative to be pleased to convey to His Majesty's Government the grave misgivings and apprehensions aroused in the States, by the recent tendency to alter the States' relationship with the Crown... by the unilateral action without the consent of the states, notwithstanding the solemn Royal pronouncements that these Treaty Rights shall be maintained impaired, and the recent assurance conveyed to the Indian princes by His Majesty's Government that the fulfilment of the fundamental obligations arising out of their treaties and sanads remains an integral part of His Majesty's Government's policy."

On the 26th November, 1944, the Viceroy Lord Wavell, as the President of the Chamber, disallowed this resolution on the plea that it would be undesirable to ventilate in public such delicate issues at a time when the matter

had already come under discussion between the Rulers and the Viceroy. The Viceroy's such reply gave dissatisfaction to the Standing Committee of the Chamber. Early in December, 1944 they resigned in a body as a protest against the 'gradual deterioration of the position of the states and the disregard of their legitimate interests'. On the 4th December, 1944 eighty Rulers met at Delhi under the chairmanship of the Maharaja of Gwalior endorsing the stand taken by the Standing Committee. Lord Wavell, who was anxious to placate the Rulers, had long discussions with the Chancellor. Ultimately, on the 25th June, 1945, Lord Wavell gave an assurance that there would be no future transfer of relationship of the states with the Crown to any other authority without their consent, provided that the rulers would assure the Government of their consent to any changes arising out of negotiations. Accordingly, the Chancellor declared that the rulers would not withhold their consent to any constitutional rearrangement which 'we consider reasonable in the wider interests of India'. Finally, the Standing Committee decided to withdraw their resignation.⁸⁵

By the end of 1942, the British Government had come out victorious in their immediate confrontation with Indian nationalism. The remaining two and a half years of the war passed without facing any serious political challenge in the country. Yet the 'victory' had been possible only in war conditions that had allowed in fact ruthless use of force. The British would never risk such a confrontation again and the decision in 1945 to try for a negotiated settlement was not just a gift of the new Labour Government. This is amply indicated by the attitude of the new Viceroy Lord Wavell. In a letter to the British Prime Minister Churchill dated the 24th October, 1944, Lord Wavell maintained that 'it would be impossible to hold India by force after the war, given the likely state of world opinion and British popular or even army attitudes (as well as the economic exhaustion of Britain, he might have added)'.⁸⁶

In March, 1945 Lord Wavell flew to London for consultations with the British Government. He returned at the end of May, 1945. In the meantime, a series of momentous events that rocked the World, had taken place. On the 1st May, 1945 the Hamburg Radio announced the death of Adolf Hitler and within a week Germany surrendered unconditionally. On the eve of Lord Wavell's departure from England, the Secretary of State informed the House of Commons that the British Government had empowered Lord Wavell to make new proposals on the composition of an interim Government. In a broadcast on the 15th June, 1945 Lord Wavell disclosed a fresh plan designed to 'ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of self-government'.⁸⁷ The Viceroy proposed talks to set up a new Executive Council which would be entirely Indian except for the Viceroy himself and the Commander-in-Chief. 'Caste Hindus' and Muslims would have equal representation and the Executive would work within the existing constitution (i.e., it would not be responsible to the Central Assembly).⁸⁸ The measures proposed by the Viceroy were provisional and were intended to mobilize the forces of India against Japan and to draft a new constitution. Meanwhile, the Cripps offer, it was stated, remained in the field. At the same time, Lord Wavell invited the leaders of the Congress and of the Muslim League, as well as others to Simla for further discussions. The members of the Congress Working Committee were released to participate in the talks. That marked the end of the phase of confrontation that had

existed since August, 1942. The Simla Conference met on the 30th June, 1945 but failed to reach agreement. The negotiations broke down finally on the 14th July, 1945.⁸⁹

In the meantime, the Nawab of Bhopal, the then Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, convened a meeting of a special Committee of Rulers and Ministers in Bombay in April-May, 1945. This Committee examined the question of the political adjustment between the States and British India. In another Joint Conference of Rulers and Ministers held in June, 1945, a resolution adopted reviewed the position of the Princes in the new political situation and felt that the Cripps offer and the recent developments had already indicated that India might be a Dominion without the adherence of the States. The resolution further emphasised that the war efforts of the States were not likely to make up, for the purposes of negotiation, the loss in the position which the States once enjoyed. Besides, "the British Government will not be in a position in a Dominion India effectively to fulfil its obligations of defence or to safeguard the non-acceding states against economic strangulation or discrimination by the Dominion Government."⁹⁰

The Joint Conference also appointed a Constitutional Advisory Committee to prepare "the case of states for use at appropriate places." The first meeting of the Committee was held in July, 1945, to consider the proposals for an interim Government as given in a broadcast of Lord Wavell in June, 1945. It recommended the setting up of a suitable machinery for regular consultations between the representatives of British India and representatives of the states with regard to matters of common concern during the interim period. The Committee unanimously endorsed the importance of progressive reforms in the States and expected the rulers to introduce them as soon as possible.⁹¹

After a massive victory in the general election in July, 1945 in Great Britain, the Labour Party formed a new government under Clement Attlee as the Prime Minister and Lord Pethick Lawrence became the Secretary of State for India. Soon afterwards, what was changing fast was the total objective situation, world wide, as well as Indian. Nazi Germany had been destroyed, Japan surrendered after Hiroshima in August, 1945, socially-radical regimes with communist leadership were emerging in Eastern Europe, the Chinese revolution was forging ahead, and a tremendous anti-imperialist wave was sweeping through South-East Asia. 'With a war-weary army and people and a ravaged economy, Britain would have had to retreat; the Labour Victory only quickened the process somewhat.'⁹²

In September, 1945 Lord Wavell, the Viceroy went again to England and on his return announced his second plan. He reaffirmed the Government's determination to do their utmost to promote the early realization of full self-government for India and expressed the hope that Indian political leaders would assume ministerial responsibility in all the provinces after the elections which had already been announced. He declared that the British Government intended to convene as soon as possible a constitution making body to draft the future constitution of India and for this purpose, he had been authorised to consult the representatives of the provincial assemblies to modify the Cripps'

proposals. Discussions will also be held with the representatives of the Indian States to enable them to participate in the constitution-making body.⁹³

The Princes welcomed Lord Wavell's second plan and were prepared to take the opportunity of participating with the representatives of British India in the task of framing of a constitution for the country. They, however, made it clear that any such constitution would be subject to ratification by the princes; that the monarchical form of government in the states should in no way be discussed by them; and that their existing treaties and sanads would not be altered unilaterally without their consent.⁹⁴

The annual session of the Chamber of Princes was held in January, 1946 under the chairmanship of Lord Wavell. The Viceroy in his address assured the princes that no change in their relationship with the Crown or the rights guaranteed to them by treaties and engagements would be initiated. He expressed his confidence that the states would take their active part in the future constitutional discussions as well as in the proposed constitution-making body. He also emphasised the necessity of placing their administration on modern lines for the welfare of their subject.⁹⁵ In reply, the Chamber of Princes in a resolution adopted at this session asserted that 'the States fully shared the general desire of the country for the immediate attainment of its political stature and their intention to make every possible contribution towards the settlement of the constitutional problem.' It further declared that it was the policy of the Chamber that the fundamental principles of sound administration should be followed in every state and that "there shall be popular institutions with elected majorities to ensure close and effective association of the people with the governance of the States."⁹⁶ The princes' resolution with regard to constitutional reforms was a step in the right direction but actual steps were too slow to keep pace with the rapidly changing situation. The Princes failed to comprehend the growing aspirations of the people of Indian States and therefore, could not carry their people with them on the question regarding the position of the States in the future political set up.

The Labour Government's attitude of Great Britain was influenced by what the Government of India was saying about the political imperative of economic development. The advice from the Indian Government was that the States were on the whole, too small to stand on their own feet, represented barriers to trade and communications and were likely to present a serious impediment to rational economic planning. It seemed clear to Attlee, Cripps, and the other members of the Cabinet's India and Burma Committee, that a prolongation of the monarchical system was incompatible with the goal of a free, prosperous India.⁹⁷

However, the main reason that drove the Labour Government to pull the plug was the knowledge that the princely partnership had become insupportable. While the Whitehall saw insurmountable obstacles to maintaining a diplomatic link with the States, after independence, they could see no way of fulfilling their obligation to protect them.

Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State, thus explained to the Cabinet on the 9th October, 1945. "...The question therefore arises whether Crown will have in India British troops under its sole command and, if so, whether any treaty provision could be made which would secure free passage for them to any non-adhering State in which their use was required... I fear that the answer to both questions may be in the negative".⁹⁸ He also observed in a memorandum for Attlee dated the 21st December, 1946, that it was not really "a possible solution to maintain British troops in States... to resist infiltration from British India' when the Congress, which encouraged such action, was in office with our approval."⁹⁹ Therefore, the Labour Government came to the conclusion that Britain's pledges to the States would have to be repudiated.

The British Government had now ample time to take stock of the Indian situation, since it had been in power for eight months. The British Cabinet had already appointed a British delegation to India on the 28th November, 1945¹⁰⁰ to meet leading political personalities and to learn their views. So the Government had the benefit of the views of this delegation which had toured the country. On the 19th February, 1946, Attlee announced the much more significant decision to send a Cabinet Mission to negotiate with Indian leaders for achieving "early realisation of full self-government in India." While speaking in Parliament on the 15th March, 1946, he expressed the hope that Princely India and British India would co-operate with each other.¹⁰¹ From 24th March to June 1946, three members of the Cabinet Mission Secretary of State Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and First Lord of the Admiralty A. V. Alexander carried on together with Wavell long and very tortuous negotiations with Indian leaders on the two issues of an interim Government and principles and procedures for framing a new constitution giving India freedom.¹⁰²

The Cabinet Mission arrived in New Delhi on the 24th March, 1946 and the Secretary of State Lord Pethick Lawrence at a press conference held the next day, expressed the hope that the Mission would enable Indians to set up a machinery for producing a constitutional structure for India as a whole. He also made it clear that in its negotiations the Mission would adhere to the earlier precedents and would consult only the Rulers.¹⁰³ This disappointed the AISPC which had all along demanded that States' people's opinion should also be taken into account. Authorised by the Standing Committee of the AISPC, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to the Mission insisting that it should meet the representatives of the AISPC. In this letter, Mr. Nehru emphasised that "independence conferred upon India would not be complete unless it applied to States' subjects too."¹⁰⁴

Following the policy stated by Lord Pethick Lawrence, the Cabinet Mission met the Nawab of Bhopal, the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, rulers of Bikaner, Patiala, Gwalior and Nawanagar who were the members of the Standing Committee and represented the interests of the middle-sized states as well as rulers of Bilaspur and Dungarpur representing smaller states. The views of Hyderabad and Travancore were placed before the Commission by their respective representatives, viz., the Nawab of Chhattari and Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer. Sir Mirza Ismail

represented the Rajputana States.¹⁰⁵

In their talks with Mission, the members of the Chamber of Princes, specially the Chancellor, made it clear that the States wished to retain the maximum degree of sovereignty. They desired no interference in their internal affairs by British India. None of the rulers wanted a constitutional set-up as envisaged in the Act of 1935 but they were in favour of a 'loose federation' at the Centre. The rulers argued that if there could be two Indias there was no reason why a third India composed of states should not be recognised. The Chancellor suggested the formation of a Privy Council of the States and British India as proposed in the Simon Commission Report. Lastly, he pleaded that Paramountcy should not be transferred to an Indian Government.¹⁰⁶ The bigger States like Hyderabad and Travancore also agreed with the Chancellor on these issues.¹⁰⁷ However, the rulers of Dungarpur and Bilaspur were divided in their views. While the Maharaja of Dungarpur believed that, except six bigger States, the Smaller States should group themselves into larger units "by pooling sovereignty on a regional and linguistic basis", the Raja of Bilaspur did not agree with the idea of grouping and wanted each state to be sovereign and to be left to itself to do as it wanted after Paramountcy lapsed.¹⁰⁸

Broadly, the position taken up by the rulers was that "Paramountcy should not be transferred to a successor Government, but that it should lapse; that the States should not be forced to join any Union or Unions; that there should be prima facie no objection to the formation of a confederation of States if the rulers so desired; and that there should be no interference in their internal affairs By British India".¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Mission had also met the leaders of Indian political parties and communal groups. The Mission and the Viceroy also held a tripartite conference on the 27th April, 1946, with the delegates of the Congress and the Muslim League at Simla. The Mission met the Nawab of Bhopal again on the 9th May, 1946 and clarified some of his doubts.¹¹⁰

On the 16th May, 1946 the Cabinet Mission after the conclusion of its discussion with Indian leaders, issued a statement embodying their own suggestions and recommendations towards a solution of the Indian problem. This was subsequently known as the 'Cabinet Mission Plan'.¹¹¹ Referring to the States, the Plan made it clear that, after India gained freedoms the relationship which had existed hitherto between the States and British India would no longer be possible. "Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government. The representatives of the States have assured the Cabinet Delegation that they are ready and willing to co-operate in the new development of India, but the precise form which their co-operation will take must be a matter for negotiation, and the outcome of that negotiation may not prove to be identical for all the states."¹¹²

The Cabinet Mission Plan recommended that the states would "retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union", namely, Defence, Communications and Foreign Affairs. During the interim period, the States would be represented in the Constituent Assembly by a Negotiating Committee. In the final Constituent Assembly, the method of selecting the states' representatives whose number was not to exceed 93 was to be finalised in consultation with the parties concerned. Then the representatives of the three sections of the Constituent Assembly and of the Indian States could prepare the constitution for India. In his broadcast on the 16th May and at the Press Conference the next day, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick Lawrence raised no new points and clarified none except that Paramountcy was to lapse after India had gained independence and that the future relationship between the States and British India was to be decided by the parties themselves through negotiation.¹¹³

The Mission also prepared a Memorandum entitled "A Memorandum on States' Treaties and Paramountcy" and forwarded it to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes on the 12th May, 1946. But the Memorandum was published on the 22nd May, 1946. "During the interim period", stated the Memorandum, "Paramountcy will remain in operation. But the British Government could not and will not in any circumstances transfer Paramountcy to an Indian Government". Paramountcy would lapse and all the rights surrendered by the States to the Paramount Power would return to the States. Political arrangement between the Crown and the States would be brought to an end. This void would "have to be filled either by the States entering into a federal relationship with the successor government or Governments in British India or failing this, entering into particular political arrangements with it or them."¹¹⁴ It was also stated that during the interim period it would be necessary for the States to conduct negotiations with British India in regard to future relations in matters of common concern, specially in the economic and financial fields.¹¹⁵

The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes adopted the resolution on the 10th June, 1946 expressing the view that "the Cabinet Mission Plan provided the necessary machinery for the attainment by India of independence, as well as a fair basis for further negotiations. This Committee welcomed the declaration of the Mission with regard to Paramountcy, though maintained that certain adjustments during the interim period were necessary. The Standing Committee also accepted the invitation of the Viceroy to set up a Negotiating Committee for consultations with its counterpart in British India so as to determine the method of selecting the representatives of Indian States in the Constituent Assembly."¹¹⁶ This Committee included the Princes and their Ministers, and the States' people had no place in it.¹¹⁷

On the other hand, the General Council of the AISPC met in Delhi during the 8th - 11th June, 1946 to discuss the Cabinet Mission Plan. Nearly 200 delegates from all over India participated in it. Referring to the explosive background in the Indian States, Pandit Nehru, in his presidential address, expressed the view that the immediate problems with which the States' people were faced were : (1) making of an Indian constitution; (2) arrangements for

the interim period; (3) democratisation of the States to bring them up to a common level with the rest of India. He further maintained that Paramountcy should rest in the Union Federal Government and also deplored the fact that the Cabinet Mission had completely ignored the States' people in its deliberations.¹¹⁸ The General Council of the AISPC in its resolution welcomed the declaration of the Princes that they stood for "a free and united India." At the same time, it regretted the way the States' people had been bypassed and ignored by the Cabinet Mission. It complained that the Mission made no reference at all to the internal structure of the States. The General Council also suggested that, in the Constituent Assembly, people's elected representatives and not nominated members should participate.¹¹⁹

The Congress was also critical of the absence of any provision for elected members from the Princely States in the proposed Constituent Assembly. Soon after the publication of the Cabinet Mission Plan, 'the Congress resolved that the Constituent Assembly could not be formed of two conflicting elements and that the manner of appointing the States' representatives for the Constituent Assembly must approximate, so far as possible, to the method adopted in the Provinces'.¹²⁰

In June, 1946 both the Congress and the Muslim League agreed to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan. Hence, both the major parties agreed to participate in the Constituent Assembly to be convened for the framing of a new constitution. But this agreement was bound to be short-lived, since it was based on mutually opposed interpretations of the Plan. The Muslim League reiterated that the attainment of a sovereign Pakistan still remained its unalterable objective and finally withdrew its earlier acceptance of the plan on 29-30th July, 1946. Meanwhile, Lord Wavell set up a Caretaker Government of officials alone on 4th July, 1946.¹²¹ On 12th August, 1946 the Viceroy invited the Congress President Nehru to form an interim Government which did on 2nd September, 1946. On 15th October, the league representatives also joined this Government.¹²²

In the meantime, elections to the Constituent Assembly were held in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Mission Plan. The Members of the Muslim League who were elected to that body refused to join it. However, the Constituent Assembly with other members met, for the first time, on the 9th December, 1946. It elected Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the President and appointed several committees to draft the different sections of the constitution. On the 21st December, 1946 the Constituent Assembly passed a resolution appointing a Negotiating Committee to negotiate with its counterpart of the Chamber of Princes, regarding the representation of the States in the Constituent Assembly.¹²³

The Muslim League's decision to stay out of the Constituent Assembly 'tended to unsettle the princes' decision also. The Chancellor, the Nawab of Bhopal, was of the opinion that in the absence of agreement between the parties in British India, the Princes should not join the Constituent Assembly. He also held that in order to play the role

of an effective "Third Power" in Indian politics, the rulers should not join the Constituent Assembly immediately but should join it only after had taken a unanimous decision regarding the conditions precedent to their entry to that body.¹²⁴ For this purpose, the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes drew up a lengthy resolution which was adopted at a Conference of Rulers at Delhi on the 29th January, 1947. This emphasised certain fundamental propositions, which formed the basis of the States' acceptance of the Mission Plan. The entry of the States into the Union, the resolution stated, should be subject to the prior acceptance by the Assembly Negotiating Committee of certain 'sine qua nons', namely, the preservation of the system of monarchy, right of secession if India became a republic, and recognition of all existing State boundaries.¹²⁵ Some rulers also publicly announced that if these fundamental propositions were not accepted by the Congress, they would boycott the Constituent Assembly. But there was a small group of rulers which did not support the resolution passed at the Delhi Conference. The Ruler of Baroda, for instance, decided to join the Constituent Assembly.¹²⁶

The Negotiating Committee of the Chamber of Princes met the British Indian counterpart for the first time on the 8th February, 1947. But this joint meeting ended without any positive result owing to material differences regarding the scope of the discussions which manifested themselves at the outset. Particularly the Chancellor, the Nawab of Bhopal, insisted that before the talks could proceed, the Assembly would have to accept the terms enshrined in the princes' resolution of 29th January. On the 9th February, 1947 the second joint meeting was convened, where the Chancellor repeated his previous day's stand that 'the Chamber of Princes had laid down certain fundamental propositions on which they wanted satisfactory assurances before they could enter the Constituent Assembly. This time Nehru, on behalf of the Congress, made a conciliatory approach to the rulers. He made it clear that they would not come in the way of the monarchical form of government in the States. The Congress had no idea of changing the States' boundaries. Such change must have the consent of the parties and would not be forced on them. He added that the scheme under the Mission Plan was a voluntary one and there would be no compulsion at any stage. Nehru's statement satisfied the rulers and then the meeting considered the question of filling the 93 seats allotted to the States. It was decided that the method of distribution should be worked out jointly by the Secretaries of the Constituent Assembly and of the Chamber of Princes and the Meeting adjourned till the 1st March, 1947.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, open dissension between the Congress and the Muslim League members in the Interim Government had come to a head. In February, 1947 the League's refusal to join the Constituent Assembly and co-operate in the Cabinet functioning led to a major political crisis. The Congress also demanded resignation of the League ministers and threatened to withdraw its own nominees from the interim government if its demands were not met. This was the immediate context of the Prime Minister Attlee's famous declaration in the House of Commons on the 20th February, 1947. It set a date not later than June 1948 by which Britain would transfer power to responsible Indian hands. It also announced that Viscount Mountbatten of Burma would replace Lord Wavell as Viceroy. With

regard to the States the declaration stated :

"As was explicitly stated by the Cabinet Mission, His Majesty's Government do not intend to hand over their powers and obligations under Paramountcy to any Government of British India. It is not intended to bring Paramountcy, as a system, to a conclusion earlier than the date of the final transfer of power, but it is contemplated that for the intervening period the relations of the Crown with individual States may be adjusted by agreement".¹²⁸

This declaration had a considerable influence on the two Negotiating Committees when they met on the 1st March, 1947. Pandit Nehru argued that Attlee's declaration had introduced an additional element of urgency and it would be a great advantage of the States if their representatives could join the Constituent Assembly during the April session. This joint meeting approved the distribution of seats among the States by the two secretariats and then turned to the method of selecting representatives. A Sub-committee was appointed to consider the question. The general proposition was accepted that fifty percent of the States' representative would be elected and that the Darbars would endeavour to increase the elected quota as much as possible. Nehru also invited the States' representatives to work on the committees set up by the Constituent Assembly.¹²⁹

Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy, arrived in India on the 22nd March, 1947 and took charge two days later. As a man of royal blood, cousin no less than to the King-Emperor George the Sixth, already well-known to the Princes from his time as supreme commander and counted a close personal friend by Bikaner, Bhopal and Rampur. Mountbatten appeared tailor-made to guide the States through a period of crisis.¹³⁰ Mountbatten interpreted his mission as one to get the Princes somehow or other into one dominion or other. Unlike his cousin, he did not have much time or admiration for the Indian Princes, whom he regarded as 'semi-enlightened autocrats at their best and squalid degenerates at their worst.' He called them a "bunch of nitwits."¹³¹

Mountbatten proved more decisive and quick in taking decisions than previous Viceroys like Wavell. This was possible because he had been informally given much greater powers to decide things on the spot by the British Government than his predecessors. Apart from this, the formula of freedom-with-Partition was coming to be widely accepted well before Mountbatten took over charge.¹³² Nevertheless, his earnest determination to transfer power by June, 1948 to Indian hands created a deep impression.

The general conference of the rulers was convened at Bombay in the first week of April, 1947. The Chancellor, the Nawab of Bhopal, again reiterated his old stand in a memorandum, stating that the propositions contained in the resolution of 19th January should be taken as a condition precedent to the States' entry to the Constituent Assembly. Sadul Singh, the Maharaja of Bikaner, was opposed to the policy pursued by the Chancellor. In a statement the Maharaja of Bikaner emphasised that "the united front which was required to be put by the States could not be

attained by a policy of 'wait and see' but co-operation with the Constituent Assembly." Besides, this 'wait and see' policy, he held, would give "a loophole to the interested parties to make mischief in every possible way." Yadavindra Singh, the Maharaja of Patiala, in another statement, voiced the same views of the Maharaja of Bikaner and deprecated the "sitting on the fence"¹³³ policy of certain rulers. By this time, it became clear that Patiala-Bikaner group had finally made up its mind to join the Constituent Assembly in contravention to the policy of the Chancellor in this matter.

However a formal split was averted by a last minute compromise formula prepared by the Maharaja of Gwalior. A resolution embodying the formula stated that the question of entry to the Constituent Assembly should be a matter for the discretion of individual States after the Assembly had ratified the agreement between the Negotiating Committees of the Chamber and of the Assembly. This resolution was adopted unanimously first by the Conference of the Rulers and later at a joint Conference of Rulers and States Ministers on the 2nd April, 1947. Meanwhile, some rulers accepted Pandit Nehru's invitation to work on the different committees of the Constituent Assembly. The Nawab of Bhopal still tried to persuade the progressive group of Princes not to join the Assembly, but he did not succeed.¹³⁴ This was evident when, on the 28th April, 1947, the representatives of Cochin, Patiala, Baroda, Jaipur, Rewa, Jodhpur and Bikaner took their seats in the Constituent Assembly. With the public defection of these seven important states, the united front of the princely order was, thus, broken up and hence forward the other States gradually followed the suit and joined the Assembly. It has rightly been said that the Bombay Conference 'marked the end to the domination of the Nawab of Bhopal'.¹³⁵

The AISPC met at Gwalior on the 17th and 18th April, 1947. The purpose of the Conference was to pass judgement on the agreement arrived at between the Negotiating Committees for the States' entry to the Constituent Assembly. Finally a resolution endorsing the agreement was passed. In his address to the Conference, Pandit Nehru accused the rulers of having a 'shop-keeper mentality' and declared that any state which did not join the Constituent Assembly would be treated by the country as a hostile State and such a State would have to bear the consequences of being so treated. "Our aim", he added, "at present is to liberate as much of India as we can — half or three fourths and then to deal with the question of independence for the rest."¹³⁶ Lord Mountbatten privately rebuked Nehru both for the substance of his opinion and also for his demagoguery, especially as a Member of the Interim Government who ought not to speak in such terms without Cabinet approval. But Nehru explained that he was speaking in a personal capacity as President of the States People's Conference.¹³⁷ The Muslim League also took strong exception to Pandit Nehru's speech. Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan, the Leader of the Muslim League in the Central Executive, declared that the States were perfectly entitled to refuse to have anything to do with the Constituent Assembly. He also declared that "the Congress had no right to coerce the States" and called upon the States "to disregard the idle threat" in Pandit Nehru's speech.¹³⁸

At this juncture, another development with regard to smaller states may be noted. The Attachment Act of 1944 had already integrated a large number of petty Kathiawar estates and jagirs with some big states in the interests of administrative efficiency. Though the enactment of this Act was a right step, yet due to the Princes' opposition, it had left untouched many other smaller states in other regions.¹³⁹ Their grouping in sizable units became once again necessary for the purposes of their representation in the Constituent Assembly and their accession to the Indian Federation. The initiative in the formation of Union of States was first taken by some of the Deccan States in May, 1946 to form a Union of Deccan states. This was followed by a conference of 26 rulers of Eastern India States who met in Calcutta and decided to form a union. The Union of the Deccan states came into being in early 1947. The Smaller states of other regions also followed the suit and began to prepare the draft schemes. However, except for the short lived Unions of the Deccan States, the Simla Hill States and the Eastern States, none of these schemes ever came into existence.¹⁴⁰

Both the Congress and the All India States People's Conference favoured the formation of the Union of states, provided that power was delegated to the people. A Committee appointed by them had recommended the formation of sub-federations of Kerala, Karnatak, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rewa State with all the States of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand, Malwa States including Gwalior, Sikh States of Punjab and Rajputana States with Ajmer Merwara. As regards the smaller States adjoining the provinces such as Manipur, Tripura and Cooch Behar, it recommended their amalgamation with the provinces. These recommendations were endorsed by the States People's Conference in its Gwalior Conference.¹⁴¹

Meanwhile, the Political Department was busy devising measures for its own liquidation. As a first step, a Conference of Residents and Political Officers was held in the second week of April, 1947, to consider steps for the contraction of Paramountcy and its eventual lapse. Lord Mountbatten inaugurated the meeting and stressed the need for speed. The programme of the Conference was to withdraw Political Agents by the Autumn and Residents by the end of 1947, while the main duties of the Political Department were to be wound up by the end of March, 1948.¹⁴² Besides, one of the steps proposed by the Political Department was to hand over the Crown Representative's forces to the various States.¹⁴³

After a rapid series of interviews with political leaders between 24th March and 6th May, 1947, Mountbatten decided that the Cabinet Mission Plan had become untenable, and announced his revised Plan, on the 3rd June, 1947; which was approved by the British Government on the 31st May and was accepted by the Congress, League and Sikh leaders on the 2nd June, 1947.¹⁴⁴ According to the Plan of 3rd June, the British Government would relinquish power to Governments of India and Pakistan on the basis of Dominion Status, and this relinquishment of power would take place much earlier than June, 1948. In regard to the States, the Plan laid down that 'the policy of His Majesty's

Government towards the Indian States contained in the Cabinet Mission memorandum of 12 May, 1946 remained unchanged.¹⁴⁵

On the 3rd June evening, Lord Mountbatten met the Members of the States' Negotiating Committee and explained the Plan to them. He advised the rulers that 'in coming to their decisions, the rulers should cast their minds forward ten years and consider what the situation in the country, and in the world as a whole, was likely to be then'. The princes and their representatives finally accepted the plan. On the 4th June, 1947, Lord Mountbatten also elucidated the plan at a press conference. Replying to a question, he said that it was not the intention of His Majesty's Government to offer dominion status on any State which declared it self-independent. At this conference he also gave the first indication that the date of 'the transfer of power could be about 15 August, 1947.'¹⁴⁶ It is important to note that Mountbatten had already warned the British Government in May, 1947 that "if we admit that the Indian States or even some of them can be admitted as separate Dominions into the Commonwealth we shall be charged with disintegrating India and Congress is likely to withdraw its application for Dominion Status. The solution seems to be to take the line that we cannot accept as members of the Commonwealth any of the Indian States unless they first associate themselves with one of the two Dominions of British India. In that case their relation with the Crown could be through one of the Governor-Generals..."¹⁴⁷

With the announcement of the Plan, the Nawab of Bhopal resigned the Chancellorship of the Chamber of Princes on the 3rd June, 1947. He said in his letter of resignation that "as soon as Paramountcy is withdrawn, the Bhopal State would be assuming an independent status. Another reason was that the Chamber as now constituted, formed part of a constitutional machinery which, in my opinion, will now become *functus officio*."¹⁴⁸ Yadavindra Singh, the Maharaja of Patiala, then Pro-Chancellor, took over the chancellorship. The Chamber lingered on under his token leadership until the 14th August, 1947, but after April it steadily lost members and prestige. The Standing Committee later adopted a resolution to the effect that, with the lapse of paramountcy, the Chamber of Princes would cease to exist. In June, 1947 the chamber started to 'wind down its operations and dispose of its assets. The Chamber, with one exception, did not meet again as a body.'¹⁴⁹

The Political Department had always been distrusted by the Congress leaders. They regarded it as a buttress and an instrument of British Power in Princely India and as being hostile to democracy in the States, especially to the Congress-organised States People's Conference. In the new phase they also believed the Political Department to be working for an independent future for the States, which they could not accept. Lord Mountbatten shared these latter's suspicions.¹⁵⁰ His Political Adviser, Sir Conrad Corfield was known as a Princes' man. While Corfield first encountered the States as a junior member of Reading's viceregal touring party in 1921, he became an ardent believer in the myth of the real India' and a life long admirer of darbari culture. He devoted his final phase of his

career to seeing that the Princes were given a fighting chance to retain their patrimony.¹⁵¹ In the circumstances of 1946 this meant convincing Wavell and through him the Labour Government that the British had an obligation to arrange "reasonable terms for accession to the new Federation" for those which wished to join, and to lend recognition and assistance to those which didn't."¹⁵² Not long after the 3rd June Plan Lord Mountbatten was led to believe that he and his Political Adviser Corfield were pulling in different directions, and relations between the two men were gradually strained. Thereafter, he largely ignored the Political Department in his plans and efforts for the constitutional future of the States.

Meanwhile, it had been reported that the Political Department was destroying all records, winding up residencies and handing over cantonment areas and the Crown forces to various States. These reports alarmed the Congress leaders like Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel. On the 11th June, 1947 the Standing Committee of the All-India States People's Conference passed a resolution demanding that either the Political Department and its agencies should be handed over to the new Government of India or a new Central Department should be created immediately to discharge the functions of the Political Department.¹⁵³

Against this Background a meeting was held on the 13th June, 1947 at the Viceroy's House over which Mountbatten presided and Nehru, Jinnah, Baldev Singh, Conrad Corfield were among those present. Mountbatten in his inaugural speech said that Paramountcy should lapse as soon as the transfer of power took place. The lapse of Paramountcy would automatically involve the closing down of the Political Department. At this meeting it was agreed that a States Department should be set up to deal with the questions of common interest between the States and the successor governments in British India. The new department would consist of two sections, ready for the partition of the country. As regards the destruction of state records and documents, it was further agreed that while ephemeral records and documents might be destroyed by the residents, the Crown Representative's records might be weeded and sorted out with the assistance of experts appointed for the purpose by the Member for Education in the Interim Government.¹⁵⁴

The rulers generally wanted to make the best of the bargaining position in which the lapse of paramountcy placed them. "The decision therefore", Menon said, "that with the withdrawal of the British, the Indian states comprising two fifth of the land must return to a state of complete political isolation was fraught with the gravest danger to the integrity of the country."¹⁵⁵ The very concept of the lapse of paramountcy was, however, inadmissible to both the Congress and the AISPC. The Congress became particularly repugnant after some States like Bhopal, Hyderabad and Travancore declared that after the lapse of Paramountcy, their States would be independent and sovereign. These states were dreaming of their independence without bothering about geographical and economic compulsions and implications of such a move. Besides, many states still hoped to form a Third State - a Statistan.¹⁵⁶ The Maharawal of

Dungarpur "had hoped that after the creation of Pakistan, the states might have been allowed to form an independent union of their own - a statistan, a third dominion."¹⁵⁷

Provoked by these statements, Jawaharlal Nehru declared at a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on the 15th June, 1947 that, 'there is a certain inherent Paramountcy in the Government of India which cannot lapse - an inherent Paramountcy in the dominant State in India which must remain because of the very reasons of geography, history, defence etc.'¹⁵⁸ He also maintained that the independence of any such State was not to be recognised by India and that the recognition of such independence by any foreign power would be considered an unfriendly act'.¹⁵⁹ At the same meeting, Gandhiji said, "They (the princes) must recognize the Paramountcy of the Indian people as they had accepted the Paramountcy of the British Power".¹⁶⁰ The All-India Congress Committee, at the same meetings, passed a lengthy resolution repudiating the claim of any State to declare independence and to live in isolation from the rest of India.¹⁶¹

Likewise, after the acceptance of the 3rd June Plan, the Standing Committee of the States People's Conference, at a meeting on the 11th and 12th June, 1947 resolved that the conception that any State was free to go out of the Union of India would reduce India to anarchy. None of the States was completely independent at the time of the advent of British Power - in some way or other they had all recognized and submitted to the suzerainty of the Mughal Empire, the Maratha Supremacy, the Sikh Kingdom or later, the British Power. It had to be recognised that on the lapse of Paramountcy, sovereignty would reside in the people of the States. If any State refused to join the Constituent Assembly of India, the Constituent Assembly should allow the people of that State to elect their own representatives.¹⁶²

Jinnah, however, contested the views of Nehru and the All-India Congress Committee. His view was legalistic. In a statement issued on the 17th June, 1947 he said that the choice of the States was not limited to joining one or other Constituent Assembly; they were free to remain independent if they so desired. According to him, the States would be independent sovereign States on the termination of Paramountcy.¹⁶³

The proposal to create a States Department to deal with the States was formally approved by the Interim Government at its meeting held on 15th June, 1947. On 27th June a press communique was issued allotting this Department to Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon was to be the Secretary.¹⁶⁴ Mountbatten was much relieved when Nehru asked Patel to take charge of the new department. "I am glad", he wrote in his Personal Report on 27th June, "that Nehru has not been put in charge of the new States Department. Patel...is essentially a realist and very sensible. ... Even better news is that V. P. Menon is to be the Secretary".¹⁶⁵ It became evident that a sense of conflicting loyalties, interests and policies strained the relations between the States Department and the Political Department during the

seven weeks of their joint existence.

V. P. Menon held a position of extraordinary influence at this time. While he assumed the secretaryship of the States Department on 5th July, 1947, he remained Constitutional Adviser to the Viceroy and was one of the latter's principal consultants on the drafting of the Indian Independence Bill. Menon had earned the complete confidence both of Lord Mountbatten and of Sardar Patel. Though his relations with Jawahar Nehru were less intimate, he had been brought into close contact with the Prime Minister in the negotiations over the new plan for the transfer of power, and in that quarter also he was a valuable mediator.

Menon realised that the prospect of some States striving for an independent existence would balkanise India and the situation had to be carefully handled. Of the 565 States, only 14, including Kashmir, were contiguous with Pakistan.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, the problem was of far greater magnitude for India than it was for Pakistan. Menon drew up two standard documents - an Instrument of Accession for Defence, External Affairs and Communications and a Standstill Agreement to continue arrangements in matters of common concern such as customs, currency, railways, irrigation, electric power and high ways during the interim period.¹⁶⁷ Even before he took charge of the secretaryship of the States Department on 5th July, 1947, he had persuaded Patel that Mountbatten's co-operation should be enlisted to solve the problem because 'apart from his position, his grace and his gifts, his relationship to the Royal Family was bound to influence the rulers'. Accordingly, Menon asked Mountbatten for his help in getting the States to accede on three subjects. After thinking the matter over, Mountbatten gave his consent.¹⁶⁸ Mountbatten had already got the British Prime Minister Attlee's directive that he should 'aid and assist the States in coming to fair and just arrangements with the leaders of British India as to their future relationships'.¹⁶⁹

According to Copland, 'the main thing which changed Mountbatten's mind about the importance of the States was the realisation that they held the key to a negotiated settlement with the Congress'.¹⁷⁰ Early in May, 1947, Reform Commissioner V. P. Menon informed him that the accession of the States - whose combined area and population nearly matched that of the districts claimed by the League for Pakistan — might help to reconcile the still edgy Congress to the necessity of partition. Convinced by this argument¹⁷¹ the Viceroy at once tried it out on Nehru and Patel.¹⁷² Mountbatten found the Congress leaders much more amenable to his proposal for an early transfer of power on the basis of dominion status, once he made clear to them that he would not support any continuing relationship between Great Britain and the non-acceding States.¹⁷³ In this way the rulers became unwittingly entangled in a game played for bigger stakes : preservation of the Empire-Commonwealth.¹⁷⁴

From the beginning of July, 1947 the Viceroy made the States his "primary consideration".¹⁷⁵ "As soon as I turned my attention to the problem of the States", he wrote later, "it became evident to me that their independence

... would not be worth a moment's purchase unless they had the support of one or other of the Dominions."¹⁷⁶ The solution to the states' problem became now obvious to him. He had to devise such a form of accession which was to satisfy both the Congress and the Princes. And it was provided by Menon's three subjects accession plan.

On the day the States Department was formally inaugurated, i.e., 5th July, 1947, Sardar Patel issued an important statement, defining the policy of the Government of India towards the States. The statement appealed to the rulers to accede on three subjects, "in which the common interests of the country are involved" and explained that the states would have "an autonomous existence" in the Indian Union. It continued, "... I should like to make it clear that it is not the desire of the Congress to interfere in any manner whatever with the domestic affairs of the States. They are not enemies of the Princely order but, on the other hand, wish them and their people, under their aegis, all prosperity, contentment and happiness. Nor would it be my policy to conduct the relations of the new Department with the States in any manner which savours of domination of one over the other.... I hope the Indian States will bear in mind that the alternative to co-operation in the general interest is anarchy and chaos which will overwhelm great and small in common ruin if we are unable to act together in the minimum of common tasks."¹⁷⁷ According to Hodson, this conciliatory statement displayed Sardar Patel's "realism and statesmanship, qualities desperately needed in India's crisis and too often missing".¹⁷⁸

On 16th July, 1947, during the debate on the Indian Independence Bill in the House of Lords, Listowel, the Secretary of State for India, said, "We do not of course, propose to recognise any states as separate international entities".¹⁷⁹ This authoritative declaration by the Secretary of State virtually shut the door to independence for every state in India. For it gave the States notice that since the British Government would not recognize their independence, no other Government in the world was likely to do so and thus they would have to opt for either India or Pakistan.

The position, as it stood when the States Department came into existence, was that the Political Department had already sent to the rulers a draft Standstill Agreement and it was proposed to call a conference of rulers to finalise the Agreement. But having regard to the paramount necessity of the establishment of a constitutional relationship between the States and the Dominion, the Government of India felt that a Standstill Agreement would not provide any kind of answer to the problem that confronted them at the time. It was, therefore, decided that the States Department, and not the Political Department, should take the charge of the negotiations with the rulers and that the accession of the States on the three subjects of Defence, External Affairs and Communications should be included in the agenda of the proposed conference. Besides, the task of conducting negotiations with the Princes was entrusted by the Indian Government to Lord Mountbatten, who was then the Crown Representative.¹⁸⁰

Against this background, Lord Mountbatten called a special full meeting of the Chamber of Princes on 25th

July, 1947. He addressed the Chamber of Princes with the object of persuading as many states as possible to accede to one dominion or the other before 15th August, 1947. His speech, which was made without notes, was described by V. P. Menon as "the apogee of persuasion". Mountbatten advised the states to accede on Defence, External affairs and Communications. Defence was 'a matter that a state could not conduct for itself' and 'if you do not link up with one or the other of the Dominions, you will be cut off from any source of supplies of up-to-date arms or weapons'; 'External Affairs is inextricably linked up with Defence'; and 'Communications is really a means of maintaining the life-blood of the whole sub-continent'.

Lord Mountbatten assured the rulers that their accession on the three subjects would involve no financial liability and that in other matters there would be no encroachment on their internal sovereignty. This would be "a tremendous achievement for the States. But I must make it clear that I have still to persuade the Government of India to accept it. If all of you would co-operate with me and are ready to accede, I am confident that I can succeed in my efforts.... If you are prepared to come, you must come before 15th August."¹⁸¹

The States Department had already formulated a draft Instrument of Accession and revised the original draft of the Standstill Agreement prepared by the Political Department. These two drafts were circulated to the rulers at the afore-said meeting held on 25th July. Lord Mountbatten addressed the Chamber of Princes for the first and last time in his capacity as Crown Representative. For the creation of machinery for negotiation, Mountbatten announced the personnel of the Negotiating Committee, consisting of ten rulers and twelve ministers. The Negotiating Committee was split into two sub-committees, one to deal with the Instrument of Accession and the other with the Standstill Agreement. These sub-committees held separate meetings daily at Bikaner House in Delhi between 26th and 31st July, 1947. The drafts of the Instrument of Accession and the Standstill agreement were agreed, with amendments, by the States Negotiating Committee by 31st July, 1947.¹⁸²

The Instrument of Accession took three forms, according to the existing status and powers of the various states. For 140 states with full powers the Instrument caused them to accede to the Dominion of India only for defence, external affairs and communications, without any financial liability. The three subjects were defined in the same terms as in the schedule to the Government of India Act, 1935 listing the matters exclusively reserved for the Federation that was to be set up under the Act. For about seventy states in Kathiawar, Central India and the Simla Hills which had never exercised full powers the standard Instrument of Accession was such as to restrict their future powers to those they already possessed. Finally, for over 300 estates and talukas in Kathiawar and Gujarat, which were not in any proper sense States though ranking as such and being no part of British India, an Instrument was devised on the lines of the common-form accession but reserving all residuary powers and jurisdiction to the Central Government.¹⁸³

In all three cases, the Standstill Agreement was common. It laid down that all agreements and administrative arrangements as to matters of common concern specified in the schedule then existing between the Crown and the States should continue until new arrangements were made.¹⁸⁴

On the evening of 28th July, 1947, Mountbatten held a reception for over fifty ruling Princes and a hundred States Representatives, which, Menon said, was "in the nature of a last minute canvassing of voters near the polling booth".¹⁸⁵ "Those of their Highnesses" wrote Campbell-Johnson, "who had not already signified their intention of signing the Instrument of Accession were duly shepherded by the ADCs one by one for a friendly talk with Mountbatten. He in his turn passed them on in the full view of the company to V. P.[Menon], who conducted them across the room to see Patel. There were Maharajas three deep in a semicircle watching this process."¹⁸⁶

The Viceroy also gave a luncheon to several of the leading Princes for the same purpose on 1st August, 1947. "After paying their bread-and-butter respects to Their Excellencies, they [the guests] ran the gauntlet of the ADCs, who helped to form virtual 'Aye' and 'No' lobbies of the rulers on their attitude to Accession".¹⁸⁷ The "No" lobby consisted of "last-ditchers" who wanted to execute Standstill Agreements but wanted to mark time so far as the Instrument of Accession was concerned. To deal with them, the Government of India announced that Standstill Agreements would be entered into only with those rulers who executed the Instrument of Accession. "The process of getting Instruments of Accession signed", Menon said, "involved considerable persuasion, strain and anxiety".¹⁸⁸

Lord Mountbatten's technique for inducing the princes to sign instruments of accession may have been too drastic for some people in London, and was certainly not to the likes of his political adviser, Sir Conrad Corfield; 'but he had been given maximum discretion in carrying out the relaxation of Paramountcy, and so had his own way'. According to E.W.R. Lumby, "The solution which Lord Mountbatten so persuasively urged upon the rulers was in the nature of a compromise between those who claimed that on August 15, 1947 the states would become completely independent and those who contended that Paramountcy must pass to the successor governments".¹⁸⁹

A Foreign Office Circular of 6th August, 1947, which was issued for the chiefs of British diplomatic missions pointed out that since the British Government did not propose to recognise any Indian State as a separate international entity, 'it would be most unfortunate if any power gave such recognition to any state at this stage as this would prejudice the negotiations now in progress between the Indian States and the new dominions'. The United States Government had received reports that certain Arab States may be contemplating diplomatic recognition of certain Indian States after 15th August, 1947. The State Department had accordingly instructed their diplomatic official in Egypt and the Middle East to inform those Governments that the United States shared the opinion of the British Government that Indian States should associate themselves with one or other of the new Dominions, and that the

United States had no intention of according any Indian State diplomatic recognition.¹⁹⁰ Significantly Lord Mountbatten wrote to Listowel on 8th August, 1947 that he could not help feeling that things were moving so fast in India that "the India Office have been unable to keep abreast of them." He argued that the promise of independence to the States based on the Cabinet Mission's memorandum 'would not be worth a moment's purchase' unless they had the support of one of the new dominions, principally "because of the wide gap that prevails between the rulers and the ruled". He reiterated his already well-tried admonition that it was paramount importance to secure the good-will of independent India. "The Indian Dominion", he went on, "consisting nearly of three fourths of India, and with its immense resources and its important strategic position in the Indian Ocean, is a Dominion which we cannot afford to estrange for the sake of the so-called independence of the States. I have no doubt that you will agree with me that we should leave no stone unturned to convince the Indian Dominion that although we had to agree to the plan of partition, we had no intention to leave it balkanised or to weaken it both internally and externally".¹⁹¹

In the meantime, Bhopal-Indore group did attempt to negotiate with foreign powers with a view to getting international recognition to their States as independent and sovereign States. But soon they realised that they would not survive for long outside the new Dominions, especially after the accession of Travancore along with many States and in view of the strong public reaction to their declaration. Bhopal ultimately acceded to India. Gradually, even the "last-ditchers" like Dholpur, Indore, Bharatpur, Bilaspur and Nabha signed the Instrument of Accession with the Indian Union.¹⁹² Thus, by 15th August, 1947, apart from the few states which clearly had to accede to Pakistan Dominion, all the states except Junagarh, two small states under the Muslim rulers of Kathiawar, Kashmir and Hyderabad, had acceded to Indian Dominion. In spite of the major success of the States Department under the leadership of Sardar Patel in acceding nearly four hundred forty states with India before 15th August, 1947, at least two largest states Kashmir and Hyderabad, exercised their legal right under the Indian Independence Act and opted for autonomy. Protracted negotiations had been on to bring all those states strategically important and non-important within the fold of Indian Dominion.¹⁹³

On the other hand, there had also been so many other occurrences taken place in different parts of the country relating to the Princely resistance movement against the accession. During 1949-50 urgent measures and hectic efforts were under-taken to bring the different princely states under the fold of the Government of India. For instance, some states like Punjab Hill States, Bilaspur, Tripura, Manipur, Cooch Behar etc. were integrated with India as Commissioner's Provinces, and some small states or estates of Southern and Eastern part of India had been viewed as isolated states and were merged with bigger States like Madras, East Punjab, United Provinces, Assam etc.¹⁹⁴ In order to occupy the vacuum left by the departing British, the Indian Government had already sent regional commissioners to Rajkot, Kolhapur, Rajputana, Central India, Baghelkhand, Bundelkhand and the Eastern states.¹⁹⁵ Besides, The States Department had to be much more cautious owing to the continuous discontent among the rulers

of the States like Hyderabad, Baroda, and Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁹⁶ By November, 1949, only six out of 552 states that had acceded to India, viz, Hyderabad, Mysore, Bhopal, Tripura, Manipur and Cooch Behar remained as separate entities within their old boundaries.¹⁹⁷

The policy of integration pursued by the Government of India had made further progress. As a result, the Princely states, numbering 552, were integrated with the Dominion of India by 1950. There were three major forms in which all those States had been integrated with the Dominion of India. Each of these forms had been adopted according to size, geography and other factors relating to each state or group of states. By 1950, as a result of the application of the three fold integration scheme, (a) 216 States covering an area of 108,739 square miles with a population of 19.158 millions had been merged in British Indian Provinces; (b) 61 States covering an area of 63,704 square miles with a population of 6.925 millions had been converted into seven Centrally administered areas such as Himachal Pradesh, Kutch, Bilaspur, Bhopal, Tripura, Manipur and Vindya Pradesh and (c) 275 States covering an area of 215,450 square miles with a population of 34.7 million had been integrated to create five Unions of States, viz., Saurashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat, Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) and Travancore-Cochin. This brought the total number of states affected by integration scheme to 552 covering an area of 387,893 square miles with a population of 60.783 millions.¹⁹⁸ It may be added here that Cooch Behar having an area of 1,321 square miles with a population of 6,41,000 was first taken over as the Chief Commissioner's Province on 12th September, 1949 and finally was merged in the Province of West Bengal on 1st January, 1950.

Some scholars like Philip Ziegler have called Mountbatten's coup in getting the States to accede an 'astounding' accomplishment.¹⁹⁹ E.W.R. Lumby has opined that 'Lord Mountbatten's policy achieved its objects of effecting a graceful demission of the obligations of Paramountcy and avoiding accusations of betrayal by the Princes. More important, it soon became clear that he had contributed to preventing the emergence of more than two successor States; Hyderabad was unable to hold out for long; Kashmir had to accept de facto partition in accordance with the geographical compulsions which he had emphasized'.²⁰⁰ While it was undoubtedly a considerable feat, it had also drawbacks. Most importantly, the scheme of three subject accession was inherently flawed, for while it met then the Government's most urgent need to prevent the balkanisation of the country, it failed to address the on-going concern of the Congress about the viability of the States and the future of the monarchical system. 'In this respect', Copland maintained that, "the real architects of the final solution to the problem of the States ... were not Mountbatten and Attlee but V. P. [Menon] himself and his boss at the States Department, Vallabhbai Patel".²⁰¹ James Manor also expressed the same view that 'there can be no doubt that within a few months of the transfer of power Patel and Menon had succeeded in imposing the centre as a Paramount Power over the States'.²⁰²

On the other hand, Vanaja Rangaswami has argued that the story of integration of the States was not the

mere result of a 'tour de force' of Vallabhbhai Patel and V. P. Menon or the result of the naive outpourings of a Nehru as the President of the AISPC, but it was the fruit of Gandhian 'real politic' whose figure alone stands out as a colossus in his clear manipulation of the States people's movement as a force towards his main objective on integration. In this Vallabhbhai Patel with a quick appreciation of underlying motives helped him ably to wipe out the six hundred and odd States with their "petty princelings, and their courts and their privileges, and their pomp, and their armed forces and their pedigree and all".^{202*}

Thus, between 1947 and 1949 all 552-odd ruling Princes in India were pensioned off and their so-called princely States, varying in size from 84,471 square miles (Kashmir) to 0.29 square miles (Vejononess), were submerged in the body politic of the Indian Union. As a practical system of governance, monarchy in India disappeared. By any standards 'integration; represented a major watershed. Some Indian historians like R. C. Majumdar have rightly called the 'integration' of the states a 'great ... revolution'.²⁰³

Many scholars agree that the position of the princes was so weak that their demise had been long on the cards. By guaranteeing them protection against external aggression as well as internal revolt, the British Government had secured their dependence on itself. As a result, after 1857 Indian princes had lost their militancy and were duly perpetuated by the British Government for its own strategic reason as a social support to its rule. But this policy weakened the sense of responsibility and moral fibre of the rulers. They were generally a decadent class more interested in a life of luxury for themselves than in the welfare of their subjects. The standard of civil liberties in the States was low and the people of the States could not remain unaffected by the wind of change blowing in British India.

The Princely States had different level of institutional developments, particularly they had no experience with political parties, representative institutions, democratic elections and other attributes of modern state politics. On the other hand, the British Provinces had been acquainted with all these experiences. Moreover, the Princely States displayed different level of socio-economic development, and specialized and diversified experience of society, economy and polity formation. Thus the Princely States were generally looked upon as backward compared to the advanced level of development in British India.

During the debate on the Indian Independence Bill in the House of Commons on 10th July, 1947, Lester Hutchinson, one member, said that the Indian States were 'remarkable examples of the survival of the unfittest. They would not have existed without the might of the Paramount Power behind them'. Woodrow Wyatt thought that 'the worst thing' which the British Government ever did in India was to take away from the people of the States the ultimate sanction of revolt and rebellion against a bad ruler.²⁰⁴ Before the States Department was set up, Sardal Patel had told

Lord Mountbatten not to bother about the States because after the transfer of power the people of the States would rise, depose their rulers and throw in their lot with the Congress.²⁰⁵ L. M. Bhatia has rightly said, "They [the Princes] had become an anachronistic counter - weight to nationalism".²⁰⁶ James Manor also said, "Long before 1947", further said "princely India had become a hopeless anachronism, a British piece on a chessboard, to be sacrificed when the game was up. Patel and Menon deserve not the wrath of the British but rather their gratitude for allowing a graceful exit from an unhappy predicament".²⁰⁷

We must also recognise the considerable role played by the potential presence of mass pressures in the rapid integration of the States. Thus recalcitrant Princes were forced to form the Eastern States Union in December, 1947 in the face of powerful Praja Mandal agitations in Orissa States. Muslim ruler of Junagarh who tried to join Pakistan was brought to heel by a combination of popular agitation with Indian police action. The Mysore State Congress launched a powerful 'Mysore Chalo' agitation in September, 1947 which led the State substantially towards a democratic direction in October, 1947. V. P. Menon persuaded the Travancore Dewan C. P. Ramaswami Iyer to give up his dream of continuing his personal power through the 'American Model' by pointing to the 'Communist menace'. The Telengana armed struggle weakened the Nizam and also provided one important reason for military intervention in Hyderabad.²⁰⁸

On the other hand, some authors like A. R. Desai have pointed out that ' the elimination of the States brought about through the policy of negotiation and bargain between the Princes and the Government of the Indian Union and not by means of the plebiscites of the people of the States had some undesirable consequences. It created among other things the problem of Kashmir which loomed large on the Indian political scenario'.²⁰⁹

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44. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.44. The Hindu Mahasabha was the only political organization which had all along supported the federal scheme. Loc. cit.
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46. Moore, R. J. : The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940, Oxford University Press, 1974, p.316.
47. Jain, M.S. : 'Reduction of a Rectangle to a Triangle : New Perspective on the Partition of India.' in Ramakant and Rajan Mahan (eds.) : India's Partition : Preludes and Legacies, Rawat Publications, Jaipur & New Delhi, 1998, pp.332, 334.
48. *ibid.*, pp.323-324.
49. Sarkar, Sumit; Modern India, 1885-1947, Macmillan, First Published 1983, Reprint 2000, pp.375-376.
50. Chandra, Bipan and et al : India's Struggle For Independence, Penguin Books, 1989, p.450.
51. Sarkar, Sumit : op. cit., p.375.
52. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.45-46.
53. The Indian National Congress, 1939-40, being the resolutions passed by the Congress, the All India Congress Committee and the Working Committee during the period between March, 1939 to January, 1940. The evidence is cited in Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.135.
54. *ibid.*, p.46.
55. Sumit Sarkar held this view that in the Lahore resolution of 23 March, 1940 'neither Pakistan nor Partition were explicitly mentioned; - Sarkar, Sumit : Modern India, op. cit., p.379.
56. Jain, M.S. : op. cit., p.337.
57. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.46.
58. Sarkar, Sumit : op. cit., pp.377-378.
59. *ibid.*, pp.384-385.
60. Burke, Samuel Martin and Quraishi, S.A. : The British Raj in India : An Historical Review, Karchi, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.565.
61. However, a copy of Draft Declaration was already being supplied to the Princes and Political parties in India. - Coupland, R : The Cripps Mission, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1942, P.29. The evidence is cited in Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.135.
62. Loc. cit.
63. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.48.

64. Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.) : Constitutional Relations between Britain and India : Transfer of India : 1942-47, the Cripps Mission, Vol.1. London, 1970, p.575.
65. *ibid.*, pp.48-49. This Princes' delegation consisted of the Chancellor (the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar), the pro-Chancellor (the Maharaja of Bikaner) and the Maharaja of Patiala. The Nawab of Chhattari represent the Nizam - Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.136.
66. Menon, V.P. : pp.49-50.
67. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.137.
68. Corfield, Conrad : The Princely India I Knew, Madras, 1975, p.126. Corfield a member of the Indian Political Service, retired after rising to the post of Political Adviser to the Crown Representative.
69. *ibid.*, p.366.
70. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.52.
71. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.51.
72. In a statement dated April 13, 1942, Gandhiji while commenting on the Cripps' proposals as 'ill-fated' maintained that "the proposals contemplated the splitting up of India into three parts, each having different ideas of Governance". Quoted in Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.138.
73. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.139.
74. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.52.
75. *ibid.*, p.53.
76. Chandra, Bipan, and et al : India's Struggle For Independence, *op. cit.*, pp.369-370.
77. Handa, R.L. : History of Freedom Struggle in Princely States, Central News Agency, New Delhi, 1968, p.209.
78. Copland, Ian : *op. cit.* p.183.
79. *ibid.*, p.185.
80. Linlithgow to Amery, 24 August, 1942, Transfer of Power, Vol.II, *op. cit.*, p.814.
81. Copland, Ian : *op. cit.*, pp.186-187.
82. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.55.
83. Copland, Ian : *op. cit.*, p.197.
84. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.55.
85. *ibid.*, p.56.
86. Sarkar, Sumit : *op. cit.*, p.404.
87. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.* pp.56-57.
88. Sarkar, Sumit : *op. cit.*, p.416.
89. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.57.
90. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, pp.145-146.
91. *ibid.*, pp.146-147.
92. Sarkar, Sumit : *op. cit.*, pp.417-418.
93. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.57.
94. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, pp.152-153.
95. Menon, V.P. : pp.57-58.
96. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.147.
97. Copland, Ian : *op. cit.*, p.218.
98. Mansergh, Nicholas (edi.), *op. cit.*, London, 1970-83, Vol. VI, p.328.

99. *ibid*, Vol. IX, 1980, p.400.
100. Sarkar, Sumit : *op. cit.*, p.422.
101. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.58.
102. Sarkar, Sumit : *op. cit.*, p.428.
103. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, pp.58-59.
104. *The Hindu*, April 10, 1946, It is quoted in Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.154.
105. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.154. It should be noted that the author here mentioned that that policy was stated by Sir Stafford Cripps, but according to the Menon, it was stated by Lord Pethick Lawrence.
106. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.59. On the 2nd April, 1946, Lord Pethick Lawrence declared that if British India became independent, Paramountcy would come to an end and the British Government would not keep any troops in India for internal order. Therefore, as the Crown would become unable to carry out its part of the treaty obligations the States would naturally be released from their obligations under those treaties. - *ibid*, pp.59-60.
107. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.155.
108. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.61.
109. *ibid*, p.62.
110. *ibid*, pp.62-63.
111. The Cabinet Mission Plan confronted Jinnah with a choice between a 'moth - eaten' Pakistan and a loose, three-tire confederal structure in which Muslims would dominate the N.W. and N.E. province of a still-united country. According to the Mission, a full-fledged Pakistan was impossible, since it would include a very large number of Non-Muslims (48.3% in Bengal and Assam, for instance). 'The alternative suggested was a weak centre controlling only foreign affairs, defence and communication with the existing provincial assemblies being grouped into three sections while electing the Constituent Assembly. The sections would have the power to set up intermediate level executives and legislatures of their own- Sarkar, Sumit : *op. cit.*, pp.429-430.
112. Cabinet Mission : Statement, 16 May, 1946. It has been quoted in Mansergh, Nicholas : The Transfer of Power, Vol. VII, *op. cit.*, p.585.
113. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, pp.63-64.
114. Papers relating to the Cabinet Mission to India, 1946, Delhi, Government of India Press, 1946, pp.31-32. Confer also Ian Copland, *op. cit.*, p.222
115. *ibid.*, pp.19, 31.
116. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.67.
117. Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.164. The Negotiating Committee consisted of the Nawab of Bhopal, the Chancellor, the Maharaja of Patiala, the pro-Chancellor, Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, Maharaja of Dungarpur, Sir. Mirza Ismail (Hyderabad), Sir. Ramaswami Mudaliar (Mysore), Sir. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer (travancore), Sir. Sultan Ahmad. (Constitutional Adviser to the Chancellor) and Sardar K. M. Panikhar (Bikaner). *Loc. cit.*
118. Mitra, N,N, : The Indian Annual register, Vol.I, 1946, (Calcutta, Annual Register Office, n.d.) p.213.
119. *ibid*, p.214.
120. Indian National Congress : Being the resolutions passed by the Congress. The All-India Congress Committee and the Working Committee during March, 1940 to September, 1946. (Allahabad, AICC, n.d.) p.159. It is quoted in Phadnis, Urmila : *op. cit.*, p.161.
121. Sarkar, Sumit : *op. cit.*, pp.430-431.
122. Menon, V.P. : *op. cit.*, p.68.

123. Loc. cit.
124. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., pp.164-165.
125. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.241.
126. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.69-70.
127. *ibid.*, pp.70-71.
128. *ibid.*, p.71.
129. *ibid.*, pp.71-72.
130. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.246.
131. Mosley, Leonard : The Last Days of the British Raj, Bombay, First Jaico Edition in India, 1961, p.178.
132. Sarkar, Sumit : op. cit., p.447.
133. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.72-73, and Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.170.
134. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., pp.170-171.
135. Copland, Ian : op. cit., pp.247-248.
136. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.172.
137. Hodson, H.V. : op. cit., pp.358-359.
138. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.76.
139. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.176. It should be noted here that the British Government submitted the Attachment Bill to the Parliament and it became an Act in early 1944. As a consequence, all the estates and taluks of Gujarat and Western India were merged with the neighbouring States. Collectively this area covered about 7,000 square miles with a population of 8 lakhs and an annual revenue of about Rs. 70 lakhs. - *ibid.*, p.141. Confer also Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.55.
140. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.177. Confer also Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.76-77.
141. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.177.
142. Corfield, Sir Conrad : op. cit., p.151.
143. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.77.
144. Sarkar, Sumit : op. cit., p.448. In this connection Conrad Corfield said that, "Lord Mountbatten was carrying out his 'Dutch Auction' with the Indian Politicians. Jinnah's price included partition and an independent Pakistan. The Congress had to pay his price in order to obtain an early transfer of power. So Lord Wavell's refusal to bisect India was jettisoned." - Corfield, Conrad : op. cit., p.151.
145. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.77-78.
146. *ibid.*, pp.78, 81.
147. Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.) : Transfer of Power, Vol. X, op. cit., p.970.
148. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.81-82.
149. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.246.
150. Hodson, H.V. : op. cit., p.359.
151. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.216. Copland also expressed the view that Conrad Corfield 'generally has had a bad press from historians, but much of what has been said about him is inaccurate. Wylie, whose ideological outlook was quite different, described him as 'a Resident of real quality who misses very little and on whose percipience and judgement His Excellency can, I think, rely absolutely.' Besides, while old-fashioned and conservative, Corfield was never a defender of Princely oppression or an apologist for naked autocracy. He supported fully his predecessor's rough stand against Rewa. Loc. cit.

152. Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.) : The Transfer of Power, Vol. VI, op. cit., p.1229.
153. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.83.
154. *ibid*, pp.83-87. During the proceedings Nehru and Jinnah had sharply differed on the constitutional status of the States. Jinnah asserted that 'every Indian State was a sovereign state for every purpose except in so far as they had entered into treaties with the Crown.' Nehru said he 'differed altogether'. What were the tests of sovereignty'; he asked. ' One was the capacity for international relations. The states had no such capacity. Another was the capacity for declaring war. The States had no such capacity.' -Loc. cit.
155. *ibid*, p.88.
156. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., pp.179, 183. It may be mentioned here that the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar through his confederation scheme wanted to form such a Third State. *ibid*, p.179.
157. Ashton, Steven R. : British Policy Towards the Indian States, 1905-1939, London, 1982, p.207.
158. Brecher, Michael : Nehru, p.345.
159. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.
160. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. II, the Last Phase, p.341.
161. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.87-88.
162. Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.) : The Transfer of Power, Vol. XI, op. cit., p.283.
163. *ibid*, p.438. In this context, Hodson said that 'For the States indubitably destined for association with Pakistan were very few, and the main object of Jinnah's policy in this sphere was, on the face of it, to secure leverage for Pakistan and embarrass India. Not least was this so in regard to Hyderabad, like Bhopal a Hindu-majority state they therefore supported. Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state with a Hindu ruler, was not a conspicuous bone of contention at this time, Hodson, H.V. : op. cit., pp.360-361.
164. White Paper on Indian States, op. cit., p.33.
165. Hodson, H.V. : op. cit., pp.364-366. Abdur Rab Nishtar was appointed to look after the new department for Pakistan, with Mr. Ikramullah as Secretary.
166. Burke, S. M. and Quraishi, S.A. : op. cit., p.570.
167. Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.) : The Transfer of Power, Vol. XII, op. cit., pp.468-473.
168. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.94.
169. Burke, S.M. and Quraishi, S.A. : op. cit., p.570.
170. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.253.
171. Mosley, Leonard : op. cit., p.192.
172. Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.) : The Transfer of Power, Vol. XII, op. cit., p.584.
173. *ibid*, Vol. X, p.533.
174. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.254.
175. Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.) : The Transfer of Power, Vol. XIII, op. cit., p.36
176. *ibid*, p.585.
177. *ibid*, Vol. XI, op. cit., p.929. The Statement of 5th July, 1947 had been drafted by V.P. Menon for Sardar Patel. - Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.95
178. Hodson, H.V. : op. cit., p.369.
179. Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Sessions 1946-1947 (10 and 11 Geo. VI), p.814. This is quoted in Burke, S.M. and Quraishi; S.A. : op. cit., p.568.

180. White Paper on Indian States, op. cit., pp.34-35.
181. Mansergh, Nicholas : The Transfer of Power, Vol. XII, op. cit., pp.347-52 (For text of Mountbatten's address).
182. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.104-105.
183. Hodson, H.V. : op. cit., pp.370-371.
184. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.106-107.
185. *ibid*, p.113.
186. Campbell-Johnson, Alan : Mission with Mountbatten, Robert Hale Limited, London, First Published 1951, Reprinted 1952, p.144.
187. *ibid*, p.147.
188. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., pp.109-110.
189. Lumby, E.W.R. : op. cit., pp.96,102.
190. Burke, S.M. and Quraishi, S.A. : op. cit., p.574.
191. Mansergh, Nicholas : The Transfer of Power, Vol. XII, op. cit., p.584.
192. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.195.
193. White Paper on Indian States, op. cit., pp.38-39.
194. Chakrabarty, Biman : Political History of Merger of the Princely States : A study of Cooch Behar, Unpublished ph.D. Thesis, the University of North Bengal, 2001, p.28.
195. Phadnis, Urmila : op. cit., p.197.
196. Menon, V.P. : op. cit., p.455. The Privy Purses survived until 1971, when the Government of Mrs. Indira Gandhi stripped the Princes of the titles, privy purses and regal privileges through a constitutional amendment passed in the same year. While moving the constitutional amendment in the Lok Sabha on 1st Sept. 1970 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared, "We are convinced that the indefinite continuance of hereditary titles and customary rights, special privileges and privy purses without any relatable functions and responsibilities, is incompatible with our democratic constitution, the spirit of the times..." — The Years of Endeavour, Selected Speeches of Indira Gandhi, 1969-1972, New Delhi, Publication Divisions, Government of India, 1975, p.63. Confer also, Ramusack, Barbara, N : The Indian Princes and their States, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.278.
197. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.263, Hari Singh, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, acceded to India after raiders from Pakistan invaded the State in October, 1947. Jammu and Kashmir still existed as a separate entity, but after the tribal invasion of October, 1947 and the consequent border war between India and Pakistan it became effectively a partitioned State.
198. White Paper on Indian States, op. cit., pp.39, 58. However, V.P. Menon maintained that by the partition India had lost an area of 364,737 square miles and a population of 81½ millions. But by the integration of the states, India brought in an area of nearly 500,000 square miles with a population of 86½ millions (not including Jammu and Kashmir). — Menon, V.P., op. cit, p.468. (A Consolidated Statement in this Regard has been appended at the end; vide Appendix D - x)
199. Zeigler, Philip : Mountbatten, London, 1985, p.414.
200. Lumby, E.W.R. : op. cit., p.103.
201. Copland, Ian : op. cit., p.261.
202. Manor, James : 'The Demise of the Princely Order - A Reassessment', in Robin Jeffrey (ed.) : People, Princes and the Paramount Power, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978, p.322.
- 202* Rangaswami, Vanaja : The Story of Integration : New Interpretation, Manohar, New Delhi, First Published, 1981, p.246

203. Majumdar, R.C. : Struggle For Freedom, Bombay, 1969, p.784.
204. Burke, S.M. and Quraishi, S.A. : op. cit., p.574.
205. Hodson, H.V. : op. cit., p.367.
206. Bhatia, L.M. : 'The End of the Princely System', Indo-British Review, A Journal of History, Vol. XV No. 2 December, 1988, p.141.
207. Manor, James : op. cit., p.323.
208. Sarkar, Sumit : op. cit., pp.451-452.
209. Desai, A.R. : Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism, Popular Prakashan Private Limited, Bombay, First Published 1960. Reprinted 1998. p.66.

Appendix C

The Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement under the Leadership of Thakur Pachanan Barman and its Impact

In dealing with the socio-political stirrings of the period under study it is important to take account of a movement that emerged and spread among the Rajbansi Hindus of the Princely State of Cooch Behar and also other districts of North Bengal, particularly Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and Dinajpur and Goalpara district in Assam. The movement came to be called the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement by its leaders and participants.¹ This lower caste agitation of the late 19th and early 20th centuries has been considered as 'manifestation of protest against a dominant system of social organisation that imposed disabilities and inflicted deprivation on a subordinate group.'² Social mobility was not a rare phenomenon in British or pre-British India. At different points of times, individuals and groups belonging to the lower castes (jatis) had acquired economic, political and social power. The rise of these people created acute incongruity in the society because their position in the caste hierarchy became utterly incompatible with the eminence they had earned. Such incongruities generated serious social tensions. However, the caste society had developed provisions for accommodating the aspirations of those ambitious individuals and groups and ultimately put them in a higher position as a new caste with higher ritual status. "It is due to the relative flexibility of the caste system," Hitesranjan Sanyal wrote, "that social tensions arising from the rise of people from lower rungs were channelized through movements for upward social mobility and were ultimately neutralized by promotion to higher position within the hierarchy of caste."³

Social mobility became much more pervasive under the British rule which not only altered the political base of the caste system but also struck at the economic foundations of the traditional hierarchical social relationships. But the caste system still prevailed as an important determinant of social behaviour of the Hindus. Those people from lower castes who had improved their economic position taking advantage of the new economic opportunities, demanded a corresponding higher rank in caste hierarchy and organised caste agitations in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. 'Such movements were possible,' according to Sekhar Bandopadhyay, 'because this limited mobility generated greater desire for social upliftment among the lower caste masses and perhaps a greater urge for social equality.'⁴

The background to Rajbansi Kshatriya movement was broadly provided by the social, political and economic changes that occurred under British rule. Over several centuries social mobility involving various autochthonous groups of North Bengal, particularly the Rajbansis and Koches, had been taking place. The British rule brought about major dislocation in the socio-economic life of the rural population resulting in narrowing down of opportunities and increased pressure on available resources.⁵ The British rule also bolstered upper-caste dominance in land and administration.

The introduction of Zamindari and Mouzaduri tenures, English education and berths in administration helped to establish upper-caste cultural and social hegemony over the Koch-Rajbanshis. This also initiated the process of destitution and cultural disintegration among these people.⁶ Services and professions came to be monopolised by upper caste Hindus. At the same time, new opportunities for social mobility were opened up through commercialization of agriculture, improvement of communications and spread of education, though to a very limited extent. These contrary processes generated new social tensions and strivings which partly found expression through the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement.⁷ The movement essentially challenged this hegemony of the upper-castes.⁸ Besides, the colonial government's census operations since 1891 tried to classify each Hindu social group or caste on the basis of social hierarchy recognised by Hindu public opinion also directly contributed to the growth of the movement.

The colonial rulers considered the Rajbansis an uncivilized people. Writing in the early nineteenth century Buchanan-Hamilton observed that the Rajbansis, Koches etc. were 'generally looked upon as low and impure.'⁹ And in the 1870s W.W. Hunter, the colonial scholar - administrator, referred to them as 'semi-aboriginal tribes.'¹⁰ Not merely the British rulers but the high caste Hindus too treated the Rajbansis contemptuously. As it is learnt from the District Census Report for Jalpaiguri for 1891 that the social status of the Rajbansis 'was extremely low, and no high caste Hindu could be induced to take cooked food from their hands or smoke in their 'hookas'.'¹¹

The Rajbansis have, no doubt, a rich and complex history, but it is yet to be written properly. Their history includes the history of the people of Cooch Behar State and other North Bengal districts mentioned above and also of part of Assam. They were once a regionally dominant political power and founded several powerful kingdoms. But their precise origin, status and folk history remain in obscurity. From various accounts mostly left by the colonial administrators and ethnographers, it appears that when the British defeated the Rajbansis they belonged to a semi-tribal community who for a considerable period were settled agriculturists, with regional diversities. Even at that juncture the Rajbansis formed a considerably differentiated peasant society.¹²

The Rajbansis lived in a geographically contiguous region. It is important to note that in 1921 more than 88 percent of their population lived in the princely state of Cooch Behar and the districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri.¹³ As a matter of fact, the Rajbansis were a dominant peasant caste in northern Bengal. In 1911, 89 percent of the Rajbansis who had any occupation were "cultivators." Among 'the cultivators,' though many were share croppers or adhiaars, a substantial section had become rich peasants, enjoying various grades of tenurial rights as Jotedars and Chukanidars. The process of reclamation of the jungle areas in northern Bengal had been the major source of their economic mobility and this resulted in the establishment of some big zamindari houses by the Rajbansis. Later on some of them also took to trade, education and various professions, resulting in an upwardly mobile section among the Rajbansis. Consequently, the Rajbansi community became much less homogeneous.¹⁴

The Cooch Behar society was composed of heterogenous people. The people were, as of now, generally composed of two elements : the Hindus and Musalmans. Amongst them the Rajbansis constituted the most numerous ethnic group in Cooch Behar State. There were also other small tribes like Koch, Mech, Garo residing in Cooch Behar State.¹⁵ The following table shows their number during the period between 1872 to 1931 :¹⁶

	Year						
	1872	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Rajbansis	1,11,125	2,99,458	3,52,409	3,38,299	3,38,623	3,29,268	3,18,846
Koch	-	-	-	-	1317	1261	1230
Mech	-	-	3778	-	-	-	-
Tiyar	-	54152	7	14	4	-	-
Garo	-	-	1261	-	-	-	-

The following tabular statement shows the percentage of the Rajbansis to the Hindu population of the Princely State of Cooch Behar and other four districts of Northern Bengal from 1872 to 1931.¹⁷

Percentage of the Rajbansis to the Hindu population

State or Districts	years					
	1872	1881	1891	1911	1921	1931
Cooch Behar state	86	85	90	85	80	80
Jalpaiguri	70	60	3	58	60	50
Darjeeling	50	25	6	15	12	14
Dinajpur	12	55	8.5	55	52	45
Rangpur	33	50	62	-	58	60

Another table given below shows the percentage of the Rajbansis to the total population of the princely state of Cooch Behar and other four districts of Northern Bengal from 1872 to 1931.¹⁸

Percentage of the Rajbansis to the Population

State or Districts	years					
	1872	1881	1891	1911	1921	1931
Cooch Behar State	20	50	55	56	52	55
Jalpaiguri	33	35	2.5	33	30	33
Darjeeling	24	20	4.5	12	9	9

State or Districts	years					
	1872	1881	1891	1911	1921	1931
Dinajpur	6	25	4.5	24	25	20
Rangpur	5	22	22	–	18	13

From the foregoing tables it is clear that the most predominating component in the population of Cooch Behar State was composed of the Rajbansis. Not only that, the Rajbansis also constituted the most numerous group among the autochthons in the districts of North Bengal. They also constituted the single largest Hinduized social group in the princely state of Cooch Behar and other districts of North Bengal such as Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and Dinajpur. The Rajbansis along with the Paliyas, Deshis and Koches were almost entirely found in the wide stretch of the country extending from the districts of Malda and Purnea to Goalpara in Assam. They as well as the Muslims of North Bengal origin, the majority of whom were most probably 'Islamized' Rajbansis or Koches¹⁹ spoke, a dialect which, according to Grierson, 'is called Rajbansis, and while undoubtedly belonging to the eastern branch [of Bengali language], has still points of difference which entitle it to be called as a separate dialect.'²⁰

The Rajbansis formed a loosely differentiated and amorphous community with very loose adherence to Puranic Hindu faith. Over several centuries, particularly since about the late fifteen century, they were increasingly being exposed to Brahmanical religion. For a quite long time they had been claiming that they represented the traditional Kshatriya caste and they came to be recognised as a distinct Hindu caste or jati by the late nineteenth century. But as a matter of fact, the impact of orthodox religion and of caste-based social practices and rituals upon the Rajbansi community remained very much partial and in many respects superficial even in the early twentieth century. The religious beliefs and practices of the Rajbansis were non-Brahmanical to a great extent. By the late nineteenth century, a sort of sycretism between non-Brahmanical faith and Puranic Hindu faith seems to have been taking place. However, their religious beliefs and rituals, marriage customs, funeral ceremonies and various social practices show that the process of Hinduization was marked by considerable tension and even conflict.²¹

In spite of a long-standing sanskritizing process, Rajbansis' religion is a curious blend of nature worship, Saktism, Vaishnavism, Tantricism and even Sufism. While the Hindu gods and goddesses such as Siva, Vishnu, Kali and Durga were worshipped, a major and significant element in their worship was that of the Pre-sanskritic gods and goddesses. Much of their worship was associated with agricultural operations and the warding off of evil spirits.²² The worship of Balaram and Bishohari (The goddess of snake) was very popular among the Rajbansis. However, Bura Thakur, Bura Thakurani, Dangdhara, Suvachani, Madan-kam (the god of love), and the like, were deities peculiar to this people.²³ Almost all of the these gods and goddesses were non-vedic, non-Smriti and non-Brahman in origin. Offerings were made to Muslim saints like Satya Pir. Many of the ceremonies like Hudum deo puja were magico-

religious in nature.²⁴ Most of the pujas were performed by non-Brahmans, that is, Rajbansi priests called Adhikaris. Ojhas or exorcists belonging to Rajbansi community performed rituals to appease or ward off evil spirits.²⁵ All this shows that the Rajbansis while being drawn into the Hindu fold, continued to retain many non-Bramanical practices and rituals.

There were several types of marriages widely prevalent among the Rajbansi Hindus till the early twentieth century and even much later, which were not permissible in orthodox Hindu house. Divorce was allowed and a loose form of widow remarriage took place. In many cases marriage was merely a matter of mutual consent to live together as man and wife as because the Rajbansi people did not always consider the marriage tie as sacred and inviolable as it should be. Bride price still remained the norm among the Rajbansis. The Union between a widow and a man among the Rajbansis was no marriage at all in the strictest sense of the term and no ceremony was performed on the occasion. When a widow accepted a man to live with him, she, in the vocabulary of the people, was said to do gao gach, and was known as the panchhua wife of the man, who, in his turn, was called her sangna. When a man took possession of a widow apparently by force, the latter was called the dangua wife, but in reality no forcible means had ever to be adopted, and such connections were entered into always by mutual consent. In like manner, when a widow of her own accord entered the house of a man and lived with him, she was called the dhoka (entered) wife.²⁶ From such marriage customs prevalent among the Rajbansis it is apparent that Rajbansis were not by any means fully integrated into Hindu caste society in spite of centuries of sanskritization.

Buchanon - Hamilton who visited Eastern India in the early nineteenth century observed that the Rajbansis were the 'aboriginals of Kamrup and be strongly characterized by their features as belonging to the great eastern race of mankind.' He also noticed that they were called indiscriminately Koch and Rajbansi, although they had introduced numerous distinctions amongst themselves. At that time they appeared to have been recognised as true Sudras by Maithili and Kamrupi Brahmins but not by the Bengali Brahmins.²⁷

There is divergence of opinions among the scholars on the ethnic origin of the Rajbansis. However, most scholars are of the opinion that 'the Rajbansis, the most dominant ethnic group of Cooch Behar State had their origin in the Bodo stock which in its course reflected Austro-Mongoloid tradition The Bodo stock gave birth to different tribal formations such as Koch, Mech, Rava, Tharu and other sub-tribal formations. The Rajbansis of Cooch Behar had their origin in Koch tribal formations. In the process of civil formation the Rajbansis of the State got sanskritized and this dominant ethnic group had experienced a closer touch with two distinctive alien culture sets like Hinduization and Islamization resulting into a cultural mix giving birth to a distinctive mixed variety of cultural fusion.'²⁸ Ranajit Das gupta has pointed out that 'as the ethnic origin of the Koches and Rajbansis is somewhat uncertain, it may be tentatively observed that these groups can be considered as an extension of the Bodo race of Assam and East

Bengal. They were subject to a process of Hinduization and claimed themselves to be Rajbansis, that is, kindred of the royal family.²⁹

However, Rajbansi intelligentsia by and large strongly disagreed with what had been stated above and emphatically denied any affinity between the Rajbansis on the one hand and the Koches, Paliyas and Bodos on the other. Among the Rajbansi scholars the eminent one was Rai Saheb Panchanan Barman who held that Rajbansis and Koches were different communities. Monomohan Roy, Hara Kishor Adhikari, Upendra Nath Barman, Hemanta Barman, Maniram Kabya Bhusan, and many others of the Rajbansi literati also held the same view. They argued that the Rajbansis and Koches formed entirely distinct castes and asserted the Rajbansis' 'mythico-historical claim of a Kshatriya origin'.³⁰

In the early social setting of the North Bengal districts including the Princely State of Cooch Behar, the social status or position of the Rajbansis was not challenged until the influx of a large number of caste Hindu immigrants in the region from other parts of the country. Those Hindu people with a strong sense to casteism started interacting with the indigenous Rajbansis in differential terms.³¹ The immigrant upper caste gentry treated the Rajbansis as 'backward, uncultured and even 'antyaaj''. They used to refer to the Rajbansis as 'bahe', implying their cultural inferiority. The Rajbansis were also regarded as 'ajalchal' and they were not allowed to touch wells of the upper castes. They were not allowed to enter the places of worship or to enter the kitchen in the upper caste households. On the other hand, the Rajbansis used to refer to the outsiders as 'bhatia', meaning an outsider to their land.^{31*} The Rajbansis were not regarded as pure Hindus. The Hindus of Lower Bengal residing in Cooch Behar did not drink water touched by a Rajbansi. In fact, the upper-caste Hindus considered the Rajbansis impure. As a consequence, the position of a Rajbansi had been 'below the Navasaks such as Kamar, Kumar, Goala etc.' Besides, the use of pork and the countenance of a form of widow marriage among the Rajbansis were the most objectionable practices from a Puranic Hindu point of view.³²

The higher caste people particularly the Brahmins were willing to accept the Rajbansis only as belonging to very low caste and naturally they had to suffer all the evils of the caste system.³³ The stigma of untouchability often put some of the well-placed educated members of the Rajbansi community in uncomfortable situation.³⁴ Thus being Hindus, the Rajbansis had ultimately sank to the level of lower castes and got tied to the shackles of the caste system.³⁵ In such a precarious social situation some Rajbansis of the region were going out of the Hindu fold and started embracing other faiths. In order to protest social humiliation, unjust and discrimination against them; and to desist their people from leaving the Hindu fold, a section of educated Rajbansis launched the Kshatriya movement.³⁶ In other words, the movement was born of a protest mentality or an 'attitude of defiance' on the part of the Rajbansis to the social authority of the higher castes who had been instrumental to the functioning of the caste system.³⁷

It should be mentioned here that a Rajbansi bhadralok class was emerged by the late nineteenth century. This Rajbansi elite class was basically an extension of the big landholders class and as such they had strong mooring in their rural society, and their main source of income was earning from land. They assumed the social leadership of their community because of the higher status added by their education and profession. They had the qualification necessary to articulate and represent the cause of their community to the British Government. This elite class also felt more strongly than their rural counterparts the disadvantages and disabilities due to their low caste status assigned by the Hindu society. In schools, colleges, hostels, offices and bar they felt the odium of the caste Hindus. They were outnumbered by the upper caste group in the urban centres and the discriminatory treatment they received made them champion of the social reform movement.³⁸ It is important to note that as early as the nineteenth century, the Rajbanshi leaders basing themselves on Hindu scriptures and epics were setting up their claim to be considered as Kshatriya. Their arguments were that in the hoary past they were known as Haihaya Kshatriyas who being attacked by Parasuram, the Brahman Warrior and Sagar of the Bhrigu dynasty, fled to distant places outside the Aryan territories to escape annihilation (according to some accounts, to Paundra Desh in Bengal and Bihar and, according to other accounts, Kamrup), took shelter among the non-Aryans, remained in cognito and in the course of time lost their Kshatriya characteristics and identity.³⁹ Hence they claimed the title of Bhanga Kshatriyas, which mean, fallen or degenerate Kshatriyas.⁴⁰ The claim received a fillip in subsequent years, particularly in the early decades of the twentieth century and came to be associated with a social reform movement.

In the early nineteenth century, Buchanan Hamilton had noticed the prevalence of legends associating the Rajbansis of North Bengal with the Kshatriyas of the classical age. He also witnessed the beginning of a social movement among the Rajbansis, under the leadership of certain important zamindars such as Mahiram Choudhuri.⁴¹ They had started claiming Bratya Kshatriya status. But there is no account to inform us about what happened to earlier Rajbansi claim to Kshatriyahood.⁴² However, the claim that the Rajbansi Hindus were kshatriyas of Aryan origin, began to take the shape of a movement at the time of the Census of 1891.⁴³ The Census authority gave instructions to the effect that 'the Rajbansi is the same as Koch.' The three groups of people - Rajbansi, Poliya and Koch - were returned under the single ethnic name of Koch. Several leading Rajbansi Zamindars and Jotedars of Rangpur took initiative in voicing protest against this and in forming a 'Rangpur Bratya Kshatriya Jatir Unnati Bidhayani Sabha' in 1891. Harmohan Khajanchi was one such influential Zamindar of Shyampukur in Rangpur district and one of the Rajbansi employees in the Rangpur Collectorate and became the President of that organization.⁴⁴ In 1891, the Rajbansi leaders described themselves as Bratya / Bhanga (fallen) Kshatriyas. They also started demanding official recognition of their new caste name.⁴⁵ They urged F.M. Skrine, then District Magistrate of Rangpur, to recognise Rajbansis as a caste separate from the Koch and to allow them to be enumerated as Kshatriyas in the Census. Mr. Skrine sought the opinion of the 'Rangpur Dharma Sabha', an association of Brahman Pundits. The Dharma Sabha in

its turn, according to Upendranath Barman, the Rajbansi scholar, after consultation with representatives of different schools of Pandit Samaj, important personalities of Hindu society and prominent 'Rajbansi Kshatriyas', gave the opinion that the Rajbansis and the Koches were two entirely different castes, that the former were of Kshatriya origin and that they had been degraded to a Bratya state due to non-observance of Vedic practices. They might be recognized as Bratya Kshatriyas or members of the warrior caste who had temporarily fallen from their high caste. F.M. Skrine made a recommendation to the Census Superintendent to allow Rajbansis to be enrolled as Bratya Kshatriyas against their cast status and also issued a general circular to the effect that the Rajbansis might write their caste as Bratya Kshatriya in all official correspondence. This pacified the Rajbansis and for the time being the movement subsided.⁴⁶

The Kshatriya movement gathered momentum again during the Census operations of 1901. Following the recommendation made by Mr. Skrine, the Rajbansis had expected that their Kshatriya status would be recorded in the census report and that they would be returned as a caste separate from the Koch. But they were greatly disappointed when they found that they were returned under the general head, Koch, a term very much despised by the Rajbansis claiming Kshatriya status, implying that they were the same as Koch. It was also learnt by them that in the 1901 census operations then going on they were to be enrolled as mere Rajbansi and not as Rajbansi Kshatriya. This gave birth to considerable discontent and they urged the concerned authority to accord them the status of Kshatriya caste. But their demand failed to get any positive response and in the 1901 Census the Rajbansis were once more bracketed with the Koch.⁴⁷ Some writers opine that opposition from sections of high caste Hindus was probably an important factor behind the rejection of the demand.⁴⁸ This caused much resentment as well as despair among the Rajbansis.⁴⁹

It was in this background that Rai Saheb Panchanan Barman (1845-1935) assumed the leadership of the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement which gradually spread throughout North Bengal including the Princely State of Cooch Behar.⁵⁰ Needless to mention that Panchanan Barman belonged to the Rajbansi ethnic group. He was originally an inhabitant of the Cooch Behar State. He was born to a Jotedar family in 1272 B.S. (c. 1865) at village Khalisamari, located under Mathabhanga sub-division in the State. His father was Shri Khosal Sarkar, a respectable land holding middle class farmer. Having completed his bachelor's degree from the Victoria College (now called Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal College) situated in Cooch Behar capital town, Panchanan Barman obtained the Master's degree in Sanskrit from the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta and the degree of Law from Calcutta University in 1898. It deserves mention that he was the first post-graduate (in Sanskrit literature) and the first law graduate amongst the people belonging to the Rajbansi community not only of Cooch Behar State but also of undivided Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Nepal.⁵¹

Panchanan Barman expected an honorable post in the Cooch Behar State administration commensurate

with his academic qualification. But his expectation was belied and he was given the post of Superintendent of the Rajgun Boarding attached to Jenkins School, Cooch Behar. Having realised that no better position would be offered to him in the State, he consequently left for Rangpur, the nearby district and joined the Rangpur Bar and started a career there as a law practitioner in 1901.⁵² He spent the rest of his life at Rangpur dedicating himself to the social upliftment movement of his community - the prime mission in his life. It was through his leadership and best endeavours that the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement succeeded and reached a new height.⁵³

The late nineteenth century and the early decades of twentieth century constituted a period of change and social tension. The socio-economic backwardness of the Rajbansi Hindus and the repeated refusal to accord Kshatriya status to them hurt Panchanan Barman. Even after Panchanan established himself as a highly qualified lawyer, he himself had to suffer humiliating treatment from upper caste Hindus. Thus once while going from the Bar Library to a Court in Rangpur he, by mistake, took the toga (hat) of a Brahman lawyer. Later on after realizing his mistake he wanted to return it, but the Brahman lawyer threw it away and burst out, 'I hate to use a toga used by a Rajbansi.' There were also instances of discrimination being practised by caste Hindus with regard to Rajbansi students staying in hostels.⁵⁴

In this critical background, Panchanan Barman took the initiative in mobilizing the Rajbansi community in striving for a proud Kshatriya identity. Already jealous attempts were being made by some Rajbansi scholars and pandits to compile materials of history, folk tales and folk songs, proverbs and sayings to establish the claim to Kshatriya status. Basing themselves on the Hindu scriptures and Puranas they sought to strengthen their claim.⁵⁵ At the same time, Panchanan Barman put emphasis on the need for social reform. Among the measures emphasized by Panchanan Barman and other Rajbansi leaders were the wearing of the sacred thread, reduction of the days of mourning on the death of either parent from thirty days to twelve days which was the mourning period for high cast Hindus, and change of surname from Das to Barman, Singha and Roy.⁵⁶ Panchanan Barman wrote 'Bratya Mochan Paddhati,' 'Kshatriyopanayam Byabastha' with a view to create more consciousness among the Rajbansis about their kshatriya status.⁵⁷ For his role in awakening the Rajbansis, Panchanan Barman emerged as the most popular and respected leader of his community.

It was under the leadership of Panchanan Barman that prior to the 1911 Census the kshatriya movement gathered momentum. In May, 1910 several hundred Rajbansis, mostly landholders, Jotedars and substantial peasants from different districts of North Bengal, Cooch Behar State and Goalpara in Assam assembled in a conference in Rangpur town. As a result from this conference, the Kshatriya Samiti, an organization of Rajbansi Kshatriyas was formed with Madhusudan Roy, a Lawyer from Jalpaiguri, as President and Panchanan Barman as Secretary. The Conference formulated the aims and objectives of the Samity and laid down the organizational structure.⁵⁸ This

structure consisted of (i) an Executive Committee which was to formulate and implement the Samiti's policies, (ii) a Finance Committee which was to look after the financial matters, and (iii) a Publication and Publicity Committee. The constitution provided for members of three categories : (i) Sadharan or ordinary members, (ii) Pracharak or ganya (distinguished) members, the members who would devote all their time for the work of the Samiti, and (iii) Manya or respectable members.⁵⁹

The immediate objective of the Kshatriya Samiti was to force upon the Census authority their claim of Kshatriya caste status. In its first session in 1910 the members present passed two resolutions reiterating the earlier statements : the Koch and the Rajbansi were different people and decided to communicate it to the Government so that the Rajbansis be enumerated separately and be returned as Kshatriya.⁶⁰ Deputations were sent to the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam at Dacca and the District Magistrates of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur with representations supported by the Vyavasthas (sanction) of large number of pundits of Kamrup, Nabadwip, Mithila and Cooch Behar.⁶¹ They also pressed the Superintendent of the 1911 Census operation in Bengal to enumerate the Rajbansis separately from the Koch and to recognize them as Kshatriyas in the Census.⁶² The former request was granted by the census authority without hesitation, 'as there is no doubt,' according to them, 'that at the present day, irrespective of any question of origin, the Rajbansi and Koch are separate castes. But the other request was turned down by them with the remark that 'it was out of question to allow them to be returned by the generic and archaic name of Kshatriya.'⁶³

Following the establishment of the Kshatriya Samiti, in the words of L.S.S. O'Malley, the Superintendent of the 1911 Census operations in Bengal, 'a most persistent agitation was carried on by the Rajbansis of Northern Bengal with the object of being recognized as Kshatriyas by descent. They desired not only to be recorded separately from the Koch, but also to be distinguished by the name of Kshatriya. The Census Superintendent further observed that no part of the 1911 Census aroused so much excitement as the return of castes. There was a general idea that 'the object of the Census is not to show the number of persons belonging to each caste, but to fix the relative status of different caste and to deal with questions of social superiority.' Some frankly regarded the Census as an opportunity that might be taken to obliterate caste distinctions. The feeling on the subject was very largely the result of castes having been classified in the last Census Report (1901) in order of social precedence. This "warrant of precedence" gave rise to considerable agitation. Hundreds of petitions were received from different castes requesting that they might be known by new names, be placed higher in social hierarchy, be recognized as Kshatriyas, Vaisyas etc. The Census authority also pointed out that many castes were aggrieved at the position assigned for them, and complained that it lowered them in public estimation while others thought it a suitable opportunity to advance new names.⁶⁴

It is also learnt from the Census Report of 1911 that the Rajbansis of Northern Bengal and Eastern Bengal

claimed to be entered as Kshatriya, Rajbansi Kshatriya, Kshatriya Rajbansi, Bratya Kshatriya, Patit Kshatriya and Bhanga Kshatriya. The Rajbansis dwelling in the Princely State of Cooch Behar claimed to be returned as Kshatriya Rajbansi and Rajbansi Kshatriya while the Rajbansis in Purnea claimed to be recorded as Bhanga Kshatriya.⁶⁵ However, in the final report of 1911 Census, they were listed as a separate Hindu caste, 'Rajbansi', with 'Kshatriya' in brackets.^{65*} It was pointed out that a comparatively modern symptom of this anxiety for the improvement of social status was the growth of the Caste Samiti or Sabha. Most of these bodies had come into existence since the 1901 Census and especially since the partition of Bengal in 1905. Their main object was, no doubt, to improve the social position of the caste.⁶⁶

The excitement and tension rose to its highest pitch on the eve of the Census operations of 1911, threatening disturbance of peace in different quarters.⁶⁷ At the local level, the movements of the lower castes "sometimes involved hostility against the higher castes and sometimes the action of the lower caste leader ... led to annoyance and opposition on the part of higher castes. The divisive forces had thus been effectively let loose. At that point of time it seemed that Hindu society was almost on the verge of being torn apart."⁶⁸ "We have enough of unrest in these troubled time," the Bengalee noted with alarm, "Let nothing be done to add to its volume, by riding rough-shod over the cherished caste sentiments of important groups of the Hindu Community." "An awakened and new born sense of self respect is at the bottom of the feeling ..." observed the Bengalee before the Census operations of 1911. "There is a wide-spread desire to level upwards ; and this is a feeling with which all Englishmen will readily sympathise, ... The action of the Government in granting the prayers of these cases will add to their contentment and enhance their self-respect ; and their claims seem to be founded on well-considered grounds."⁶⁹ In the report of the 1921 Census of India the authority mentioned the various types of Kshatriya claims by different social groups.⁷⁰ The Rajbansis were recognised as Rajbanshi Kshatriyas in the 1921 Census. It was also mentioned in the Census report that many of the Rajbansis were prepared to use force in support of their claim. Thus, after a decade of representation and persuasion, the Kshatriya Samiti succeeded in getting official recognition of the desired caste status of Kshatriya.⁷¹ Henceforth a large number of Rajbansis recorded themselves only as Kshatriyas (dropping the caste name) in the subsequent Censuses after taking of the sacred thread. So a fall in number of Rajbansis was noticed in some districts of Northern Bengal.⁷²

The leaders of the Kshatriya movement also made similar appeal to the Cooch Behar State administration to record the Rajbansis of the State as Kshatriyas in the Census. Initially the Royal Government of Cooch Behar did not incline to respond to this appeal positively, but later on they conceded to the demand for the recognition of Kshatriya status.⁷³ It is interesting to observe that the Rulers of Cooch Behar State (who are believed to have been sprung from the same community) did not incline to favour the Kshatriya movement led by Panchanan Barman.⁷⁴ It is learnt from the Administrative Report of the State that the Rajbansis in Cooch Behar were anxious to have themselves

entered as Kshatriya in the column for caste in the Census schedule and they held meetings at different places for the purpose of considering how this object could be attained. They subsequently submitted memorials to the authorities. But the State Government rejected their claim for Kshatriya status on two grounds : (i) the object of the Census was to record things as they existed, and (ii) titles of honour were to be conferred by His Highness, and the State could not ordinarily recognise titles assumed by the people themselves. However, in the column for name in the Census schedule, the Rajbansis affixed to their names titles used by the Kshatriyas. But from the Census point of view this was considered immaterial, because no notice of the names is taken in preparing the returns.⁷⁵ It is learnt from Panchanan Barman's letter written in September, 1921 to the Government of Bengal that the Kshatriya Samiti as an association representing about 22 lakhs of souls belonging to Kshatriya community, inhabiting the districts of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and other neighbouring districts and the State of Cooch Behar.⁷⁶

But mere claim to a higher category did not necessarily serve to elevate its status in social hierarchy at the local level. Castes wanting to raise themselves socially changed their customs and practices and tried to reorient pattern of their relationships with other Hindu castes. Thus the Kshatriya Samiti became seriously engaged in the task of giving up non-kshatriya rituals, customs and manners in favour of those practised and followed by superior caste groups. The first step to this reform was the ritual purification or Suddhi from Vratya status by donning sacred thread. The Kshatriya Samiti organised the first mass investiture ceremony (upanayana) at Perolbari on the bank of Karatoya, a river sacred to the Rajbansis, near Debiganj Railway Station in Jalpaiguri district on 27th Magha, 1319 B.S. (c. 9th February, 1912), where several thousand Rajbansis took sacred thread.⁷⁷ Panchanan Barman himself took sacred thread and adopted the surname of Barman in lieu of Sarkar. Such places of investiture were known as Milan Kshetra (Meeting place). The Brahman Pandits from Mithila, Kamrup and Nabadwip were present there to preside over the ceremony.⁷⁸ The next ritual practice the Rajbansis adopted was to shorten the asauch period to twelve days for kshatriya caste.⁷⁹ The community members were asked to follow Dashakarma or ten sacraments from birth onwards and other rituals of the twice-born castes, and to use the service of 'pure' Brahmans, and select proper Guru (preceptor) for them. They were also urged to take gotra name of the Brahmanical system.⁸⁰

As a matter of fact, emphasis on ritual emulation reached a feverish activity during the second decade of the twentieth century. As a further step towards Sanskritisation, the Rajbansi leaders began to boast of a pure Kshatriya origin from 1911 and secured Vyavasthas from the pandits of various places like Nabadwip to validate that claim. At the same time, the sacred thread for Rajbansis became a symbol for social mobilization. Since 1912 a number of mass thread wearing ceremonies were organized in different districts, where lakhs of Rajbansis went through the ceremony of ritual rebirth and began to don the sacred thread as a mark of their kshatriya status.⁸¹ As varna Hindu sacred thread sellers refused to sell sacred threads, the Kshatriya Samiti asked the women to learn spinning for upabit and started selling this from its office. With a view to build up proper character, Vrahmacharya Asram was set

up at various places where Rajbanshi youths were trained properly through ritual education. Two such Asramas were set up in Cooch Behar State, one at Gadaikhola and the other at Gitaldah.⁸²

An organisational structure was evolved to carry on socio-ritual activities of the Kshatriya Samiti. Besides the head-quarters of the Samiti at Rangpur, units were established at village level to introduce socio-ritual reform among the rural masses. The lowest village level unit was Mandali. The Kshatriya Samiti decided in its fourth annual conference in 1913 to set up mandali samitis in every village. From 1916 onwards, under the initiative of its volunteers, such samities began to come up slowly.⁸³ Each Rajbanshi Kshatriya by virtue of his social origin became automatically a member of the mandali. Several Mandalis constituted one Antar Mandali which was below the apex body, i.e., the Kshatriya Samiti. The constitution provided for two types of special membership : Ganya membership by paying rupees two within the first half of the year, and Manya membership by paying rupees one hundred or more at a time. By 1926, the number of such mandalis were as follows : 144 in Rangpur, 81 in Dinajpur, 34 in Cooch Behar State and one in Bogra, and total number of special members were only 100.⁸⁴ Provision for paid Pracharak or preacher was arranged who would travel village to village to organise Mandalis. One such earnestly devoted Pracharak was Jogendra Nath Deb Barma Sarkar of Sukhandanga Baghmara village in Mathabhanga sub-division of Cooch Behar State where he settled after his duty as Pracharak. He wrote many short family histories highlighting the past glory of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas some of which were published in a Calcutta based Bengali monthly. Questions had been raised as to what extent this Mandalis were participated by the community members but there was no denying that Mandalis became the focal point of the social movement at the grass-root level.⁸⁵

Along with emulation of rituals of higher caste people, the Rajbanshis were asked to replace their non-Kshatriya social customs, manners and habits by those followed by the higher caste people. The kshatriya Samiti instructed its members to change their non-Kshatriya customs and manners by curbing the women's liberty, lowering marriageable age of the girls, prohibiting widow remarriage and informal connubal relations, giving up phota or patni for saris by women, tabooing drinking spirituous liquor and eating fowl and pork etc. The Kshatriya Samiti acted as a social guardian of the community 'by prescribing 'do' and 'don't' commandments and punishing the offenders according to nature and degree of offence by fines and other measures including ostracism.⁸⁶

Consequently as a further step towards Kshatriyaisation, the Rajbanshis began to adopt Kshatriya surnames, some of them arranged early marriages for their daughters and some began to confine their women behind the purdah. The practices of informal connubial relations, polygamy and widow remarriage were also given up by a section of Rajbanshis. Some Rajbanshis left their traditional community priest called Adhikari (who were also Rajbanshis) and established Jajmani relations with the immigrant Srotriya Brahmans. And then in order to forge a greater pan-Indian horizontal unity, their leaders in 1920 established links with the 'Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasbha'.⁸⁷ and Kshatriya

Samiti became a branch of that organization.⁸⁸ It should be noted that in 1922 Panchanan Barman was elected the Vice-President of the Bengal Branch of the Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasabha, known as the Bengal Prantik Sabha.^{88*} Panchanan Barman was addressed as Thakur in the All India Kshatriya Mahasabha, held at Alwar under the Presidentship of the Maharaja of Alwar in 1924 and since then he was also known as Thakur Panchanan Barman.⁸⁹

The leaders of Kshatriya Samiti realised the backward state of education among the community members. Especially Panchanan Barman laid importance on mass education among the Rajbansis as he believed that education was the key to all-round progress of an individual, society and nation. Infact, he played the role of a forceful propagator of education among the rural people. "Many people have the wrong notion,' in the words of Panchanan Barman, 'that those who have land and property need not concentrate more on education of their children. They think that since looking after the property could be enough for livelihood why at all to waste money on education?' he urged the Rajbansi people to come out of the false notion and acquire maximum education at any cost.⁹⁰ Another factor for the educational backwardness of the Rajbansis was the lack of accommodation for students in district and sub-divisional towns where English education was available. In the hostels attached to these institutions prejudices of the caste Hindu students would not allow the Rajbansi students to stay. To facilitate the education of the Rajbansi students new hostels were set up with the help of donations from the community members and contribution from the Government.⁹¹ Kshatriya Samiti also offered scholarships for the education of the poor Rajbansis students and by 1925 it had spent about Rs. 10,000 for the education of 70 such students. Request was made to wealthy Rajbansi jotedars to open schools in the rural areas for spread of education. A student wing of the Kshatriya Samiti, 'Kshatra Chhatra Samaj,' was set up in 1324 B.S. (1917 A.D.) in Rangpur to organise the students section. The members of 'Chhatra Samaj' were asked to repay their social debt by participating in welfare activities to help the poor members of their community. In order to spread the ideal of the Samiti, raise social consciousness and communicate and coordinate geographically scattered members, a monthly journal, 'Kshatriya', had started publishing from 1327 B.S. (1921 A.D.).⁹² This journal also dealt with various socio-economic problems facing the Rajbansis and published several booklets on Hindu Shastras. Regarding the prevalent educational system, Panchanan Barman as Secretary of Kshatriya Samiti wrote a letter on the 5th November, 1917 to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal expressing his view that 'the system of education be so modified that every community may develop its own religious, social and moral ideas and that impetus be given to the industrial education and enterprise.'⁹³

Immediately after his arrival at Rangpur Panchanan Barman established the Uttarbanga Sahitya Parishad, as he believed that it were the cultural and philosophical foundations which made the social life sound and goal-oriented. He also took the responsibility of becoming the founder-editor of the journal published by the Rangpur Sahitya Parishad. He undertook the task of writing research-oriented articles on the land and culture of the Rajbansis in the Rajbansi language. As a very effective writer he used his pen as an weapon for social mobilization as he brought

out the state of discrimination, evils of untouchability, racial intolerance etc in his writings. Not only his writings achieved the goal of awakening the people to a great extent, but also his works received appreciation from the intellectuals and scholars from all quarters. Renowned scholar Nagendra Nath Bose, while appreciating the works of Panchanan Barman, remarked, "Panchanan Barman's scholarly pursuit is like a bright flame and his work on language provided me with more of research materials."⁹⁴

Panchanan Barman worked for women's education in general and believed in a complete protection of respect of women. He formed Nari Raksha Sebak Dal also nicknamed Sebak Dal to protect the women from the clutches of the gundas and the anti-socials. He engaged this Sebak Dal in resuming the honour of women and even planned rehabilitation of victims. In order to prevent the unfortunate incidents against the modesty of the women, he arranged to provide arms training to the women for their self-defence. Considering the prevalent practice of Jahar, practice of suicide of traditional Kshatriya women to save their modesty, this was perhaps the most pioneering Kshatriya-like step taken by Panchanan Barman.⁹⁵ In the background of the women's distress and dishonour prevalent then in North Bengal districts, he wrote a famous poem, entitled "Dangdhari Mao".⁹⁶ At one time, in fact, "Dangdhari Mao", the club wielding mother, had become the rallying cry of the Rajbansis obviously to protect the honour of their women.⁹⁷ It may be noted here that in September, 1921, a resolution on women's suffrage was raised in the Bengal Legislative Council. But Panchanan Barman opposed the resolution on the ground that "if we allow women to come out and vote publicly like males, the result will be that they will be quarrelsome, their household duties will be neglected and they will not attend to their home duties where alone their greatness lies." Ultimately the resolution was rejected by 56 - 37 votes.⁹⁸

Besides the Upanayana or the Thread Ceremony of the Rajbansi youth, Panchanan Barman and other Rajbansi leaders insisted on arousing positive vigour and courage among them. They introduced a regular training programmes on physical exercise and martial arts and arms like Jathis, swords, bow and arrow etc. for the men and women alike and gradually formed a Mahila Bahini extended for women. The outbreak of the First World War (1914-18) prompted the Kshatriya Samiti leaders to give a call to the young men of the community to show their Kshatriya, that is, martial abilities by joining the British army and issued appeal to the Government for raising two battalions composed exclusively of Rajbansis. Responding to the call several hundred Rajbansi youth from the North Bengal districts and Goalpara joined the army and went to the war front. The outstanding performance of the Rajbansi Youth in the war can be learned from Panchanan Barman's report submitted in the 9th Annual conference of Kshatriya Samiti held at Domar in Rangpur District on 31 and 32 Ashar in 1325 B.S. (1918 A.D.). In appreciation of Rajbansi soldiers and the Rajbansis dwelling in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and the State of Cooch Behar in general, the Superintendent of Bengal Regiment at Karachi remarked, "the men of this Kshatriya community make better soldiers than most of the others." Observing the vigour and valour of the Rajbansi Youth. Mr. F.J. Mohan offered to form

independent Rajbansi Kshatriya Company. On the 6th April, 1917, he wrote, "A separate Company composed of Rajbansi (Kshatriyas) of the upper and middle class might be formed if suitable candidates are available."⁹⁹

In fact, the enthusiasm, valour, team spirit and skill of the Rajbansi youths in the war drew attention of the high officials and the military commanders. They were full of praise for the Rajbansi war professionals. In the words of Captain O' Dolder, Commanding Officer of Karachi "with reference to the attached letter of the Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti, I write to say that it would be advantageous for recruitments if you could send the men mentioned in the above letter on recruiting duly as desired by the Secretary (Panchanan Barman). I understand that men of his community have turned out better soldiers than most of the others and it would be as well to recruit as large a number of them as possible. It will also help recruitment if all the men of this community can be formed into a separate Company to be known as the Kshatriya Company. Col. Bondler, my predecessor so promised the leader of the community that this should be done if it were practicable." This achievement, no doubt, created a sensation in the whole of Eastern India. The Kshatriya leaders, therefore, appealed to the Government of India to form a Rajbansi Kshatriya Regiment. Two fold benefits were contemplated by this proposal. First, the awakening of the spirit of valour, and secondly, to create a means of livelihood among the Rajbansi youth as of Gurkha and other community youth. Panchanan Barman formally put up the proposal to form a Kshatriya Regiment in the 11th Annual Kshatriya Samiti Conference held at Dhubri in Assam. Later on when the British decided to form the Indian Territorial Army, a large number of Rajbansis joined the force inspired by the social upliftment movement mobilized by Panchanan Barman. In recognition of the service rendered by Panchanan Barman in the war effort, he was conferred the titles 'Rai Saheb' and 'M.B.E.' (Member of the British Empire) by the Government in 1919.¹⁰⁰

The Kshatriya Samiti which included many jotedars and prosperous peasants raised community funds for providing loans to Rajbansi agriculturists, urged the latter to improve their agricultural practices and called upon them to organize co-operative credit societies.¹⁰¹ It deserves particular mention that the Government was urged to pay more attention to the development of agriculture and to amend the Bengal Tenancy Act in order to make the peasants the owners of the land. Such demands featured regularly in the pages of Kshatriya, the monthly journal of Kshatriya Samiti, and were raised on the floor of the Bengal Legislative Council.¹⁰² In order to ease out the difficulties of the farmers, Panchanan Barman established Kshatriya Bank, perhaps the first of its kind in the North-Eastern India. As a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, he contributed greatly for the amendment of the Bengal Tenancy Act for the benefit of the cultivators of all communities. The Tenancy Act established the ownership right of the farmer over the land that they used to till. As a member of the Board of Economic Enquiry, he also tried to improve the economic condition of the depressed classes, particularly educationally backward classes. In 1929-31 when severe economic depression occurred in the whole world Panchanan Barman wrote to the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division to review the revenue policy of Bengal so that the large section of the common people and farmers were relieved. He

continued to pursue the matter with Mr. Rabson, the President, Eastern States Agency and Mr. Baslow, the Secretary of the Eastern States Agency till he got the policy amended.¹⁰³ Panchanan Barman also sent appeals to the government for the abolition of the oppressive ijaradari system in the Cooch Behar State or for allocation of more grants for the rural health centers.¹⁰⁴

Panchanan Barman was the visionary who could foresee that only through dependence on agriculture a community could not prosper. Thus he made efforts to encourage education in the Rajbansi Community as noted above and endeavoured to make them eligible for governmental job. That was the time when following the historic Poona Pact signed between Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mr. M.K. Gandhi some provisions were made at the national level for reservation of jobs for the depressed classes. Panchanan Barman single-handedly made an effort to change the definition and obtained the nomenclature, "those are educationally and economically backward." By this he made the Rajbansi community eligible to obtain the benefit in educational, political and economic fields. In order to achieve the mission of uplifting the Rajbansis he adopted the means of kshatriyaisation to begin with, but later adopted the movement of Dr. Ambedkar and brought the Rajbansis to the category of Depressed class without inhibition. Some members of the Kshatriya Samiti were initially opposed to the Rajbansis being branded as a Scheduled Caste (depressed classes' later being called scheduled castes). But the dispute was later resolved through Panchanan Barman's persuasion and his careful exposition of the possible advantages of reservation.¹⁰⁵

The Kshatriya Samiti described itself as a non-political association aiming at the intellectual, social, moral and religious progress of the Rajbansi community.¹⁰⁶ However, it took a political stand on several occasions, which was definitely not apolitical. Some instances may be cited here. The fourth annual conference of Kshatriya Samiti held at Debiganj in June, 1913 declared that the Rajbansi Kshatriyas were 'loyal subjects' and expressed 'great indignation at the most heinous bomb-outrage upon Viceroy (Hardinge) at the time of his entry into the new capital of Delhi in December 1912. The tenth conference held in 1919 expressed great rejoicing at the British Victory in the War with loud cheers for the King Emperor.¹⁰⁷ While national agitation and activities for constitutional reforms were launched in the war years and immediate post-war years, in a representation to the Government of Bengal in November, 1917, the Kshatriya Samiti spoke of its 'apprehensions of tendencies ... of discontent and even disrespect for law and order, and urged the government for separate representation in future constitutional reforms.¹⁰⁸

As a matter of fact, the lower caste elites, whether Rajbansi or others, remained deprived of political power. The fact of under-representation especially in the Provincial legislature and other local bodies led to the growth of separatist tendencies among the lower caste elites. For instance, when the Montague - Chemsford Reform proposals were announced, the Namasudra elites of Eastern Bengal resolved at a Conference in Calcutta in 1917 that if any additional power was "vested in the hands of a few leaders without giving any share of power to us it will make the

future progress of the backward classes impossible."¹⁰⁹ A similar conference of next year unequivocally demanded "communal representation" to prevent "the oligarchy of a handful of limited castes." The resolution was endorsed by the Rajbansis.¹¹⁰ As a result of these demands, the Reform Act of 1919 provided for the nomination of one representative of the depressed classes to the Bengal Legislature. Apart from this lone member, such classes remained almost totally unrepresented and all the constituencies inhabited by them returned only caste Hindu candidates.¹¹¹

In this way, lower caste perception of history tended to be contrary to that of the nationalists. The colonial rule appeared to the former to be an improvement over the past. "There is no more the casteism and communalism of the middle ages," wrote Kshatriya in 1920, "God has dispensed even-handed justice by placing the Indians for their proper education in the hands of a noble nation from far off Britain".¹¹² Therefore, among the Rajbansi and other lower castes élites there grew a certain sense of loyalty to the colonial Government and at the same time, a suspicion about the nationalist politics which came to be identical as a high caste affair. Nationalism for these people had assumed a different connotation. The Bengali word 'Jati' for these people, had come to mean not 'nation', but only 'caste' and its upliftment became their 'sole objective'.¹¹³ Thus a rural Rajbansi poet wrote sometime in the early twentieth century "¹¹⁴

Mora chahina artha, chahina man

chahina bidya, chahina Jnan.

Mora chai shudhu Jatir pratistha.

Mora chai shudhu Jatir Pran.

(We do not want money, nor do we want prestige

We do not want education, nor do we want Knowledge.

We only want the recognition of our caste,

We only want our caste to come alive.)

In fact, there was strong disinclination to join the Congress in the case of local leaders of ritually lower castes like the Rajbansis and the Namasudras, and the political response from these two large peasant communities, which numbered next only to the Muslim and Mahishya communities, was weak because of their resentment of their low ritual rank.¹¹⁵ It is true that some lower caste leaders tried to maintain the link between their community and the nationalist mainstream. Such ambivalence was much more evident among the Rajbansi leaders. They were occasionally involved in nationalist mass protest, such as the Non-Cooperation movement. The Rajbansi community under the leadership of Panchanan Barman temporarily went over to the non-co-operators in July, 1921. Some other important personalities like Upendranath Barman were also deeply influenced by the nationalist fervour at different junctures. But despite all these, the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement on the whole remained loyal to the British and in its thirteenth

annual conference in 1926, the Samiti adopted a formal resolution expressing its "loyalty and obedience" to the Raj. The British Government also responded equally to win them and induced them to be dissociated from the caste Hindu group in order to curb their political base. As such the constitutional reform of 1919 provided for separate political representation for these backward communities.¹¹⁶

It is important to note that this Kshatriya movement had to face some opposition from certain sections within the community.¹¹⁷ Many bhatias or Bengali immigrants into North Bengal and caste Hindus opposed the move to obtain the Kshatriya status. The Koch Behar State Officials too, many of whom were immigrant upper caste Bengalis, tried to create difficulties in the way of the movement.¹¹⁸ Perhaps one major reason was the contempt with which the Rajbansi leaders viewed the Koch.¹¹⁹ The caste Hindu opinion in general did not accept the uplifted social position of the Rajbansis. From the beginning the caste Hindu zamindars and professionals protested strongly against the demand raised by the Rangpur Vratya Kshatriya Jatir Unnati Vidhyani Sabha to the District Magistrate of Rangpur, Mr. F.A. Skyne.¹²⁰ They protested against permitting the Rajbansis Bratya Kshatriya as caste. When the Rajbansis enmass donned sacred thread on 9th February, 1913 at Perolbari, Mr. J.S. Milligan, the then District Magistrate of Rangpur, remained present with a pose of armed constables lest the caste Hindu group attempted to create disturbance and frustrate the ceremony.¹²¹ The Rajbansis were not generally treated at par with the respectable caste groups of Hindus society. So even the adoption of sacred thread, symbolic justification for Kshatriya caste group, did not help the Rajbansis getting the service of those Brahmans who served the upper caste Hindus.¹²²

The native state of Cooch Behar failed to lead the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement owing to her political, administrative and psychological factors. To begin with, the internal communication of Cooch Behar State was in bad shape. For half the year various parts of the State remained separated from each other due to heavy rain. Roads were seasonal and became unfit for conveyance from May to October each year. This state of communication system hardly provided scope for organisation and coordination among the people of different parts of the State. Secondly, the entire administration from the top officials down to the clerical staff were imported from the British Bengal from the beginning and that practice continued later on. A hiatus was developed between the caste Hindu professionals and service holders and the local Rajbansi community due to a very low impression of the latter by the former. Thirdly, the princely family of Cooch Behar did not also encourage their subjects to demand the same social status which they thought was their exclusive privilege.¹²³ Lastly, the local Rajbansi community was afraid of the Maharaja's displeasure which might result in their expulsion from the State and confiscation of their property. The obstacles put by the Cooch Behar administration before the Kshatriya movement was mentioned by the Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti frequently in its proceedings of the annual conferences.¹²⁴

On the other hand, the centre of the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement was Rangpur as it had the necessary

social, economic and political environment for the leadership to this social upliftment movement. Developed communication system, presence of social infrastructure as well as a dynamic elite class, and democratic and liberal environment — all these objective and subjective factors created the rationale of the leading role taken by the Rangpur Rajbansis in the Kshatriya movement.¹²⁵ It should be stated here that Panchanan Barman had also chosen Rangpur for his new place of living when he left Cooch Behar in 1901. It was in this background that the Rangpur Rajbansi elite led by Panchanan Barman founded the Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti, the backbone of the Kshatriya movement, in 1910 A.D.

The Rajbansi caste movement was in fact a movement of a depressed community, the people of which wanted to raise their social rank by borrowing the upper caste rituals. The process they followed is called Sanskritisation or cultural adaptation by which some of the Rajbansis changed their customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of twice-born caste, and ultimately demanded kshatriya status. They obviously found Kshatriya model as much more elastic to accommodate their rank aspirations. The flexibility and diversity of the Kshatriya style of life encouraged the Rajbansis to claim Kshatriya status. Their aspirations did not require that they would abandon cultivation because their Kshatriya ideal was essentially based on control of land. It may be stated that 'under the Pax-Britannica, the warrior-ruler model of the Kshatriya remained the most popular and feasible model for social mobility and cultural assimilation for ambitious lower castes or tribals.' Through Sanskritization process the Rajbansis also wanted promotion from a lower to a higher berth in the local caste hierarchy. It has been argued by a scholar that 'from early parts of 20th century, the aims of Rajbansi leadership had been almost classically those of Sanskritization.'¹²⁶

But incidentally the question has been raised as to why did the Rajbansis follow the 'Sanskritization' model? It has been stated that this was due partly to the fact that as the avenues for change were limited and as caste was still the symbol of status and power so they took cultural adaptation as the means for upgrading their rank in the social hierarchy. As a matter of fact, the lower caste had nothing to get from the caste system. But in the absence of a tangible basis for a new identity on the one hand, and the upper castes' emphasis on ritual superiority on the other, caste identity thus became the most effective rallying point in the social and political movements of the lower castes.¹²⁷ They actually took cultural adaptation or Sanskritization as a camouflage to ventilate their grievances against the upper caste domination.¹²⁸ It has also been pointed out that the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement like other low caste movements 'indicated the lines of cleavage between respectable and peasant society and offered political challenges to the high caste, neo-Hindu culture of the educated Bengalis. Such movements of Sanskritization posed very real threats to the dominant high caste Bengali culture'.¹²⁹

It should also be noted that the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement was not without its limitations, anomalies and internal tension. It exhibited Sanskritizing tendencies with an assertion of Aryan origin and striving for the higher

social status of Kshatriyas by borrowing higher caste customs and rituals (like wearing of sacred thread, asauch ceremonies and ten sacraments or Dashakarma). Rajbansi leaders strongly rejected any suggestion to the effect that the Rajbansis and the Koches had a common tribal or semi-tribal past and totally dissociated themselves from the latter. Hence the movement was a conservative one with claim to a higher status within the existing caste hierarchy and there was no attack on or even a critique of the caste system.¹³⁰ While some of the lower caste movements with a radical potential such as the Satyashodak Samaj in Maharashtra¹³¹ rejected Brahman religious authority, the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement attempted to gain recognition from Brahman pandits and shastric sanction. Apart from this, the kshatriya movement kept away from the nationalist movement, sought opportunities for more jobs, education and political favours from the Government and looked forward to a period of benevolent rule of the British. The Rajbansi leaders passed resolutions in the annual conferences each year expressing their loyalty and allegiance to the Raj. During the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, caste was thus going through a process of politicisation, which was conditioned essentially by the colonial context. What developed through this process was a distinct 'depressed classes' politics which prevented, to some extent, a cross-caste political mobilization for our battle against colonial rule and ultimately weakened the nationalist movement in the same way, though less effectively, as the Muslim break-away politics.¹³²

Though the movement was supposed to embrace the entire Rajbansi community numbering 1.8 million souls, the coverage of social emulation was limited to the relatively well-to-do sections of the community. In the first decade of the movement, i.e. 1910-20, only 1.8 lakhs souls had donned sacred thread as Suddhi.¹³³ Considering the ratio of men and women and Suddhi performed by all adult male members, the number was about one tenth of the male population. It was evident that the Kshatriya movement did not encompass total mobility in community structure. Rather the movement was expressive of the aspirations of upper echelons of the Rajbansi community and the poorer sections were quite unaffected by the issues, and emulative practices remained exclusive to the wealthy.¹³⁴ Many economically backward and depressed Rajbansis were not very enthusiastic to respond favourably to the cultural reform movement called for by the Kshatriya Samiti. The common poor Rajbansis were not very happy as they had to incur substantial expenditure for undertaking the Brahmanic rites and rituals and as such Kshatriyaisation process was very slow. Not only this, most of the Rajbansi people preferred to retain their old rituals and practices and they were not deeply attached to the classical form of Hinduism. Besides, the Rajbansi leaders did not have any programme for the poor peasants and adhiaars who constituted the bulk of the Rajbansi Hindu peasantry and could not ultimately utilise the protest mentality of the masses to bring about any radical social change. The movement remained confined in the main among the large landholders, jotedars and better off peasants.¹³⁵ Thus it is important to note that while sociologists have tended to relate these caste movements to the upward mobility through 'Sanskritization' of particular jatis as a whole, other scholars like Gail Omvedt have sought to explain the movement as a 'distorted but important'

expression of socio-economic tensions and conflict.¹³⁶ In spite of such limitations of ideology or participation, the Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement, on the whole, represented an endeavour to find social identity and status for the Rajbansi Hindus and contained significant elements of dissent and opposition to upper caste domination. The Movement brought about the apparent caste solidarity among the Rajbansis in general and social awareness among the educated and well-to-do section of the community. This solidarity inculcated in them a sense of consciousness of nationality (Jati) and search for new identity separate from the general Hindu society. History was written by the community historians to establish link of the present with glorious past. Sanskrit scriptures were widely quoted, legends reinterpreted, folk songs and ballads discovered to build up the history and tradition. Among the Rajbanshi elite group a separatist tendency was developed which gradually increased their distance from the rest of the Bengali caste society. They mentioned varna Hindus as a separate caste (Bhinna Jati) and voice was raised to dissociate from them in every aspect of life.¹³⁷

The movement raised the caste consciousness among the members of the Rajbansi community and aspiration for the higher caste status. The community members showed mobility and self-confidence which was not observed before. The Rajbansis established now matrimonial relations on inter-district basis which was unthinkable before the movement began. Annual conferences were held at different places of North Bengal districts and Goalpara and these assemblages brought a horizontal solidarity among the community members spread over north-eastern India. The momentum of the movement was definitely noticed during the first two decades of the twentieth century.¹³⁸

In this crucial period, The Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement led by Panchanan Barman for upgrading the Rajbansis into the status of Kshatriyas in society was not a religious movement in the contemporary background, and judging from the contemporary social view of point, it was rather a movement to bestow social status upon the depressed and backward community. And Panchanan Barman was the pioneer of this movement.¹³⁹ As a social reformer he devoted his life to the work of protecting his community from social exploitation and oppression, and this was his greatest achievement.¹⁴⁰ Throughout the Kshatriyaization movement Panchanan Barma emerged as the saviour of the community and very soon got the epithet 'Thakur' (God).¹⁴¹ He invested the Rajbansis with sacred thread and infused self-confidence in them.¹⁴² Hence the Kshatriya movement not only brought about the first awakening among the Rajbansi people¹⁴³ but also created a sense of solidarity and fraternity among them.¹⁴⁴ '27th Magha', the date on which the first mass investiture ceremony took place, is being still observed by the Rajbansis as the regeneration day.¹⁴⁵

Notes and References

1. Dasgupta, Ranajit : Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal : Jalpaiguri, 1869-1947, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p.87. It may be mentioned here that the first two decades of the 20th century witnessed, in addition to the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement, two major caste movements — one among the Mahisyas of Midnapore, Howrah, Hooghly and 24-Parganas, and the other one among the Namasudras of Khuina, Faridpur and Jessore. *ibid*, p.269 ff.
2. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : 'Protest and Accommodation : Two Caste Movements in Eastern and Northern Bengal, c. 1872 - 1937, *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 1-2, July 1887 - January, 1988. p.219.
3. Sanyal, Hitesranjan : Social Mobility in Bengal, Papyrus, Calcutta, 1981, pp. 28-29.
4. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : Caste, Politics and The Raj : Bengal 1872 - 1937, K. P. Bachi & Company, Calcutta, 1990, p. 95.
5. Dasgupta, Ranajit : *op.cit*, p. 87.
6. Nandy, Vaskar and Raman, Vasanthi : 'The Long Transition : The Koch - Rajbanshis of North - Eastern India', in Dev Nathen(ed), From Tribe to Caste, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1997, p. 458.
7. Dasgupta, Ranajit : *op.cit*.
8. Nandy, Vaskar and Raman, Vasanthi : *op.cit*.
9. 'Buchanan - Hamilton Account' in West Bengal District Handbooks : Jalpaiguri, p. CXXXV. The evidence is cited in Ranajit Das gupta : *op.cit*, p. 14.
10. Hunter, W. W. : Statistical Accounts of Bengal, Vol. X, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and State of Kuch Bihar, London, 1876, reprint, 1974, p. 255.
11. Census Report of the District of Jalpaiguri, 1891, p. 21, Para 77.
12. Dasgupta, Ranajit : *op. cit*, pp. 12 - 13
13. Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p. 358.
14. Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p. 574 ; Vol. V, Part II, Appendix to Table XVI, Part II, p. 379 ; Upendranath Barman, Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jiban Charit, Jalpaiguri, 1387 B.S. p.9 ; Sugata Bose, Agrarian Bengal, Economy, Social Structure and Politics, 1919 - 1947, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 12 - 15. See also Sekhar Bandyopadhyay : *op.cit*, pp. 222-223.
15. Choudhuri, Harendra Narayan (H. N.) : The Cooch Behar State and Its Land Revenue Settlement, Cooch Behar State Press, 1903, p. 118, 120.
16. Sanyal, Charu Chandra : The Rajbansis of North Bengal, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 15. See also Choudhuri, H. N. : *op. cit*, p. 120.
17. Sanyal,Charu Chandra :*op.cit.*, p.16. From this table it is clear that in 1891: There was a sudden fall in the percentage of the Rajbansis in almost all the districts of North Bengal excepting Cooch Behar, as a large number of Rajbansis were recorded as Bhanga Kshatriyas. *ibid*.
18. *Loc. cit*.
19. Dasgupta, Ranajit : *op. cit*. p. 12. The Rajbansis went through the parallel processes of Hinduization and Islamization. It is however curious that in most of the writings on the composition of population in Cooch Behar State and other North Bengal districts and also often in popular perception Rajbansis are usually only Hindus and by implication Muslims of local origin are non - Rajbansis. But the evidence clearly shows that the bulk of the local Muslims were converted Rajbansis. Hence the appropriate position is that there are Rajbansi Hindus and Rajbansi Muslims. *ibid*, pp. 12, 258 (Notes and References). It is also relevant to note that by far the majority of

the Muslims are Sheikhs, or, as they are popularly called, Nasyas. They are descended from the Hindu converts to Islam. The title Nasya is significant. It is generally believed to be the corrupted form of Nashta, which means fallen or degenerated. Hence this appears to be the most probable nickname which the Hindu subjects of a Hindu Principality would give to their converted co-religionists. — Choudhuri, H. N. : op.cit. p. 120.

20. Grierson, G. A. : Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. I, Part I. Introduction, 1927, Reprint, Motilal Banarasi Das, Delhi, 1967, p. 153.
21. Dasgupta, Ranjit : op. cit, p. 16.
22. Nandy, Vaskar and Raman, Vasanthi : op. cit, p. 454.
23. Choudhuri, H. N. : op. cit, p. 139.
24. Dasgupta, Ranjit : op.cit, pp. 16-17, Hudum deo Puja used to be performed in case of severe drought when the crops are suffering from this drought. It was a sort of fertility rite in which women of a village went into a distant paddy field during a dark night and stuck a plantain tree or young bamboo into the ground and danced in the nude round the mystic tree singing old songs and charms. No male was allowed to be present at the rite.—Choudhuri, H. N. : op. cit, p. 141.
25. Dasgupta, Ranjit : op. cit, p. 17.
26. Choudhuri, H. N. : op. cit, pp. 145-146.
27. 'Buchanan - Hamilton Account' in Jalpaiguri District Handbook, p. CXXXV. The evidence is quoted in Dasgupta, Ranajit : op. cit, p. 13.
28. Dasgupta, Biman Kumar, 'A note on the Rajbanshi of Eastern India', Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India, 48(I), 1-44, 1969.
29. Sanyal, Charu Chandra : op. cit, p. 13.
30. Basu, Swaraj : Dynamics of a Cast Movement: The Rajbansis of North Bengal, 1910-1947, Monohar, New Delhi, 2003, p. 29. Confer also Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : Ray Saheb Panchanan : Life and Times, All India Forum for Development of Rajbansis, New Delhi, First Published 2002, p. 20. It is interesting to note that the present day Rajbansi scholars, namely, Dr. Dwijendra Nath Bhakat opines that the Koches and Rajbansi Kshatriya are actually the same ethnic group. According to him, Rajbansis are Mongoloids and the original inhabitants of the North Eastern region of India. Dr. Ramen Adhikari of Assam also holds the similar view as that of Dr. Bhakat. — ibid.
31. Mukhopadhyay, Rajatubhra : 'Hinduisation of the Tribes in India : The Case of Rajbansis' , in P. K. Bhattacharyya(ed), The Kingdom of Kamata - Koch Behar in Historical Perspective, Ratna Prakashan in association with University of North Bengal, Calcutta, First Pulbished 2000, p. 111.
- 31*. Basu, Swaraj : op. cit., p. 63.
32. Choudhuri, H. N. : op. cit, p. 14.
33. Barma, Sukhbilas : ' Socio-Cultural Facets of the History of Kamata - Koch Behar,' in P. K. Bhattacharyya(ed); The Kingdom of Kamata-Koch Behar in Historical Perspective, op. cit, p. 96.
34. Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jiban Charit, Jalpaiguri, 1387 B.S., p. 13.
35. Barrier, N. Gerald(ed) : The Census in British India, New Perspectives, New Delhi, Manohar, 1981, p. 80.
36. Sanyal, Charu Chandra : op. cit, p. 19.
37. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : Caste, Politics and the Raj, Bengal 1872-1937 : Calcutta, 1990, p. 98. It has also been pointed out that in north Bengal there was a fair representation of the Rajbansis among the jotedars who secured a dominant position in the local agrarian structure. But the situation began to change from the late nineteenth

century with the migration of upon caste Hindu gentry in this area. This led to large scale transfer of land from the hands of the Rajbansis to those of the non-Rajbansis. This brought about subsequent changes in the pattern of land control in North Bengal, with the result that the Rajbansis were gradually pushed out by the non-Rajbansi landholders from their position of eminence. In the State of Cooch Behar also, the people from outside who were in the state administration, grabbed a large number of jotes. By 1872 in Cooch Behar 54 percent of the revenue paying land had passed into the hands of the outsiders. This transfer of land from the Rajbansis to the non-Rajbansis became a common phenomenon all over North Bengal and in course of time it gave birth to a sense of grievances among the dispossessed Rajbansi gentry. — Swaraj Basu, Dynamics of a Caste Movement, op. cit., pp. 50-53.

38. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : 'Rungpur Kshatriya Samiti-History of A Caste Organisation', Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, Vol. 17, 1994, pp. 126-27.
39. Barman, Upendranath : Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, 3rd edition, Jalpaiguri, 1981, pp. 26-55 and Buchanan - Hamilton Account in Jalpaiguri District Handbook, p. CXXXV.
40. Choudhuri, H. N. : op. cit, pp. 126-127.
41. Martin, Montgomery R : History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India, Vol. II, London, 1838, p. 741.
42. Basu, Swaraj : 'The Rajbansis of North Bengal : A quest for Kshatriya Identity,' Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 56th Session, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta, December 28-30, 1995.
43. Barman, Upendranath : Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, p. 56.
44. Loc. cit.
45. ibid, pp. 58-59.
46. ibid, pp. 56-59; Roy, A. K. : 'Some Notes on the Kshatriya Movement in North Bengal' in Journal of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Vol. XX, No. I, pp. 49-57.
47. Barman, Upendranath : Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, pp. 59-60. E. A. Gait, Superintendent of Census Operations, Bengal for 1901 observed, "The Rajbansis of North Bengal wished to be styled Bhanga or Bratya Kshatriya and to be classed among the twice born castes." - Census of India, 1901 Report, Vol. 6, Part-I, p. 382, Para 617. In subsidiary Table II, Chapter XI, p. 460 of the Report population figure for Rajbansis with Koch in bracket is given.
48. Dasgupta, Ranajit : op. cit, p. 88.
49. Barman, Upendranath, Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, p. 12.
50. Barman, Upendranath, Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jiban Charit, op. cit.
51. Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : op. cit, pp. 24-25. See also Barman, Upendranath, 'Brief life Sketch of Thakur Panchanan Barma', in Panchanan Smarak Patrika, 127th Birth Anniversary Number, 1993 (1399 B.S.), the Cooch Behar Kshatriya Society, pp. 1-2.
52. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti - History of A Caste Organisation, op. cit, pp. 129-30.
53. Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jiban Charit, op. cit, p. 12.
54. ibid, pp. 13-14. Panchanan Barman also experienced caste hatred right in his childhood. Once in early childhood, he happened to touch the Gita of their family priest which the latter was on his visit to their house. He was shocked that even the conduct of an innocent child was grossly condemned through an alarm of hue and cry. He was cautioned that being a non-Brahman he had no privilege to touch a holy book that too written in Sanskrit, the Deva-Bhasa. - Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : op. cit, p. 27.
55. Barman, Upendranath : Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, pp. 4-24; Roy, A. K. : op. cit, pp. 54, 61-70.
56. Dasgupta, Ranajit : op. cit, p. 89.

57. Singha, Kshetra Mohan : Raj Saheb Panchanan Barman Jiban, Cooch Behar, 1939, p. 10.
58. Kshatriya Samiti Karya Bibarani (a compilation of proceedings of the annual conferences); Pratham Sammilanee, Rangpur, B.S. 1317 (1910); Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charit, op. cit, pp. 14-16.
59. *ibid*, p. 55.
60. Singha, Kshetra Mohan : op. cit, pp. 11-13.
61. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : op. cit, p. 131.
62. Barman, Upendranath : Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, p. 67.
63. Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Part - I, Report by L. S. S. O'Mally, Calcutta, 1913, p. 445.
64. *ibid*, p. 440.
65. *ibid*, p. 442.
- 65*. Basu, Swaraj : Dynamics of a Caste Movement, op. cit., p. 70.
66. *ibid*, p. 5.
67. Report of Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p. 440.
68. Proceedings of Government of India, Home (Political), April, 1911, No. 20.
69. Bengalee, 2 October, 1910.
70. The 1921 Census of India reported that Rajbansis, Kayasthas, Haji, Kamar, Kahar, Pod, Malo, Pundari, Koch - all claimed Kshatriya status. The Rajbansis claimed Kshatriya, Bratya Kshatriya and Varna Kshatriya status. - Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : op. cit, p. 147 (F.N).
71. Barman, Upendranath : Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, pp. 63-64.
72. Mukhopadhyay, Rajata Subhra : 'Uttarkhand Movement : A Sociological Analysis', (Centre for Himalayan Studies, Special Lecture VIII), University of North Bengal, April, 1987, p. 14.
73. Barman, Upendranath : Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, p. 64.
74. Brahma, Kshetra Mohan : Cooch Beharer Bibaran, 1929, p. 62.
75. A.A.R.C.B.S., 1910-11, General, p. 6.
76. A letter dated the 5th September, 1921 from Panchanan Barman, Secretary of Kshatriya Samiti to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal. The evidence is cited in Barman, Kshitish Chandra : Thakur Panchanan Smarak, Kolkata, First published 2001, pp. 197-200.
77. Singha, Kshetra Mohan : op. cit, pp. 17-18.
78. Barman, Upendranath, Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charit, op. cit, p. 20.
79. Barman, Upendranath : Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, p. 61.
80. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti - History of A Caste Organisation, op. cit, pp. 131-132.
81. Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, pp. 351-55; Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charit, op. cit, pp. 21-25; Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas, op. cit, pp. 50-66; Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jiban Smriti, Jalpaiguri, 1392 B.S., pp. 46-47.
82. Kshatriya, the monthly Journal of Kshatriya Samiti, IV(1), Baishakh, 1331 B.S., pp. 9-10.
83. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : 'Protest and Accommodation', op. cit, p. 224.
84. Kshatriya, IV(1), P. 21, IV (3) Ashara 1331, p. 45.
85. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : op. cit, pp. 132-133.
86. *ibid*, p. 133.
87. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : op. cit, p. 225; Mukhopadhyay, Rajatasubhra : 'Hinduisation of the Tribes in India : The Case of Rajbansis', op. cit, p. 112.

88. Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charit, op. cit, pp. 23-25.
- 88*. Basu, Swaraj : op. cit., p. 79.
89. Barman, Upendranath : 'Brief, Life Sketch of Thakur Panchanan Barman', op. cit, p. 3.
90. Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : op. cit, p. 30.
91. Singha, Kshetranath : Rangpur Kshatriya Samitir Itihas, Gaibandha, 1346 B.S., pp. 19-21.
92. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : op. cit, pp. 133-134.
93. Barman, Kshitish Chandra : Thakur Panchanan Smarak, Kolkata, First published 2001, pp. 197-200.
94. Barman, Upendranath : 'Brief life Sketch of Thakur Panchanan Barman', op. cit, pp. 1-2, Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : op. cit, p. 29.
95. *ibid*, p. 3, Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : pp. 14-15.
96. Barman, Kshitish Chandra : Thakur Panchanan Smarak, op. cit., p. 189.
97. Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barman Jibancharit, op. cit, pp. 47-57.
98. Proceedings of Bengal Legislative Council, August 29 to September 6, 1921 (4th Session), Proceedings of Meeting held on 5.9.1921. The evidence is quoted in Barman, Kshitish Chandra : op. cit, pp. 201-203.
99. Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charit, op. cit, pp. 30-44, 86; Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : op. cit, pp. 32-33.
100. Barman, Upendranath : 'Brief life Sketch of Thakur Panchanan Barman', op. cit, PP. 2-3; Mandal, Ranjit Kumar : op. cit, pp. 33-34.
101. See the Resolutions adopted at the different annual conferences of Kshatriya Samiti, and also Roy, A. K. : op. cit, pp. 57-58.
102. Kshatriya, Ashadh 1331 B.S.; Proceedings of Bengal Legislative Council, Vol - I, No. 6, 1 April, 1921.
103. Barman, Upendranath : 'Brief life Sketch of Thakur Panchanan Barman', op. cit, p. 3; Mandal Ranjit Kumar : op. cit, pp. 30-31.
104. Proceedings of Bengal Legislative Council, Vol. 36, No. 3, 27 March 1931, pp. 640-41.
105. Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charit, op. cit, p. 63. Mandal, ranjit Kumar : op. cit, pp. 31, 37.
106. Memorandum on Constitutional Reforms submitted by the Kshatriya Samiti to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal in December, 1917, published in full in Kshatriya Samiti's Nineth Annual Proceedings.
107. Kshatriya Samitir Karya Bibaran, fourth Annual conference, 1320 B.S., p. 18.
108. Memorandum on Constitutional Reforms ..., op. cit.
109. Bengalee, 10 November, 1917.
110. The Statesman, 5 November, 1918.
111. Report of the Bengal Franchise Committee, Calcutta, 1932, pp. 23-24.
112. Kshatriya, Baisakh 1327 B.S.; Chaitra, 1332 B.S.
113. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : 'Protest and Accomodation', op. cit, p. 226.
114. Quoted in Barman, Upendranath : Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charit, op. cit, p. 15.
115. IB 1921, 'Fortnightly Reports of the Government of Bengal on the Political Situation (1921-22)', Quoted in Ray, Rajat Kanta : Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 306.
116. Kshatriya, Baisakh, 1327 B.S.; Baisakh, Jaishtha 1331 B.S.; Jaishtha, Chaitra 1332; Ray, Rajat Kanta : op. cit, p. 306.
117. Kshatriya Samiti, Nineth Annual Circle Report, B.S. 1325.
118. Kshatriya Samitir Karyabibaran, eighteenth annual conference, 1335 B.S.

119. Dasgupta, Ranjit : op. cit, p. 91.
120. Barman, Upendranath : op. cit, p. 58.
121. Report on the Census of District of Jalpaiguri, 1891, p. 21. The leaders of the movement tried to explain this antagonistic attitude of the upper castes in terms of a fear-psychosis of the outsiders or bhatias. The upper caste Hindu gentry were opposing the social regeneration of the local people, they argued, because they felt that their dominance in local society would be undermined. 'If we, the Kshatriyas, raise our voice,' resolved the Kshatriya Samity, 'they would lose their domination over us. So being scared, they are not allowing us to unite and to awaken our Kshatriya spirit.— Kshatriya Samiti, 'Eighteenth Annual Conference, Report,' 1334 B.S, p. 58. The evidence is quoted in Swaraj Basu, op. cit., p. 81.
122. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : op. cit, pp. 134-135.
123. Brahma, Kshetra Mohan : op. cit, p. 62; Mukherjee Sib Sankar : op. cit, p. 128.
124. Kshatriya Samitir Karya Bibarani, third year, 1319 B.S., PP. 36-37. It has given the details of obstruction created by the Cooch Behar State Administration.
125. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : op. cit, p. 129. The writer also analysed the various factors responsible for the failure of the Rajbansis of Goalpara and Jalpaiguri to take the lead in the Kshatriya movement. *ibid*, pp. 127-29.
126. Mukhopādhyay, Rajatubhra : 'Hinduisation of the Tribes in India : The Case of Rajbansis', op. cit, pp. 107-112.
127. Sanyal, Hitesranjan : op. cit, p. 32.
128. Basu, Swaraj : 'A Case Study of the Rajbansi Caste Movement in Northern Bengal in 1901-21', Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, Vol. XXVI, No. 3, 1986, p. 59.
129. Ray, Rajat Kanta : op. cit, p. 68.
130. Dasgupta, Ranajit : op. cit, p. 92.
131. O'Hanlon, Rosalind : Caste, Conflict and Ideology, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
132. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : Caste, Politics and the Raj, op. cit, pp. 14-15.
133. Report of the Census of India, 1931, p. 474.
134. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : 'The Social Role of A Caste Association', the Indian Economic and Social History Review, 31(1), 1994, p. 100.
135. Barma, Sukhbilas : op. cit, p. 97; Dasgupta, Ranajit, p. 92; Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : Caste, Politics and the Ray, op. cit, p. 14. It should be stated here that during the census of 1931 an investigation was made to trace the number of Saktas, Saivas and Vaisnavas residing in Cooch Behar State. It was found out that 7.9% were Saktas and 3.8% were Vaisnavas of the total Hindu population. The rest of the population had not expressed their opinion about the particular sects to which they belonged. This indifference to Puranic Hindu religion was seen among the Hindu people of the State to a greater extent than any other places in Bengal. — Datta, Jotindra Mohan : 'Cooch Behare Janatathya Sambandhe Kayekti Katha', Cooch Behar Darpan (Fortnightly Journal), 9th Year, No. X, Magh, 1353 B.S., p. 144.
136. Sarkar, Sumit : Modern India, 1885-1947, Macmillan, First Published 1983, reprinted 2000, p. 158.
137. Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : 'Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti - History of A Caste Organisation', op. cit, p. 137.
138. *ibid*, p. 140.
139. Extracts of Ex-Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's speech delivered on 24th September, 1981, quoted in Barman, Upendranath : Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti, 1392 B.S., p. 276.
140. Barman, Upendranath : op. cit, pp. 270-71; Basu, Jyoti : op. cit, p. 276.
141. Basu, Swaraj : Dynamics of a Caste Movement, op. cit, p. 114.
142. Barman, Upendranath : op. cit, p. 271.

143. Ahmed, Fayejuddin : 'Cooch Behar Palli', Paricharika (Bengali Journal), 6th year, Vol. II, p. 113; Singha, Kshetra Mohan : op. cit, p. 18; Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar : Caste, Politics and the Raj, op. cit, p. 129.
144. Ahmed, Fayejuddin : op. cit; Mukherjee, Sib Sankar : 'The Social Role of A Caste Association', op. cit, pp. 89-100.
145. Roy Sarkar, Sushil : 'Thakur Panchanan Barma : Karme O Manane', Madhuparni, (Bengali Journal), Cooch Behar Special Issue edited by Ananda Gopal Ghose, 1990, p. 381.

Appendix D

Position of Islam in Cooch Behar State and Issue of Hindu-Muslim Amity

Every missionary religion like Islam has to change its colour and creed according to the cultural condition of a country where it is established. Christianity has done so profoundly and so has done Buddhism. Even Hinduism, though not a missionary religion, underwent a lot of change when it spread over the lands like Java, Sumatra, Siam etc. Islam has also changed its colour, if not its formal official creed, in the various countries. But nowhere it was so amazingly changed as it did in India and in Bengal as well. The changes that took place in India and Bengal, are known by two names of Bidat (religious innovation) and 'Shirk' (polytheistic and idolatrous beliefs and practices) given by the orthodox Muslims. The phrase 'Popular Islam' indicates all the changes that have taken place in Islam from the earliest times up to the present.¹

Islam in traditional Bengal was particularly marked by its tendency towards convergence with and assimilation to the local cultural milieu. The locally acculturated form of Islam in Bengal was perceived as a form of "folk" or "popular" Islam. Islamization as a social and cultural process has operated in Bengal, 'where Islam is not a primary but a secondary culture, that is, exogenous and not endogenous to the particular region, and also where Islam is not a single or the only great tradition since it entered a land which was not culturally virgin, and confronted the long-established endogenous Hindu great tradition.'² These factors, inter alia, are significant considerations in an analysis of Islamic contact with and its position in Cooch Behar State in Bengal.

Bengal was under the Muslim rule for a period of five and a half centuries from the conquest of Bengal by Bakhtiar Khalji in 1203 A.D to the acquisition of Diwani by the English in 1765 A.D. It is needless to mention here that during this period, not only immigrant Muslims came into Bengal but also many local people were converted to the faith of Muhammad. However Dr. Atul Sur has classified the Bengali Muslims into three categories : (i) immigrant Muslims, (ii) converted Muslims and (iii) mixed Muslims originated from the above two categories. According to Dr. Sur, the first category comprised the descendants of those foreign Muslims who were brought here by the Muslim rulers and Pathan Sultans of Bengal for the appointment to higher administrative posts. The second category comprises the descendants of those Muslims who had voluntarily embraced Islamic religion. The third category comprises the descendants of those Muslims who were originated out of mixture of the first two categories. The Muslims, belonging to the second category are, no doubt, the most numerous.³

We are almost in the dark regarding the time and manner in which the Mohammedans first came to Cooch Behar. The first contact of the region with the Mohammedans is said to have been started at the beginning of the thirteenth century. When Bakhtiar Khalji advanced to attack Tibet through Kamatapur in 1205 A.D., he made friends

with a leader of the Koch or Mech tribe who embraced Islam and took the name of Ali Mech. Ali Mech may well have lived anywhere between Rangamati and Devkot.⁴ It is believed that the growth of the Mohameddan population in the Kamata-Koch kingdom had been increased through subsequent invasions by the Mohammedan rulers of Bengal and Delhi.⁵ During the war (1493) of Hussain Shah, the Sultan of Bengal, with Nilambara, the ruler of Kamata, a large number of Mohammedan soldiers settled in Kamata and infiltration of Musalmans continued for their settlement in the region.⁶ It was during the reign of Koch ruler Naranarayan that an amicable relation had been established with the Mughal Emperor Akbar. The favourable circumstances probably led the Musalmans to infiltrate into the region through trade and other relations.⁷ Musalmans' infiltration seems to have reached its zenith during the Mughal rule in the Koch-Hajo region (1613 - 1647 A.D.) The invasions of Kamata - Koch Kingdom by Mir Jumla in 1661 A.D. and Sayesta Khan in 1665 A.D. and others were no less significant in respect of Musalmans' settlement.⁷ In the subsequent period the treaty between Koch kings and Mughal rulers established a political relation between Koch dynasty and the Mughals, which no doubt, led to the establishment of peace and interaction between the Koch kings and the Muslims. The establishment of political relations of the Muslim rulers with the local Koch kings had facilitated many Muslim officials, intellectuals, military forces, traders, artisans and various other occupational groups to immigrate into this kingdom. Along with these Muslim groups, many Muslim saints or Sufis had also come to Cooch Behar and established Khanqahs or Astans (abode of a pir) to preach their religion along with spiritual teaching among the local population. These Sufis or Pirs played a very important role in propagation and expansion of Islam and Muslim population during the early period of Cooch Behar State.⁸

During the early period of the Koch kingdom, a fraction of the society was consisted of the Muslims. The contemporary literary sources like Vamsavali and Gurucharita refer to the "Turks or 'Turuks' and the 'Yavanas'. It is possible that both the terms refer to the Muslim community. While the term 'Turuk' implies the Turks, the term 'Yavana' indicates all groups of Muslims, Turko-Afghans and the Mughals.⁹ Darrang Raj Vamsavali mentions that the 'Yavanas' in the Koch Kingdom lived happily by freely reciting the Koranic verses.¹⁰ It is probable that the Muslims began pouring into the region since the time of Bakhtiar Khalji's invasion of Kamrupa in 1205 A.D. Their social status appears to be low. Any person accepting Islam on any pretext was made an outcaste in the Hindu society.¹¹ But Sankara Deva (1449 - 1568 A.D.), a preacher of neo-Vaishnavism, accepted the Muslims to his fold. Chandsai, a Muslim, was made his disciple and was placed on an equal footing along with his other disciples.¹² It is said that Chaitanyadeva came to Kamarupa at a time when Sankaradeva was preaching the doctrines of Vaisnavism there and Buddhist customs were still in vogue in the region.¹³

At the time when Islam emerged in this country, Buddhism and Hinduism were the two prominent religions of Bengal. But the moral and ethical degradation of Buddhism was at its zenith at this time. With the fall of the Palas and the rise of the Senas, Buddhism was fast waning and consequently it had to take shelter in the border regions of

Bengal. During these days of Buddhistic decline, there gradually sprang up many sects and sub-sects such as Natha, Sahajiya, Tantrika and others, which practically followed no strict code of any religion or morality. With regard to Hinduism, it was also not in its pristine glory. The Senas tried to revive it but miserably failed in this regard. Hinduism was then thoroughly steeped in superstitious beliefs and practices. Astrology of absurd nature occupied the place of true religion. Besides, a powerful influence of Tantras and many other indigenous cults and creeds sapped the pristine strength of Hindu religion. Shastras began to be created by the Brahmins whose orthodox, narrow and conservative views hampered the progress of the whole society and made it hopelessly stagnant. This state of affairs in the Hindu society contributed much to the caste hatred and racial tyranny of the Hindus.¹⁴

When such religions and social conditions were prevalent in Bengal, the Sufis came here carrying the message of Islam with them. Islam is ever famous for its strong monotheistic belief in god, and for its theoretical and practical teachings of universal brotherhood. A simple faith in one god, the loving and the merciful, combined with only a few easy practices and moral principles is another marked feature of Islam.¹⁵ Hence, from the doctrinal point of view, Islam, whether as a religious system or as a social formula, is in every respect the antithesis of Hinduism. It recognizes no priesthood nor acknowledges any caste differentiation based upon subtle distinctions of food, drink, dress, marriage and ceremonial usage.¹⁶ Islam sufficiently possesses those qualities which can easily satisfy spiritual cravings of the masses. By the continuous activities of the saintly preachers known as the Sufis, these inherent qualities of Islam were made familiar with the masses. They gathered round the Sufis and readily changed their old faith to the new one. Only the change of faith at once offered the masses an opportunity to raise their social status and satisfy their hearts by the adoption of a simple and easily understandable creed like Islam.¹⁷ Thus Islam emerged as the "religion of social liberation" to the people of the lower rungs of the Hindu society because they were suffering from the crushing burden of the oppressive high caste Hindus. They were converted to Islam enmasse as they were attracted by the liberating message of social equality of Islam as preached by the Sufis.¹⁸

It has rightly been pointed out that Islam spread in this country in the garb of Sufism. Sufis were the real precursors of Islam and the agents of its expansion. These Muslim preachers just came to Bengal in the wake of the Turki conquest. Gaur and Pandua (in the district of Maldah) were not only the metropolitan cities of Bengal from the 13th to the 15th centuries, but they were also centres of Muslim preachers generally known as Pirs, Darvishes or Fakirs who preached Islam and the doctrine of the Sufis in the surrounding tracts of Varendra.¹⁹ During this period, a number of Sufi orders were introduced into Bengal, of which the chief orders were the Suhrawardi, Chisti, Quadiri, Naqsh-bandi, Madari etc.²⁰

It is generally believed that the preaching of Islam had begun in Kamarupa at about the beginning of the 13th century A.D. In the early period, Muslim preachers must have been untiring in their efforts for Islam which became

widely disseminated in western Kamarupa. Some of them devoted themselves to meditation, others to preaching and establishing 'Dham' or 'Astana' commonly known as 'Dargas' in diverse places.²¹ For instance, The celebrated saint Giasuddin Aulia preached Islam in the beginning of the 16th century. He lies buried in Hajo in the district of Kamarupa where he established a Muslim colony and constructed a mosque named 'Poa-Makka Masjid'. Pir Shah Soltan of Balkh came to western Kamarupa where he lived and was buried in Mahasthangarh in Hijri 439 (1047 A.D.) Besides, Shah Madar came to Kamarupa to preach Islam.²²

The well-known 'Astanas' or 'Dargas' of Mohammedan Pirs in the capitals of Hindu Koch kings, viz, Kamatapur, Dhaliabari and Cooch Behar, suggest that the Pirs resided in those places receiving honour and practised their devotional exercises and preached their religion without fear of oppression.²³ Within the State, there existed quite a good number of sacred places known as Khangahs or Dargahs. The local Muslims were very closely associated with the Khangahs or Dargas for spiritual, ritual and cultural needs. The most important Dargahs in Cooch Behar were of Torsapir, Shah Fakir Sahib, Shah Garib Kamal, Paglapir, Satyapir etc.²⁴ The Dham of Torsapir at the outskirts of Cooch Behar town, is a well-known Dargah. It is said that many people were attracted to Islam through the influence of this Torsapir who flourished probably in the beginning of the 18th century. As he resided on the banks of the Torsa, he became known as the Torsapir. The Koch kings revered the Pir and money grants were conferred over a long period for offering 'Shirni' regularly in the 'Dargah'. Maharaja Harendranarayan granted seven bighas of land as 'Pirpal' for the Dargah.²⁵ In the ancient capital of Cooch Behar named Dhaliabari, there lies tomb of Shah Fakir. This 'Dargah' was so influential that the Cooch Behar Darbar had granted 77 bighas of land as 'Pirpal' to meet its expense. Shah Garib Kamal was buried outside the fort of Kamatapura south-west of the Baghdwar. This Pir lived probably in the 17th century. In the settlement papers of 1872 a Hindu is recorded as the Sebait of this 'Dargah'. The history of Paglapir remains obscure. His influence has endured in the custom of erecting a bamboo in his name whenever dogs or Jackals become rabid. During this ceremony a Bhowria (in whom the spirit of the Pir is said to be transmitted) acts a madman and utters prophecies.²⁶

Satyapir is an emblem of Hindu Muslim unity. From various manuscripts it is assumed that Satyapir was originally a Hindu, but was converted to Islam and devoted his life to preaching. The popular belief is that Satyapir is a god or at least a godly person who can grant an all-round prosperity and success. He was unquestionably a religious power in Northern Bengal, and the influence of his name could be noticed even in the 20th century. The worship of Satyanarayan is prevalent in Hindu society. Satyapir has been Hinduized under the name of Satyanarayan. That Satyapir was identified with Satyanarayan is suggested in a manuscript of Satyapir, "He who is Satyanarayana, is also Satyapir. By his revelation worship from both sects (Hindu and Musalman) is rendered to him." In the Panchali of Satyanarayana, it is written, "The Musalmans should worship in the name of Satyapir, each according to his inclination." Satyapir's 'Shirni' or Satyanarayana's 'Prasad' was both uncooked and prepared without fish or meat.²⁷

Both Satyapir and Satyanarayana were worshipped without the use of any image.²⁸ A noted scholar is of the opinion that "Satyapir neither resembles the Pauranic Hindu god Narayana nor a real Darvish in any description. he is rather an idealized creation of Hindu and Muslim minds, which were eager to meet with each other on a common platform of cordiality and unity. Thus he was and is still an ideal deity venerated by both Hindus and Muslims of Bengal."²⁹ In addition to local Pirs, the Muslims of Cooch Behar are also influenced by the teachings and activities of some celebrated and popular Pirs of outside such as Nizamuddin Aulia of Delhi and Khwaja Mainuddin Chisty of Ajmir. Prof. Abdul Karim has rightly remarked that 'the Sufis and their Khanqahs and later their dargahs have played or are still playing the most important part in shaping and developing the Muslim society'. According to him, the most important element of the popular force in Islam was Pirism. The people considered the dargah of the Pir as a place of pilgrimage.³⁰ As a matter of fact, the belief of Pirism was not only shared by the Muslims, but also shared by Rajbansi Hindus and other communities,³⁰⁺ which had strengthened the inter-community relations in Cooch Behar.

The Muslims of Cooch Behar mostly belonged to the Sunni sect as it was the case in other parts of Bengal.³¹ Besides the Sunnis, there are very few Muslims of 'Shia' and 'Ahle-e-Hadish' or Wahabi sects. The Sunni Muslims of Cooch Behar are again divided into two sub-sects 'Barelvis' and 'Deobandis'. In Cooch Behar the Muslims are exclusively of Barelvi variety of Sunni sect and it is estimated that over 90 percent of the Muslims are of this category, who follow the theological school of Barelvi, Uttar Pradesh. The Sunni Barelvis tend to accept without much criticism the traditional social customs of the Muslims. Belief in spiritualism of Pirism is the typical feature of them. The Muslims of this category consist of both 'Nasyas' and 'Bhatia' Muslims (whose forefathers, time to time, migrated to this place from Eastern and Northern Bengal and Assam) and they are deeply integrated with the local society and culture. They are mainly the followers of 'Quadiri' and 'Chisti' orders. The Deobandis follow the logical school of Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, whose basic objective is to purify Islam. They are a puritan group and are less in number but more organized through their missionary organisation called Tabliqu-e-Jamat. Pirism of hereditary nature is not acceptable to them.³²

Since the Muslims of Cooch Behar are predominantly of 'Sunni Barelvis', so the influence of Pirism in their socio-religious life is all-pervading. As time passed, 'Popular Islam' or 'Folk Islam' grew up in Cooch Behar as well as in other parts of Bengal. Absorption of Hindu and other indigenous beliefs and practices was the main feature of this "Popular Islam." The proselytising propaganda of the Pirs or Darvishes was chiefly responsible for the conventional conversion of the people of the region. Such conversions were generally incomplete in nature, showing only an outward acknowledgement of the creed. The converts retained many of their old religious, social and cultural beliefs and practices during their apostatic life. Besides, from the outset Islam had to live under the influence of Hindu environment. 'The new Muslims had to live amidst their Hindu relatives and neighbours and as such had to maintain an amicable and friendly relation with the people of the sister community. Out of these relations of the Muslims with

the Hindus gradually sprang up a mutual toleration and spirit of 'give-and-take'.³³ As a result of this, many Muslim beliefs and practices were modified by Hindu and other indigenous influence and the vice versa. Hence, under the influence of the doctrine of 'Guruvada', the doctrine of 'Pir-muridi' (i.e. of making disciples by the Pirs) grew up among the Muslims. The Muslims learned gradually to worship Pir and his grave (Dargah). As a matter of fact, these Pirs were and are still regarded as gods who could grant any boon to their devoted followers.³⁴ 'Urs' festivals are still observed annually in honour of departed Pirs.³⁵ The Muslims of Cooch Behar observe the Muharram and take out 'Taziahs'.³⁶ Although making of 'Taziahs', playing of music along with processions etc. are not recognized as Islamic.³⁷

The low-class Muslim masses of Cooch Behar stick to many polytheistic beliefs and perform many Hindu practices. These beliefs and practices speak of their Hindu origin. Though the Muslim masses changed their religion but could not clear off of old culture and faith. The Manasa cult is very popular in Bengal. Many Muslim make offerings through Hindu priests to Manasa known also as Bishohari, the goddess of snakes.³⁸ A large number of the Muslims of North and East Bengal actively take part in the 'Bhasan-Yatra' festival, which is held to commemorate the Behula legend.³⁹ Besides, most of the 'Ojhas' (exorcists) are Muslims. These Muslim exorcists often recite 'Mantras' or charms containing the names of Hindu gods and goddesses. The worship of Sitala or goddess of small pox is almost universal.⁴⁰ This deity is also worshipped by many superstitious Muslims when small pox breaks out in an epidemic form. In a similar way, 'Ola Bibi', goddess of cholera, is worshipped by the Muslims in an epidemic of cholera. The Muslim masses also believe in spirit in a purely local and non-Islamic sense of the term, which is Bhut, Pret, Deo or Pari.⁴¹

Many Hindu Social practices have been found among the Muslims of Cooch Behar like other parts of Bengal. Here Islamic practices of marriage have been so much altered that they have become un-Islamic to a great extent. 'Pana Pratha' or Dowry system, 'Kane dekha' or selection of bride, 'Halud Makhan' or washing of the bride by water mixed with turmeric, 'chailan bati' etc. have become part and parcel of the Muslim marriages. Their marriages are also celebrated with music, amusements and grand feasts.⁴² When a woman is generally on the seventh month of pregnancy, the Hindus of Bengal give a feast to which only women are invited to take part. This ceremony which is called 'Sadh Khaoya', is observed by many Muslims in Cooch Behar. Besides, some old practices are observed by the Cooch Behari Muslims in connection with death, Though they are not found in any religious code of Islam. For instance, the ceremony of the fortieth day known as 'Challisa' is observed after a man's death. On this day, a grand feast is served to the guests who are invited previously, and some religious functions are held for the benefit of the departed. This ceremony appears to be an imitation of the 'Sraddha' ceremony of the Hindus.⁴³

Such is the picture of 'Popular' or 'Folk' Islam that grew up in Cooch Behar with the rest of Bengal mainly through the untiring proselytising efforts of the Pirs or Darvishes. It is also a fact that Hindu and other indigenous

beliefs and practices surreptitiously crept into the fold of semitic Islam through the agency of the converts.⁴⁴ In the words of Rafiuddin Ahmed. 'The gods and goddesses, Pirs and their dargahs to whom the common man looked for immediate protection in times of trouble - were too near and dear to be discarded outright. In a sense, these elements of popular Islam were neither characteristically Hindu nor Muslim, nor even a product of syncretist rapprochement, but represented the folk religion of rural Bengal with its roots in a prehistoric past.⁴⁵ But Asim Roy has expressed the view that Pirs as a section of 'Cultural Mediators' were religious practioners and stood closer to the masses in their capacity as mystic religious guides and their command of the Bengali language. 'They showed courage and a creative dynamism in their syncretistic formulation of the Bengali Muslim identity , in defiance of the dominant 'ashraf' religious - cultural ethos.⁴⁶ 'Despite all the efforts of the reformers over the years', it was pointed out, 'the basic pattern condemned as heretical by the fundamentalist reformers a hundred years ago were found persisting at every level of Bengali Muslim society as late as the 1960s'.⁴⁷ There is nothing to indicate that things are any fundamentally different even today.

The population of Cooch Behar State is mainly consisted of two religious communities - the Hindus and Muslims during the period under study. The majority of the people of the State belonged to Hinduism and the Mohammedans formed the principal minority community. In the Census report of 1872, only the adult males of Cooch Behar were classified according to religion. Out of a total of 1,76,396 adult males, exactly one-third of the entire population of the State, 1,27,928 or 72 percent were Hindus; 48,086 or 27 percent were Mohammedans.⁴⁸ According to the Census of 1891, the Muslims were 1,70,746 in number out of a total of 5,78,868 and formed about 30 percent.⁴⁹ In the Census report of 1911, the Mohammedans were 1,82,556 out of a total of 5,92,952 and constituted about 31 percent of the population of the State. It is learnt from the Census report of 1941 that the Muslims were 2,42,684 out of a total population of 6,40,842 and formed almost 38 percent.⁵⁰ The following statement will show the percentage as well as the rate of increase of Muslim population of Cooch Behar during the sixty years from 1881 to 1941 A.D. It can be noticed from this statement that the ratio of Muslim population of the State has steadily increased from 28.96 percent to 37.86 percent during this period.⁵¹

	Percentage of the Muslims	Rate of increase in each decade	Total Increase
1881	28.96	....
1891	29.50	+0.58	1881-1941
1901	29.67	+0.17	+8.90
1911	30.79	+1.12	
1921	32.58	+1.79	
1931	35.34	+2.96	
1941	37.86	+2.52	

In terms of descent, the Muslims of the Cooch Behar State did not constitute a homogenous community. They had three segments : (a) The Muslims of three demoninations such as Mughals, Pathans and Sayyads were almost foreigners who enjoyed high status of 'Ashraf' (literally, the 'high' - or 'noble born') among the Mohammedan community. They were very negligible in number and resided mainly in towns of the State. It is also most probable that some of the Muslims of the State were a mixed group with converts and the immigrant Muslims, 'who came in the wake of the Pathan and Mughal conquest, living side by side and intermarrying.' (b) The local Muslims formed the majority of the total Muslim population, the bulk of whom was composed of converted lower class Hindus and aboriginal tribes such as Koches, Meches etc. They were generally known as Shaikhs or as popularly called 'Nasyas'. The title 'Nasyas' is significant." It is generally believed to be the corrupted form of 'Nashta', which means fallen or degenerated and thus appear to be the most probable nickname which the Hindu subjects of a Hindu principality would give to their converted co-religionists.⁵² The following table shows the number of different segments of the Muslim population of Cooch Behar in 1891.⁵³

Mughals	49
Pathans including Sayyads	1,146
Sheikhs including ' <u>Nasyas</u> '	1,69,551

Hence, it is clearly shown from this table that Shaikhs and Nasyas formed more than 99 percent of the Muslim population of the State. E.A. Gait wrote in the 1891 Census Report of Assam that the great majority of persons professing the Islamic faith in Assam were, as in Eastern Bengal, local converts from the lower castes and aboriginal tribes, who after conversion describe themselves as 'Shaikhs'.⁵⁴ Most of the Muslim population were of Sunni sect and there were no Faraizis and Wahabis.⁵⁵ F.C. Crunning stated in the Jalpaiguri District Gazetteer in 1911 that 'the Shaikhs and the Nasyas who composed the majority of the Muslims of the district were, in the main, natives of the district, and in their appearance, dress and customs differed very little from the Rajbansis.... They were very much the sons of the soil.'⁵⁶ The observation made by E.A. Gait and F.C. crunning on the descent of the Muslims of Assam and Jalpaiguri respectively were applicable to the Muslims of Cooch Behar State too. There were also a Muslim group known as the 'Bhatia' Muslims whose forefathers, time to time, migrated to Cooch Behar from Eastern and Northern Bengal and Assam, permanently settled and mixed up with the local population. They were invited to this place by the Koch Maharajas for their specialized services. They were primarily cultivators.⁵⁷ It is interesting to note here that the Baikunthapur Zamindars of Jalpaiguri district also encouraged migration of Muslims from nearby districts to facilitate extension of cultivation.⁵⁸ It is learnt from the Census of 1931 that the numbers of the Muslim population in Cooch Behar State were increasing for the same reason that sent Muslims from the predominantly Muslim district of Mymensingh into Assam where they went to take up the land which they could no longer find in their own district to support their increasing numbers.⁵⁹

It should be noted here that there were extraordinary variations in the figures for the Muslims in Bengal during this period. The ambition of numerous functional groups (such as Jolahas, Kulus etc.) and practically all lower Muslim classes was to be known as Sheikhs. Consequently, in the Census Report of 1911, the Sheikhs were nearly 23 millions in Bengal, where they accounted for 95 percent of the total Muslim population. In North and East Bengal they had increased by $2\frac{3}{4}$ millions owing mainly to the orders of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam that the lower Muslim classes might return as Shaikhs, Pathans etc. As a result of this, the 'Ajlaf' (literally, the commoners) or 'Atrap' (literally, the 'Wretches') had a loss of over two - thirds which was due to the term having lost popularity. For example, the Nasyas alone had lost 1,99,000. The Nasyas of North Bengal also took the opportunity to call themselves Shaikhs, their number falling from 1,99,727 in 1901 to 1,816 in 1911. In Jalpaiguri District, there were 63,884 Nasyas in 1901, but their number was reduced to only 36 in 1911.⁶⁰ Likewise, in Cooch Behar State the number of Sheikhs was 1,23,690 in 1901 and it rose to 1,75,657 in 1921 and thus formed about 92 percent of the total Muslim population. On the other hand, in Cooch Behar, the number of Nasyas was 42,607 in 1901, but there was no mention of Nasyas as a Muslim group in the Census of 1921.⁶¹ Hence Asim Roy has opined that the process of 'Ashrafisation' ran in tandem with the process of 'Sanskritisation' among Hindus, involving social emulation of the higher and the dominant castes by the lower.⁶²

Though in theory and in religious practices, no social distinction is made by the Muslims, yet in all social matters, such as marriage, feasts etc., the question of social status does receive prominence. The two general social divisions of the Bengali Muslims are the 'Ashrafs' and 'Atrafs', the former term indicating the "high castes" and the latter, "low castes". The Ashrafs claim descent from the immigrant Muslims and form the aristocracy. Although in blood, (as the foreign Muslims took wives from this land) they have no or little difference from the local people. The Ashrafs include the three classes, viz., Sayyad, Pathan and Mughal who are supposed to be the Muslims of high social status, just as the Dvijas include the three high castes, viz., Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya of the Hindus. The Atrafs comprise the Sheikhs or Nasyas and other functional groups who are supposed to be the Muslims of low social status, just as the Shudras of the Hindus. In the words of Muhammad Enamul Haq, "Inter-marriage, inter-dinner, and other inter-social matters are commonly found among the Ashrafs only, but they are rare phenomena between the Ashrafs and the Atrafs."⁶³ Ranjit K. Bhattacharya in a research-paper has shown that 'the Muslim ethnic groups in rural Bengal seem to share some other caste-like features and frequently use them in determining their relative social standing. Some of these strikingly common Hindu caste-like features among the local Muslim ethnic groups are endogamy, restrictions on commensality and hereditary occupational specialization and the relative merit of the different occupations.'⁶⁴ It is learnt from the Census Report of 1921 that even 'a Shaikh will not marry a Kulu and in some parts one class of Muhammedans will not even feed with another.'⁶⁵

It has often been recognized that social structures of the Muslims are also organized according to caste principles.⁶⁶ In Cooch Behar State also, the Ashrafs include the Sayyads, Mughals and Pathans who claim their foreign descent. The Atrafs comprise the Sheikhs or Nasyas and the majority of Bhatia Muslims who were by far the majority of the Muslims in the State. They generally lived in rural areas, and the overwhelming majority of them belonged to a differentiated cultivating or peasant society, adhians forming a large proportion of that society. They were further segmented into various occupational groups, such as Jolahas (weavers), Kulus (oil-pressers), Behras and Nagarchis. These Muslim groups based originally either on descent or occupation persisted as social classes and were socially and culturilly significant. Thus a notion of social stratification among the Muslims was prevalent in Cooch Behar State.⁶⁷ The following table will show the overall social hierarchy of all Muslim ethnic groups in the State according to the Census of 1921 :⁶⁸

Social hierarchy of Muslim ethnic groups in Cooch Behar State and their number :

Muslim Ethnic groups	Social Status	Numbers
	<u>Ashraf</u> (Aristocracy)	
Sayyad		426
Mughal		not mentioned
Pathan		999
	<u>Atraf</u> (Commoner)	
Sheikh		1,75,657
<u>Nasya</u>		not mentioned
<u>Jolaha</u>		62
<u>Kulu</u>		3
<u>Nikari</u>		62
<u>Behras</u>		5

Theoretically the Muslims stand completely outside the fold of Hindu caste system. But the local traditional social system was far from considering Muslims as complete outsiders. Since the Koch rulers and local Jotedars invited many Muslims for their specialized services for the growth of this State, so they developed a system for dealing with them. Apart from this, many of the indigenous groups, as has been noted earlier, were converted to the fold of Islam. Thus considering the history, social position, political role and caste background of the Muslims, the local non-Muslims of Cooch Behar assigned them a position in the caste-ladder. The Muslims were placed in between pure and impure castes in local society. The high caste Hindus accorded lower rank to the Muslims, but placed them above the rank of unclean castes and tribes. The service-castes of Cooch Behar used to serve the Muslims as their patrons

through the relations of Jajmani type. Besides, the interaction between the high caste Hindus with high social Muslim groups and the same also between low Hindu castes with Muslim occupational groups was vogue in Cooch Behar.⁶⁹

The Rulers of Cooch Behar State, though professed Brahmanical religion, always patronized the Muslim community with the grant of stipends like Pirbhata and construction of mosque and the titles of distinctions. It may be explained with the useful roles played by the immigrant Muslim community in expansion of the cultivated lands, in reclamation of cultivatable land and in the application of better methods of cultivation in the State of Cooch Behar.⁷⁰ Their contributions to the improvement of Cooch Behar's agricultural crops, particularly, paddy, jute and tobacco were remarkable. Muslims of Dinhatia sub-division were and are still considered to be the best tobacco cultivators.⁷¹ It is also not unlikely that in the earlier period a certain number of Musalmans brought here in different capacities in the guild of masons and artisans whose functions were construction, decoration of walls and repair of buildings. It is probably due to this, Maharaja Pran Narayana is said to have brought Muslim masons in order to build temples in the Koch kingdom.⁷² The result was that some influence of Islamic art and architecture can be traced in some temples of Cooch Behar. The spacious building with rounded pillars, curved door shapes, windows, geometrical patterns and the domes are said to be some of the characteristics of (Persian) Muslim architecture.⁷³ We can trace some of these features in the temples built by the Koch Rulers in the precolonial period. Besides, most of the temples as well as the mosques are dome-shaped both in the inner and outside parts.⁷⁴

The Muslim community received social recognition during the rule of the Koch Maharajas and enjoyed the opportunities to hold high administrative positions in the State. Their economic, political and cultural contributions for the growth of Cooch Behar had been duly recognized. During the period under study, some instances may be mentioned here. Nawabzada Abdul Karim was appointed as Secretary to Maharaja Jitendranarayana as well as to Her Highness Regent Indira Devi. Nawab Khasru Jung was appointed as the Guardian of the young Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan and also took the charge of the Household Department of the Palace. Both of them were non-Cooch Behari Muslims.⁷⁵ Munshi Amanatulla Ahmed, a local Jotedar as well as a renowned scholar, was rewarded with the title 'Khan Choudhuri'; by the Maharaja Raj Rajendranarayan.⁷⁶ Later he was appointed the Revenue Minister in the State Council and the President of the Hitasadhani Sabha, the only State-recognized political organisation of the State. Ansaruddin Ahmed and Bazley Rahman were appointed as the Chief Secretary of the State and Fouzdari Ahilkar respectively.⁷⁷ Other remarkable Muslim personalities in the state administration as well as in other arenas were Ahmad Hossain Pradhan, B.L., Najib Ahilkar, Maulvi Fakiruddin Ahmad, B.L., Special Magistrate, Maulvi Sekh Dayal Mohammad, Assistant Inspector of Schools, Abbas Uddin Ahmed, the famous folk singer, Makbul Hossain, a noted pleader, Maziruddin Ahmad etc.⁷⁸

The Muslims lived in pluri-cultural society in Cooch Behar State and bulk of them differed little from the

Hindus and other indigenous communities (ethnic groups) in respect to language, dress, material culture, habits and customs. They even observed major and popular festivals of the locality as if their own. In many places even known Muslim customs have been turned into local one. What A.C. Hartley, the Rangpur Settlement Officer, wrote in 1932, was very much true for Cooch Behar State too. He said, "Ballads in honour of Bishohari and Satyapir (sometimes known as Satya Narayan) are preserved and sung by the people of both the faiths. The worship of Jakha, also a Rajbansi deity, was noted in some thanas and the use of a white flag on the burial ground is very reminiscent of the white canopy used by the Rajbansis on their cremation ground. The regular attendance of men of both the faiths at 'Jatra' and 'Kirtan' parties is common."⁷⁹ In many other aspects too important similarities between the local Muslims and Hindus can be found in their socio-cultural traditions and practices. Food habits were the same except that the Muslims did not take pork. Names of the local Muslims were often indistinguishable from those of the Rajbansi Hindus. Muslim women, generally speaking, did not use 'burkhas' and participated in agricultural operations.

In this context, it is worthwhile to elaborate the observation of Thakur Panchanan Barma, the most charismatic leader of the Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement, on the natural harmonious relationship between the Rajbansis and the local Muslims. Referring to the Muslims, Panchanan Barma held the view that 'it was not proper to differentiate between the Hindus and the Muslims, as their ancestors were the same. If due to certain circumstances they had adopted Islam, that should not overshadow the fact that every morning they met and ploughed the land together, did the marketing, shared the pleasures and problems and participated in the same social ceremonies. So, even though the Rajbansis had adopted the sacred thread, they should not think of their caste alone.'⁷⁹⁺

As a matter of fact, the Muslims were highly integrated with local traditions of Cooch Behar and the process of integration had been taken place slowly and gradually. The cultural continuity of the local converts had a great role in this process of integration. Most significantly, in the State of Cooch Behar the native Muslims were generally guided by the Hindu law in matters of succession and inheritance. Any Muslim who claimed to be governed by the Mohammedan law had to prove that he was foreigner and that the Mohammedan law of inheritance had always been followed in his family.⁸⁰ This clearly indicates the cultural roots of the Muslim converts in Cooch Behar. The Mohammedan Inheritance Act (Cooch Behar Act II) was passed in 1887, but till 1950 it was not much popularized among the Muslims.⁸¹

The interaction between the Hindus and Muslims in day-to-day life was very much in vogue. They were sympathetic and affectionate to each other in their joy's and sorrows. They carried on cultivation as well as trade and commerce living side by side. Hindus and Muslims addressed each other through certain kinship terms such as Dada, Aju, Kaka which indicated warm relationship.⁸² Interaction between Muslims and Hindus generated an atmosphere of veneration and attraction for each other's religion. In this context, the role of the Pirs or Darvishes cannot be overlooked. Unlike the professional missionaries like Ulema of their own faith, the Sufi saints or Pirs neither vilified the

ancient religions of this country, nor they unusually glorified their own. Instead, they preached the essence of Islamic religion without emphasizing its orthodox aspects. They only emphasized on spiritual, liberal and humanistic aspects of Islam. 'The preachings of liberal - humanistic aspects of Islam by these Muslim saints or Pirs made it possible for these two faiths - Islam and Hinduism to co-exist and to know each other' in this region.⁸³ Since at the level of the masses, there was neither comprehension of theological subtleties nor conflict of interest, there was syncretistic tradition emerging on the social scene.⁸⁴ All these factors together strengthened the communal bond and religious toleration among the two major religious communities in the State. In this vein, what Ranajit Dasgupta wrote about communal amity in his study of the district of Jalpaiguri was also true for the neighbouring Cooch Behar State. He said, "A significant feature of the social life was the absence of any tension and rivalry between Hinduized autochthons and Islamized autochthons. Thus a peaceful mingling and a cultural syncretization had been taking place."⁸⁵

The Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan in his speech delivered on the 27th June, 1947 in the Legislative Council referred to the cordial Hindu-Muslim relations prevailing in the State. The Maharaja said, "In Cooch Behar we are in a happy position to congratulate ourselves that not only no disturbance of any kinds has occurred but also that Hindus and Muslims have continued to live together in perfect peace and harmony as brothers and are determined not to be influenced by the poison of communal and communist forces that have been and are unfortunately still at work round about us. The credit of this remarkable achievement goes to the people themselves and to their elective representatives in this House."^{85*}

Our independence in August, 1947 brought simultaneously the partition of the country into India and Pakistan along religious lines. There were two partitions creating two huge borderlands - one between India and West Pakistan ('Partition-in-the-West') and another some 1,500 km to the east between India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh and Burma ('Partition-in-the-east').⁸⁶ In this context, Gayatri Devi, the princess of Cooch Behar royal family and the Maharani of Jaipur, wrote in her memoirs, "To me, brought up in Cooch Behar where 40 percent of the inhabitants were Muslim, it seemed terrible to rend India apart in this way when we knew from long experience that it was perfectly possible for Hindus and Muslims to live peaceably side by side."⁸⁷ However as a result of partition, Cooch Behar State came to be bordered on three sides by East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Amidst terrible bloodshed and suffering millions of refugees crossed the borders. Many refugees from East Pakistan also migrated to Cooch Behar. In this volatile situation, there was always the dark menace of Hindu-Muslim trouble. Because there was a sizeable part of the population was Muslim and there was also anxiety of Cooch Behar's being a border State. But the Maharaja of Cooch Behar rose to the occasion and used his personal authority to guarantee the safety of the Muslim minority. There was no outbreak of Hindu-Muslim trouble in the State.⁸⁸ It has been pointed out that compared to the eastern and other parts of Bengal, communal tension was rarely visible in the northern part of Bengal. As both the Rajbansi Hindus and the Muslim masses of North Bengal are believed to have been members of the same ethnic group having lots of similarities between them at

popular cultural level, religious loyalties did not come in the way of their peaceful relationship.⁸⁹

In fact, no major incident of communal disturbance had been recorded in Cooch Behar State during the period under study. This fact has been well expressed in a letter dated the 8th August, 1949 written by Amanatulla Ahmed and Satish Chandra Roy Singha of Cooch Behar to the Adviser, the States Ministry, the Government of India. They narrated in that letter that "by nature the people of the State are peace-loving. Communal harmony in the State is a feature which surprises the rest of India. Even when there were great killings in Bengal and elsewhere in India, there was not a single shutter in the calm and peaceful atmosphere of Cooch Behar. Peace and tranquility prevailed even at the greatest provocation. This peculiar and harmless nature of Cooch Beharis will merit always and anywhere exceptional treatment both politically and educationally."⁹⁰

Notes and References

1. Haq, Muhammad Enamul : A History of Sufism in Bengal, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dacca, First published 1975, p. 317.
2. Roy, Asim : The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal, Princeton, First Published 1983, p. 4.
3. Sur, Dr. Atul : Bangalir Nritattvik Parichaya, (in Bengali), Calcutta, First Published 1977, Third Edition, 1986. Fourth Print 2000, p. 53.
4. Ghosal, S.C. : History of Cooch Behar, (Translated from original Bengali 'Koch Biharer Itihas' by Amanatullah Khan Choudhury Ahmed), Cooch Behar State Press, 1942, pp. 299, 301.
5. Hunter, W.W : Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and State of Kuch Bihar, London, 1876, Reprint, 1976, p. 359.
6. Ghosh, S.C. : op-cit, pp. 52, 57.
7. Saikia, Mohini Kumar : Assam-Muslim Relation and Its Cultural Significance, Gauhati, 1978, p. 133.
8. Mandal, Sekh Rahim : 'Muslim Minority of Cooch Behar : Their History and Culture' in P.K. Bhattacharyya (ed) : The Kingdom of Kamata-Koch Bihar in Historical Perspective, Calcutta, 2000, pp. 122, 124.
9. Nath, D : History of the Koch kingdom (1515 - 1615), Delhi, 1989, p. 134.
10. Darrang Raj Vamsavali, V., 563.
11. Nath, D : op.cit. p. 134.
12. Loc. cit. Also see Barman, Sivanath : An Unsung Colossus : An Introduction to the Life and Works of Sankaradeva, Forum For Sankaradeva Studies, Guwahati, First Published 1999, p. 79. In fact, Sankaradeva was a preacher of bhakti and ekasarana. The doors of his religion were open to each and every one - be he a Brahmin, or a Garo, a Kalita or a Kachara. Further, in the sattrā (an institution conceived by him), he maintained complete equality among his disciples. Thus his religion became a powerful catalyst or 'a cementing force in the process of acculturation of the different ethnic groups. Sankaradeva spent the last years of his life in the Koch kingdom where he maintained a very cordial relation with King Naranarayana and his brother Chilaraya (his actual name being Sukladhvaja). Barman, Sivanath : op.cit, pp. 72, 78, 79.
13. Ghosal, S. C. : op. cit, p. 77.
14. Haq, Muhammad Enamul : op. cit., pp. 265 - 266.
15. *ibid*, p. 266.
16. Ahmed, Rafiuddin : The Bengal Muslims : A Quest for Identity, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 7.
17. Haq, Muhammad Enamul, op. cit, p. 266.
18. Choudhury, Sushil : Review Article of the Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier : 1204 - 1760 by Richard M. Eaton, the Indian Historical Review, I.C.H.R., Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2, July, 1993 & January, 1944, p. 155. However, Richard M. Eaton considers the 'Religion of social liberation' Theory inadequate. According to him, there is abundant evidence that Indian Communities, even after conversion, failed to improve their status in the social hierarchy of Islam. Moreover, in Bengal Muslim converts were drawn largely from Rajbanshi, Pod, Chandal, Koch and other indigenous groups that had been only lightly exposed to Brahmanical culture. Instead, Eaton elaborates his thesis which is entirely novel and based on solid evidence. According to him, deforestation and peasantisation as well as Islamization went hand in hand especially in eastern Bengal delta after the establishment of Mughal rule in Bengal. Islam in Bengal absorbed so much local culture and became so deeply identified with the long term process of agrarian growth there that in its formative years the peasant cultivators never seem to have regarded it as "foreign". *ibid*, pp. 154 - 155. Also see Eaton, Richard M.' Who Are the Bengal Muslims' ?

Conversion and Islamization in Bengal', in his edited Essays on Islam and Indian History, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 264.

19. Haq, Muhammad Enamul, op. cit, p. 159.
20. *ibid*, pp. 146 - 154.
21. Ghosal, S.C. : op.cit, p. 83.
22. *ibid*, pp. 86, 90.
23. *ibid*, pp. 84 - 85.
24. Mandal, Shekh Rahim : op. cit, p. 130.
25. Ghosal, S.C. : op. cit, pp. 84 - 85.
26. *ibid*, pp. 85 - 86.
27. *ibid*, P. 87; Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal & Sikkim, Part-I, Report by L.S.S. O'Malley, Calcutta, 1913, p. 252.
28. Sarkar, Jagadish Narayan : Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal, Delhi, First Published 1985. p. 76. Confer also Ray, Girijasankar : Uttarbange Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Puja-Parvana, N. L. Publishers, Dibrugarh, Assam, First Published 1970, Second Edition 1999, pp. 211-212.
29. Haq, Muhammad Enamul : op. cit, p. 292.
30. Karim, Abdul : Social History of the Muslims in Bengal, Jatiya Grantha Prakashan, Dhaka, Third Edition 2001, pp. 168, 229.
- 30*. Ray, Girija Shankar, op. cit, pp. 211, 213. According to the author, the worship of Satyapir, Khoyajpir, Pagelapir etc. came into vogue as a result of synthesis of Hindu and Islamic religions. — *ibid*, p. 219.
31. The two main sects of the Mohammedans of Bengal are the Sunnis and the Shias. The former accept the authority of all successors of Muhammad, whereas the Shias look upon the first three Abu Bakkar, Omar and Osman, as interlopers and regard Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, as the first true Khalifa. They also greatly reverence his martyred sons, Hasan and Hossain. Sect was not returned at the 1901 Census, but it is known that, with the exception of those of Mughal origin, the great majority of Bengal Muslims consider themselves Sunnis, although at the same time they exalt Hasan and Hossain and observe the Ramzan as strictly as the Shias. -Census Report of Bengal, 1901, Part - I, Chapter IV, p. 173. Also see Census Report of India, 1931, Vol. V, Bengal & Sikkim, Part-I, Chapter XI, p. 358.
32. Mandal, Sekh Rahim : op.cit, pp. 129 - 30.
33. Haq, Muhammad Enamul : op. cit. p. 318.
34. *ibid*, pp. 323, 154.
35. Mukhopadhyay, Bisnupada : 'Samprodayik Sampriti O Koch Bihar', in Pashchimbanga', Special Issue on Cooch Behar, Government of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2006, p. 93.
36. Majumdar, Durgadas : West Bengal District Gazetteers : Koch Bihar, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1977, p. 84.
37. Haq, Muhammad Enamul : op. cit. pp. 342 - 343.
38. Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal and Sikkim, op. cit., p. 252.
39. Haq, Muhammad Enamul : op. cit., pp. 350 - 51.
40. Census of India, 1931, Vol. V, Bengal & Sikkim, Part-I. Report by A. E. Porter, Calcutta, 1933, p. 390. In a work entitled Punthi Parichay edited by Panchanan Mandal, it has been found that some mantras (charms) contained the names of Islamic Allah, Khuda, Mukammad etc. besides the names of Hindu gods and goddesses. Such

mantras are another example of the synthesis of Hindu-Muslim cultures. — Ray, Girijashankar, op.cit, p. 219.

41. Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal & Sikkim, op. cit., p. 252.
42. *ibid*, pp. 131 - 132, Mukhopadhyay, Bishnupada : op. cit., p. 94.
43. Haq, Muhammad Enamul, op. cit., p. 365 - 366.
44. *ibid*, p. 367.
45. Ahmed, Rafiuddin : op. cit, p. 70.
46. Roy, Asim : 'Being and Becoming a Muslim : A Historiographic Perspective on the Search for Muslim Identity in Bengal,' in Sekhar Bandyopadhyaya(ed), Bengal : Rethinking History, Manohar, New Delhi, 2001., p. 118.
47. Ahmed, Rafiuddin : op. cit., p. 71.
48. Hunter, W.W. : op. cit., p. 358.
49. Choudhury, Harandra Narayan ; The Cooch Behar State and Its hand Revenue Settlements, Cooch Behar State Press, 1903, p. 118.
50. Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal & Sikkim, Part - II, Calcutta, 1913, p. 444; Census of India, 1941, Vol. IV, Bengal, Government of India, Simla, 1942, pp. 71, 105.
51. Dutta, Jatindra Mohan : Koch Bihare Jana Jathya Sambandhe Kayekti Katha; Koch Bihar Darpan (in Bengali), A Fortnightly Journal, Cooch Behar State Press, 9th Year, No. X, Magh, 1353, B.S., p. 144.
52. Choudhury, H. N. : op. cit., p. 120. It is a fact that North Bengal was the home of the Mech and Koch tribes. In 1901, The nominal strength of these tribes was still nearly a million and a half despite the fact that a large number of them had embraced Mohammedanism :- Census Report of Bengal, 1901, Part - i, p. 15.
53. *Loc. cit.*, As a matter of fact, the Mohammedans of Eastern and Northern Bengal as class are more numerous, not only than in any other part of Bengal but than in any other part of India. The Mohammedans of Bengal who call themselves 'sheikhs' outnumber those who profess to be Pathans in the ratio of 50 to 1. The number of Mughals in this Province is quite insignificant. Many of these 'sheikhs', moreover, had recently begun to claim this appellation. They were formerly known as 'Atraf' in South Bengal and as 'Nasya' in North Bengal. The latter word is commonly used by outsiders, though the people concerned now prefer to describe themselves by a more pretentious name. - Census Report of Bengal, 1901, Part-I, Chapter IV, pp. 165 - 166.
54. This is quoted in P. K. Debnath : Religion and Religious Establishments of Kamata-Koch kingdom, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, the University of North Bengal, 1993, p. 133.
55. Hunter, W.W. : op. cit, p. 359.
56. Crunning, C. F. : Eastern Bengal and Assam Districts Gazetteers : Jalpaiguri, Allahabad, 1911. This is quoted in Bazley Rahaman, Mandal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj (in Bengali), 1996, p. 15. Besides, Buchanan Hamilton in his 'Statistical Account of Rangpur' stated that 'although the followers of the Koran form the largest proportion of the inhabitants of the district, there is little reason to believe that many of them are intruders. They seem, in general, from their countenances, to be descendants of the original inhabitants.' - It is quoted in the Census Report of Bengal, 1901, Part-I, Chapter IV, p. 167.
57. Mandal, Sekh Rahim : op. cit., p. 129.
58. Das Gupta, Ranajit : Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal : Jalpaiguri 1869 - 1947, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992, p. 19.
59. Census of India, 1931, Vol. V, Bengal and Sikkim, Part I, Chapter XI, p. 358.
60. Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Part-I, Report by L.S.S. O'Mally, Chapter XI, pp. 446, 508, 516.
61. Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Part - II, Report by W. H. Thompson, p. 175; Census of Bengal, 1901, Part

-B, Table XIII, p. 285. 'The acknowledged superiority of the Ashrafs' position had the most serious consequences for the Bengali Muslim identity. The commulative result of their social, economic, cultural and political dominance was their becoming 'the reference model' for the Bengal Muslim society. With supreme importance attached to the non-Indian extraction of the Ashraf, there was a natural tendency for the local-born aspirant to 'discover' for himself a foreign ancestry. Thus the late 19th and early 20th centuries Census records offer a picture of the galloping numbers of claimants to foreign extraction.' — Ahmed, Rafiuddin : op. cit, pp. 16 - 17.

62. Roy, Asim : 'Being and Becoming a Muslim'; op. cit, pp. 190, 218.
63. Haq, Muhammad Enamul : op. cit., p. 358.
64. Bhattacharya, Ranjit K. : 'The Concept and Ideology of Caste among the Muslims of Rural West Bengal,' in Imtiaz Ahmad(ed.), Caste and Social Stratification Among the Muslims, Delhi, 1973, p. 123.
65. Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Part I, Report by W. H. Thompson, Calcutta, 1923, p. 349.
66. Ahmad, Imtiaz (ed.) Caste and Social Stratification Among the Muslims, Delhi, 1973, Introduction, p. VII.
67. Memo No. 3364 - 3503, C, dated the 20th November, 1930 of Superintendent of Census, Bengal, quoted in a letter No. 3499, dated the 9th March, 1931 from the Fouzdari Ahilkar to the Registrar, State council, Cooch Behar, Collection No. 20, File No. 6, Batch No. 303, Regency Council, Cooch Behar.
68. Census of Bengal, 1901, Part - II, Table - XIII, Caste, Part - B, pp. 276 - 288; Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Part - II, p. 175.
69. Mandal, Sekh Rahim : op. cit., p. 134.
70. Bhattacharyya, Pranab Kumar : Dainik Basumati, (Bengali Daily), March 25, 1993.
71. Nag, Hiten : 'Koch Biharer Musalman Samaj : Agragati O Bikash', in Madhuparni, Cooch Behar Special Number, edited by A. G. Ghose, 1990, pp. 141 - 142.
72. Ghosal, S. C. : op. cit., p. 226.
73. Chand, Tara : Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, Allahabad, 1946, pp. 242 - 243.
74. Debnath, Pabitra Kumar : Religion and Religious Establishment of Kamata-Koch kingdom, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of North Bengal, 1993, p. 136.
75. Cooch Behar Gazette, Extraordinary, May 25, 1923; Cooch Behar Gazette, June 4, 1923; See also Devi, Gayatri and Rau, Santha Rama : A Princess Remembers : Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur, Tarang Paperbacks, First Published 1976, Reprint 1988, p. 55.
76. Annual Administrative Report of Cooch Behar State, 1911 - 1912, General, p. 7. In this connection, it may be mentioned that Khan Choudhury Amanatulla Ahmed wrote an authoritative book on the early history of Cooch Behar State entitled "A History of Cooch Behar - Part-I" (in Bengali), published under authority of the Cooch Behar State in 1936.
77. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch Secret, File No. 15(8) - P/49, 1949, p. 54. NAI
78. Nag, Hiten : op. cit., pp. 135 - 136; Mandal, Sekh Rahim, op. cit., p. 125.
79. Hartley, A. C. : Rangpur S.S.R., P. 11. This is quoted in Dasgupta, Ranajit : op. cit., p. 20.
- 79*. Sarkar, D. N. : Raj Saheb Panchanan, (in Bengali), Rangpur, 1391 B.S. p. 2. The evidence is quoted in Basu, Swaraj : Dynamics of a Caste Movement : The Rajbansis of North Bengal, 1910-1947, Manohar, New Delhi, First Published 2003, p. 106.
80. Mitra, A : West Bengal District Census Handbooks : Cooch Behar, 1951, Calcutta, 1953, pp. XLIV - XLV; Majumdar, Durgadas : op. cit., p. 57.

81. Mandal, Sekh Rahim : op. cit., p. 133.
82. Ahmed, Fayezuddin : 'Cooch Behar Palli', Paricharika, (Bengali Journal), 6th Year, Vol. II, No. 1, Jaishtha-Kartik, 1329 B.E., p. 61.
83. De, Amalendu : Islam in Modern India, Maya Prakashan, Calcutta, First Edition, 1982, pp. 4-5; Haq, Muhammad Enamul : op. cit., p. 262.
84. Engineer, Asgar Ali : Review Article of the book "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal" by Asim Roy, in Indian Historical Review, Vol. XVII, No. 1-2, July 1990 and January 1991, p. 263.
85. Dasgupta, Ranajit : op. cit., p. 21.
86. C.B.G., Extraordinary, June 28, 1947, p. 87
86. Schendel, Willem Van : The Bengal Borderland, Anthem Press, London, 2005, P. 28. According to the author, some basic misconceptions on 'Partition-in-the-east' are that it was essentially a question of establishing a North-South border through Bengal (ignoring the much longer border in the North and East, and the fact that Assam was also partitioned), that Bengal was cut in two halves (in reality it broke into 4 large parts and 197 minuscule parts or enclaves in northern Bengal), that East Pakistan was carved out of India (ignoring the simultaneous surgery creating a novel and isolated 'North-east India'), and that population dislocation in the east was primarily the flight of Hindus from East Pakistan to West Bengal (ignoring both the large flows of Muslim refugees coming into East Pakistan from West Bengal, Bihar and Assam, and the movement of refugees from East Pakistan to Tripura and Assam) — *ibid*, pp. 28, 43.
87. Devi, Gayatri and Rau, Santha Rama : op. cit., p. 205.
88. *ibid*, p. 211.
89. Basu, Swaraj : op. cit., pp. 105, 107.
90. Letter No. 110, dated the 8th August, 1949 from Amanatulla Ahmed and Satish Chandra Roy Singha of Cooch Behar to the Adviser, the States Ministry, Government of India, New Delhi, File No. 15(8) - P/49, 1949 (secret), pp. 158 - 160 NAI. It may be noted here that the Partition was a serious setback for the Muslims, particularly, the educated middle class Muslims in Cooch Behar. At the time of partition, mass-scale movement from both sides of the border was the order of the day. A large section of Bengali Hindus immigrated to Cooch Behar, whereas many Muslims also left Cooch Behar and went to East Pakistan for seeking shelter and occupation. The process of migration and immigration from, and to Cooch Behar went on simultaneously even after the merger of the State with West Bengal as a district in 1950. As a result of this, the percentage of the Muslims went down to a significant extent. The proportion of Muslim population decreased from 38 percent in 1941 to 29 percent in 1951, and it was further reduced to 24 percent in 1961 and to 21 percent in 1971. — Majumdar, Durgadas : op. cit., p. 50; Nag, Hiten : op. cit., pp. 139, 141.

Appendix E - i
COOCH BEHAR MERGER AGREEMENT

AGREEMENT MADE THIS twenty-eighth day of August 1949 between the Governor-General of India and His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

WHEREAS in the best interests of the State of Cooch Behar as well as of the Dominion of India it is desirable to provide for the administration of the said State by or under the authority of the Dominion Government;

IT IS HEREBY AGREED as follows :—

Article 1

His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar hereby cedes to the Dominion Government full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of the State and agrees to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government on the 12th day of September 1949 (hereinafter referred to as "the said day").

As from the said day the Dominion Government will be competent to exercise the said powers, authority and jurisdiction in such manner and through such as it may think fit.

Article 2

His Highness the Maharaja shall continue to enjoy the same personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles which he would have enjoyed had this agreement not been made.

Article 3

His Highness the Maharaja shall with effect from the said day be entitled to receive for his life-time from the revenues of the State annually for his privy purse the sum of Rupees eight lakhs fifty thousand free of all taxes. After him the privy purse will be fixed at Rupees seven lakhs only. This amount is intended to cover all the expenses of the Ruler and his family, including expenses on account of his personal staff, maintenance of his residences, marriages and other ceremonies, etc., and will neither be increased nor reduced for any reason whatsoever.

The Government of India undertakes that the said sum of Rupees eight lakhs fifty thousand shall be paid to His Highness the Maharaja in four equal instalments in advance at the beginning of each quarter from the State Treasury or at such Treasury as may be specified by the Government of India.

Article 4

His Highness the Maharaja shall be entitled to the full ownership, use and enjoyment of all private properties (as distinct from State properties) belonging to him on the date of this agreement.

His Highness the Maharaja will furnish to the Dominion Government before the 15th September, 1949, an inventory of all the immovable property, securities and cash balances held by him as such private property.

If any dispute arises as to whether any item of property is the private property of His Highness the Maharaja or State property, it shall be referred to a judicial officer qualified to be appointed as a High Court Judge and the decision of that officer shall be final and binding on both parties.

Article 5

All the members of His Highness' family shall be entitled to all the personal privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by them whether within or outside the territories of the State, immediately before the 15th day of August, 1947.

Article 6

The Dominion Government guarantees the succession, according to law and custom, to the gaddi of the State and to His Highness the Maharaja's personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles.

Article 7

No enquiry shall be made by or under the authority of the Government of India, and no proceedings shall lie in any Court in Cooch Behar, against His Highness the Maharaja, whether in a personal capacity or otherwise, in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by him or under his authority during the period of his administration of that State.

Article 8

(1) The Government of India hereby guarantees either the continuance in service of the permanent members of the Public Services of Cooch Behar on conditions which will be not less advantageous than those on which they were serving before the date on which the administration of Cooch Behar is made over to the Government of India or the payment of reasonable compensation.

(2) The Government of India further guarantees the continuance of pensions and leave salaries sanctioned by His Highness the Maharaja to servants of the State who have retired or proceeded on leave preparatory to retirement, before the date on which the administration of Cooch Behar is made over to the Government of India.

Article 9

Except with the previous sanction of the Government of India no proceedings, civil and criminal, shall be instituted against any person in respect of any act done or purporting to be done in the execution of his duties as a servant of the State before the day on which the administration is made over to the Government of India.

In confirmation whereof Mr. Vapal Pangunni Menon, Adviser to the Government of India in the Ministry of States has appended his signature on behalf and with the authority of the Governor General of India and Lieutenant Colonel His Highness Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan Bhuj Bahadur, Maharaja of Cooch Behar, has appended his signature on behalf of himself, his heirs and successors.

JAGADDIPENDRA NARAYAN
Maharaja of Cooch Behar

V. P. MENON
Adviser to the Govt. of India
Ministry of States

Appendix E-ii

PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

PRESS NOTE
COOCH BEHAR TO MERGE WITH WEST BENGAL

His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar executed an Agreement ceding full jurisdiction, powers and authority to the Government of India in relation to the governance of Cooch Behar State on August 28, 1949. In pursuance of this Agreement the administration of the State was taken over on September 12, 1949, and a Chief Commissioner was placed in charge of it. After careful consideration of all factors, the Government of India have now come to the conclusion that the best interests of the people of Cooch Behar and the country will be served by its integration in the Province of West Bengal. It has accordingly been decided to merge Cooch Behar with West Bengal with effect from January 1, 1950, and an Order under Section 290A of the Government of India Act, 1935, is under issue.

In deciding on this arrangement every care has been taken to ensure that the interests of the people of Cooch Behar are fully safeguarded. Provision will be made for its representation in the West Bengal Legislature. The cash balance and investments of the State will be earmarked for being spent on development schemes for the benefit of the people of Cooch Behar. All permanent employees of the State will, as far as possible, be absorbed in the service of the West Bengal Government and surplus staff will be paid reasonable compensation. Cooch Behar will be administered as a separate unit and for the time being the present Chief Commissioner, Mr. V. Nanjappa, I.C.S., will continue to be in charge of it under the West Bengal Government.

Ministry of States

New Delhi, December 28, 1949.

Source : Government of India, Ministry of States, Political Branch, 1949, Secret File No. 15 (59) - Political / 1949 (D/ 1825 P/49).

Appendix E-iii
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW
NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 31st December, 1949

No. S. O. 28. — The following Order made by the Governor-General is published for general information :—

THE STATES' MERGER (WEST BENGAL) ORDER 1949.

WHEREAS full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of the Indian State of Cooch Behar are exercisable by the Dominion Government.

AND WHEREAS it is expedient to provide by Order made under section 290A of the Government of India Act, 1935, for the administration of the said State in all respects as if it formed part of the Province of West Bengal;

AND WHEREAS for the aforesaid purpose it is expedient further to amend the States' Merger (Governors' Provinces) Order, 1949;

AND WHEREAS the views of the Government of West Bengal have been ascertained both with respect to the proposal to make such an Order and with respect to the provisions to be inserted therein;

NOW, THEREFORE, in exercise of the powers conferred by the said section 290A and of all other powers enabling him in this behalf, the Governor-General is pleased to make the following Order :—

1. This Order may be cited as the States' Merger (West Bengal) Order, 1949.

2. In clause (b) of article 2 of the States' Merger (Governors' Provinces) Order, 1949 (hereinafter referred to as the Principal Order), after the word and figures "December, 1949" the words and figures "and in relation to the State specified in Schedule VIII, the first day of January, 1950" shall be inserted.

3. In clause (a) of paragraph 1 of Article 11 of the Principal Order, after the entry relating to the United Provinces, the following entry shall be inserted, namely :—

"West Bengal92."

4. After Article 12 of the Principal Order, the following Article shall be inserted, namely :—

"13. As from the appointed day, —

(a) the jurisdiction of the High Court at Calcutta shall extend to the whole of the merged State of Cooch Behar (hereinafter referred to as Cooch Behar) as it extends to the Province of West Bengal :

(b) the Bengal, Agra and Assam Civil Courts Act, 1887, shall extend to and be in force in, Cooch Behar as it extends to, and is in force in the Province of West Bengal;

(c) the High Court of Cooch Behar and the other Civil Courts in Cooch Behar (hereinafter referred to as "existing Civil Courts") shall cease to function, and are hereby abolished;

(d) every appeal, case and other proceeding, pending before the High Court of Cooch Behar immediately

before the appointed day shall stand transferred. —

- (i) If it is an appeal from a decree or order in a civil case where the amount or value of the subject-matter of the suit or other proceeding is not more than five thousand rupees, to the Court of the District Judge, Cooch Behar;
- (ii) if it is an appeal in a criminal proceeding and the sentence appealed against is a sentence of fine only or is a sentence of imprisonment for a period not exceeding four years, whether with or without fine, to the Court of the Sessions Judge Cooch Behar; and
- (iii) in any other case, to the High Court at Calcutta;

(e) every civil appeal suit or other proceeding pending, immediately before the appointed day, before any of the existing Civil Courts shall stand transferred to the lowest Court, established under the Bengal, Agra and Assam Civil Courts Act, 1887, as extended to Cooch Behar, which would have jurisdiction to try or dispose of such appeal, suit or proceeding;

(f) every criminal appeal, case or other proceeding pending, immediately before the appointed day, before the Civil and Sessions Judge, Cooch Behar, shall stand transferred to the Sessions Judge, Cooch Behar;

(g) every decree passed or order made before the appointed day by the High Court of Cooch Behar or by any of the existing Civil Courts, and every sentence or order passed in the exercise of criminal jurisdiction by the High Court of Cooch Behar or by the Civil and Sessions Judge, Cooch Behar, shall be deemed, for the purpose of execution, to have been passed or made by the corresponding court established under and in accordance with the provisions of this Article;

(h) where any existing Civil Court, by reason of its abolition under clause (c) of this Article, ceases to have jurisdiction with respect to any suit or proceeding, any proceeding in relation to that suit or proceeding which, if that Court had not ceased to have jurisdiction, might have been had therein, may be had in the Court to which the business of the former Court has been transferred under this Article;

(i) an appeal from a decree or order passed by an existing Civil Court, but not appealed against before the appointed day, shall, —

- (i) where such appeal would, before that day, have lain under the law in force in Cooch Behar to the High Court of Cooch Behar and the amount or value of the subject-matter of the suit or other proceeding is more than five thousand rupees, lie to the High Court at Calcutta; and
- (ii) where such appeal would, before that day, have lain under the law in force in Cooch Behar to the High Court of Cooch Behar or to the court of the Civil and Sessions Judge, Cooch Behar, and the amount or value of the subject-matter of the suit or other proceeding is not more than five thousand rupees, to the Court of the District Judge, Cooch Behar;

(j) an appeal from an order passed by a magistrate in a criminal case but not appealed against before the appointed day, shall, if the appeal would, before such day, have lain under the law in force in Cooch Behar to the High Court of Cooch Behar, lie to the Sessions Judge, Cooch Behar;

(k) an application for revision of an order passed by a magistrate in a criminal case shall, if such application would, under the law in force in Cooch Behar before the appointed day, have lain, but was not made, to the High Court of Cooch Behar, lie to the High Court at Calcutta;

(l) nothing contained in clauses (g) to (k) shall be construed to extend the period of limitation to which any such appeal, application or other proceeding may be subject on the day immediately before the appointed day;

(m) the abolition of the High Court of Cooch Behar or the existing Civil Courts under clause (c) of this article shall not prejudice or affect the continued operation of any notice served, injunction issued, direction made or proceedings taken before the appointed day by such High Court or Civil Court under the powers then conferred upon it;

(n) no proceedings taken, or jurisdiction exercised, by a single Judge of the High Court of Cooch Behar during the period from the 31st day of October, 1949, to the 31st day of December, 1949, shall be called in question on the ground that the Court was not properly constituted or that such proceedings could have been taken, or jurisdiction exercised, only by a bench of two Judges; and

(o) in so far as this Article makes no provision or insufficient provision, the High Court at Calcutta may make such order for the transfer of suits, cases or proceedings pending before the High Court of Cooch Behar or an existing Civil Court to itself or to any Court in Cooch Behar subordinate to it; and where any case, suit or proceeding is so transferred, the Court to which it is transferred shall hear and dispose of the same as if it had been a case, suit or proceeding transferred to it in accordance with the law for the time being in force.

Explanation. — In clause (g) the expression "corresponding Court" means a Court in which the case or proceeding in which the sentence or order was passed would have lain if the case or proceeding had been instituted after the appointed day."

5. In the Schedules to the Principal Order, the following Schedule shall be added at the end, namely :—

"SCHEDULE VIII
State merged in the Province of West Bengal

Name of State	Number of seats in the Legislative Assembly
Cooch Behar	2"

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI,
Governor-General

K.V.K. SUNDARAM,
Secretary.

Appendix E-iv

ADDRESS BY

The Hon'ble Dr. B. C. Roy

Premier of West Bengal

on the occasion of the Merger of

The State of Cooch Behar

With WEST BENGAL

on January 1, 1950

CITIZENS OF COOCH BEHAR,

On the first day of the year in which the Indian Union is going to declare itself a Republic, I desire to convey to you a message of welcome on your admission into the Province of West Bengal as also into the constitutional set-up of the Indian Union.

Nineteen years ago, the Butler Commission reported that although geographically India was one and indivisible, yet politically there were two Indias—the British India governed by the Crown, according to the laws and statutes of the British Parliament and the enactments of the Indian Legislature, and another India composed of the Indian States which recognised the British Crown as the Paramount Power, though for the most part these States were under the personal rule of the Princes. The Butler Commission stated that "the principle of statesmanship is to hold the two together". The Commission could not realise that a time will soon come when the two could not only be held together but could be "integrated"—one into the other. The territories of Indian States are in many cases dovetailed into and are closely interwoven with those which are under the Indian Union. Ethnically, racially and linguistically the people of the States and those of the rest of India are closely linked, the main difference being that before August, 1947, while the Indian Union accepted a democratic constitution and a popular Government, the States were still enjoying a monarchical system of Government subject to the Paramount Power. In many cases the Indian States were under foreign subjugation not only in matters of external policy but were also under the control of the British Crown, even with regard to their internal administration.

In the early part of 1947, when the question of withdrawal of British authority from British India was being seriously discussed, it became evident that India was not only "one" from geographical and cultural points of view but it was so also from economic and political aspects. The real problem was to devise a plan by which all people,

whether in the States or in the Union, could work together for common weal and for joint endeavour to rise India to her fullest stature.

With the advent of Independence in India, on the 15th of August, 1947, the forces responsible for bringing this freedom travelled to and affected the people of the States. Fortunately, the Rulers, on their part, recognised the changes that were coming on and adjusted themselves to these forces. Therefore, we have witnessed the fact that within a few months of our Independence, smaller States have been consolidated into sizeable units and democratic institutions and responsible governments have been introduced in them. Thus it was possible for the Government of India to utilise those forces for purposes of integration and bring about a United India in which the Indian Union and the States and their respective citizens will have full scope to co-operate and develop the country as one unit.

The partition of India was regarded as a blow to the political and geographical integrity of India. The position of States, therefore under such circumstances was a problem which the Government of India felt they must solve. This necessarily meant that a common programme had to be adopted by which the entire country, including the States, could function in unison in matters of all-India concern.

On the 5th of July, 1947, the Hon'ble Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister of India, issued a statement on behalf of the States Ministry, asking the States to accede to the Indian Union with regard to three subjects — Defence, Foreign affairs and Communications as these matters were of common concern to the whole of India. The autonomous existence of the States was ensured and it was declared that there would be no domination of the Indian Union over the States.

This declaration of the States Ministry was very well-received by the Princely order, and all the States, except, Hyderabad, Kashmir and Junagarh, acceded, on its basis, to the Indian Union within a very short time. Thus it was that after hundreds of years India became welded into one unit, and this revolution was brought about without violence, bloodshed or coercion on either side.

Along with this accession, two other changes continued to operate—one was the consolidation of smaller States into big units and the other was the introduction of democratic institutions and responsible Government in the States so integrated. But it was soon found that this could not make many of the States viable, and so in December, 1947, after discussion with the Rulers of Orissa and Chattisgarh, it was decided to merge these States with the neighbouring Provinces in the interest of the Rulers and their subjects. In this process there is no doubt that the approach of the Rulers was very helpful. This was the first occasion when 39 States, with an area of 56000 square miles, a population of 7 millions and with a revenue of Rs. 2 crores merged into the neighbouring Provinces. Then came the merger of the Deccan and the Gujrat States with Bombay and some small States with East Punjab.

These smaller States were integrated into one viable and sizeable union having their own administration, while

bigger States were either merged into Provinces or remained under the direct control of the Centre. Cooch Behar has been one such unit. It was but natural that States in which Representative Government had been introduced would soon become part of the new set-up established by the Constitution which had been adopted by the Constituent Assembly. Under this arrangement this Union of States would be regarded as corresponding to the existing Provinces in the Indian Union.

We thus find that in place of 600 odd individual States there are now nearly 20 States or Unions of States. With the lapse of the paramountcy of the British Crown, every unit has fully functioning democratic administration where the powers have been or are about to be transferred to the people. Even Hyderabad has been no exception. We may thus call the Rulers co-architects in building India as a free and democratic State enjoying the fruits of freedom.

Cooch Behar covers an area of 1,318 square miles. The State of Cooch Behar lies in the plains at the foot of the Bhutan Hills. It has a border of 100 miles in contiguity with West Bengal and about 30 miles between the State and Assam, separated by the river Sankosh. The State was founded in the early part of the 16th century and at one time its suzerainty extended from Mahanand in the West to the middle of Assam in the East. Early in the 18th century, Bhutan began to interfere with the affairs of the State and by 1772, they had taken possession of the capital of Cooch Behar. The then Ruler, Raja Daridranarayan, sought British aid and signed a treaty with the East India Company in 1773, in which the following appears :—

"The Raja represented to the Hon'ble President and Council in Calcutta the present distressed condition of the country owing to its being harassed by the neighbouring independent Rajas who are in league to depose him. The Hon'ble President and the Council, from a love of justice and a desire of assisting the distressed, have agreed to send a force consisting of four companies of Sepoys and a field force for the protection of the said Raja on condition that the Raja will pay all expenses for this help and also will acknowledge subjection to the East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the Province of Bengal."

Today there is no question of annexation. It is a voluntary merging of the State of Cooch Behar with the Indian Union.

According to the latest census, the population of Cooch Behar is about 6,00,000. It has five subdivisions. The State, besides its indigenous population, has a good proportion of Bengalees, Beharis and Marwaris who have resided here for generations. The Court language of the State is Bengali. Socially and ethnologically the people of Cooch Behar have close affinities with the people of the Jalpaiguri area. The State had a Cabinet composed of a Chief Minister and three other members with a Chief Secretary, who practically ran the State. On the 12th of September last it ceased to be a separate State and became a centrally administered area.

On this occasion I am desired by the Government of India to make a few announcements :—

(1) That Cooch Behar would be maintained as a separate district with headquarters at Cooch Behar for historical as well as for sentimental reasons. Cooch Behar is a fairly compact area and is equal in size and population to one of the districts of West Bengal.

(2) That representation would be given to the people of Cooch Behar in the Provincial Legislature on the basis of population as soon as possible by means of nominations, which should be done in consultation with the Administrator of Cooch Behar.

(3) That all State servants in Cooch Behar would be absorbed in West Bengal Government Service on terms not less advantageous than those under the State regime. In case it is found necessary to discharge any person, adequate compensation will be paid to him.

(4) That the dearness allowance, interim and ad-interim relief of all State servants would be brought to the level of West Bengal with effect from the date of the merger. The question of revision of pay-scales of Government servants in Cooch Behar, so as to bring them in line with those prevailing in West Bengal, would also be taken up as early as possible.

(5) That the balance in the State Treasury on the date of merger would be retained by the Central Government to be spent by the Government of West Bengal on nation-building schemes for the benefit of the people of Cooch Behar.

We, on behalf of the West Bengal Government, assure you that we shall do all we can to ameliorate the condition of the people and bring about such improvements in the State as are found necessary and as are compatible with available funds.

Before I conclude, I desire to strike a personal note. For nearly 40 years, both as a medical practitioner and as a private individual, I have been closely associated with the Ruling Family of Cooch Behar, Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur and his family, his children and grandchildren, have been my friends, and I welcome this opportunity of acknowledging my intimate association with them. With your administration also, headed by Rai Kalika Das Dutt Bahadur onwards, I have had close association. I acknowledge my personal ties of friendship with them. Personally speaking, I appreciate this opportunity of welcoming you.

I welcome you, the people of Cooch Behar, once again, and ask you to join with the people of West Bengal and say —

JAI HIND!

Appendix E-v

COOCH BEHAR DYNASTY
A Scion of the Haihaya

*
*
Sumati
Bhadrajit
Bhadrasrava
↓
Vasudama
↓
Damambu
↓
Hari Dass Mandal

1.	Viswa Sing	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1496
2.	Nara Sing	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1533
3.	Nara Narayan	...	...	(Brother)	...	...	1533
4.	Lakshmi Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1587
5.	Vir Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1627
6.	Pran Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1632
7.	Mode Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1665
8.	Vasudeva Narayan	...	...	(Brother)	...	...	1680
9.	Mahendra Narayan*	...	...	(Kinsman)	...	...	1682
10.	Rupa Narayan	...	...	(Kinsman)	...	...	1704
11.	Upendra Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1714
12.	Devendra Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1763
13.	Dhairyaendra Narayan	...	...	(Cousin)	...	...	1765
14.	Rajendra Narayan	...	...	(Brother)	...	...	1770
15.	Dharendra Narayan**	...	...	(Nephew)	...	...	1772
16.	Harendra Narayan	...	...	(Brother)	...	...	1783
17.	Shibendra Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1839
18.	Narendra Narayan	...	...	(Nephew & adopted son)	...	...	1847
19.	Nripendra Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1863
20.	Raj Rajendra Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1911
21.	Jitendra Narayan	...	...	(Brother)	...	...	1913
22.	Jagaddipendra Narayan	...	...	(Son)	...	...	1922

* After his death in 1693, there was an interregnum for about ten years due to anarchical conditions prevailing in the State.

** After his death, in 1775 his father Dhairyendra Narayan ruled again up to 1783.